

american whitewater

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Mr. Ernie**

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**Crystal River
Conquest...**

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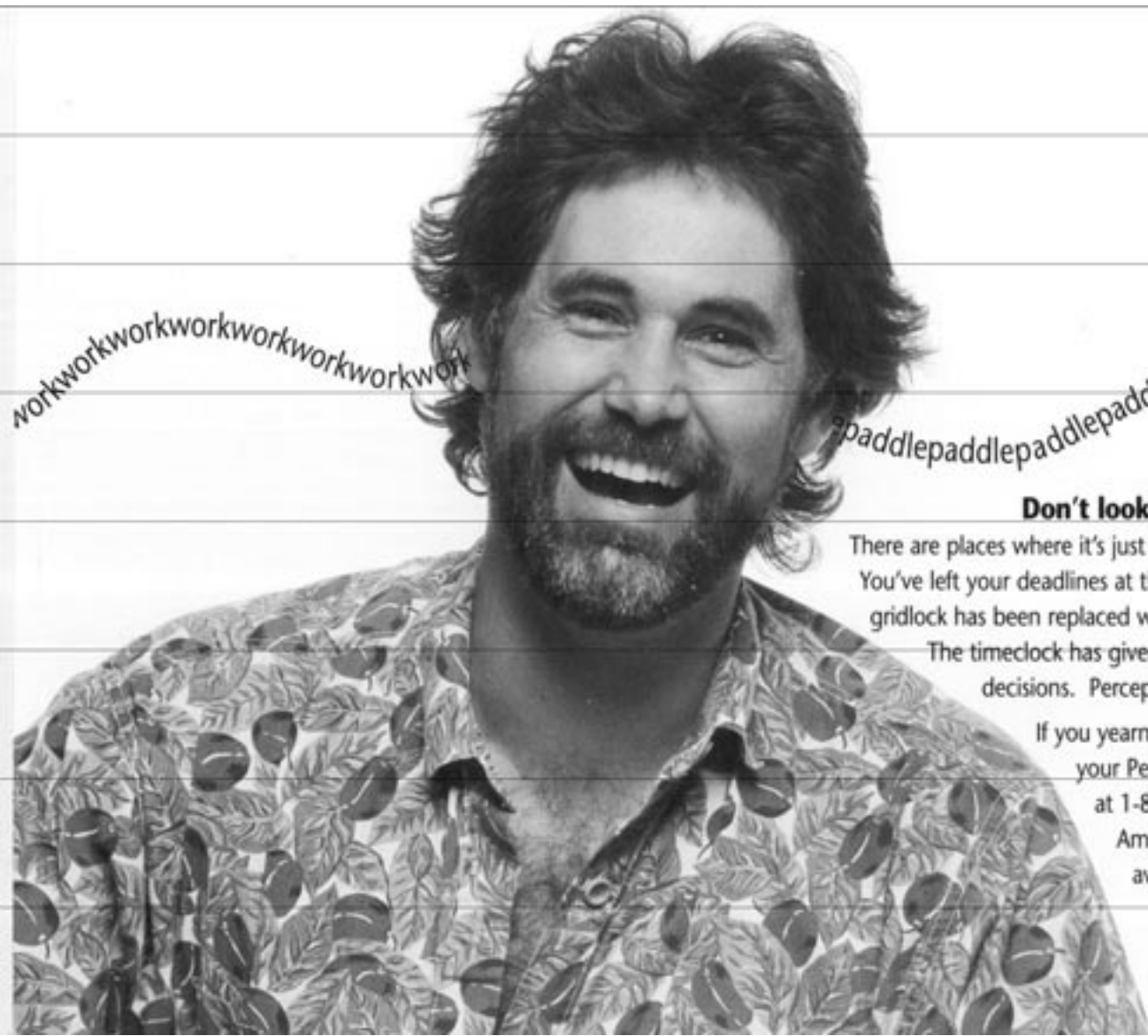
Potomac Floods of '96





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Journal of the American Whitewater Affiliation

Volume XXXVI, No.2

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Front Cover: Mason Hayes on Jacuzzi, Ernie's Canyon. Photo by Pete Flanagan. See Mean Mr. Ernie on page 34.

Inset: Paul Schelp surfing the massive crashing wave downstream of Harpers Ferry. Photo by Skip Brown. See the Potomac Flood story on page 22.

Back Cover: Pete Flanagan, over easy on the Carbon River, Washington state. Photo by Mason Hayes.



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Tales From The Edge

Ain't a bronc that can't be rode
Ain't a man that can't be thrown.

Old Cowboy Saying

Everybody plays the fool.... sometime.
There's no exception to the rule.

70's Soul Song

A few weeks ago, at high water, in mid-January, a young buddy of mine stumbled into a nasty hole on the Tyeart, not far below shoulder Snapper. Actually, he didn't exactly stumble into it. He was following someone who claimed to know the river....me.

And I did know the river... at least I knew that the hole existed, and that it could be a little mean at 8 feet. I just couldn't remember exactly where it was. "Keep an eye out for it," I advised nonchalantly as we peeled out of the eddy.

As luck would have it I clipped the edge of the monster, did a tailstand and flushed through. My young friend wasn't quite as lucky. He backended, maytagged in the icy recycle... and I do mean icy... as in chunks of it floating in the water... then washed out. By then he was half out of his boat. His subsequent swim was brief, uneventful and without consequence.... though, no doubt, invigorating.

As we put the pieces back together in the pool below the rapid, we were both



laughing. Well, I was laughing. He was grinning a little... and shivering a lot. We sat by the side of the river talking while he warmed up. I was surprised that he was so embarrassed by this minor escapade. After all, I wasn't embarrassed, and it was more my fault than his!

On the drive home the incident still weighed heavily on his mind. He asked me... the old timer... if the Big Dog Friendsville boaters that we both know ever got trashed and took swims.

"Heaven's no," I replied. "They never, ever come out of their boats. They'd die first!"

He quickly read the sarcasm in my voice.

"Everybody get's eaten once in a while," I observed. "Lot's of times it happens in pretty trivial places, especially when the water is really cold. And if you paddle really difficult stuff, especially at high water... it's inevitable."

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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 Affiliation or the editors of this publication.

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One of Idaho's hottest boaters once told me that the North Fork of the Payette regulars assume they are going to take at least one good thumping a season. Most of these guys have the battle scars to prove it: they wear them as badges of honor.

The extreme creekers of the Appalachians are no different. Given the right circumstances and significant amounts of powerful libations, they have plenty of entertaining and grisly tales to tell.

All the well known boaters that I have met admit to swimming once in a while, with two exceptions. And these are secretive and eccentric individuals who often boat alone... so I have my suspicions! I think it is the mark of a truly great boater to be able to admit to and laugh about an occasional ass kicking.

I do not pretend to be a great boater and I have never tried to keep my whitewater fiascoes a secret. When you get trashed as often as I do there is no use trying to be sneaky about it. Actually, two years ago I survived an entire season without a single swim, the first and only time in my fifteen year boating career. But I made the mistake of bragging about it in this magazine. As a consequence I ate crow three times last year.

One of these was after a brief pin on

the Upper Blackwater in January. The second was while blindly, and foolishly, running a nasty sluice on the Clark's Fork. There was a certain perverse nobility to each of these. But the third occurred at a spot that is too humiliating, even for me, to reveal. (There is one person out there who knows where that spot is, and that individual would do well to remember that there are a few skeletons in his closet, too.)

Christ said, "Let he who hath not sinned cast the first stone." In my experience the consequence of reveling in another boater's misfortune is inevitably a big dish of humble pie. If you can't laugh at your own aquatic misadventures, you shouldn't laugh at others.

It is the near misses and embarrassing moments that make talking and reading about running whitewater fun. Imagine how boring this magazine would be if no one ever admitted to having screwed up. Fortunately for those of us who get our "on the edge" thrills vicariously, there are a lot of Big Dog boaters who have enough self-esteem to set their egos aside and share their wild and woolly adventures with us.

This particular issue contains hair raising accounts of runs on some of the wildest and wooliest whitewater in the country.

Ernie's Canyon has earned a reputation as one of the most severe steep creeks in the Cascades of Washington state. In "Mean Mr. Ernie" regular contributor Nathan Lewis tell us why.

The Crystal River in Colorado features a number of popular whitewater sections. But not many whitewater enthusiasts have the guts and skill to challenge the Crystal River Gorge, high in the watershed. Paul Tefft's account of the initial explorations of this formidable challenge is a real thriller.

The Cataracts of California's Kern River are a formidable spectacle, even when viewed from the safety of the road, high above. Newcomer Rocky Contos joins Richard Penny and Keith Beck, self described graybeards of the California hair boating scene, in revealing what it is like face the Cataracts at water level.

Finally, Bob Cipoletti, a south-westerner, shares his experiences "pioneering" the rivers of the east. Like a lot of Chatooga regulars he found Section IV at high water to be particularly memorable.

All in all, this may be the most adrenaline loaded issue in the history of American Whitewater. If you find it half as exciting to read as I found to edit, you are in for a real treat.

Bob Gedekoh

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LETTERS.....

Busted on the Upper Ocoee

Dear AWA,

Once again it comes time to support all efforts towards whitewater boating and to preserving our watersheds. Here is \$50.00 towards my renewal and the rest for our battle! Here, also, is an interesting experience shared by myself and Brad Brewer entitled.... "Felons of the Ocoee!"

Gauley Fest Weekend on the Ocoee - with the new course running and no one boating out there, Dave and Brad thought "why fight the crowd on the lower?"

Sounds good to me- what could go wrong?

Well....after a fun Saturday.... boat to boat traffic, we decided Sunday morning to go straight to the upper put-in. Wallah! Gates open....no cars...**No Signs**. Drive down to river parking lot...river is on...again... **No Signs!** Right? Brad. All to ourselves... my second run on the Upper Ocoee. Uh-Oh!

We found ourselves above the course- not alone at all. Other Olympic hope-falls training just beyond a banner stretched completely across the river.

WARNING:UNAUTHORIZED PERSONNEL NOT ALLOWED BEYOND THIS POINT.

Uh-Oh! Brad-now what? I'm not paddling 2 miles upstream. Brad's philosophy-don't get in their way and just paddle. What can they do? Well, Dave went to the first drop and noticed quite a stir and fingers and radios pointing at me. Uh-Oh! So Brad paddles on while Dave hoists his boat and starts walk'in. Forest Service Cops apprehend both of us. TVA security, state troopers and park service officials detain us for 2 hours, waiting for what? The F.B.I.?

The Feds are here now to harass us for another hour; threaten us with a felony (being in a closed area). Well, it boiled down to three options: #1.Jail and \$5,000 Fine, #2. Jail and go before a federal judge, or #3. \$100 fine and a wasted day. We took the latter. My question for all these authorities kept coming back to, hey if you didn't want us on the upper- why leave the gate open and why No Signs?

To this day I hear of others falling into this same entrapment. Our U.S. dollars hard at work; screw the slimy wet no good boaters. That's all that I got out of the upper Ocoee.

You may add or subtract to this or not print it at all-but folks ought to know what we did not.

And do the Fed's constitutionally have a right to keep us off the Upper?

Dave Woodward
Franklin, N.C.

Editor's Reply:

If it makes you feel any better Davey Hearn, the current world C1 champion, got busted by park police in Washington, D.C. last weekend... because he was paddling the Potomac in flood. He got hauled off in a paddy wagon! Looks like no one is immune!

You've got my sympathy... like John Mellencamp says, "I fight authority... Authority always wins!" Sure seems to me that if the river was closed there should have been signs prominently placed at the put-in.

As best I can tell from browsing through club newsletters, for better or worse, the Upper Ocoee will be off limits to the general public until after the Olympics. After that it may be available for both private and commercial use... the powers that be are accepting public comments on this now. An awful lot of money was spent developing the whitewater facility on the Upper Ocoee, it will be a real shame if recreational boaters never get to enjoy it.

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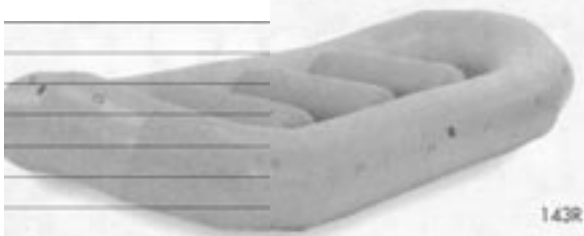
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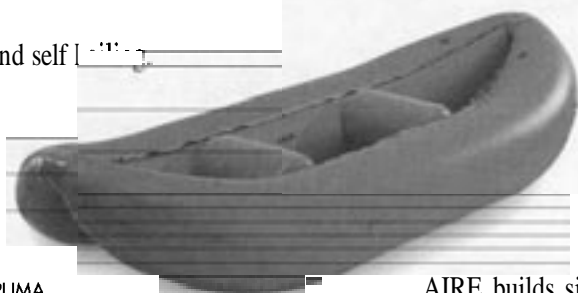
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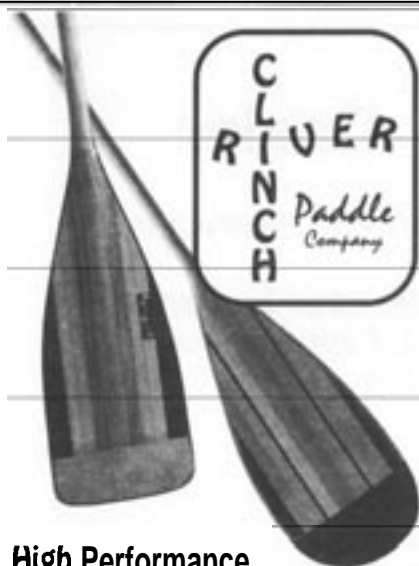
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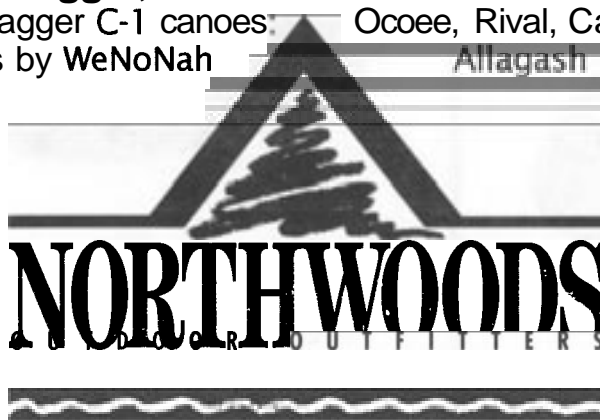
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PURPOSE.....

The American Whitewater Affiliation

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

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

CONSERVATION: AWA 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, AWA 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, (AWA) provides information and education about whitewater rivers, boating safety, technique and equipment.

SAFETY: AWA 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 AWA Whitewater Safety Code.

EVENTS: AWA 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.

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



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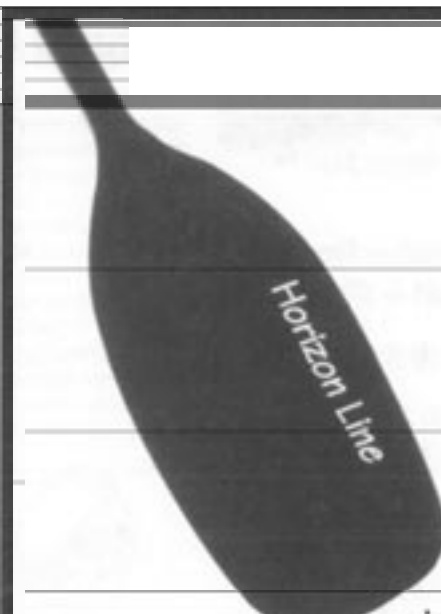
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CONSERVE.....

AWA Joins Lawsuit to Stop Jet-boats on Idaho's Snake

In our January/February issue, we presented "Cool your Jets," an article on the impact of jet-boats and jet-skies on rivers and human-powered recreation.

In January, AWA joined the Hells Canyon Preservation Council, Wilderness Watch, NORs, Rivers Council of Washington, Northwest Rafters Association, and numerous outfitters in a lawsuit designed to limit the number and use of motorized rivercraft within the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area. The lawsuit also seeks to require the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest to implement the Wild and Scenic

Snake River Management Plan before the 1996 boating season, and to limit jet boats to 1975 levels when the river was designated Wild & Scenic. Here is an abbreviated history of the situation:

In 1975, the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area Act designated 67 miles of the Snake as Wild and Scenic. Under this act, the "use and number of motorized and non-motorized rivercraft" must be regulated (under Forest Service jurisdiction).

Non-motorized use (rafts, canoes and kayaks) have been regulated since 1977, but motorized craft were not regulated until a 1992 lawsuit

forced the Forest Service to do so (Hells Canyon Preservation Council v. Richmond).

In 1994, the Forest Service issued rules which would have prohibited jet boats on a 21 mile stretch of river between Wild Sheep Rapids and Kirkwood Ranch. However, a few months later the Forest Service watered down this provision by setting a very high cap on motorized craft (based on recent use levels).

In 1995, the motor boat lobby appealed the plan, claiming that the restrictions would force operators out of business. The Forest Service delayed regulations until they complete an "economic viabil-

ity analysis" on motor boat outfitters, due in late 1996.

To sum up, non-motorized boats have been regulated since 1977 on Hells Canyon. However, due to strong lobbying efforts, commercial motorized boaters have escaped regulation for 20 years.

For more information contact AWA's conservation office at (301) 589-9453 or by email at 72732.401@compuserve.com. You can also contact Ric Bailey of the Hells Canyon Preservation Council at (541) 432-8100 or effig@pacificrim.net

Auburn Dam

In January, Congressman Thomas Petri (R-WI) drafted perhaps the shortest and most direct bill to come before Congress in years. Entitled "A bill to protect US taxpayers by preventing construction of a dam on the American River at Auburn, California," it has just two provisions: 1) that no funds be appropriated to or made available to the US Army Corps of Engineers or the US Bureau of Reclamation for this project, and 2) that if increased levels of flood protection are necessary for the Sacramento region, more efficient and cost effective projects be presented to Congress as "preferred alternatives."

Congressman Petri has weighed in against Auburn before. In 1992, he introduced an amendment to delete funding authorization for Auburn. This amendment was adopted by an overwhelming bi-partisan House vote of 273-140 and helped kill

funding for the dam. Now he's helping river supporters again.

As we go to press this bill has not yet been introduced, and AWA, Friends of the River and other river interests are working the Hill to find co-sponsors. Give us a call to find out what has gone on in the last month or so!



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HYDROPOWER UPDATE



Work on hydropower issues often seems to move along in spurts. A few years ago, when the AWA first got involved in hydropower issues, the majority of staff time was spent on rivers in New England (Kennebec, Moxie, Penobscot, Saco, etc.). Then, when these issues got wrapped up in negotiation and debate, rivers in the Mid West came to the forefront — then the North West — then California — and so on.

For some projects, we have come full circle. In December, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) issued its long awaited Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on the Kennebec, and Central Maine Power (CMP) applied for a new license term on the Dead. Both are outstanding whitewater rivers.

For additional information on any of these projects, please contact Rich Bowers at (301) 589-9453 or by email at 72732.401@compuserve.com. For information on the Kings, you can also contact Richard Penny at (209) 323-9236 or at rikpenny@CyberGate.com

Kennebec River, ME

The Kennebec DEIS covers a total of nine hydropower dams and two storage projects. At Moosehead, the headwaters impoundment controlling flows to both the East and West Outlets, the DEIS maintains the existing flow and duration of whitewater flows. New improvements include:

- greater minimum flows (500 cfs in the East Outlet and 80 to 120 in the West)
- a continuous flow phone on both Outlets
- annual meetings with whitewater interests to discuss schedules
- improved parking and an improved put-in on East Outlet

The trouble starts with the DEIS determinations on Moxie stream. Moxie is a fantastic Class V tributary of the Kennebec. Several years ago, AWA, CMP and others hashed out a recreational and environmental scenario which improved the fishery, provided whitewater releases, and addressed lake owner concerns. This plan was agreed upon by all parties with the exception of one state agency.

However, CMP withdrew its support for this scenario when administrators found out they needed to pay big bucks to upgrade the dam's safety requirements. They then withdrew their entire application. In the next year, CMP

Above: Phil Martin on the North Fork of the Kings River

CONSERVATION

sold the dam to the Forks, a town with less than 40 permanent residents, hoping to relieve themselves of all responsibility. The legality of this maneuver has yet to be decided, and FERC will rule on this license surrender in a separate proceeding.

Unfortunately, FERC ignored these negotiations in this DEIS, eliminating both scheduled whitewater flows and other improvements of the earlier agreement. In fact, FERC recommends against scheduled whitewater releases because of potential impacts to spawning (these releases would only be in Oct. and Nov.), and due to state agency concerns over safety. Each of these issues were studied in the earlier talks, but this information has been ignored by FERC. AWA will be involved both in restoring the gains included in the first agreement and in the issue of surrender of the license.

The other long-awaited decision is FERC's determination on project retirement and removal of Edward's Dam, the furthest downstream dam on the Kennebec. AWA has been pushing for its removal, which would restore many miles of anadromous fish runs on the Kennebec.

They didn't do it! Basically FERC has said that it doesn't yet have enough information to recommend dam removal, and recommends installation of a fish lift to pass seven target fish species. FERC also recommends 10 years of ongoing effectiveness studies. If at that time the fish lifts have not worked, FERC may require additional measures.

Hopefully, environmental intervenors will be able to help supply enough additional information to support dam removal prior to the final EIS.

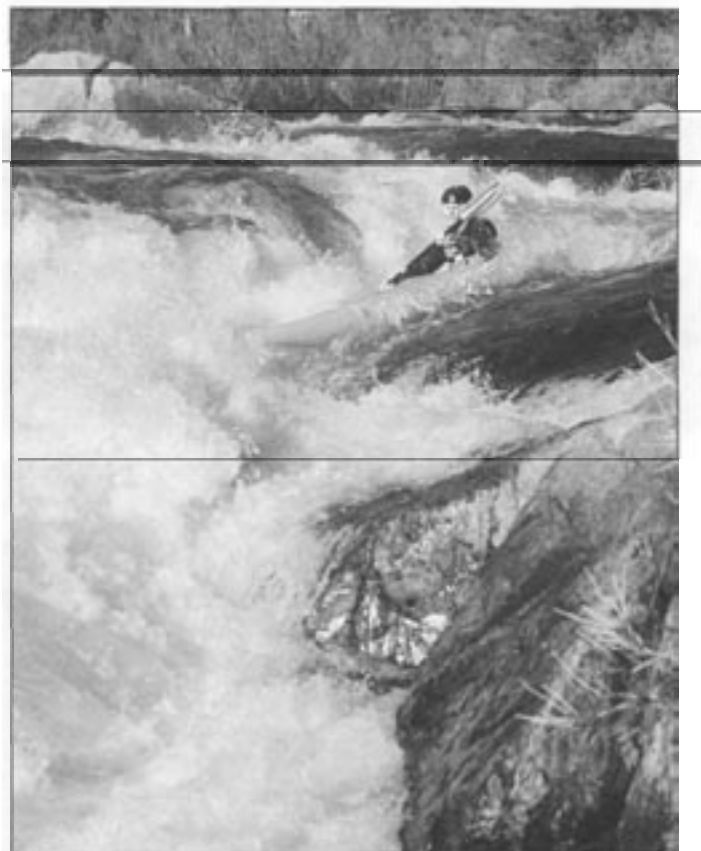
Dead River, ME

The Dead is a fifteen mile Class II-IV whitewater run in a remote area of northwestern Maine (Spencer Stream to confluence with the Kennebec). Currently Central Maine Power provides between 18 and 20 whitewater releases per year below Long Falls Dam. Each spring, CMP sets the release schedule after consulting with commercial and private boaters.

Under the new application, no change to the number of whitewater releases, flow levels, or consultation with boaters will occur. However, these releases will now be incorporated into the actual license for the project, basically guaranteeing releases for the next 30 years. Whitewater releases will continue to be 3,500 cfs, 5,500 cfs, and 7,500 cfs.

Through boater participation in this relicensing process, and whitewater flow studies requested by the AWA (and completed in May and June of 1994), the following improvements are proposed for inclusion in this application:

- a portage trail around Poplar Hill Falls, one of the hardest rapids on the river
- a toll free information line on whitewater releases
- installation of three staff gauges to provide boaters with accurate information regarding existing flow levels. These will be



Left: Marvin Lears on the North Fork of the Kings River

installed at Spencer Stream, Elephant Rock and at the head of Poplar Hills Falls

-Better safety access at Enchanted Stream

Enchanted Stream

AWA and others asked CMP to purchase an easement and provide access to the Dead at Enchanted Stream. The purpose of this request was to provide

an additional access point (which would allow boaters easier access to the best whitewater), allow boaters to make a quicker trip (or multiple trips), and increase boater safety in case of an emergency.

In its application, CMP has proposed improving the existing road for emergency vehicles, but has not proposed allowing boaters to use this access site (it is currently a rugged four-wheel drive road). This proposal will greatly reduce the benefits of this access point for recreational use.

CMP claims that they are only half-owners of this road, and cannot guarantee access over the property of others (Boise Cascade). However, purchasing an access easement across this property should be a simple task. AWA will continue to seek improved boater access at Enchanted Stream

Kings River, CA

In January of this year the AWA and the San Joaquin Paddlers intervened in the Haas-Kings River Hydropower Project on the North Fork of California's Kings River. This intervention started back in 1982, but the recent draft environmental assessment has reopened the opportunity for public participation.

This project impacts several great whitewater runs, including two separate runs on the North Fork, Dinkey Creek, and the main stem Kings River. The entire North Fork is within the Sierra National Forest, and the US Forest Service is a cooperating agency in this relicense. AWA and San Joaquin paddlers are looking to improve both whitewater resources and access to the river.

Part of the purpose for this intervention is to seek improved minimum flows to the North Fork. According to Cassidy, Cross, and Calhoun in *Western Whitewater*, "The Main Kings means big water. During spring snowmelt the Kings has the highest flows of any California river." The North Fork Kings is likewise a major river system. The mean average annual flows through the Lake Wishon, Black Rock and Balch project areas of the

North Fork (each of these are areas above the whitewater sections) are in excess of 400 cfs. Unfortunately, this new license requires Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) to release only 2.5 cfs in Helms Creek (a tributary above Wishon Reservoir), 15 cfs in the Haas bypassed reach (also upstream), and 7.5 cfs below the Balch Afterbay. Just a trickle for a river whose natural minimum flow is approximately 113 cfs. And not even a trickle for restoration of the North Fork fishery, or the other environmental, recreational and aesthetic values of this river.

The other part of the intervention is to improve whitewater on this river. From a boating perspective the North Fork is outstanding because it offers:

- A dependable winter and early spring season, and the potential for a longer season if PG&E restores water to the river
- Good year round access from the cities of the San Joaquin Valley
- Easy portage routes and good roadside access
- A short and easy shuttle (Forest Service highway FS11512 runs the entire length of the lower stretch of the North Fork)
- Bedrock ledges, slides and falls creating unique whitewater boating opportunities!

Now for the part you've all been waiting for: what are the runs like?

The upper run (Garlic Fall's run) from Balch Afterbay to the confluence with Dinky Creek, is a 1.7 mile, Class V+ stretch.

The lower section starts at Dinkey Creek and runs for 3.2 miles to the Main Stem Kings River. Class IV (V at high water). This part of the North Fork has been a popular site for an-

nual slalom races and a popular training spot for kayakers.

Dinkey Creek is also runnable, offering 1.6 miles of Class V creeking with a gradient of 156 fpm.

Also at issue is an order by FERC to "remove bedrock barriers" (that are prohibiting fish from migrating upstream) in the North Fork upriver from the Wishon reservoir. We discovered that these "barriers" are just the natural bedrock of the stream!

The AWA opposes the modification of any natural riverbed, particularly in the name of environmental improvement! The North Fork Kings has had enough modification.

Although (to our knowledge) no one has boated above Wishon reservoir, it's not beyond the realm of possibility that such boating might be done someday.

Here is what the AWA and the San Joaquin Paddlers have requested on the North Fork:

- 14 weekends of whitewater flows per year (Saturdays, Sundays and holidays when appropriate) during July and December when other regional, naturally flowing streams are low
- releases of 200 cfs on 6 weekends during the same period to allow boating on the Afterbay to Dinkey Creek section
- a boater access trail to the North Fork of the Kings River at the Balch Afterbay, and access for hikers and fishermen to the North Fork immediately upstream of the Afterbay
- open PG&E's Keller Ranch property to overflow camping and parking
- provide flow information and release schedules to the public in a reliable and accurate manner
- deny all man-made streambed modifications to the North Fork

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CONSERVATION

New Whitewater on Michigan's Red Cedar River

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board (which is funded by Michigan's oil and gas revenues) has approved a grant to the city of Williamston to construct whitewater rapids on the Red Cedar River. This river is approximately 20 miles East of Lansing.

The rapids will replace a dam built in 1840 and destroyed in a 1975 flood. Besides offering whitewater for novice boaters (the average flow in the river is fairly small), the rapids will provide a natural and aesthetic upstream passage for migrating fish.

The grant averages between \$342,700 and \$425,000, and while this is a lot of money for whitewater, it is far less than the cost of a new dam and fish ladder.

This project was conceived and developed by local Council member Ed Noonan, who is a long time recreational canoeist. The City of Williamston expects to commence construction in the fall of 1996.

AWA applauds Mr. Noonan for his vision. This project is a great example of how new engineering, forward thinking, and creative funding can provide benefits for all river users — and return the river to a more natural setting. There are many abandoned, ruined and unwanted dams on rivers across the nation. There are many more dams which present dangerous obstacles to boaters and other river users, and which could be re-engineered to provide greater safety and public benefits. A similar discussion is taking place on Washington's Potomac River. In this instance Brookmont Dam may be re-engineered to provide both upstream fish passage and downstream navigation.

Deschutes River, Oregon


In December FERC declared that it had no jurisdiction over PacifiCorp's 82 year old Bend Project. FERC made this decision when they realized that fish passage measures would make the projects power more costly than alternative power sources. The issue of removing the dam was not feasible because the project forms the impoundment around which the whole city of Bend is developed. FERC avoided this predicament by finding the project non-jurisdictional.

Of particular importance to boaters, FERC also found the Deschutes to be not navigable in the vicinity of the Project. Non-navigable rivers do not fall under FERC jurisdiction.

Raquette River, New York

Members of the Hydro Reform Coalition, including AWA and New York Rivers United have proposed, and FERC has agreed to combine the relicensings of all of Niagara Mohawk's projects on the Raquette River in order to facilitate a basin-wide approach to environmental and recreational assessment and rehabilitation. 1993 relicensings will be delayed to coordinate with upstream licenses expiring in 2001 and 2002.

Coalition members will be involved in improving recreation, fish passage and protection. bvdass and base flows and ribarian habitat



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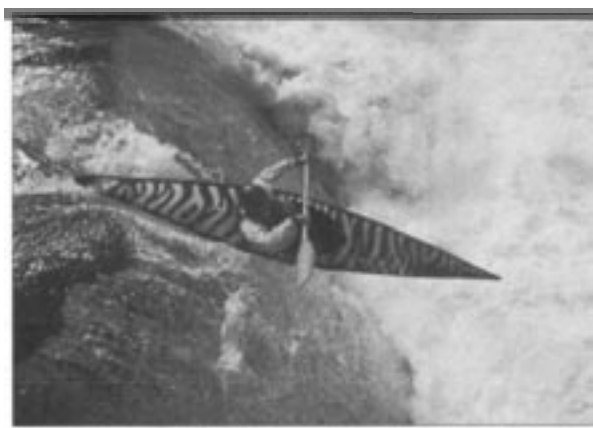
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Colorado Stream Safety Act

According to a judge in Steamboat Springs, Colorado may not be best the state in which to live if you are a recreational user of public waters.

The AWA and the Colorado White Water Association (CWWA) are working hard to discredit this opinion!

More than six months ago, a team of lawyers and access experts—nicknamed CROPP, the Colorado Right of Passage Project—sat down to plan a strategy. After much research and legwork, we were able to introduce a bill before the Colorado legislature in January 1996. It's called the Colorado Stream Safety Act, sponsored by House Majority Leader Tim Foster and Minority Leader Peggy Kerns, and it's intended to clarify our right to float through private lands.

As detailed in the accompanying article ("Can't Touch This!"), existing Colorado law is very confused on this issue. The CROPP team felt that one solution is to straighten out the legal tangle with a new law amending the trespass statute.

Here are some of the key provisions of the bill:

The core provision of this bill clarifies that rafts, kayaks and canoes may briefly touch stream beds or banks—no more than the minimum necessary to continue safely downstream.

The bill does not apply to commercial whitewater crafts, inner tubes, or boats with engines.

This bill does not permit hunting, fishing, or picnicking on private land and does not allow a boater to cross private land in order to reach a river.

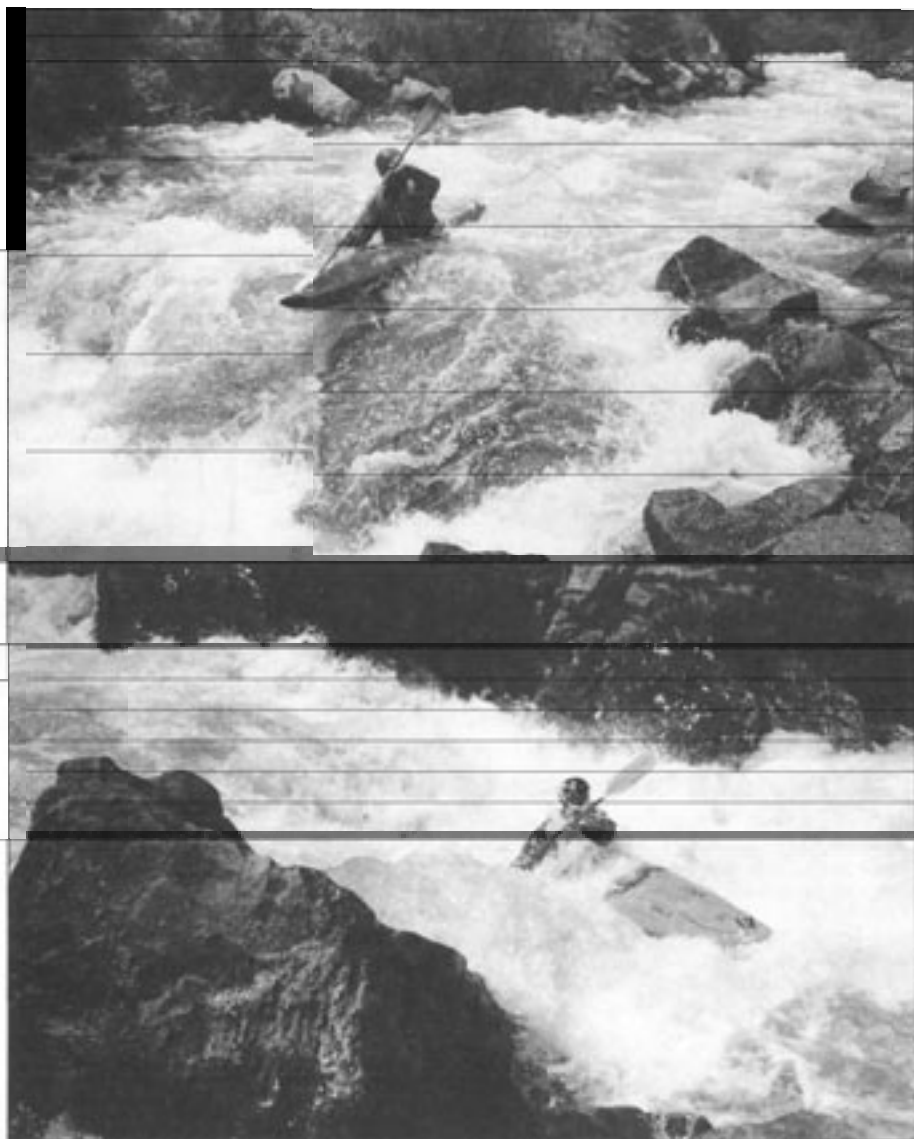
The bill will protect landowners from liability for certain injuries sustained by boaters.

On January 17, the House Agriculture Committee passed the bill. As we go to press (late January), the CROPP team is preparing to bring the bill before the full House for a vote. If it passes the House, the bill will go to the Senate Agriculture Committee and then the full Senate for votes.

If this bill passes, it will help all boaters in the state of Colorado and will set a

great precedent for the future.

A lot will have happened by the time you read this, but we will still need your help. Please give us a call to find out the status of this effort.



Top: Just don't touch any rocks! Rich Hoffman on Boulder Creek. Photo by Sandy Springer. Bottom: Craig Gunderson staying loose through Rigor Mortis, Colorado's Clear Creek, worthy of access. Photo by Sandy Springer

ACCESS

Safety Act continued

Here's what you can do:

For current information about the bill and how you can help, contact Rich Hoffman at (301) 589-9453 or Ric Alesch at (303) 985-8620.

Immediately call or write your state Representative and Senator to sponsor this bill.

Ask your state Representative and Senator today to vote for the Colorado Stream Safety Act. Contact other boaters and landowners with river frontage to call and support this bill.

Be brief and clear when speaking to legislators, and emphasize the title (Foster and Kerns' Colorado Stream Safety Act). Emphasize the bill is common-sense; it doesn't take away landowner rights. Instead it protects boaters from injury by allowing them to get out and walk around dangerous obstacles (only to the minimum extent necessary!) rather than boating around blind corners or over horizon lines. This bill will reduce injury, conflict and litigation, and it brings Colorado law into step with the laws of New Mexico, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, and California. This bill is about safety and fairness.

In addition, please write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Organize your friends to support this bill. Contact local boating retailers about the effort.

To find the name and phone numbers of your local Representative and Senator:

Call your local county or city election commission or clerk (usually located in the "blue pages" in the front of the phone book), or call AWA or CWWA for this information.

Call the State Capitol: (303) 866-2904 for the House of Representatives, (303) 866-2316 for the Senate.

Below are members of the Senate Agriculture Committee. They can kill the bill in committee, so it's crucial that we gain their support.

Colorado House and Senate Agriculture, Livestock & Natural Resources Committee Members:

SENATE	Office	Home
Ament, Don	303-866-4866	970-522-8205
Bishop, Tilman	303-866-3077	970-242-9230
Dennis, Ginette	303-866-4866	719-547-9330
Hernandez, Robert	303-866-4865	303-458-1011
Johnson, Joan	303-866-4863	303-288-9237
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Colorado Boating: Can't Touch This!

The Source of Conflict and Confusion: People v. Emmert

by John Marshall and AWA Staff

Imagine being handed a citation for criminal trespass because your boat has touched the banks of a stream or because your paddle has brushed against a midstream rock. Sound ridiculous? Implausible? Perhaps, but this is one interpretation of Colorado law. When floating on a river in Colorado that passes through private lands, the only thing standing between a boater and a trespass conviction could be whether or not the boater touched the banks or beds.

Like many things in our legal system, the law in Colorado governing the right to float down rivers flowing through private lands is a tangled mess. The courts, the legislature and the Attorney General have delivered conflicting messages and have created confusion on this point. An act of legislature or a new precedent by the Colorado Supreme Court will probably be necessary to straighten the whole mess out.

The Colorado Supreme Court precipitated most of the confusion in a controversial 1979 case, People v. Emmert (1). In this case, the court stated that since ownership of a streambed included ownership of everything above the bed, floaters who did not obtain permission from streamside landowners before floating through were criminally liable for trespass.

Despite the unduly broad language of the court, however, the case was limited to a situation where people were floating on the water at times and walking on the river bottom at other times.

In addition to expanding its ruling beyond the facts in the case, the Emmert court made a faulty interpretation of the Colorado Constitution that has been criticized by legal scholars and is at odds with the interpretation of similar provisions by courts in other states, such as Wyoming and New Mexico (4).

Furthermore, the court's decision relied on an irrelevant and bizarre Latin maxim, "*cujus est solum, ejus est usque ad coelum*." The maxim, frequently scorned by legal scholars as representing "medieval conceptualism," is also known as the "Heaven-to-Hell doctrine" (2). Fifty years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court determined that this antiquated maxim has "no place in the modern world" (3).

Finally, unlike other states, the Emmert court failed to recognize the law of public recreational rights and gave no mention of the common law of riparian property rights. These laws have traditionally controlled decisions in cases involving private versus public rights on nonnavigable (by the federal definition) rivers, streams, and lakes. Consequently, the Emmert case has not been treated as a precedent by other courts.

Despite its faulty legal reasoning and flawed analysis, however, the Emmert case is often cited by streamside landowners in Colorado when they seek to prevent floaters from passing downstream through their property.

The Confusion Grows: the Trespass Statute and Attorney General's Opinion

The confusion does not end with one flawed Supreme Court case, however. Hidden within Colorado's trespass statute, C.R.S. Sect.18-4-504.5, is a definition of "premises." This law, passed in 1977, limits liability for trespass to the *beds and banks* of streams flowing through private land. The language and legislative history suggest that floaters who remain on the water without touching the bed or banks of the stream will not be liable for trespass (5). However, this is not expressly stated.

The confusing relationship between the overly broad language of the Emmert case

ACCESS

and the trespass statute is somewhat clarified by a 1983 opinion by the Colorado Attorney General (AG) (6). The AG opinion recognizes that a public right to float through private lands is implied by the trespass statute and therefore that *People v. Emmert* only applies to boaters who touch the bed or banks of a river, not simply float on the water (7).

The Confusion Continues

However, even with the strong language from the Attorney General's opinion, the Emmert case continues to cause confusion and floaters are still occasionally arrested for trespass. Several factors account for the continued confusion. For one, although Attorney General opinions are written to clarify the law and contribute to its uniform enforcement, they are not as easy to locate as opinions from the State Supreme Court.

Timing also confuses the issue. *People v. Emmert* was handed down after the passage of the trespass statute, leading some to believe that *People v. Emmert* interpreted it as denying the right to float. In fact, however, the defendants in *People v. Emmert* were arrested in 1976, the year before the passage of the trespass statute. Therefore, the defendants were not covered by the statute and the court's mention of it is not considered legally significant (8).

Even under the Attorney General's opinion and the trespass statute, however, boaters may still face the possibility of being cited for criminal trespass whenever a boat or paddle touches a midstream rock or the shoreline. Such a possibility would be a spurious result, a restriction by a technicality that could be easily abused:

Colorado is the only western state to contemplate such an absurd scenario for recreational river enthusiasts. All other western states, even the arid mountain states with identical water allocation and recreational interests as Colorado, expressly recognize the right to float through private lands. Montana, Wyoming, New Mexico, Utah and Idaho recognize the right to recreate on their rivers (including touching the bed and banks as a necessary incident of navigation, such as scouting and portaging), irrespective of ownership of the land underlying the waters (9). Like Colorado, considerable portions of the rivers in these states pass through private land.

A Solution

The conflict between boaters and landowners is not new in Colorado, but the problem is growing large enough that the tenuous legal balance in Colorado threatens to collapse.

The bill introduced by the American Whitewater Affiliation (AWA) and the Colorado White Water Association (CWWA) will reduce conflict and to clarify boaters' rights of passage in Colorado. It will clarify the existing confusion and recognize incidental touching of the bed and banks so that the right to float is not impeded by a technicality.

End Notes

1. *People v. Emmert*, 198 Colo. 137, 597 P.2d 1025 (1979) 2:52 U. Colo.L.Rev. 247, 270 (1981).
3. *United States v. Causby*, 328 U.S. 256, 261 (1946).
4. *Dav v. Armstrong*, 362 P.2d 137 (Wyo. 1961); *State v. Red River Valley Co.*, 51 N.M. 207, 182 P.2d 421 (1945).
5. Colo. Rev. Stat. Sect. 18-4-504.5 (1990). This statute added a definition of "premises" to the second and third-degree criminal trespass statutes (C.R.S. Sect. 18-503, 504). The adopted definition of "premises" includes "stream banks and beds of any non-navigable fresh water streams."
6. A.G. File No. ONR8303042/KW, August 31, 1983.
7. Id. The opinion analyzes the statute under both traditional canons of construction and legislative history and concludes that the definition of premises in the context of criminal trespass does not encompass those who float through private lands without touching the stream banks or beds. "One who floats upon the waters of a river or stream over or through private property, without touching the stream banks or beds, does not commit a criminal trespass because the essential element of entering or remaining in or upon "premises, which includes banks or beds but excludes waters, is missing."
8. The court did not base its holding on C.R.S. Sect. 18-4-504.5. The court's mention of C.R.S. Sect. 18-4-504.5 comes in a laundry list of statutes that the court cites as legislative backing for its determination that the state's waters are not generally open to the public. The mention of C.R.S. Sect. 18-4-504.5 in this list of statutes is merely an opinion by the court outside of the determined issue. Since the defendants in *People v. Emmert* were arrested in 1976, the year before the passage of C.R.S. Sect. 18-4-504.5, the applicable law was the trespass statute in place prior to C.R.S. Sect. 18-4-504.5.
9. M.C.A. Sect. 23-2-302 (1994); *Galt v. State*, 731 P.2d 912 (Mont. 1987). *Dav v. Armstrong*, 362 P.2d 137 (Wyo. 1961). *State v. Red River Valley Co.*, 182 P.2d 421 (N.M. 1952); *J.J.N.P. Co. v. State*, 655.

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Middle Fork Salmon Management

The management plan for the Frank Church Wilderness (Idaho) is in the process of being revised. Part of the plan addresses the management of the rivers that flow through the Wilderness, such as desired future conditions, the limits of acceptable change, and...PERMITS! The Forest Service has held numerous public meetings about the plan, including talking to groups of private boaters in Idaho. (including the Idaho whitewater assoc.). [MSG to Sandy Thomas]

For all interested parties, I recommend adding your name

to the draft Environmental Impact Statement (to be issued in March). Call Ken Wotring at 208-756-2215, or write to:

Salmon-Challis NF

P.O. Box 729

Salmon, Idaho 83467-0729

In related news, the Forest Service has recently started assigning campsites on the main Salmon, similar to what they've already done on the middle.

New User Fees for Federal Lands?

In December, the AWA met with Lyle Laverty, Director of Recreation, Cultural Resources and Wilderness Management for the Forest Service. We discussed the Forest Service's plan to set up a fee system for 50 sites under Forest Service jurisdiction. (We believe that the BLM is also setting up a similar fee system.) The pilot program is called "Recreation Fee Demonstration," and is authorized by language in the controversial Interior Appropriations Bill (still not passed as of 1-24-96).

Upon first glance, the new fee sites most affecting boaters will be:

- Poudre River Corridor Recreation Complex

- Upper Kern Canyon Recreation Complex

- Rogue Wild and Scenic River

- Metolius Basin Recreation Complex

Laverty assured us that, as the proposal is currently struc-

tured, the majority of the money raised will be dedicated to the site, and will be entirely used for Operations and Maintenance, i.e. to improve and maintain existing land, not for the acquisition of new land.

The AWA raised several concerns. A key concern is that boaters don't require a lot of facilities (O & M) for our sport. Another concern is the fees for commercial use in Forest Service areas. We wouldn't want to shoulder the cost for our commercial brothers. We raised the possibility of getting an annual pass to all Forest Service fee areas, comparable to a Golden Eagle pass for all National Parks. Finally, we were assured that boaters would be able to provide input to the planning process.

Paralleling this proposal is a nefarious bill sponsored by Rep. Hansen (R-UT) that goes much farther, instituting fees on all public lands.



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Potomac

The Potomac Floods of '96

INTRO

The diversity of boating on the stretch of the Potomac River just outside of Washington, D.C. is nothing short of incredible. The river has something for everyone, from Class I to Class VI. It also has incredible mood changes. In late January, the Potomac got downright hostile, overtopping its banks, ripping up houses and trails, churning with immense force.

While most boaters were content to view this monster from the shore, a handful of local experts got more intimate with the beast. Unfortunately, as detailed below, boating on the flooded river brought some heat, from the authorities and from the press. As we write this article, much of the access to the river remains closed, and some boaters and local police remain paranoid.

It's not a situation we want. As Steve Taylor, one of the "village elders" on the Potomac, wrote in an editorial, "Now is the time to put our misunderstandings behind us and work to build a river community based on mutual respect." To this end, AWA and the local boating community (including the Canoe Cruisers Association, Blue Ridge Voyagers and Monocacy Canoe Club) are discussing these issues with the river and park authorities. Stay tuned for an upcoming issue detailing our progress.

Davey approaches the Park Police



Sunday, January 21. Everyone in the whitewater world knows what happened that day: Davey Hearn, current C-1 slalom world champion, was arrested for paddling his home river, the Potomac.

The story was picked up by the evening news and earned a front-page story in the Washington Post, a mention in U.S.A. Today and a spot on NPR's "All Things Considered." It was an impressive if dubious honor for the paddling world.

In part, we can blame a hydrologic conspiracy for the situation: a record-breaking snowfall, followed by unseasonably warm weather and rain. As a result, the snow melted catastrophically and caused the Potomac River in Washington, D.C. to crest at its highest level in 23 years, peaking at 19.3 feet on the Little Falls gauge.

As large chunks of towns once located in western Maryland and West Virginia came floating downstream, the National Park Service restricted access to most of its land surrounding the river. Those who made it to the river saw something reminiscent of the Poseidon Adventure: 350,000 cfs pushing through a completely filled river gorge, blasting through trees and side channels, creating bottomless trench holes and boils. Most of the spectators and park police saw entry into this almost supernatural event as suicide. But some of the local paddlers, as you might imagine, saw something entirely different.

All of the stories covering Hearn's arrest reported the same basic facts: who Davey was and the absurdity of the world champion being "rescued" from the river, why the Park Police felt justified in "rescuing" him, why Davey felt the police were wrong. But the more fundamental questions were not addressed: what is the law with respect to boating on flooded rivers and who enforces these laws? Should government prohibit knowing risk-takers from pursuing their sport? And most importantly, how can we resolve this fundamental conflict between boaters and authorities?

From this mess, one thing is clear: in a less populated area, or in a country without tort-mania, the arrest and following press boondoggle would have never happened.

Although Davey Hearn was the only paddler who got arrested, he certainly wasn't the only one who decided to put on that day...

The Perfect Wave

by John Weld

by Larry Hovick, \$20 (incl. postage)

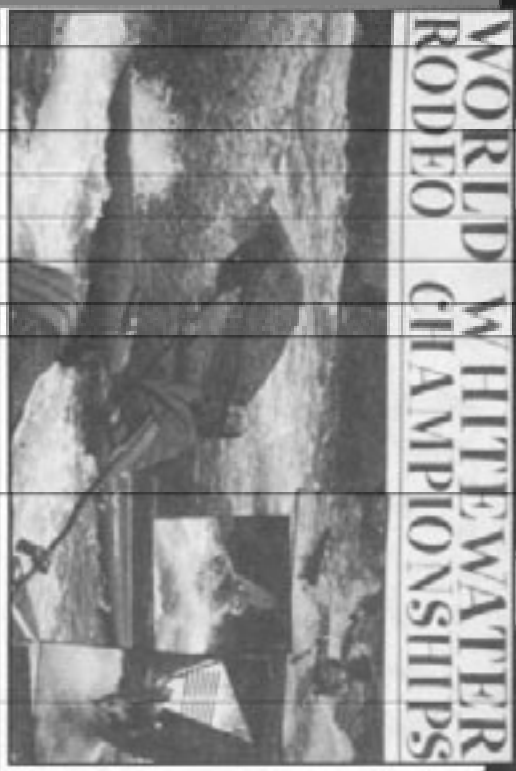
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Difficult Run

Seeing that the normal access to the park was closed, two local experts paddled down a Class IV-V tributary to the Potomac, appropriately named Difficult Run. Upon entering the mainstem Potomac, they pulled into a sloppy eddy and looked downstream. What they saw was an indecipherable mess: exploding waves disappearing into a horizon line, all of this in a part of the gorge that during normal flows was a maze of rocks on dry land. They decided to take out then and there and to haul their boats back up the creek.

What the pair above were gawking at was only the relatively tame lower section of a colossal set of rapids called the Jumps, which began 1/2 mile upstream. As this pair was making their decision to bail, a group of four boaters were hiking up the opposite shore. After scouting as thoroughly as possible, they opted to go. (For an account of this harrowing run, please see accompanying article.)

When it was all over, only two of these four were still stroking. One swam and was pulled out, and the other, unbeknownst to his partners, tried to eddy out below the last wave train but lost his paddle in the trees and was forced to take out. He stashed his boat and hitchhiked home.

Considered MIA by the rest of the group, the missing boater was reported to authorities, a move that sparked some debate after the fact, but which seemed like the only responsible alternative at the time. After all, a US Park Police helicopter had been circling the area all day, common practice during high and/or fast-rising waters here, and the group figured that if necessary the chopper could pluck the swimmer out of the drink or off of a mid-stream island.

The nature of the trip, and the image of the self-sufficient kayaker, changed dramatically when the Park was called in for a possible rescue. One of the boaters that helped pull in the swimmer called the situation "very manageable, until we couldn't find the last boater. We had no problem rescuing the swimmer...but it was very unfortunate that we had to report someone missing anyway." One of the boaters, for his part, does not necessarily feel any antagonism towards the Park. "I'm not on the anti-authority bandwagon, I'm certainly less anti-authority than I was before.... They [the Park Police] were very civil with us, much different than they were with Davey."

The swimmer maintains a somewhat different view. He believes that the Park "shouldn't be able to tell us when it is and isn't safe. People should have the right to kill themselves, if they want." He also emphasized the point that the park, in the end, wasn't really needed. "There were four of us, and despite our problems, we all self-rescued."

The Jumps



Meanwhile, the Park Police and rescue helicopters had spotted several boaters just downstream, around a set of rapids known as Little Falls...

Davey Hearn and the Perfect Wave

At normal water levels, Little Falls is a Class III set of drops which is guarded by a river wide low head dam just upstream. In 1985, during

another extreme high water event, a beautiful, empyreal surfing wave formed just downstream of the dam.

Three boaters (who requested to remain nameless) decided to put on just upstream of this unique feature. Shortly after hitting the water, they were spotted by a patrolling Park Police helicopter, who began circling and sounding unintelligible warnings at them as they approached the dam. By the time they hit the dam, numerous Park Police cars had gathered on the bank, as well as Volunteer Fire Department vehicles, and regular police cars. The authorities on the bank shouted at them to get off of the water. After a brief surf, in conditions one of them described as "intense, but certainly, totally, 100% under control," the three boaters managed to elude the helicopter for five minutes, and floated downstream to a nearby island. They hopped out, buried their boats and hid while the helicopter resumed the search without success for 45 minutes. After the fruitless effort, the helicopter (who, as it turned out, was running out of gas) left, and the three boaters managed to make a harrowing run for cover in the nearby town of Brookmont.

Enter Davey Hearn. Davey knew that some boaters had gone out to surf the wave, but he didn't know that they were currently hiding from the police on a midstream island. Remembering the outrageous wave from the high water of 1985, he decided to join them. By the time Davey got to the wave, however, the police on the bank were in a frenzy.

Hearing the shouting from the shore, Davey approached the bank where the park police ordered him out of the water. Davey replied that he had heard (while he was putting on) that someone needed to be rescued, and went back out to help.

When Davey finally paddled to the bank to take out, the Park Police were very aggressive in apprehending him. One officer slipped/dove into the water to get him, dragged him on the bank, tipped him over and jerked the paddle out of his hands like it was a weapon. The Park Police arrested Davey and charged him on three counts: "closure violation," "disobeying a lawful order of a government employee," and "resisting or interfering with government employees." A court date has not yet been set.



Lt. Stover enters the scene



...and dives into the drink.

What now?

Following the arrest, opinions about the situation circulated throughout the paddling and law enforcement communities. The subject obviously struck a nerve for many people, and the rhetoric from both sides was at times very passionate. The Park felt that Davey wasted taxpayer's money by forcing the Park Police to save his life. Lieutenant David Stover of the Park Police, who was seen almost diving onto Davey's boat during the alleged rescue, was quoted in the Washington Post Tuesday morning. "I didn't know [he was world champion], he didn't say, and it makes no difference. It was not a recreational situation and had no business being out there. Whether Mr. Hearn thinks so or not, I feel I rescued him."

The local Cabin John Volunteer Fire Department, who was also called in for the "rescue", seemed frustrated not only with Davey, but with paddlers in general. In a decidedly anti-paddler article that appeared in that week's Bethesda Gazette, VFD member Eugene Roesser was quoted as saying, "It was a complete circus on the river. The attitude is unbelievable. The whole situation is out of control with these guys."

Davey, on the other hand, quickly became the voice of many local paddlers who feel the park authorities do not have much experience with boating and the river. "First of all," Davey told me the morning after the arrest, "I didn't ask for assistance, and it's not my fault that they used taxpayer money to help me. They were protecting me from something that I didn't need protection from." One of the paddlers who surfed the wave right before Davey expressed similar sentiments. "I have never been so scared of being 'rescued' before in my life. We were having a fine time surfing the wave behind the [Little Falls] dam, and this helicopter is hovering twenty feet over our head trying to 'rescue' us....After we escaped the police, and I was back in my house, I was still worried that somehow the police found out who we were and they were going to come 'rescue' me in my living room and take me to jail."

No one doubts that the whole situation was a mess. The question is now, how do we fix it so it doesn't happen again. A good way to start would be to figure out exactly who is in charge of the river and the surrounding parks, an issue which is more complicated than it seems. At least four governmental authorities plus three rescue squads have jurisdiction (often overlapping) around the river.

Unfortunately, the Park Police (the authorities that arrested Davey) were not part of the agreement hammered out between boaters and other authorities that allows boaters to run Great Falls, a Class V-VI rapid (at normal water levels). While other authorities have watched paddlers run the falls for almost 20 years, a member of the Park Police recently stated that "it is not possible for anyone to run Great Falls and survive." Essentially, an important park authority has remained isolated from paddler's activities. Steve Taylor, a local boater points out that "we (the Canoe Cruisers Association, a DC based canoe club) offered river trips to the Park Police, and no one ever showed up."

The next step is to figure out exactly when the Park feels as though it's too dangerous to be on the water. As it stands now, no defined criteria exist and the decision to close the surrounding access to the river is arbitrary. And while the river is under the jurisdiction of the state of Maryland, they usually defer to the Park Service. Interestingly, an official with Maryland's Natural Resources Police stated that the river was not closed during the recent high water.

The good news is that there already is a model arrangement between the paddlers of Richmond, Virginia and the local rescue squad for paddling the James River in flood. To paddle the James over 9 feet, boaters must sign a permit which states that you must pay for rescue if you need it. The system has been in operation for 10 years, and so far, no paddler has had to be rescued. With this system in mind, the group which temporarily lost one of its members while running the Jumps — and reported him missing — raised \$700 in the following days to compensate the rescue squad for any extra costs incurred during the short-lived search. While not required, the funds were an important gesture on the paddlers' part, and it will certainly aid negotiations in the next few months.

In the meantime, Davey still has to go to court, a scenario that could be an avenue for negotiations or a cat fight. The Park Police and many non-paddlers feel very strongly about Davey behaving like "an undergrown 35 year old" as one editorial in the Washington Post stated. Minutes after the story broke on network news, however, several lawyers from what appears to be the D.C. paddling Mafia called to offer Davey free legal services. Davey, on his part, seems to be unrepentant about paddling that day. "It was, after all," he said, "the perfect wave."



Davey "the resistor" Hearn is dragged on shore and flipped.

The paddle is wrestled from him.



Davey is cuffed and led away to jail



The Jumps

by Paul Schelp

Harpers Ferry by Boat

by Skip Brown

Saturday, January 20. Wake at 7:00am, the Potomac is at 12 & 1/2 feet as we drive to Harpers Ferry for Shenandoah to Potomac run. At 30 feet(?) it's huge, bigger than Paul Schelp and Gil Rocha have ever seen. Hundreds of big waves, it looks like the ocean in storm.

Paul, Gil, Kevin O'Neill and myself slide in on snow and ice and sweep downstream, watching for and dodging large debris while trying to catch waves on the fly. Those guys are in their rodeo boats but Kevin and I go for faster hulls and we all snag a couple of good waves. Just below the Rt. 340 bridge I get the wave of the day, a long (by flood stage standards) 5 minute surf breaking way overhead which is captured on video. By the time I bail from my wave I worry that my friends will be miles downriver as the river is moving very fast.

I catch up with them in time for a scenic tour of downtown Harpers Ferry — by boat! We amble out of town, under the railroad tracks and out to where the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers converge into a maelstrom of trees, 50 gallon drums and pieces of houses mixed in. We bob down through a giant wave train to a big 12-15ft. breaking wave near the road on river right that we can attain back up to through the trees. Here we play for half an hour or so, taking turns trying to surf this massive crashing thing.

When we arrive back home to Great Falls, the park is already closed as the Potomac continues to rise....

It was crunch time. We were elated at having met our first objective - getting through the "cordon sanitaire" of a combined air and ground force of park police and rangers — but now we had to decide how happy we would be to actually paddle into this tumult. The four of us were just starting to feel the chill of the 31 degree air as we huddled on a small rocky outcropping mid-way down the Mather Gorge on the River, straining to get a good look downstream at the some rapid known as the Jumps.

The Jumps had only been run once before. Not surprising, since it had only existed once before! At least in the modern boating era. In 1985 as the Potomac crested near 18 feet on the Little Falls gauge, Davey (a.k.a. the resistor) Hearn, his brother Billy, Jon Luggbill, Kirk Simon, and others were floating down the Mather Gorge when they unexpectedly happened upon this lurking monster. Most of the group found a way to get through the Jumps in one piece, but Kirk was forced into the drink when his 13 lb. slalom race kayak disintegrated around him.

These events of 11 years ago came to mind as we watched the river nearing its crest of 19.31 feet on the Little Falls gauge. The flow was a humbling 347,000 cfs, according to the US Geological Survey. This on a river with an average flow of 7,000 cfs! Water temperature was about 37 degrees. The gorge was unimaginably monstrous and chaotic. Millions of gallons of chocolatey brown, debris-laden water sloshed ferociously about the gorge, rampaging downstream at a dizzying rate. The roar was deafening. Was it beckoning us or warning us off? Each of us, of course, had to decide that question on our own. Stomachs churned as all those usual thoughts of "what if?" streamed through our brains. This time was different, though. This was a bona fide class 6 behemoth (or a class 5++ for the purists among us). It hadn't been this high since Hurricane Agnes in 1972, and we all knew we might never get another shot at it.

Particularly unnerving was the fact that, at normal flows, this spot was flat and placid. Today the whitewater was enormous and the river appeared to drop 40 or more vertical feet as it plunged 1/2 mile downstream through the Jumps. This hydrological phenomenon is caused by Mather



Left: Paul Schelp times his entry between mobile strainers. Above: Following in John Brown's footsteps in Harpers Ferry, W.V. Photos by Skip Brown.

Above right: Jaywalking in Harpers Ferry. Left: Gil Rocha on the Flood Watch Phone. Right page top: Gil Rocha skirting the break below Harpers Ferry. Bottom right: Whitewater on a Noahian scale: the formidable cloudwalker rapids below the Jumps. Photos by Skip Brown



We named
these rapids
Cloudwalker, in
honor of a US
Park Police of-
ficer who was
quoted in a local
paper saying any
kayaker who ran
this stuff was
lucky he wasn't
kayaking in the
clouds by now.



Gorge being filled to the brim (about 60 feet above the height of the average flow), virtually damming up Great Falls, 1.5 miles upstream of this point. As a result, Great Falls flattens out to some extent, and its vertical drop (about 65 feet) is delayed as the incredible funneling pressure of the relatively narrow, sheer-walled Mather Gorge keeps the river elevated. At the Jumps, the vertical walls of the Gorge give way to a less-steep, rocky valley and the river finally gets to violently eject itself from this bottleneck.

We took one last look, hiked back up to our boats, and put in. Remembering the events of '85, we talked about staying close together, about each of us keeping track of who was in front and who was behind, and decided that we would attempt to regroup at a point about 1.5 miles downstream where we thought there might be an eddy. I ran my finger one last time around the cockpit rim. Skirt was locked in.

I slipped my hands into my pogies, took one last deep gulp of air, and charged out into the boil zone at full throttle, trying to cross the 20 or so yards separating me from the downstream current as fast as possible. It was not to be. About half way across I stalled out and began rotating out of control, as if a giant troll were stirring my Prijon Hurricane like a toothpick in a grotesque caldron of roiling stew. I helplessly waited for this to stop when I was suddenly attacked from my blind side by a massive moving hydraulic about 8' high. It pulled me completely underwater for 3 or 4 seconds before dissipating. I glanced over at my buddies still bobbing in the eddy just long enough to see their dropped jaws, and escaped downstream. I think we all realized at that point what we were up against. A blown skirt might be fatal.

Once I got situated in the big "V" leading into the heart of the Jumps, I could relax for a moment. It was eerie just floating, thinking, "OK this is where I want to be," but fully aware that there wasn't a damn thing I could do if a big tree surfaced under me or if I just got folded into the maw and held under indefinitely. As I dropped into the first waves, I could see that they were cycling wildly, now and then building into truck-sized hydraulics then reverting to clean 20 foot high haystacks.

At low water there is a 45' high metagraywacke outcropping on the left shore below the jumping cliffs. Today this rock was well under water and formed a massive 25' high continuous hydraulic (it was here that Kirk's boat broke up in '85). This hole was maybe 50 yards wide, and extended 50 more yards into a wave on either side. It was easy to miss this beast, but it was somewhat unsettling to ride over its shoulder and witness the sheer magnitude of it.

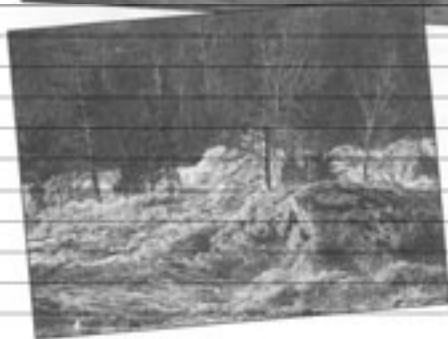
Below the Jumps we saw something we weren't expecting. Here the river normally makes a 90 degree left turn, then turns back to the right. But as we looked downstream we realized that most of the river was cutting this corner in a series of 4 parallel chutes, all of which were filled with exploding waves ending in horizon lines backed up by trees and rock cliffs. It was around this time that I realized we had a swimmer.

Scouting was out of the question at this point, so all we could do was pick a line and go. We were committed for the scariest part of the run. Knowing that one of us was swimming into this pit actually gave me a twisted sense of security. The wave trains were nearly as intense as Jumps, but they did flow cleanly back into the familiar main channel. We named these rapids Cloudwalker, in honor of a US Park Police officer who was quoted in a local paper saying any kayaker who ran this stuff was lucky he wasn't kayaking in the clouds by now.

Two of us emerged from Cloudwalker unscathed (myself included). One of these two went after the swimmer, while I hung back waiting for Skip to come out. He never did. After several minutes I decided that I would be of more use getting the swimmer out than just floating there, so I bolted downstream. Later, after a lot of worrying and some soul searching, we found him safe at home. He had lost his paddle in the trees while eddying out and self rescued. Unfortunately, we had already notified authorities of his disappearance, knowing that the Park Police helicopter which had been circling most of the day might be able to get him off of an island or out of the water. (See accompanying article by John Weld for more on the boater-police scene that day).

This trip was, of course, the exoerience of a lifetime. While we all agreed that we would probably not do this again, it was exhilarating beyond belief. We certainly knew the risks and we knew some elements were not in our control (a branch poking through your spray skirt, or being surfed in a hole with a tree in it). We had some 50 years of paddling experience between the 4 of us, mostly in these waters. Our weakest member had 5 years experience. Each one of us made his own decision, and, despite our casualties, each thinks that it was a sound decision.

We luckily did not see authorities (other than 2 circling helicopters) en route to the put-in, nor did we see any signs indicating that the river was "closed," as the Park Service would later claim. We understood that Park Police or Rangers would have no choice but to turn us back, so we avoided contact. We are grateful that we did not get tripped up by this problem and were able to make the decision to go or not go purely based on our scouting and self-assessment of boating skills. When we got to our take-out at Lock 10 on the C&O Canal, police and rescue personnel ordered us out and we complied — as our run was over — thankfully!



ACCIDENT ROUNDUP

1995

By Charlie Walbridge

In 1995 a record number of fatalities were reported to the AWA Safety Committee. We finished the year with a total of 41 deaths in our files, including 9 kayak, 4 canoe and 28 rafting accidents. My last article covered the first half of the year, through late July. Paddling activity always quiets down in the second half of the year, but there were a number of incidents in the last six months of '95 of interest to serious whitewater paddlers. These are summarized below.

1995 saw a record number of commercial outfitter fatalities on Colorado rivers. The four deaths, roughly one for every 130,000 guests, is the highest annual toll since the state began keeping records ten years ago. All were flush drownings caused in part by unusually high water levels. Including private paddlers, there were a total of 10 whitewater fatalities statewide. Only one involved a kayaker. The articles and internet postings came to us from the AWA's Ric Alesh, Stacy Dorion, or CWWA's Safety Chairman Roger Lynn.

On July 2 Jim Giulianelli, 54, drowned in Brown's Canyon of the Arkansas. Two paddlers were thrown from a raft in Staircase Rapid; one was recovered quickly. Giulianelli flushed some distance and was found face down, still in his PFD. On July 10 William Simonton, 73, drowned on Dowd's Chutes of the Eagle River after his raft flipped. He was flushed downstream for about 5 minutes. Although he was wearing a full wetsuit, a heart attack, brought on by the cold water, may have been responsible. On July 11 David Stroud, 49, died in Brown's Canyon after a long swim. A Rec.Boats.Paddle posting reported that this was a one-boat trip. On July 31 Scott Hoedt, 28, drowned in Sledgehammer Rapid on the Royal Gorge following a flip. A Rec.Boats.Paddle reported that the victim's life vest came off almost immediately. The body was found six miles downriver.

River rescue instructors constantly warn their students that drowning is still the leading cause of death among emergency responders. Heavy summer rains in the Southeast resulted in two deaths which were reported in the Rescue III newsletter. Both illustrate the danger of tying someone to a line in fast-moving water without a quick-release harness or rescue PFD.

On June 22 there was severe flooding in Southwest Virginia. Volunteers from the Brockville Fire Department near Lynchburg were called out to check on three abandoned cars on a flooded bridge. Following departmental policy several firefighters including Carter Martin, 41, were tied into ropes. An earthen dam failed a mile upstream. A wall of water swept down to the bridge and knocked Martin off his feet. He was pulled underwater instantly and trapped in the river; it took his fellow responders fifteen minutes to pull him to shore. By then he was dead.

Major flooding struck North Carolina on August 27th. A car and driver were stuck on a low water crossing and the Mebane Fire Department responded. In the gathering dusk Firefighter Greg Hinson, 34, was attached to a rope before wading to the vehicle in waist-deep water. Behind him at intervals were other rescuers, clipped into the rope with carabiners to form a human chain. Hinson tried to encourage the driver to leave the vehicle, but he would not do so.

Diver Allen Terry, wearing a buoyancy compensator but no PFD, made his way to the vehicle. As Terry reached the car, the diver leapt out onto Hinson, knocking him over. Terry was able to grab both men as they washed over the bridge into a hydraulic on the downstream side. He could only hold onto one; he chose the driver because he thought his team-mate was safely tied in. Hinson surfaced at some distance downstream, climbed a tree, and used his dive light to

signal a rescue boat. The team tried to retrieve Hinson and another firefighter who had slid down the rope on his carabiner. They managed to pull the second man free, but the rope hung up on a phone pole support wire with Hinson hanging below. After a protracted struggle they made the recovery, but Hinson was dead.

Dr. Peter Whitman, chief pathologist of the Frisbee Memorial Hospital in New Hampshire, died from an asthma attack suffered after being thrown from a raft on the South Fork Canyon of the Payette River in Idaho. Whitman was rafting on a commercial trip on July 15 with his wife when their raft overturned, dumping everyone into the water. The other members of the group swam for shore; the doctor was washed over Little Falls, a steep ledge drop into a bad hole. Dr. Whitman, who suffered from asthma, was not breathing when he was pulled from the water moments later and could not be revived. Several whitewater deaths over the years have been linked to asthma, which makes breathing in cold water much more difficult. Those who suffer from this condition must be extremely cautious when running rivers.

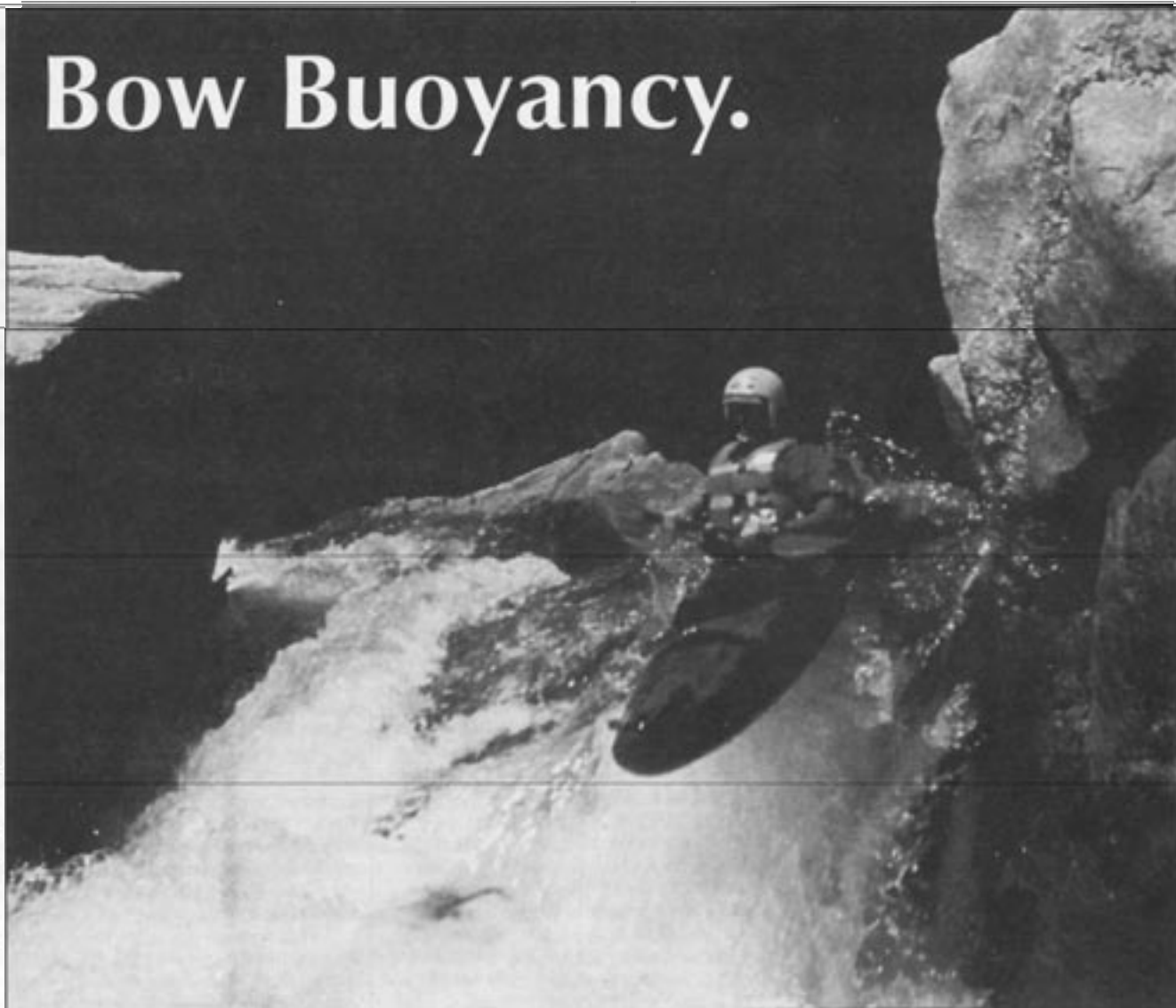
The Upper Animas in Southern Colorado is one of the state's premier expert runs. Rising in the San Juan mountains, it's known for continuous rapids and icy water. At high levels (over 2500 cfs) it becomes very dangerous. Ian Bell, who perished, was with as experienced five person, two boat party, consisting of workers at Jack's Plastic Welding in Aztec, New Mexico. Several members of the group had attended the excellent river rescue classes taught by Canyonlands Field Institute, which specializes in problems faced by river rafts at high water. Two of the party had run the river before.

The group had been monitoring water levels at Durango for weeks, looking for the best time to run their big cats down from Silverton. The level at Durango seemed good, but most of the flow was coming from the headwaters and the level of the upper river was higher than anticipated. A third boat was expected, but failed to appear. Despite this, the rest of the party decided to make the trip.

The group made a clean run down to No Name Rapid, the first Class V. After scouting the drop, one man ran his boat through solo while the other walked. Ropes were set up at the mid-point and the bottom of the rapid before Mr. Bell, another paddler, and his oarsman made the run. The cataraft flipped violently in a huge hole at the bottom, throwing all three men into the river.

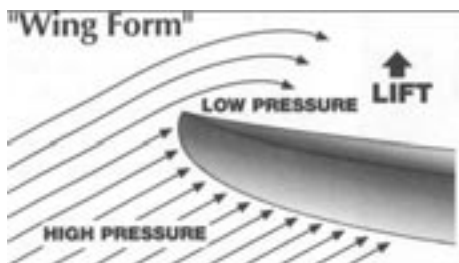
Bow Buoyancy.

Photo by Grant Amara



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All were recirculated in this hole. One man, after being hit several times by the boat, tucked into a ball and flushed out. He caught a throw line and was pulled in. The second man actually "walked" his way out of the hole on the bottom of the river; he then grabbed hold of a tiny midstream rock. The group had to belay a rope thrower out into an eddy to get enough length to reach him. By the time they got him into shore he was severely hypothermic.

The river below No Name, while not difficult, is very fast and continuous. Ian Bell washed out the far side of the hole, well beyond the reach of a throw line. He waved to the group to let them know he was OK as he disappeared around the corner. No one knows what the rest of his swim was like. Given the absence of cuts and bruises and the fact that the lungs did not contain water, the coroner ruled that death came from "exposure", ie: hypothermia. The body was found miles downstream at the Needleton Bridge by a fisherman. CPR was started, but by then he was dead. The group searched for Ian, then camped overnight. They were notified the next morning that his body had been found, and rode the train out.

Ian Bell was a very thin man with very little body fat. The Animas, a high altitude snowmelt run, is one of the coldest rivers in the USA. He knew he was sensitive to cold water and was wearing a wetsuit under his drysuit. Despite this, hypothermia played a significant role in his death.

One of the dangers of flipping a raft is that it can throw several people into the water at one time. With a two-boat party it may be advisable to walk paddlers around big drops to reduce the danger. A safety boat, positioned downstream, might have picked up Bell and saved his life. The group used throw bags for safety backup, and recovered two of their group with them. Because of the width of the river and the continuous rapids

downstream there was the potential for a swimmer to slip by. A third boat could have provided backup.

On July 25, 1995 a guided raft became wrapped around a large rock at the bottom of Haystack Rapid on Idaho's Middle Fork of the Salmon. The guide and one guest were washed out of the boat. The guest, Angela Paulos, caught her foot on a loose line and dangled head-down in the water for roughly 10 minutes. As the other guests tried desperately to pull her back into the boat, the guide saw what was happening and screamed at them to cut the line. He was running up the shore, positioning himself to swim out to the wrapped boat and cut her free himself, when one of the guests managed to do this. Her life vest may have been pulled off; she disappeared under water. The body was found about two weeks later by another rafting party.

There was a bizarre and unexplained drowning on the Lower Yough July 29th. Late that afternoon David Moore, 31, was paddling Entrance Rapid while demoing a kayak from a local dealer. He apparently capsized in the small, playful hole near the top. Witnesses reported that his boat floated upside down with no sign of a struggle. When his companion, Paul Cherry, realized there was someone still inside the boat, he gave chase. Assisted by a raft he brought the victim to shore, wrestled him out of the boat, and began CPR. Total time under water is estimated at five minutes. Assisted by an emergency room nurse who was on the scene, they brought his color back, but were unable to save his life. An autopsy reported death by drowning; there was no evidence of any head injury other than a few superficial abrasions.

Rec.Boats.Paddle had the following posting by Paul Wagner: On Saturday August 19 a three-canoe party reached Poly Falls, a five-foot drop on Robinson Creek near Black River Falls, Wisconsin. Two canoes made it to shore, but one tipped over above the drop. The 20-year-

old woman paddling the boat became caught in a large hole at the bottom. Her father, who was not wearing a life vest, dove in after her and also became trapped. She eventually came out of the hole; he did not. Searchers were hampered by high flows caused by recent rains.

The Royal Gorge in eastern Colorado is the last section of whitewater on the Arkansas River. Rated Class IV, it was running 1400 cfs, a low level, on September 12. Clippings from the Colorado Daily, sent by Stacy Dorion, state yhat **Gardiner** Carey, an experienced 23-year old Colorado University senior and former raft guide, was kayaking with a friend when he hit a large downed tree in a class II section of the run. This strainer, which is not hard to see or avoid, caught and folded his kayak, pinning his legs inside.

Carey's partner, an EMT trained in swiftwater rescue, struggled to save him for over 30 minutes, trying a number of different techniques. The kayak continued to sink lower and lower in the water. When Carey released his sprayskirt his kayak filled with water and sank deeper. Finally the survivor realized that his friend had been under water too long and went for help. He ran to the highway and found a phone. Members of the Freemont County Sheriff's Department and the Canon City Fire Department along with Arkansas Headwaters river rangers arrived about thirty minutes later. They extracted Carey but could not revive him. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

This was clearly a desperate situation and with only one rescuer the pair had few options. Releasing the sprayskirt of a pinned boat is a perilous option. If both legs are free, kayakers using a keyhole cockpit and a tight-fitting sprayskirt can pull their legs off their thigh braces and push their knees through the opening. When the sprayskirt is released they can escape quickly. If their legs are caught, the sprayskirt should probably be kept in place until the boat is released. If the rear of the kayak is accessible, cutting the stern off with a small hand saw may unbalance the pin and release the boat. These tools can be bought from mail-order catalogues for under \$15.00.

The Cold River, a tributary of the popular Deerfield River in Western Massachusetts, runs along Route 2 as it climbs to the crest of the Berkshires. It's a classic class IV creek run. On the third weekend of October the area was hit by 3-4 inches of rain. Flash flood conditions prevailed that Saturday as the rain tapered off.

Ken Olin, was traveling with two other kayakers from Connecticut. They had been paddling for about six months, and were athletic and capable. Late the afternoon of October 21, after running the Dryway at 2500 cfs (roughly three times the normal flow), the group decided

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to check out the Cold River. It was bank-full: the normal gauge on the left abutment was buried; the water read 2 feet on the right abutment. This is an exceedingly high level.

One member of the group elected not to run; the other two put in and capsized within a quarter mile. The first man bailed out after multiple roll attempts and was able to swim to shore. Olin bailed out but did not attempt self-rescue; he seemed helpless and may have hit his head. His two companions began a wild car chase downriver, but were unable to catch Olin and pull him in. His body was washed five miles down to the Deerfield, where it was recovered.

With the excellent gear and instruction available today it is possible for young, athletic kayakers to become quite skilled rather quickly. Good judgment, unfortunately, takes more time to develop. Bruce Lessels at Zoar Outdoors said the river was as high as he'd ever seen it. The pair was clearly in over their heads from the very first moment, but did not appreciate the seriousness of the run until it was too late. In water this fast and difficult a life jacket provides no real protection against drowning. Rescue is almost impossible, and additional boaters might not have been able to recover the victim. It has also been reported that Olin was not wearing a wetsuit, so hypothermia could have been a contributing factor.

Jim Sheppard, 54, a solid class V kayaker from Ashville, NC, died on the West Fork of the French Broad. This seldom-paddled tributary, located just upstream from Rosman, NC., is a short, isolated class IV-V run. The water was high (7"), but not outrageous. Jim was an accomplished, conservative kayaker who had run Gorilla on the Green Narrows the day before. He was very active and extremely fit.

Sheppard and his partner put in late on the morning of November 11th. They negotiated three steep, sloping drops without incident. The next rapid, Pinball, is a long rock garden that is often eddy scouted. Jim and the other kayaker portaged around a hole because there was a stick whipping in the current at one end. His partner ferried across the river, ran a narrow spot, and caught as eddy below so he could boat-scout the next drop. Jim flipped in the narrow spot. He rolled, but was committed to running the next drop: a steep pour-over creating a river wide hole. He ran an ideal line - just to the right of the pour-over - but lacked speed and did not paddle aggressively - despite his partner's shouted instructions.

Jim broke through the hole but slowly got sucked back into the backwash. His partner believes he could have broken free by paddling hard, but he did not. After a couple of good strokes the backwash sucked him back in. After a

violent side surf, he wet exited and tried to swim out. By this time his partner had exited his boat, grabbed his throw bag, and rushed downstream. Jim recirculated three times before flushing out. By the time he reached the bottom of the drop, he was floating free. His friend ran back to his boat, easily punched the hole, and paddled after him. It took about a half a mile to catch up to Jim's kayak, at which point he spotted Jim floating face down. He pulled him onto his front deck, then popped his own sprayskirt, bailed out, and swam him to shore. He performed CPR on Jim for 45 minutes without success.

If there is a message to be learned from Jim's death, it's that bad things can happen to good paddlers. He was fit, competent, and paddling well within his ability. But the spot where the accident occurred is much worse than it looks. The entrance drop where the flip occurred is not high (2') but is very difficult to read. The eddies below are small; if you roll you will miss them. The pour-over looks like an easy boof, but the hole will not release a boat. The rapid below does not let up for some distance, and some channels are clogged with debris. Leland Davis, in a rec.boats.paddle posting, reported that another boater got trashed here in September. He was able to swim out of the hole after a few recirculations, but his paddle was lost and his boat battered.

Jim was normally an assertive paddler, so his lack of aggressiveness is hard to explain. It was his first run of the creek, so he may have been hesitant to paddle hard through the hole out of concern for what lay below. The other possibility is that he'd hit his head or had some other problem during his roll. It was also his second day paddling a new high-volume creek boat. He flipped and rolled several times on the West Fork, and was apparently not yet settled into the kayak.

Jim was over forty and lightly dressed. The day was cold with snow flurries, and the water frigid. Slim Ray points out that even though he was fit, an over-40 body simply does not tolerate the cold as well as a younger one. He is, unfortunately, not the first person his age to have unexpected trouble in cold conditions. Older paddlers should get into the habit of over-dressing for swims.

Fatal accidents and near misses always have a great deal to teach the paddling community. The AWA needs help of its members in tracking future incidents. Send any reports, newspaper clippings, club newsletter articles, and Internet postings you encounter to Charlie Walbridge, AWA Safety Committee, 230 Penllyn Pike, Blue Bell Pa. 19422; Fax 215-643-0668; E-Mail Compuserve 73514,714. You can also forward them to the AWA office.

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TEMPTING FATE ON WASHINGTON'S NORTH FORK OF THE SNOQUALMIE

by Nathan Lewis
Contributing Writer

Photos by Mason Hayes

"North Fork of the Payette, basically splashy-splashy. Nothing there. You can run the whole river down the middle. Except for that left eddy move in Jake's."
—Pete Flanagan, on the road to Idaho

"Don't mess around with mean Mr. Ernie."
—Pete Flanagan, on the way to the put-in on Ernie's Canyon

I was chatting with Tom Wolf after we finished creek run in the Cascades, searching for new ideas. "What do you think of the Upper White Salmon?" I asked. It's rated "Class V-VI".

"Waterfall heaven," he said.

The Upper Cispus? Did you run the 30' falls with the screwy entrance?

"You mean you walked that? It's great."

Ever done the Clear Fork?

"Love it. Have you done McCoy Creek? Or the Callahan?"

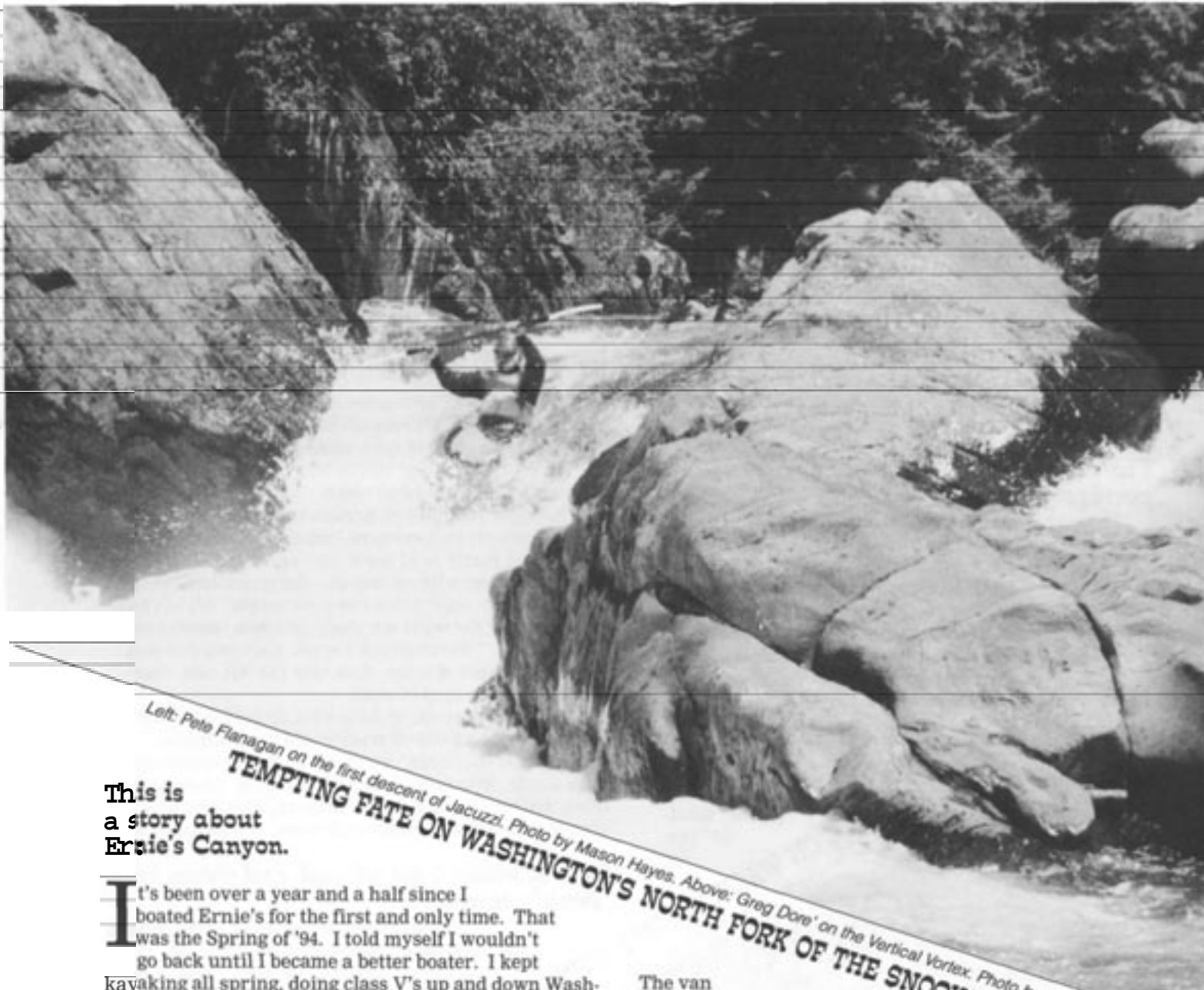
You ran the whopper at the end of the Callahan? Woie. Have you done the Ohanepecossh?

"Overrated."

How about Ernie's?

"Hmmm. I promised myself I would stop running Ernie's, at least until I became a better boater."





**This is
a story about
Ernie's Canyon.**

It's been over a year and a half since I boated Ernie's for the first and only time. That was the Spring of '94. I told myself I wouldn't go back until I became a better boater. I kept kayaking all spring, doing class V's up and down Washington state's cascades and Olympic Mountains, but I never felt I had the edge I needed. Summer came, the rivers dried up, things happened, and I ended up leaving Seattle.

Ernie is waiting for me. It was one of those runs where, halfway through, I prayed each drop would be the last. I was nearly sick, gritting my teeth through the whole river. I made the drops, but during the portages I could barely stay standing.

It was one of those rare challenges that encapsulated everything I look for in a creek. I've spent hundreds of days in a boat, but can count those kinds of runs on one hand, without using my thumbs. The Taureau. Robe Canyon at high water. And Ernie's.

Pete Flanagan and Mason Hayes were waiting for me at the take out, already wearing their polypro and basking in the clear spring sun. The take out is a nondescript little bridge that spans a mild, 50-foot wide meandering stream, just outside North Bend, Washington. While I was getting dressed, Steve U'ren rolled in with his disintegrating old Volvo. We piled our boats into Mason's van and drove out on a little road than runs along a newish streamside housing development.

The van

groaned through the switchbacks in low gear as we climbed a steep but well maintained dirt road. I hoped it would flatten out soon and it did, opening onto a forested plateau. The gate was locked, so we parked and languidly shouldered our boats. Mason rigged his up with crude backpack straps, so his Quantum teetered vertically far over his head. Steve and I simply lugged ours down the dirt road, resting once or twice, laying against our boats in the warm light and carrying on an ambling conversation. We had about half a mile to walk.

We put in on a shallow, rocky creek, more suited for trout fishing than boating. Ernie's was running at 500 cfs, which is the upper limit according to Jeff Bennett's 1991 guidebook. Pete called it "a little low, but not so pushy". 500 cubes was just enough to keep us from grinding against the cobbles for the first mile or two.

Ernie's Canyon lies on the North Fork of the Snoqualmie River, which flows from north to south and joins the main flow of the Snoqualmie a few miles downstream in North Bend. Ernie's cuts along the base of Mt. Si, whose steep, 4,000 foot high west face soars out of the rolling farmlands below to define the western edge of the

Left: Pete Flanagan on the first descent of Jacuzzi. Photo by Mason Hayes. Above: Greg Dore on the Vertical Vortex. Photo by Mason Hayes

TEMPTING FATE ON WASHINGTON'S NORTH FORK OF THE SNOQUALMIE

Cascade range. The take out is about 40 minutes from central Seattle. Ernie's runs more often than not throughout the rainy fall, winter, and spring. Courage and skill are the factors limiting runs on Ernie's, not the water level. Regulars like Pete, Mason, Steve and Rick Williams probably manage a dozen runs in a busy year.

Like many Cascade runs, Ernie's is not terribly steep by Eastern standards. Washingtonians measure their gradients over an actual mile, and not over the steepest 150 yards. Ernie's registers around 190. But Washington boating is not about sliding over huge, smooth, water-lubricated ledges, like the well-worn Appalachian runs. It's about big boulders and thumping holes, claustrophobic vertical-walled canyons and awful, gut-wrenching sieves. I walked one rapid that drops only three feet.

The first move in Ernie's canyon was a portage.

The cobbly river disappeared over a clean horizon. Mason got out left and we joined him to check out the first drop, called "Raft Catch", though I doubt that any raft has ever been through it. It's a typical Cascades creek drop: a thick tongue drops six feet into a grinding hole. If that were all there was to it, we wouldn't have even stopped. But Ernie's ups the ante—90% of the outflow from the hole washes into a mild, but inescapable channel, then

drops another six feet into a killer sieve.

We stood above the drop, one of three "must-do" portages

on the run. "A perfect boof," Pete said reverently, as he gazed into the pit. "A perfect boof would get you over the hole and into the safe channel." But none of us were willing to bet our lives on a moment of perfection. Instead, we portaged to the base of the first plunge, ferried one by one across the backwash of the hole, and peeled into a series of drops that led to safety.

"Eddy right at the bottom," Pete said. I followed him over the unscouted drops, and at the end, found everyone stuffed in a little eddy that could comfortably hold about two boats. I jammed in there, trying to hold myself on the eddy line, while watching Steve run the next drop over my shoulder.

Steve ran Raft Catch a few weeks later. One less "must-do" portage. "Piece of cake," he said. Everything's a piece of cake when you do it right. Later he didn't do it right and barely fought his way out of washing into the left-hand sieve.

The upper half-mile of Ernie's is one continuous rapid. Pools are non-existent, eddies are few, mostly hidden, and rarely hold more than two boats comfortably. It's a river without waves—the water is moving too quickly, through holes and over ledges. It's not boat scutable and the walls are steep, so I was running on instructions. "Watch where I enter, then you'll punch through a couple of holes, then take the left side, then eddy left." That kind of stuff.

It was awful, running drop after drop blind, knowing that being just a little off track could be disastrous. Finding that the "eddy" was just the papery backwash from a hole, with three boats already in it. Making the only move, or to find Pete or Steve disappearing downstream, once again, into the unknown. It was wonderful.

This is where I got pinned and swam in Ernie's canyon.

The last rapid of the dicey upper stretch is a one-two combination known as the "Room of Doom" and the "Cluster". The Room is a simple hole. A smooth, three foot drop into a foamy, almost perfectly symmetric weir. "Just paddle hard down the middle" were the

TEMPTING FATE ON WASHINGTON'S NORTH FORK OF THE SNOQUALMIE
Opening move on Bruce's Boil. Photo by Pete Flanagan.



TEMPTING FATE ON WASHINGTON

instructions. Mason went first, and got thrashed beyond belief. He made continuous cartwheels for probably over a minute, dozens and dozens. I got out on a rock with my throw bag, but there was nothing I could do. Mason knew it.

It's the kind of hole that's worse outside of your boat than in, and to bail would mean having to swim the Cluster. That is out of the question. So Mason rode the Room until it let him out. Everyone who boats Ernie's will ride the Room eventually. Pete and Steve have ridden the Room.

I went after Mason. Fortunately, my number wasn't called that day. I punched through easily and eddied out right, above the Cluster. Mason was there in the eddy, and he looked a little glassy-eyed.

At the Cluster 90% of the North Fork thunders over a six foot ledge into a gruesome pile of boulders. At far left a small tongue provides safe passage. But the left-side move is guarded by a small, troublesome, rock. Paddling straight for the tongue is next to impossible—you would wash over into the Cluster sideways. To get to the tongue you must catch a one-boat eddy on the right, just above the Cluster, then ferry carefully across the lip and into the left-side flume.

We didn't scout the Cluster. All I could see was the lip of the drop. "This is one of the nastiest places in Ernie's," Pete yelled over the roar, as we struggled to keep ourselves in our

right. Watch Steve run it." I warneea Steve set up, but then a surge tossed me out of my eddy and I had to struggle to get back in. When I turned again, Steve was gone.

I thought I understood, but I didn't. I washed into the Cluster sideways, managing to straighten out right at the lip, and pinned against the boulders, vertically, head above water. I looked at Steve and Pete, pasted into a small eddy against the left side wall. They could do nothing. My boat shifted and I turned sideways, under the plume of water coming down from above. It drove me and my boat deep underwater, but it let me free. I popped to the surface, and scrambled into a tiny eddy.

Just beyond, Ernie's sucked downstream over more

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ledges and through awful boulder fields. When I got flushed my skirt imploded, but my boat, incredibly, was still dry. In the bouncing eddy, though, surges of water were creeping over the cockpit rim and gradually filling the boat. I couldn't put the skirt back on one-handed, and if I used two hands for even a few seconds I would flush out of my micro eddy. I looked for ways to get out of the boat, but the boulders were too steep and slippery.

I called to Steve in the eddy below. He saw my problem and expertly attained up to my side, parking on the eddy line. "I need to get out," I yelled over my shoulder.

"Stand on my boat," Steve said.

I put one hand on his nose and pulled myself out of my boat. But I lost my balance, overturned, and fell in.

I washed into the current and under Steve's boat. Fortunately, Steve managed to keep my boat from flushing away. I swam into the eddy where Pete was and grabbed the side of the canyon. I couldn't get out, but I was able to crawl upstream along the side of the canyon at water level, my feet floating in the water as I pulled myself along on slimy holds. I managed to climb up a small crevice and pull my boat out of the water.

When I was back in my boat, ready to head downstream, Steve looked at me and said, "You were very lucky. The boat of the last guy who pinned in there was stuck for over an hour." It wasn't a reprimand. It was the truth.

I don't think anyone knows who Ernie was.

I've heard conflicting opinions about who made the first descent of Ernie's. It depends on how many portages you consider allowable. Rick Williams and Sprague Ackley both made claims, which date to the mid-eighties. The first descenders walked more than half the river, at flows around 200 cfs. Since then, runnable flows have gone up and the number of "mandatory portages" has steadily gone down.

"Little Nasty" is a three foot ledge above a huge, disgusting drop called "Big Nasty". It's vintage Ernie's: a minor move through a hole into a small eddy. The hole kicks hard right. If you get funneled right you wash over Big Nasty, which drops over a trashy twenty feet. Big Nasty is a mandatory portage.

"This is important", Pete said. "Make sure you point to the left and punch through hard." I walked it.

TEMPERATURE FATE A Panagari on the Rait Catch. Photo by Mason Hayes.
WASHINGTON'S NORTH FORK OF THE SNOQUALMIE

This is where Ernie's canyon ate my friend's throw bag.

I put back in and ferried across the base of Little Nasty to the left side of the river, where we were going to portage. It's a tough take-out. Mason artfully managed to breach sideways against a rock at the lip of Big Nasty and get out of his boat. The rest of us paddled up and were deposited out on a flat rock by Mason.

We scrambled over huge, wet boulders to the base of Big Nasty. I could hardly make the portage without stumbling. I had borrowed a throw bag from a friend for this trip; it was stuffed in front of my footpeg. I hoisted the boat and the throw bag cut loose and fell out of the cockpit. It bounced once on the slick black rock and into the river. I never saw it again. This all took about three seconds. All I could do was watch, dripping, balanced on the top of a tall boulder.

That rope was gone.

That could be you. Or me.

Eventually Ernie's mellowed and we coasted into a long stretch of class III. Nothing special, except that it winds around a corner and drops without warning over a twenty-five foot falls. We eddied out for the third and last "mandatory" portage. The brink of disaster is nearly invisible from upstream. Mason once forgot about the eddy—Pete says he has never seen anyone come so close to a terminal lip anywhere, and escape.

The portage ends with a six-foot seal move into a one-boat eddy. The trick is that the eddy is only four inches

deep—a boulder lurks visibly just under the water's surface. To make the entry, you place your boat on a small sloping ledge, parallel to the edge, facing right. Once inside, you gently scoot sideways on your butt until you feel the boat about ready to slide in. Then, as the boat teeters on the lip, you swing the nose around almost 180 degrees and boof into the eddy.

Pete was the first to run this "unrunnable" falls a few weeks later, reducing the number of "mandatory" portages to one. "You have to stay on the right side; it was like dropping into a Jacuzzi. Next time I'm with Rick I'll run it without stopping and blow his mind."

The next time he ran it, he got stuffed into the left-side undercut at the base.

"The scariest run I've ever done," Pete was telling me, "was the time I ran Ernie's with Rick at 1700 cfs. If it was continuous, out-of-control mayhem. I was looking up at the walls for a way to climb out." Ernie's doesn't get any wider with higher water. It just gets deeper and faster and nastier.

It might be something like the Narrows of the Green at 1200 cfs or so. No one knows how Rick manages to enjoy these things. He's something of a whitewater mystic.


This is called Vertical Vortex," Steve said. "You should get out and have a look." I got out left and perched atop the boulders. Vertical Vortex opens with a few entrance ledges, then makes a drop of about seven feet, walled in by a vee of flat stones. I pulled my boat out of the water, hauled it across the easy portage, and plunked it in the pool below.

Pete and Steve looked at me in that vaguely pleading way that you look at your beginner kayaking buddy who insists on walking no-consequence Class IV's.

"This is just fun. It's not that hard," they said. But I was already out of my boat, and the portage was easy. One step closer to the end. I didn't care if I ran it or not. Pete and Mason boofed the first ledges and buried themselves in the Vortex.

Steve eddied out above the lip like the U.S. Team slalom racer he once was. As he duffed, his stern swept over the lip and into the air. He prefers a small chute to the left. He tried the main line again, later that spring, but pitoned violently at the base.

Ernie's is the most voracious river I have ever seen. It eats gear like that scruffy tree ate Charlie Brown's kites. But this is for real. One fellow I know, an Ernie's veteran, got pinned on some rocks and took a swim. His boat stayed stuck—they managed to attach a rope to the grabloops, but couldn't work it free. So they



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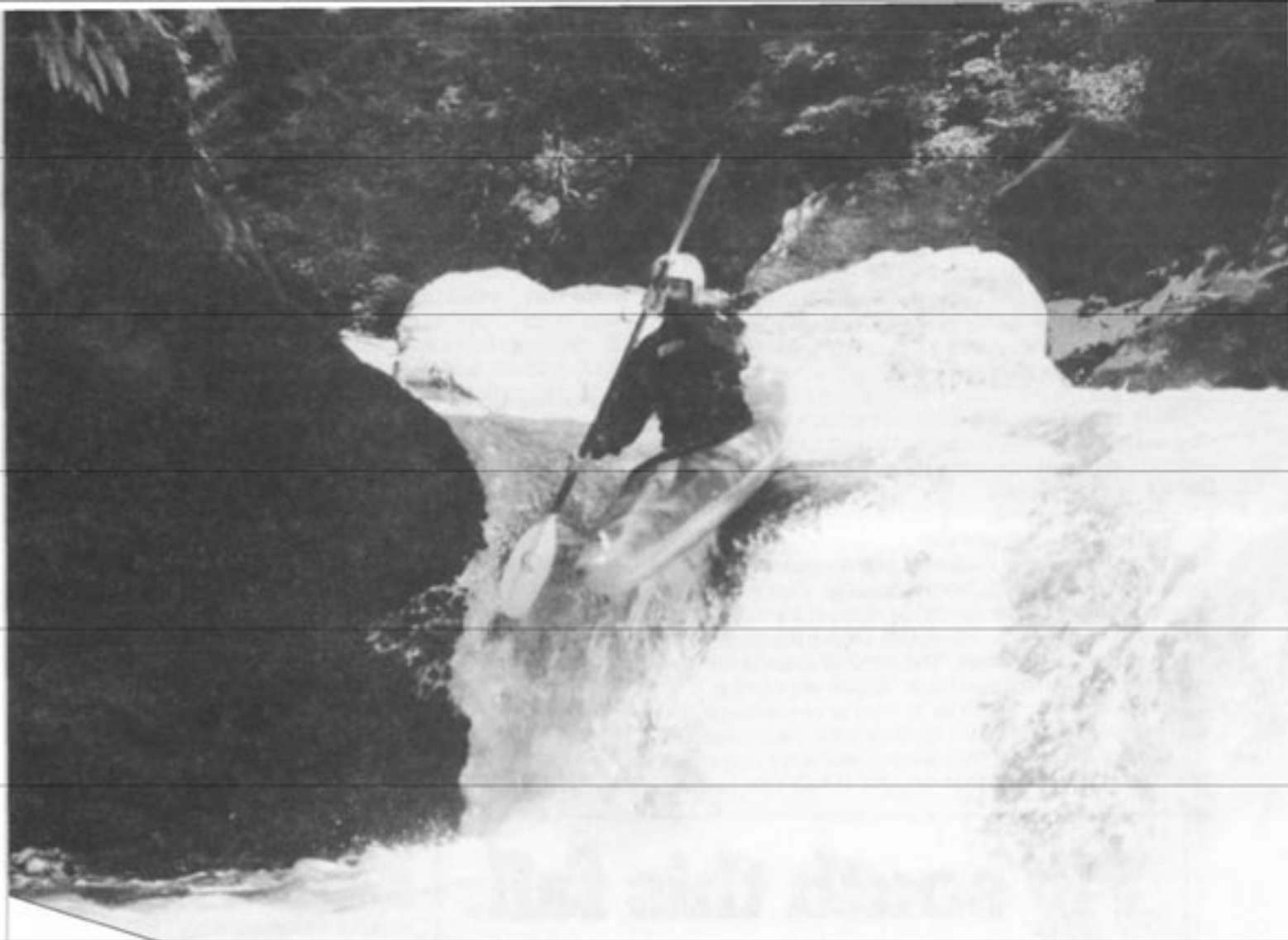
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TEMPTING FATE ON WASHINGTON'S NORTH FORK OF THE SNOQUALMIE
Pete Flanagan on Boom of Doom. Photo by Mason Hayes

de-
 cided to tie
 the rope to a tree and
 come back the next day. When
 they came back, the boat was gone. The
 water level hadn't changed, but the boat was
 gone. It was brand new.

It was not the only boat eaten by Ernie's. Tom Wolf
 recalls a number of boats that never were found. But the
 ultimate disappearance was during a bad run on Vertical
 Vortex. The boater swam free — but the boat got caught
 in the hole and recirculated behind the falls. Then is van-
 ished. They never saw it again. Where did it go?

I haven't even told you about all the other big drops in
 Ernie's, scads and scads of them. Scores of holes, little
 eddies, chutes, boofs, folded falls. You can't represent it
 on paper.

"We had some Southern boaters here a while back,"
 Pete was telling me. "They had run the Narrows of the
 Green a few times, and they said Ernie's was much more
 difficult. It's a different kind of river, not so much like

those
 Southern
 runs over smooth,
 shallow ledges. You have to
 get used to it."

Most hair boating is paddling towards huge
 ledges; the main goal is to imitate a brainless log while
 avoiding impact injuries and upside-down
 unpleasanties. But Ernie's is a river for technicians.
 One definition of Class V is that you don't want to go
 where most of the water goes. A typical Ernie's rapid
 mandates negotiating tricky holes while staying con-
 nected to the blessed 20% of the flow that leads to safety.
 Oh... and there are some big ledge moves, too.



Unknown boater, Ernie's Canyon. Photo by Pete Flanagan.
WASHINGTON'S NORTH FORK OF THE SNOQUALMIE
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It was my seventh portage on my first run of Ernie's canyon. I felt like I had run nearly everything. I felt I had eaten too much.

What began with a portage ended with a portage. The last rapid is a little boof over a three foot ledge, then through a hole into a two-boat left side eddy.

"This and Cluster are the most dangerous places on the river," Pete explained. "You have to catch that left eddy or you'll wash through a terrible sieve." I looked at it. Little boof, paddle through the hole, left eddy.

Then ferry right and bounce down eight vertical feet of ledges to the bottom, the pool, the End of Ernie's Canyon. I almost did it.

But I walked instead. The End. The End was Right There.

Pete, Mason, and Steve ran it with no problem. When I put in at the bottom I saw the sieve. It was horrible.

"Mason once went through there in a backender," Steve told me. It was hard to imagine.

We bobbed through about two miles of class I-II, past houses and fishermen, to the car.

In the spring of 1995, Rick Williams and Stephan Dopke, a radical German who regularly visits the Northwest, bounced their way down Big Nasty to make the first no-portages descent of Ernie's. It was a major accomplishment.

Ernie's canyon is only two miles long, including the class III stretch in the middle. Two tough miles. If you had to scout everything, it could take a full day. But you can portage, with difficulty, everything except for one rapid.

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A CRYSTAL RIVER GORGE UPDATE

By Paul Tefft

The "Conquest of the Crystal" was written in 1993 and edited in 1995 for publication in American Whitewater. Since the first descent of the Crystal River Gorge in 1992, the gorge has become a semi-standard hair run in the class V boater's repertoire of runs. A number of the west's best boaters have successfully paddled this whitewater gem. A description of the gorge is included in Dave Eckardt and Gordan Banks' new guidebook, Colorado Rivers and Creeks. Class V+ kayaking has evolved so rapidly new Rocky Mountain runs are being discovered every year. To keep pace with kayaking's ever-expanding limitations, Dave and Gordan plan to update their excellent book in the future.

During the epic high water Colorado Rocky Mountain summer of 1995 the Crystal River Gorge was run a number of times. A group of boaters successfully completed the first high water descent, around 400 cfs. At this level the gorge becomes extremely pushy and dangerous from "Corkscrew" down. This high water run was captured on video for the soon released video, **Meltdown Madness**.

Meltdown Madness is a fund raiser for the American Whitewater Affiliation. You can check out the Crystal River Gorge and support the AWA at the same time.

During the high water descent the lower box gorge was portaged. Most parties choose to hike out before this gnarly section. After the water dropped, Colorado boater Dave Pizzuti successfully soloed the 40 foot drop at the entrance to the inner gorge. "Zoot Shot" has since been run by another party of Colorado boaters lead by Scott Young. They all cleaned the "Zoot Shoot", but some carnage occurred down by "Powerful Piton". As far as I know, the Sick Puppy falls at the gorge's culmination have never been run.

If your ever in Colorado in late summer and are in search of an adrenaline buzz, the Crystal River Gorge can give you an immediate fix!

Colorado Rivers and Creeks can be purchased at paddlesports outlets around the country or through paddlesport mail order catalogs.

CONQUEST OF THE CRYSTAL

The First Descent of Colorado's Crystal River Gorge

by Paul Tefft
Photos courtesy of Gordon Banks and Dave Eckardt
Authors of *Colorado Rivers and Creeks*

High in the beautiful Colorado Rocky's Elk Mountain Range, a series of tiny tributaries converge to form the Crystal River. Fed by chilling cold springs and freshly-melted snow, this crystal clear waterway carves through a fabulous valley steeped in history.

From its source at Schofield Pass to its confluence with the Roaring Fork River, the Crystal River is the epicenter of a region rich in natural resources and recreational opportunities. In early June 1992, a longtime kayaking partner and I decided to explore the upper reaches of the Crystal River. John Placek and I had heard a rumor about a remote, unrunable 2-mile gorge, so we set out to either debunk or confirm the story. Unsure of what to expect, we put in a short distance upstream from the old mining town of Marble.

The icy river was overflowing its banks (June is the month for peak snow melt runoff in Colorado). John and I were swept downriver and away from all signs of civilization. Before long, the river disappeared from view, prompting a scout. We stared in awe at a serious class VI+ rapid complete with logs and huge holes. No way we thought, not in this lifetime...we hefted our boats and portaged through dense undergrowth.





Unwisely, we decided to reenter the turbulent water and paddle a partially scouted, pushy, short stretch of class V. Almost immediately, the river took charge and exerted its extraordinary power. In spite of our energetic paddling, our boats were violently hurled deeper into the gorge. We barely managed to regain control and catch a microscopic eddy right before another horizon line.

The river dropped out of sight and off the charts. The tumultuous torrent roared dramatically downhill through a constricted chasm. Monstrous holes and a steep gradient formed an eddyless turmoil which charged relentlessly downward. Both John and I stared at the Crystal with the same bug-eyed expression—thinking the same thought. What if we hadn't caught the eddy?

We quickly came to a brilliant conclusion: Start hoofing. We scrambled along the thickly foliated mountainside and marveled at the amazing gradient of this seemingly endless death deluge. After hours of groveling along the steep, jungle-like embankment, our boats became extremely burdensome. Eventually, John stumbled upon a precariously placed old mining trail. This skinny swathe was literally blasted out of the sheer cliff face. The river raged 80 feet below, heightening our awareness of each footstep.

When we emerged from a rough-hewn tunnel and spotted a familiar landmark a sense of relief overwhelmed me. Thoughts of cold beer kept us from gawking too long at the unbelievable culmination of the canyon. A spectacular 100-foot waterfall created a deafening roar which envel-

oped the senses. Exhausted, bruised and bleeding, we dragged ourselves back to reality, vowing never to return.

I recounted the tale of the first descent (hell portage!) of the Crystal River Gorge to Dave Eckardt (Aspen hair boater and **Colorado Rivers and Creeks** guidebook author), piquing his interest. In early August, Dave decided to hike in and have a look for himself. He came back with the impression that at low water, it was hairball but runnable.

One night the infamous barley brew dulled inhibitions and instigated bragging about boating bravado. John and I decided to break our pledge and attempt to actually paddle the Crystal River Gorge. Dave was psyched to go, so we coordinated our plan of attack. Our elixir-induced babbling convinced another river veteran, L'eau

The First Descent of Colorado's Crystal River Gorge

Vive's Scout Young, to join the assault force.

First day was overcast and dreary, which only slightly dampened our enthusiasm. As we bounced down the four-wheel drive road to put-in, without seeing a soul, I found it hard to picture the magnitude of the region's mining activities during the previous century. In the early 1870's gold, silver, copper, lead, zinc and galena were discovered around the summit of 10,000 ft. Schofield Pass. The town of Schofield mushroomed with a massive influx of prospectors and laborers. Then, in 1886 due to transportation problems, practically the entire town of Schofield moved four miles downriver. Crystal City, located a couple of miles upriver from the gorge's put-in, became the short lived hub for mining activity in this suddenly prosperous area.

The demonetization of silver in 1893 and the inability to derive adequate conveyance for lead, zinc and other ores, led to Crystal City's untimely demise. Time has left the city a ghost town, a common stop for sightseers on their way back and forth over the rutted four-wheel drive road to Crested Butte.

Further down the glacial valley, a different commodity propelled another population growth boom. Large quantities of calcium carbonate were discovered and the aptly named city of Marble soon followed. The marble's superior quality made it the choice for a number of prestigious buildings including the Lincoln Memorial. For the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Washington D.C., the largest block in the world ever quarried was cut in 1931. Eventually, extracting the stone became economically unfeasible and

the once thriving town dwindled to a minute fraction of its former size. Fortunately, one store survived and it sells important kayak expedition supplies like chips and beer.

Stocked up with post first day celebration necessities, the team was prepared for success. Being realistic, we also planned for the other alternative. Throwbags, a first aid kit, climbing gear and breakdown paddles were carefully packed in our kayaks. We donned our paddling gear and headed downriver. Compared to the last excursion, the river was a mere trickle. Previously well over 1,000 cfs., the water flow had shrunk to around 140 cfs. The diminished current didn't help to ease my apprehension, but it at least allowed time to observe the majestic surroundings.

Here Crystal River slices straight through a mountain of metamorphic





The First Descent of Colorado's Crystal River Gorge

stump had wedged bank to bank. The blockade created a 7 foot fall into a frothing, less than boat length, vortex. If you reacted fast, one stroke might be possible before the river dropped another 15 feet. The majority of water slammed up against the river right wall. Angling away from the accompanying undercut was imperative.

The team torpedoed down "Pine Tree Falls" and regrouped in the minuscule pool at its base. The Crystal River didn't give us a chance to relax. Unique whitewater challenges appeared in quick succession. Two consistent characteristics were prevalent, severity and technicality. The rapids demanded precise piloting combined with lightning-quick reflexes. Waterfalls, slot moves and miniature recirculating holes provided plentiful opportunities for accidents, but we somehow managed to remain upright and unscathed.

When mining activity became evident, I realized we were nearing the climax of the journey. A dilapidated

tunnel and rusted cables which dangled across the river signaled the beginning of an unscoutable box canyon. At the entry of this intimidating section, we finally found something that stopped us in our tracks. A very questionable 40 foot waterfall elicited intense scouting. The primary concern wasn't hydraulic entrapment, but the likelihood of getting permanently stuffed into an igneous envelope on river right... or pitoning. After an intense discussion, we concluded it was too dicey without checking the depth of the pool at the bottom. Due to the canyon's sheer walls, this was impossible without climbing ropes.

But to circumvent the flume would be a protracted project. It began to sprinkle as we pondered our predicament. The decision was made, to declare a first decent, we would have to continue.

Dave Eckardt broke out his climbing gear and we set up for the rappel into the unknown. One after the other we lowered 60 feet down into the gap-

ing abyss. Scott sent the boats and paddles down before following our airsteps. The rope was left to be picked up, when-and if-we emerged. Nervousness prevented me from thinking about the dismal weather. It was nearly dark as we shoved off. After the first bony rapid we were committed; there was no way out but down.

It soon became clear that there would be a toll to travel this liquid highway. In one less than boat width slot John had his paddle ripped from his hands. Fortunately, he recovered it without incident. I wasn't so lucky. I made "Paddle Pincher", but the next rocky rapid forced me to participate in an unplanned underwater trout survey. My paddle snapped in half when I was forced up against an undercut ledge. A frantic hand roll, some flailing hand bracing, and a finger chilling series of hand stokes saved me from being sucked over the next drop. Scared but not harmed, I mentally recuperated in an eddy while Dave assembled his breakdown.

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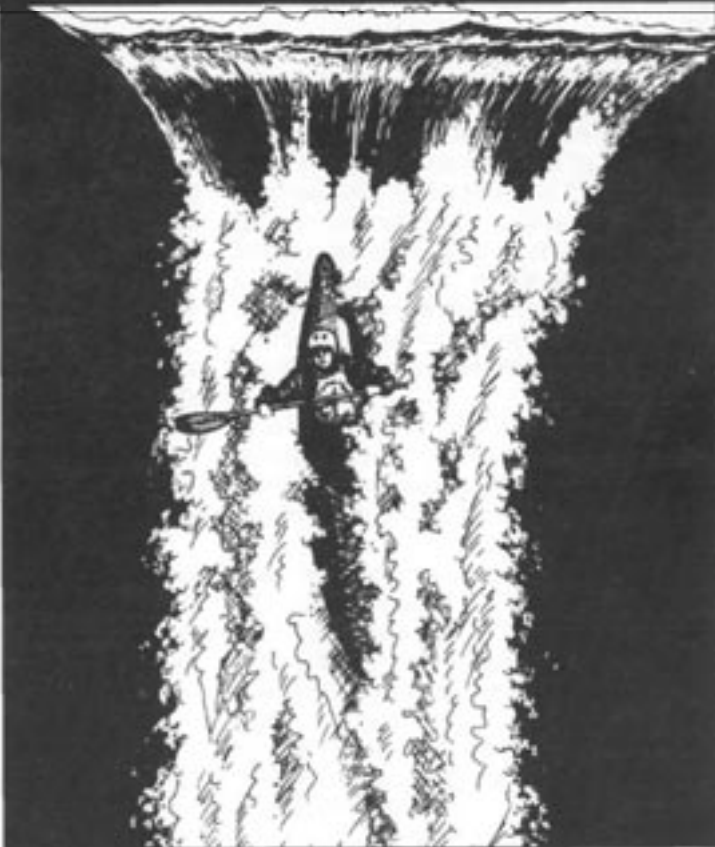
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Dave and Scott tasted terror by pinning temporarily while sneaking under a strainer. Now that everyone's emotional level was energized, we were ready to take the last test before our intended take-out eddy. The penalty for failing the exam was severe. An viscous tumble over a series of three crazy class VI, 30+ foot waterfalls was the price to pay for missing the exit. With no way to avert or scout the final trial, it was an extremely intimidating situation.

Scott was elected to be the probe. After all, that was the name of his mini Eurokayak. We watched as he deftly negotiated the suspect sluice, disappearing from sight on occasion. Relieved, we saw him climb out on a distant boulder with his throwbag. His sign language wasn't encouraging, a shrug of the shoulders and a knuckle rap to the helmet indicated trouble.

Hesitantly, I went next. My pulse raced as I boulder-dodged to the first eight foot vertical spout. I hurled over and down, the cross current slammed me into the wall of a fast moving 5-foot

wide channel. Disoriented, with one broken foot peg, I frantically brace rolled and somehow ended up backwards. Terror gripped me as I scarcely managed to turn my boat around before the definitive plunge. I launched over the last spillway. The instant impact of my kayak hitting a solid object busted my remaining foot peg and crammed me into the bow of my boat. After an awkward, sprayskirtless, full of water roll, I realized I was at the brink of disaster. Then a throw bag whizzed perfectly past, and Scott dragged a thankful person and his rapidly sinking craft to shore.

Dave then John paddled "Powerful Piton" next. Both were turned backwards by the top slot drop, and both hit hard at the bottom of the last chute. Foam bulkheads had lessened their impact, but John's kayak's nose was destroyed.

The courageous conquistadors hiked out, leaving the last torrential waterfalls for hero boaters of the future. Battered and bruised, my ankle

began to balloon. The arduous, painful pilgrimage took hours. It was nearly midnight before we retrieved the vehicles and headed back towards sanity and the emergency room. The verdict on my ankle was a severe sprain. Being immobile gave me plenty of time in which to analyze our adventure.

Why do people risk life and limb to accomplish something that has never been done before? Should egotistical aspirations outweigh common sense? Are the possible life threatening consequences worth the questionable rewards? I ponder these questions without coming to a quick conclusion. There are no simple answers. One must delve deeply into the basic principals of human nature and determine on an individual basis how he or she feels.

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The Cataracts of the Kern River

*By Richard Penny, ACA Regional Coordinator
with Rocky Contos and Keith Beck*



*Rocky Contos running Toilet Bowl, the class VI 4 miles into the Cadillacs Run.
This is near the bottom right of the rapid. Photo by Ed Houston*

California lies on the leading edge of the continent, a precarious place to rest. Towards the south, it straddles the boundary of the Pacific and North American plates. The plates jostle and grind; they push up mountain ranges (some of the most rapidly rising mountains in the world), and cut loose thousands of earthquakes that fracture the rock.

There are few places where the effects of tectonic forces are more apparent than at the mouth of the Kern River Canyon, located near the southern end of the great Sierra Nevada, where this range joins the fractured, messy, folded, and confused Transverse Ranges of southern California. Looking east from Bakersfield, the mouth of the Kern Canyon appears as an astonishingly narrow defile in the apparently continuous bulk of the Sierra.

Inside the canyon mouth, the rock that forms the steep walls is broken and fractured into a spider web pattern of joints, cracks and crevices. From the narrow and winding State Highway 178, which clings to the canyon wall, the Kern River can be seen roaring far below. Not as a fast-flowing, black and deep river. Nor as splashy, frothy whitewater. The flow of the Kern River through the Cataracts is impeded and broken into tortuous ribbons and nozzles by the portentous heaps of jagged boulders that have plummeted from the canyon walls above.

The twelve mile stretch of river near the mouth of the Kern River Canyon has been called the "Cataracts" in recognition of a lot of gradient and some amazingly fearsome rapids. In the early 1970's, this section of the lower Kern Canyon was labeled the "most dangerous river in the world," and claims were made that its water was "the fastest water on earth," rushing through the canyon at "90 miles per hour." Its reputation has not substantially improved in recent years.

The thousands of boaters who have driven by on their way to more hospitable parts of the river have gotten more queasy feelings from looking at Triple Threat and other big, nasty drops than from the bodacious curves in the road. Contributing to

the deadly ambiance of the Cataracts have been the huge, red signs that the Forest Service posted along the roadside: "Danger. Peligro. Stay Out. No Wading or Swimming! 178 Drownings since 1965!"

Back in the mid-eighties several local boaters (Keith was one) decided to pioneer parts of this stretch, and actually did all of it at one time or another. This endeavor was limited by threats of arrest by the Forest Service, whose worthy officials claimed that the Cataracts were closed to all boating. After several warnings and threats, these pioneering boaters just gave up. Those of us that came later were tantalized by the description of the easiest five miles of this stretch, provided by Holbeck and Stanley in their **Guide to the Best Whitewater in the State of California**. But forewarned of the access difficulties, we never gave it a try. The Cataracts had become the lost section of Southern California class V whitewater.

Between SCE's dam and diversion at Democrat and the canyon mouth lie twelve miles of whitewater, with an average gradient exceeding 100 feet per mile. The first 3.4 miles are known as the Cadillacs of the Kern, in dubious honor of the large number of misguided cars that have taken the plunge from the highway into the riverbed. The difficulty here extends to Class V+; the Cadillacs end with a bang at the dreaded Toilet Bowl, rated class V+ or V-VI. The difficulty eases below the Toilet Bowl. The 4.5 miles from Toilet Bowl to Nude Beach is the Richbar Run. This stretch is primarily class III and IV with one rapid, Fin Rock, that can be rated IV+ or so, and one portage at Lucas Creek Falls.

Below Nude Beach the Cataracts proper begins: an awesome 2.7 mile run from Nude Beach to the KR1 Powerhouse that includes six class IV and seven or eight big, big class V or V-VI drops. Finally, the Powerhouse run extends 2 miles from the KR1 Powerhouse down to the mouth of the Canyon; it includes another four or five class V or V-VI rapids.

So, within roughly 12 miles, there are at least sixteen class III rapids, eighteen class IV's, and sixteen rap-

ids rated class V or higher. The whole run has more stuff in it than the Cherry Creek section of the Tuolumne River by a significant margin. The Cadillacs and the Cataracts feel a lot like Kings River Canyon (a popular wilderness class V+ run a bit further north in the Sierras): long, long rapids with complex routes and BIG boulders.

This year the American Whitewater Affiliation intervened before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) in the relicensing of Southern California Edison's KR1 powerplant, located on this section of the river. As the process proceeded local boaters, led by Chris Nuthall, went to the Forest Service and asked pointed questions about access. Sequoia National Forest admitted that it had been wrong all along, and that navigating the river had always been legal. In response the AWA intervention, FERC ordered that a recreational flow study be conducted, and Southern California Edison (SCE) hired a company, WRC Environmental, to conduct it. WRC called on the AWA and on local paddlers to get involved. The long-lost Cataracts of the Kern were about to be rediscovered!

WHAT FOLLOWS ARE SOME OF OUR EXPERIENCES:

RICHARD:

News that I was going to be boating in WRC's flow study in the Cataracts of the Kern was not greeted with great joy around my hearth and home. Anne had always been nonchalant about my boating adventures; but she had driven too many times past the Cataracts on the way to some of my favorite runs on the Wild and Scenic North Fork of the Kern River. I heard more than a few stern warnings about the responsibilities of a husband and father, and was reminded more times than I would have wished that I was not far from turning 40. I pleaded that as AWA Regional Coordinator I had a moral obligation to help out. And besides, I claimed semi-truthfully, "I will be sure to portage all the really difficult stuff."



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As it happens, I still wasn't certain just how boatable the Cataracts would turn out to be. Sure, Keith Beck and Phil Martin claimed it was great stuff and mostly boatable, but these guys are notorious sandbaggers. I had never really studied the Cataracts with any great care; all I recalled was there were some damn large irrigated boulder piles in there!

The first weekend of the flow study came and I was laid up by a cold. Not all that bad a thing, I was thinking, as this was to be at the largest flow, about 2000 cfs. But when Chuck Watson and Steve Grove called and told me that Rocky Contos had been the only kayaker to participate, I knew I had to get cracking and do my part for the second weekend of studies on October 14th and 15th. I spent hours on the phone conning other boaters into participating, with lines like "Sure, you'll be fine. I've seen you paddle. You're hot. And anyway, you can always portage anything you didn't like."

That last line is a classic; I can't tell you the times it has been used to get me in over my head! Not wanting to be in over my head too far, I spent four days on the Class V Cherry Creek section of the Tuolumne, honing my meager skills.

Inauspiciously, it was Friday the 13th when I drove south to the Kern. In Bakerfield I turned my van onto Highway 178 and followed it up into the mouth of the canyon. The rapids and boulder piles in the river looked

no less forbidding than they had in years before. I chose an open hillside not far from SCE's Democrat Dam to camp. The Kern River Valley is one of my favorite places to camp. It's not quite desert and not quite forest. The plants are adapted to the severe climate that takes hold yards from the river. Yuccas, sagebrush, chamise, canyon live oaks, digger pines, and buckeye decorate the dusky hillsides. Coyotes sing in the distance. Friday the 13th or not, I was beginning to feel better about the Cataracts.

At 7 A.M. Saturday I was at the roadside callbox ready to meet the WRC folks and the volunteers for boating and roadside duty. They came staggering in: Chuck Watson and Steve Grove from WRC Environmental; a van and driver from Chuck Richards Whitewater; kayakers Keith Beck, Bill Britton, Rocky Contos, Peter Greene, and Phil Martin; rafters, including Mike Kosa, and several others. The schedule for the day was to make a roadside assessment of the river between Democrat Dam and the KR1 powerhouse.

WRC had identified 49 distinct rapids in ten miles of river. We were going to drive and hike the



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road and inspect every rapid. For each rapid we were going to assess 11 different factors. At the end of the day, each of us will have answered 539 questions! These WRC folks were nothing if not thorough. Question 1 for each rapid, was "Would you run this rapid at this flow?" I expected that I was going to have a lot of "No" answers to this one. I could not have been more wrong!

As we organized we noticed some mighty strange goings-on along the river. Helicopters flying back and forth. Huge RV's and trucks, and folks that look suspiciously like the crew for a kung fu movie. I knew that WRC had a film crew to record all the excitement, but I had no idea that they had a budget this large. Kevin Costner didn't use a crew this big to film "Waterworld".

Chuck set me straight, "No, that's my film crew over there." One guy, one woman, one camera, one Chevy Blazer.

So who are all the Asian people with trucks and helicopters? I asked a Forest Service ranger.

She tells me, "It's a Japanese film company. They are making a movie about whitewater rafting on the Richbar stretch."

We talked some more and she launched into a long lecture on why she thinks it is wrong that the Cataracts are being opened up to boating.

"Hmm, the AWA still has a lot of educating to do round here," I think.

The roadside assessment gets started; the river is running about 1200 to 1400 cfs. I discover that I am not finding all the class VI that I expected. This stuff looks mostly runnable! I remind myself that everything looks easier from 200 feet above and resolve to add a half-degree of difficulty to each rapid. But still, where are those Class VI's? I am starting to think I will run most of this stuff.

Big long rapids. Huge boulders. But these rapids are runnable Class V. No worse than the Kings Canyon, and a lot better than Sespe Creek Canyon!

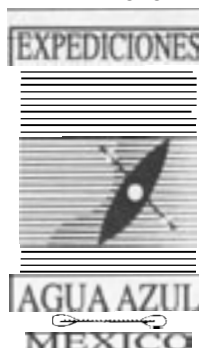
Keith Beck starts making noises about getting a run in that afternoon after the roadside assessment. Hot and thirsty work, and it is about 90

degrees in the shade. A stern taskmaster is Keith Beck; now we have to run between each rapid that we assess. "That's what I need," I mutter, "I'll run ten miles in the sun on asphalt in the morning, and then paddle Class V+ in the afternoon."

We all are trying to stay alert to avoid being crushed by traffic. There is almost no shoulder to the road; as the morning goes on everyone is engaged in a wearisome

dance, threading the cusp between the trucks on the highway and the long fall down the rubble-strew cliff to the river.

We arrive at Lucas Creek Falls; here the Japanese film company has set up to shoot a scene. They have painted a garish and fanciful map of the next mile or so of the river (a section that in fact contains nothing beyond class III). I love the rapid names that are painted on this



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thing. "Virgin's Tears" and "Hall of the Dragon" were two of my favorites. The film company rate rapids by numbers of little painted skulls; "Virgin's Tears" gets four skulls. I begin to wonder how many skulls the bigger rapids of the Cadillacs and Cataracts should get.

I decide on seventeen skulls for Toilet Bowl and twenty-three for the awesome Triple Threat. The helicopter flies up and down the canyon; the cameraman hanging outside on the skid. A helicopter had crashed earlier this week upriver near Johnsondale; we wonder if this one will crash into the Cataracts. Much discussion follows about the best name for a rapid that contains a smashed Japanese helicopter.

Keith's relentless prodding pays off. The kayakers have completed all 539 data points; somewhere miles up the road the prospective rafters are still doggedly filling in blanks. We abandon them, grab our kayaks, and head for Lucas Creek Falls, in order to get in a run of the lower half of the Richbar Section and the Cataracts. Our group consists of Keith Beck, Bill Britton, Rocky Contos, Peter Greene, Phil Martin and myself. Keith, Phil and I (considering ourselves to be the wise, old heads) are wondering what it will be like to boat with relative youngster Rocky. Rocky had burst on the Southern California paddling scene during the past year, with a good bit of fanfare and not a little controversy. I plan to keep an open mind; I reckon he is the reincarnation of Walt Blackadar. Boundless courage.

Below Lucas Creek Falls the rap-

ids are mainly class III and IV. It makes for a pleasant warmup as we start to get into a rhythm of boating together. The water is astonishingly warm; the lower Kern River has some of the warmest water in California. The views are incredible: golden hillsides spotted black from

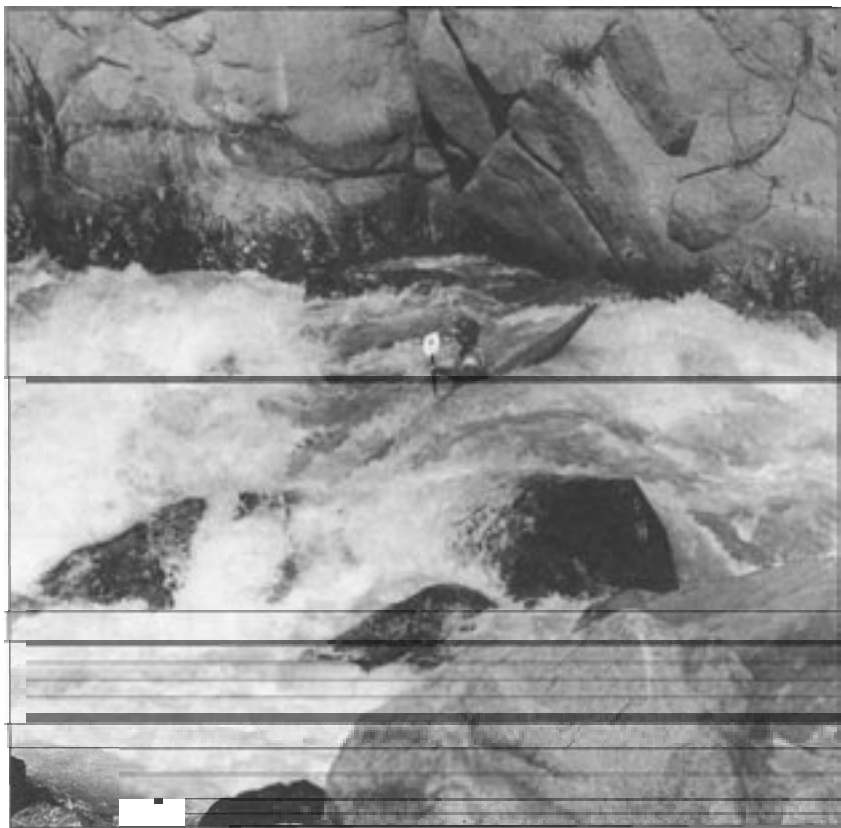
cleaner.

At the rapid I named Bolt Route (V to V+), in honor of several ancient climbing bolts and homemade hangers placed for top roping on the cliff to river-left, we made our first scout. The three gray-beards portaged; the youngsters decided to take the chal-

lenge. Some of their runs looked a little too exciting to me. I'll let Keith tell what he thought about this early part of the Cataracts:

KEITH:

There are several serious rapids in the Cataracts, with the greatest danger coming from the unpredictable nature of boulder piles. The rapids are not repetitive or similar; each has a very distinct feel and very defined route. The harder rapids tend to have one main line, although variations are available. The V's seem to have one feature in common: from the pool above, you can't intuitively tell where to enter. And if you



Rocky Contos in Fin Rock (IV+) Rapid. Photo by Ed Houston

recent wildfires contrast with lush, green riparian forest along the river. We see a great blue heron, a peregrine falcon, a red-tailed hawk, and several mergansers.

Things pick up below Nude Beach as we enter the Cataracts themselves. I am feeling strong and confident. All that training on Cherry Creek is paying off. Now we get into the action, as we work our way down through Two Hoes (IV+) and arrive at More of the Start (V-). I lead More of the Start and run a really nasty, twisty chute down the left. I am spun around, flip, and run the latter half of the chute upside-down. I direct everyone else over a big boof in the center; this is much

enter in the wrong place you won't be happy. There is often a "must make" move near the bottom of each rapid. You need to deal with the extensive complexity and get to this penultimate move in control, then finish just right. Frequently you feel like you are boating in a narrow creek; instead of banks you are surrounded by boulders, but the run is tight and precise, with steep drops and short pools.

Taking the Nude Beach put-in as mile 0.0, here is how it goes (at 1100 cfs): two Class IV to IV+ rapids in the first 0.2 miles, followed by a really nasty drop (Bolt Route) that needs more water or a large portage sign. At this flow I don't think there is a

safe route: I have never seen anyone run it that did not get sucked into a deep slot. Where you go in the slot is a **crap** shoot. Having seen it at really low water there is definite entrapment potential in there.

At mile 0.3, there is a long class IV approach to an eight foot ledge. The ledge is uneven, and there is a big hole at the bottom. Speed, speed, speed! The consequences of too little speed would be ugly; there are nasty rocks scattered in the hole.

The very next rapid features a ledge with two mounds that made us think of Marilyn, Jane, and Bridgett in a mammary sort of way. Some started calling this rapid Cleavage. I thought this a little crude, so I called it Tempest in a D Cup. At 800 cfs the ledge is unrunnable, so I would call the rapid Needs Sili-cone at low flow,

Call it what you will, it is a classic: a long class IV approach, with various routes leading to a small eddy above the crux ledge. Peel out of the eddy on river-right, go over several three foot ledges, gather lots of speed, ride the shoulder onto a big square boulder and launch: a clean ten foot drop into quiet water.

RICHARD AGAIN:

Everyone is amazed at just how much fun this stuff is and how well it is going. Then we arrive at Triple Falls Entrance (V). Keith and I scouted a long, turbulent line down river-left that we called Triple Threat Entrance. I'll let Keith tell about it:

KEITH:

Below Tempest in a D Cup [Call it Cleavage, Keith!] you can play in class III and easy IV for 0.3 miles. Then you get to the entry to Triple Threat. This "entry" deserves a name of its own. Staying hard river-left, you enter a placid class III stream shaded by willows. After several small ledges, the willows turn to boulders and the ledges get higher

and complex. There are two ledges close together, each five to six feet high, with funny cross-currents between. Pin rocks are scattered around and there is at least one cave-siphon stuffed with logs.

If you get through you end up in a blind room with four possible exits,

The very next rapid features a ledge with two mounds that made us think of Marilyn, Jane, and Bridgett in a mammary sort of way. Some started calling this rapid Cleavage.

only on of which is survivable. Concentrate on finding the right door, which is the next-to-last slot. It's boat-width wide and drops you seven feet into a calm pool. The other doors lead to pins you don't want to think about. The whole thing is at least 100 yards long, a solid V. You are now in position to walk around Triple Threat.

RICHARD AGAIN:

Keith and I make it through the Triple Threat Entrance and land in the pool above Triple Threat (Class V-VI or VI, you choose!). We take out on the right, and I look upstream for Rocky. He has not seen our nice, "safe" river-left line and is scouting an approach through an irrigated boulder pile on the right. Doesn't look like there is a line there at all. Rocky asks me to hang around as safety. Hmm, that doesn't sound like Rocky; I grab a throw rope. He runs it; crash, crash, crash, crash, crash, and he is through it and up-right. A brave youngster, that Rocky.

Phil, Keith, Bill, Peter and I completed our portage of Triple Threat.

No way was I going to run this thing; three huge drops back to back. Reminds me of Big Falls on the South Fork of the Salmon. Back in our boats we look upstream; there we see Rocky intently scouting. Some muttering and dire predictions from the Old Hats. Cameras in position, and

Rocky runs the latter two drops. Both nice and clean. A brave youngster, that Rocky!

I'll let Keith tell what he thought about

Triple Threat and then continue the story of what comes below:

KEITH:

Triple Threat needs a better name: it is really four drops. If you carry the first ~~two~~, the last ~~two~~ might be considered, if

~~that tool is not too high~~, considering them. The first two drops are on the far side of ridiculous.

No clear routes, reminds me of RuckaChucky. The whole portage is easy (including the entry rapid).

Below Triple Threat, you get some nice class IV stuff for 300 to 400 yards, ending with a series of ledges close together, with maneuvering between. This is Plink, the warmup for the Plank (V+).

The Plank is a big, black boulder sticking out from a six foot ledge. The boulder is a flat rectangle when seen from above, with its 20 foot dimension oriented downstream; it is about four feet wide. Most of the water goes left of the Plank into a awful hole. Everyone I have seen go in there comes out doing the breast-stroke and looking for a rope. But enough current goes the full length to let you "walk the Plank", which drops you past the hole. The trick is not to slide off the left side.

A long series of small ledges and holes lead to the Plank, and then you need speed and alignment. Once you are on the Plank there isn't a lot of depth to get a hard stroke in. After dropping off the end you can catch some eddies below, then figure out where to go next.

Where you go next is Plunk (get it?). It is a twisting route through, yes, more big boulders, leading to a staircase of five ledges. They get higher and closer together as you go. Between the first couple there are small eddies, but mostly you just keep cranking through each successively larger hole. The last three are especially fun: can't see a thing except the horizon of each and the mist from below.

Catch you breath for a couple hundred yards, and then run another long class V. This one is about 100 yards long, with a couple of small eddies and lots of twisting between some illogically placed boulders and ledges. Now comes a string of class III and IV before the last class IV+ or V drop. Triple Thrills.

You get the picture: three big drops. Each ledge has a very precise line. The first has a decapitation rock sticking out part way down, avoided by going way left. The other two feature piton rocks, and the final ledge has a big hole as well.

Now you can play around on some class III+ before climbing out above the Powerhouse.

RICHARD:

A few more words on the Plank. On our Saturday run, either Phil or I led the drop by boat-scouting (I forgot which), and Keith followed. We regrouped in the eddy above Plunk to watch Peter enter the drop. Peter inexorably flushed off the left side of the Plank and into the gnarly hole. After much ghastly chundering Peter emerges, grasping the stern of a badly battered Pirouette. He washes into a nasty narrow crack just above me. Peter, being the smart guy he is, stuffed the poor, broken boat in the crack, climbed aboard briefly, and then hopped onto a boulder.

His shattered boat runs Plunk on its own, and is recovered by our road support crew.

The next day, with more boaters

on the river, Keith, Alan Parker, and I were boating as a group of three. Without scouting, I set off into the Plank. It was a horrible feeling as I slid off the left side; I knew just what had happened to Peter yesterday. God, what a nasty hole! No hope for control. I rolled up a time or two,

Peter inexorably flushed off the left side of the Plank and into the gnarly hole. After much ghastly chundering Peter emerges, grasping the stern of a badly battered Pirouette. He washes into a nasty narrow crack just above me.

and, once, found myself partway out, but heading back in. (Road support crew claimed a backstroke or two here would have saved me, but I was far too disoriented to do much).

Time to pull the eject lever; my boat and paddle could fend for themselves. A long down time and then I was on the surface. A powerful crawl stroke to river right, and I found myself in a walled-in eddy. A little fooling around, and I found a crack I could climb out of the river. The 5.10 climbing rubber I installed on my boating shoes pay off once again!

Rick Norman, acting as road crew, collected my paddle and boat, amazingly unharmed, several hundred yards downstream, where they arrived after running Plunk. Needless to say, Keith and Alan chose to scout the Plank pretty darn well before they continued.

I'll now let Rocky provide his descriptions of some of the other drops on the river:

ROCKY:

Saturday Spring Rapid (V+).

This rapid has several parts: first is

the Entrance, which has two routes at 1400 cfs. A large boulder in the middle of the river divides the current. Both channels are runnable, but a view of the left one is prevented by the midstream boulder. One can see what looks like a piton-rock at the base of the left channel.

At lower flows, about 1000 cfs, I ran this channel. It's best to stay to

the left. At higher flows and the right of the boulder. Both channels converge

before the river pours into a hole, followed by a flowing pool for 15 to 20 yards, then a plunge into the Crease. Here the river drops another ten feet; on the left it enters a double hole. On the right it pillows up three to four feet, then merges with the holes on the left to create a strong outflow and a crease that is certain to swallow a

kayak. At 1400 cfs I ran it into the pillow, coming out in the crease, but at 1000 cfs we opted to run it on the left. It is easy to flip in the turbulence of this rapid.

Fortunately, the Crease flushes you out. But be prepared for the Eatery, another ten yards downstream. This is a huge hole that can be skirted on the left. On the right, the outflow goes right into a large rock wall. I've been stuck in that hole twice; both times I had lengthy rides. I escaped by muscling my way out to the left. Many boaters opt to portage the Entrance and run the Crease and Eatery only.

On my second run of Saturday Spring my skirt half-popped in the Entrance and I rolled my water-filled boat just before going into the Crease. Luckily, I managed to get a good line into the pillow. That buried my boat and filled it with more water. By the time I was at the Eatery, I went straight through the gut, actually sinking down and through the hole. It didn't stop me at all! I made it over to the side, still in my boat:

Left, Left Fall (V). Here the river

flows through boulder gardens and sieves. There is one runnable fall on the far-left; the total vertical drop is about eight feet. One can paddle up almost to the brink before getting out to scout. The river slides down about a 70 degree slope, pillows up on the right, and slams into a boulder at the bottom, before shooting all the water out to the left. It looks ugly and like a pitoning opportunity, but I've run it thrice with no problem. I simply aim my boat left as I plunge down. The boat will probably sink substantially before being thrust out, possibly with a small back-ender. My buddy John Hanser thought I was looking to die in this rapid at 1000 cfs. It's really not that bad.

Toilet Bowl (V+). Toilet Bowl is a huge rapid where the river drops down several rock-obstructed chutes. Most of the water pours to the left into two big holes (the last is most like a "toilet bowl"), the penultimate one backed-up by a rock on its right side. I opt for a route that starts in the center of the river, jumping the first five foot drop to the right into a small eddy, which I didn't catch at 1400 cfs, but did at 1000 cfs. From there one goes down the rest of the rapid on lines that look fairly clean. This is a very impressive rapid. The water could push you down the final far-right chute, which is really nasty.

This rapid is not run often, in fact, I've never seen it run by anyone else. I have heard, however, that it was boogie-boarded by Fast Eddie this year. I believe it, since I've seen video of him going over Upper Salmon Falls as well (another strong class V on the North Fork of the Kern).

Running the Entirety of Triple Threat (V-VI). On a recent Saturday at 1300 cfs I went down the Kern from Nude Beach with two other boaters (Chip and Tyler). We got a late start. At Triple Threat I decided to run the much feared first fall. I got worked in the Triple Threat Zero, the class IV before the first real class V-VI drop. I got spun sideways and plunged into the hole that way. It held me several seconds before I managed to work my way out.

I was able to make it to the small river-right small eddy before Triple Threat One. My route there was, of course, on the right chute. My plan was to stay to the far right as I entered, then head left over the fall, hopefully to the left of the boulder at the bottom.

This I did, though I slightly nosed in on a rock near the top right. When I got to the bottom, the boat went halfway on the boulder with its bow in the air. The stern caught the current, sweeping it to the left of the boulder, and I came out of it all. No flips, no major problems.

Downstream at the Plank, we had a swimmer. I rescued the boat. It was getting dark. The car was several miles downstream. Tyler and Chip stopped there, and I paddled on to fetch the car. I forgot that there was another class V coming. Nearing dark, I plunged partway into it. As I waited in the eddy in the middle of the river, I recalled, from the previous time I had paddled it, what an ugly drop this was.

I desperately searched for a way to the bank to portage, but there was no way out. I went down a smaller drop to look at another route; no go

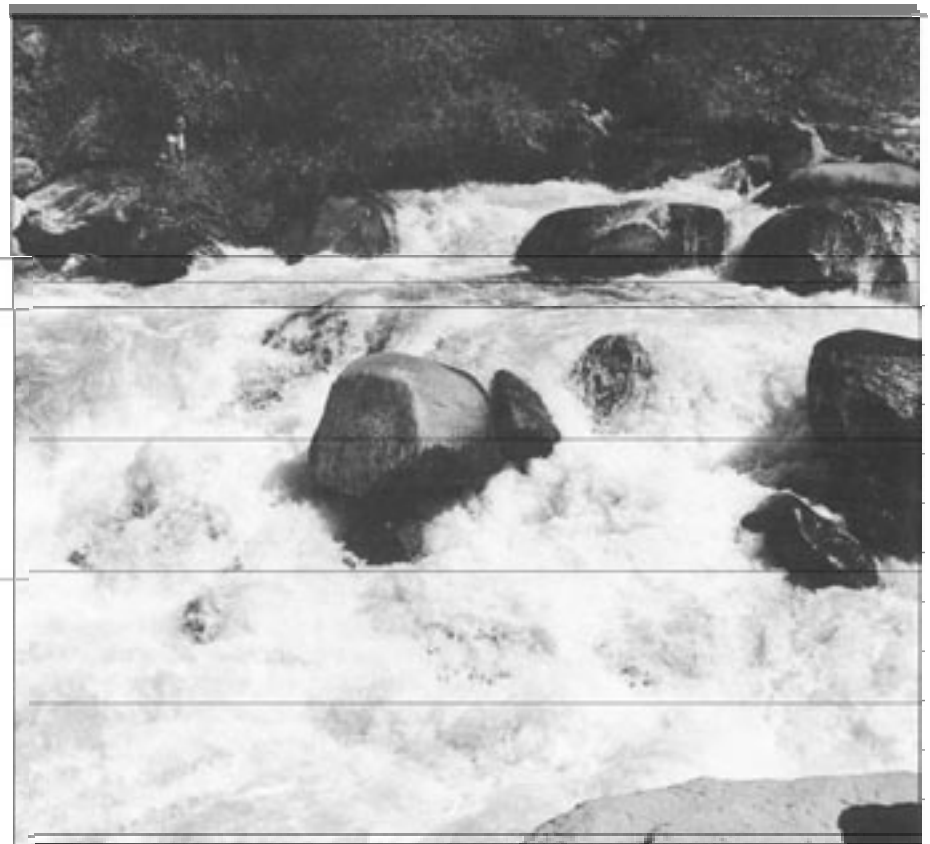
on this route to the left.

This is a terrible situation to be in: almost dark, committed to running a class V with nobody around, knowing that it was not that nice a drop, with more class IV below. It's amazing the things that go through one's head in a situation like that.

Well, after waiting around ten to fifteen minutes there, I went for it, and came through cleanly, the same route I had paddled before. At the next class IV drop, which I couldn't see at all because it was really dark, I took out and hitchhiked down to the car.

Editors Note: Richard Penny is an AWA Regional Coordinator and is author of *The Whitewater Sourcebook*, Menasha Ridge Press. Rocky Contos and Keith Beck are prominent California kayakers.

Overall view of Toilet Bowl when release from Lake Isabella was 1600 cfs. Rocky is on the other side scouting the rapid. Photo by Ed Houston



GO EAST, YOUNG MAN

Livin' High, While Layin' Low A Western "Spy" Investigates Chattooga IV

Story and Photos by Bob Cipoletti



Even as I crawl around on this bare wooden floor, looking for errant rolls of film and other tools of the trade by the light of a lantern, I have mixed feelings about leaving this place. It's Saturday evening, and I've already been holed up in Lonny's safe house in the woods for 4 days. I've managed to survive a tropical storm, rifle-tottin'; rednecks and a pack of dogs, obviously accustomed to feeding on whatever they can catch. The dogs that is.

Just 12 hours ago the remainder of my finely crafted plans, not to

mention my sanity, had been in serious jeopardy. Time was running out for my rendezvous with Jerry, the Grim Reaper, hundreds of miles away in West Virginia. It's funny how some of those names just seem to come naturally. I suspect that Jerry got his standing around the campground at Summersville Dam, wearing a hooded sweatshirt in the light of a full moon. Although, it could stem from his choice of lines when leading first-timers through the big Gauley rapids.

Days ago, I began to seriously question my obsession to complete this phase of my project. As an independent operative, these types of decisions are always left to my own discretion. But, I have a reputation to think of. To come back empty handed would be a disgrace, and would seriously undermine my ability to function within the Society. In our way of life, respect is everything.

What a contrast the last few days have been to the initial stage of my mission. Although this is my first project east of the Rocky mountains, the adjustment was painless, thanks to the willingness of Tennessean, Doug Ragan, formerly of Colorado, to reveal the location of a pristine watering hole, known only to a select local group.

More recently, I weathered the landing of Hurricane Opal, and the seemingly endless rains that preceded it, in gracious style, thanks to a true southern gentleman from Comer, GA, named Lonny McBride. Following our introduction on the Ocoee last Tuesday, I had tried in

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vain to convince him of my preference for living out of doors while on assignment. Besides, I had not planned to be in South Carolina for more than one, at most... two, nights, just enough time to complete my survey of Section IV.

But, he insisted on giving me directions to his personal hideaway on the Chattooga. The impact that his generosity was going to have on my life was becoming increasingly obvious as I made the drive there in a steady downpour. If not for him, I would not have been able to appreciate the weather forecast, which included several inches of rain throughout the region. After all, I had not been particularly thrilled with the prospect of collecting the necessary data with the Chattooga running 1 foot.

After nearly 1500 miles of driving, followed by three long days on the river, it seemed perfectly reasonable to spend Wednesday doing something that involved neither car nor kayak. Had I been cooking, eating and sleeping outdoors in that miserable weather, I surely would have been looking forward to getting into a nice dry boat and generating some body heat on the river. But Lonny's palatial retreat was made to order for sleeping-in to the delightful sound of steady rain on a tin roof, followed by a lavish spaghetti lunch and my favorite Riserva. It was only after checking late Wednesday afternoon, and finding that the Chattooga was running 4 feet, that I began to question the wisdom of taking the

day off.

By Thursday afternoon, it had rained almost continuously for two days, and the Chattooga had risen to 6.5 feet. Meanwhile, the Ocoee was reportedly running in the neighborhood of 9000 cfs and was closed to boating. Section III was buzzing with activity. The ledge at Dick's Creek was a ferocious river-wide hydraulic, with only a hint of a tongue cutting through the right side. The holes at Sandy Ford were immense, and the cart wheeling of a swimmer's boat was a sure indication of their holding power. I sorely regret not having witnessed the runs of Bull Sluice by the few courageous studs that attempted it.

On Friday the Chattooga was still running well over 3 feet. Since the local experts were spending the day staging impromptu rescue clinics on Overflow Creek, I decided to join Ilona and Neils, #1 and #2 for another run on Section III. Although

Neil #1 was prepared for anything, and surprised by nothing, it was Ilona who was clearly in charge. She assumed full responsibility for portaging her son's boat around countless obstacles, as well as tossing her husband's gear into the river above Bull Sluice. "I guess this means I'm gonna be in the dog house tonight", she said. Yeah, I guess.

Neil #1 will be the first to admit that it's extremely difficult to out swim a floating boat, even if you jump in the river immediately after it goes by. For me, the task was straightforward, since I still had my boat and paddle at my disposal. Nonetheless, I felt bad, knowing that I had probably passed his brand new Silver Creek while in pursuit of the boat. If you ever need a reason for not investing in a paddle that looks like a log....

There is a moral to this story: Always, always, always look for errant



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paddles floating among the driftwood in the river right eddy at Surfing Rapid. As of this writing, at least one has been known to float there for an hour. Miracles do happen. Ilona will attest to that.

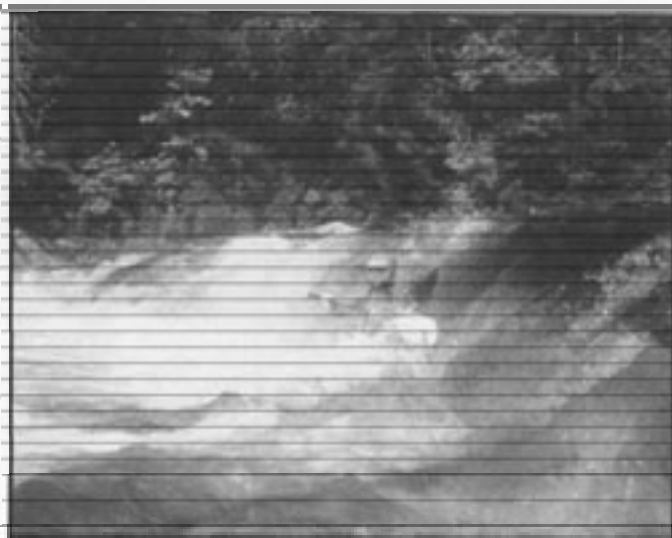
We wasted no time in celebrating the good fortune with some of Ilona's very own homebrew. Before it was all over, I had exchanged pleasantries with some friends of theirs, and was virtually assured that there would be traffic on Section IV the following day.

I went to bed, bound and determined to fulfill my commitment to Section IV the next day, regardless of the level. I would've slept fitfully anyway, unsure as I was of the circumstances that I'd be facing in the morning. Nevertheless, the tension continued to mount. I was certain that the sound that alerted me was my flashlight hitting the floor. Half awake, and reaching over the far side of the bed, I swept the floor with my hand when suddenly, POW! Even as the pain numbed my left arm, I was already thinking how this development would affect my performance the next day. Worse yet, I nearly dislocated my shoulder shaking that goddamn mousetrap off my finger.

The next morning, or this morning, depending upon your particular mode of time travel, Dave Woodward, a friend of the Three Bears from the day before, was standing in the doorway of the Chattooga Whitewater Shop, waiting to jump on Section IV.

The Chattooga had settled down to 2.6 feet. At any level, I would've felt pretty lucky to team up with Dave. He's got quite a reputation around those parts.

After walking up to Bull Sluice I



Ilona aka Mama Bear stickin' it in the camera at Second Ledge

procrastinated only long enough to photograph Dave's run before hopping in my boat. I've examined that rapid four days in a row, at four different levels, and I still have no idea where Decapitation Rock is.

Certain boaters prefer to blindly follow others through difficult rapids that are unknown to them. Although, there are times when following is the only reasonable alternative, I find that my own improvisations are more successful, if I have more information in advance. From my perspective, needless data loss, for whatever reason, is to be discouraged.

Fortunately, I had received a constructive crash course in faithful following from Ed 'Lupsycho' Lucero in the Upper Taos Box earlier this year. Otherwise, I might have been tempted to question Dave's wisdom when he told me that, "there really isn't anything to see", prior to paddling over the right side of the notorious Woodall Shoals. As it turned out, this was a fairly routine 'leap of faith', with nothing but a brief glimpse of the bright blue sky awaiting me at the bottom.

With the thrilling plunge over

Seven Foot Falls behind us, we approached Raven Rock rapid. Dave invited me to scout and portage if I wished. I found that curious, since thus far he had been pretty glib about the run, and this was supposed to be a class III rapid. After hopping up on a rock to watch Dave's run, my mind was made up. At 2.6 feet, Raven Rock is just about as much fun as you can expect to have running a drop from top to bottom. However, seeing someone else do it first is essential to enjoying it, since being caught off guard by the crux of

the rapid could change the outcome completely.

Eventually we arrived at Five Falls. Rest assured, Dave was strictly business in the eddy above Corkscrew. His advice was precise and comprehensive. It began with the importance of hitting the first wave at the top just so, and ended with a discussion of contingency measures should something go wrong. After all, that was Crack-In-The-Rock within a stone's throw.

While not continuous whitewater in the style of the Upper Animas, or even the Upper Merced, those rapids are closely spaced at that level.

I watched Dave ferry to river right to begin a flawless line, which ended abruptly in the eddy just below the main drop. Having ferried to river right myself, it occurred to me for the umpteenth time in my paddling career, just how differently waves look, depending upon your angle of view. I was hopelessly confused, and felt justified in ferrying back for another look.

It's hard to imagine what Dave was thinking sitting down below, not more than 50 feet away, watching me talk to myself. However, I was smil-

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ing, feeling foolish, not fearful, just being careful. After ferrying back to river right, I realized what a complete waste of time the second scout was. I STILL wasn't sure.

But, what the hell. So my line won't be flawless like Dave's. No, it was nothing at all like Dave's. My line took me directly to a place that someone later referred to as 'the shaft'. Now, I don't know how common that name is, but personally, I think it's just perfect. All I can remember is bracing for a vertical pin as I entered the water like a javelin from outer space. It never happened.

I went so deep that my boat didn't even surface until the bottom of the drop. I breached just a few feet from Dave. I wish I could've seen his face. He probably wishes that I could've seen MY face. After a quick roll, Dave proceeded to comfort me by pointing out that I couldn't possibly have chosen a more treacherous line.

Dave joined me on the bank overlooking Crack-In-The-Rock. Left crack and Middle crack were Single crack at this level, and Right Crack was also off limits. This left only Far Right Creek. Far Right Creek is a classic. It's fast and it's claustrophobic. I was reminded of the sneak around Gore Canyon's Toilet Bowl, only this was considerably longer.

We navigated the first part of Jaw Bone far left, running two medium-sized ramps in quick succession, then boat-scouted the rest of the drop. Dave went first. He jet ferried to the right and eddied out in midstream. Then he peeled out high and disappeared behind the huge boulders below. I passed on the eddy. Instead, I ferried across the seam in a broad arc to the fat pillow on the right, planted a Duffek downstream, brought her about, and let gravity do the rest.

As soon as it was obvious that I had nailed the correct line to the bottom of the drop, I heard Dave cheering. I have no way of knowing if he was actually that enthusiastic about

my technique, or if it was just an expression of relief after my performance in Corkscrew.

My thoughts of "four-down-one-to-go" were interrupted by a discussion between Dave and another boater. We were sitting on river left about two feet from the horizon line at Sock 'em Dog, the big dog of Section IV. The stranger was talking about staying to the extreme right, while Dave was insisting that the run was straight over the middle. Given this, it was impossible to climb out for a look since I was surrounded by smooth, vertical rock.

The stranger disappeared over the right. Dave went straight over the middle. I had to stick with what was working. I had no idea what to expect as I paddled straight over the top. How was I to know that this was the Puppy Chute? Just another leap of faith, which was, as it turned out, the easiest of the routes through the Five Falls.

After Jaw Bone came marathon play at a terrific spot called Qualude. After three of us took turns for what must've been an hour, I had enough.

The sun had long since fallen behind the hills, and we were boating in the shade. I was starting to get stiff. I announced my plans, and started down the river.

Someone had written that the two mile paddle across Lake Tugaloo always seemed like ten. To me it seemed like heaven. I know that sounds blasphemous, but I probably ended up paddling five miles, traversing the lake to photograph the lush tributaries. To each his own.


At 2.6 feet, Section IV will stand up to anyone's scrutiny. It's a thrilling playground, with splendid scenery, and rapids to the variety that I seldom have the occasion to run.

The next time I run Section IV, I sincerely hope that Dave, Neil, Lonny, and maybe even my good buddy, Randy, from Albuquerque will be there. Of course, Lonny has to drive from home, 'cause I get the bed.

I've grown so accustomed to this place that I feel like I should say good-bye to the neighbors. I wonder if there are any neighbors.

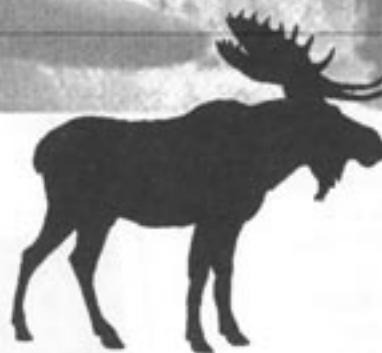
I hope Lonny likes the ristra.
Adios, my brother.





MOOSE FESTIVAL... A REAL WAHOO

By Chris Koll



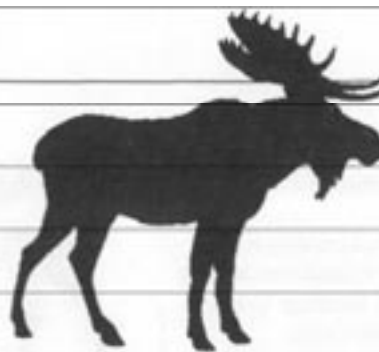
"Call for the level again, Cabot." I asked as we huddled under a tarp at the put-in to the Bottom Moose. A driving rain soaked the surrounding Adirondack forest.

Cabot Stone pulled a cellular phone from his hip pocket, punched in the numbers, and held up the receiver so we both could hear the tone from the automated gauge at McKeever. Beep, beep, beep, beep (pause) beep, beep, beep (pause) beep.

"4.31. Up a tenth," I said.

"It's not responding to the rain real fast, yet," Cabot said.

"But when it does...it will come up fast."



Cabot and I were waiting at the put-in to register contestants for the Bottom Moose downriver race scheduled to get underway Saturday afternoon of the Moose Festival weekend. Throughout the morning, hundreds of paddlers had been putting on the three sections of New York's Moose River—lured to the Adirondacks by the promise of good water after a summer of drought across the Northeast.

Many had required considerable persuasion. The record-breaking dry spell had depleted reservoirs across the region, canceling whitewater releases on several dependable fall runs. And during the weeks preceding the Festival, I had to reassure dozens of anxious paddlers that the Moose would have water...

So, now, as the trickle of water running through the middle of the tent increased to a **freshnet...** and then to a full-sized creek—I pondered the little ironies of life.

The day before, as promised, the Moose was running at a perfect level for the Festival weekend. A little under 4'—the class 2-3 Middle Moose run and the class 3-4 Lower Moose section would be low, but still adequate, while the level for the class 4-5 Bottom Moose would be optimal.

But the rains started late Friday night and by mid-morning, over three inches had fallen.

I had visions of the river rising suddenly in an enormous Tsunami—a wall of water like the Johnstown flood—cascading down upon the unsuspecting boaters already on the river. I looked upstream fully expecting to see a 20-foot wave with dozens of empty boats tumbling like colorful cockleshells in its foam.

"Call the gauge again, Cabot."

By early afternoon, the batteries of Cabot's cellular were nearly drained—as were my nerves. The Moose is my home river—and I know how quickly the river responds to a hard rain and how significantly the character of the river changes at high levels.

Moreover, most of the 400-or-so boaters on the river were visiting the Adirondacks for the first time, so were unaware that the Moose's difficulty was about to jump a class or two. We had organized the race and festival in an effort to introduce new boaters to the pleasures of the river—but as the rain continued images of lost equipment and epic trashings were played out in my imagination.

"Well, I guess if somebody loses a boat they've got to come back," I told Cabot. "At least to try to find their gear."

Fortunately, the level barely held for Saturday. By race time, the river was running a high, but manageable, 4.6'. It finished the day at 5'. The race went off without a hitch with Rok Scribar edging Ted Newton and Willy Kern for the first place.

And despite the usual trashings—to be expected whenever 400-plus boaters push off into a whitewater river—no serious misadventures were reported.

But later, Saturday night, as boaters assembled to enjoy the beer, food and music at the Festival celebration—conveniently housed in a covered pavilion—rumors of high water abounded. And at nine in the evening when Cabot whispered to me that the river was at 10' and rising—I knew the Tsunami had arrived.

BOTTOM MOOSE RACE RAGING SUCCESS!

By Chris Koll

Ironically, in a year when water releases, races and river festivals across the East were canceled due to drought conditions—the first annual Bottom Moose Race was almost lost because of high water.

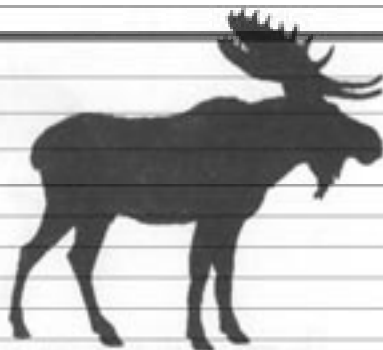
continued ►

An October storm dumped nearly four inches of precipitation over New York's Adirondack Mountains the night before the race, causing concern that the Moose would rise above 4.5'—the cut off level to stage the contest over the complete river.

At nine in the morning the level stood at 4.2—and rising. But at the two o'clock start time, the gauge still read just a hair over 4.5' and the race was on.

Twenty one competitors started the race above Fowlersville Falls in one-minute intervals. Not surprisingly, three of the fastest four times to the finish line below Crystal Falls were posted in plastic race or touring boats. The best time, 30:11, was registered by Rok Skribar of Albany, NY in a Prijon Yukon—a 14-foot touring boat.

Ted Newton turned in a surprisingly fast time of 30:27 in a Mirage—a standard whitewater boat—that was



good for second place. Willie Kern was third at 30:50 in another Yukon, while brother Chuck Kern was fourth at 31:05 in a Wavehopper.

The vertical drops of the class 5 Bottom Moose were particularly hard on the long downriver boats, with a number of wrinkles and creases reported by the top finisher.

Of course the abuse might have been much greater if the start of the race had been delayed for another hour or so. By 8 p.m. Saturday evening, the Moose was running at over 10 feet.

The results of the **1995** Bottom Moose Race were:

1. Rok Sribar, 30:11
2. Ted Newton, 30:27
3. Willie Kern, 30:50
4. Chuck Kern, 31:05
5. Tracy Clapp, 31:31
6. Chris Roberts, 31:44
7. John Kern, 31:46
8. Al Baker, 33:35
9. Rob Kelly, 33:50
10. Fred Correll, 34:06
11. Mike Duggan, 34:55
12. Deb Ruehle, 35:07
13. Adam Boyd, 35:15
14. Mike Burns, 35:40
15. Tom Budell, 36:14
16. Tony Malcowski, 36:15
17. Cory Zeigler, 36:45
18. Chris Koll, 38:44
19. Erin O'Conner, 40:40
20. Matteo Campbell, 45:04
21. John Guerrier, 46:04

SPRING SEASON ON BOTTOM MOOSE

October is fast becoming known as "Moose Season" due to dependable water levels, thanks to the annual drawdown of the Fulton Chain of Lakes. But what most boaters fail to realize is that the Bottom Moose offers optimal paddling conditions through much of the late spring.

"Typically the Moose is free of ice on the first weekend of April," explained AWA coordinator Chris Koll. "But during the early stages of snow melt—the river is usually too high to run the Bottom...that's when paddlers run the class 4 Lower section.

"But by the last couple weekends of April, the river is usually down to a manageable level," Koll said. "And during a typical year, the river falls

slowly through May, but maintains a flow more than adequate for the Bottom. Consequently, that's when we schedule spring Bottom Moose releases."

The tentative spring releases dates for **1996** are Sunday, April 21; Sunday, April 28; Saturday and Sunday, May 4-5; Saturday and Sunday, May 11-12; Saturday and Sunday, May 18-19; Saturday and Sunday, May 25-26; Sunday, June 2 and Sunday, June 9.

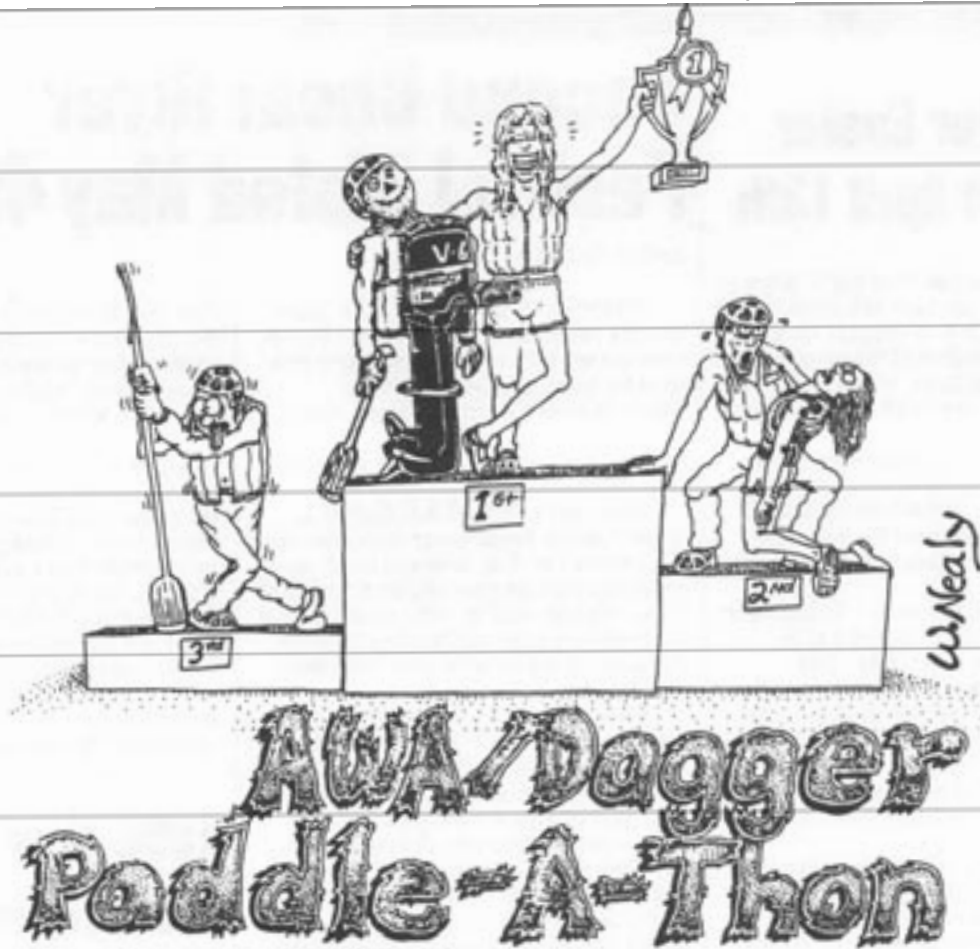
Appropriate levels for the Bottom Moose are considered to range from 2.5' to 5'. While the Bottom Moose is considered a class 4-5 run at any level—high water can make the river a difficult and dangerous class 5 river.

"It's funny because although the Bottom Moose sees plenty of boaters in October—you seldom see more than five or six people on a spring day," Koll said. "Even in the Spring of **1995** when there wasn't water anywhere else—the Bottom Moose was running with few people taking advantage of it."

Paddlers interested in running the Bottom Moose but unsure of the level can contact the Town of Webb Tourist Information Center at (315)369-6983. The Center charts river flow and can provide an educated prediction of weekend levels, as well as camping information.

The **1996** fall Moose season includes releases on Saturday and Sunday, October 5-6; Saturday and Sunday, October 12-13; Saturday and Sunday, October 19-20; Saturday and Sunday, October 26-27. The **1996** Moose Festival and Race is scheduled for Saturday, October 19.

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AWA lapel pins and AWA License plate frames

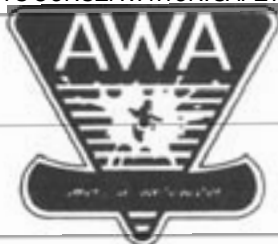
Entering is easy and fun!

- *Sign up local sponsors to pledge a contribution per river hour paddled by you during June 1996
- *Log your river time on the official entry form
- *Collect sponsor proceeds and submit to AWA by July 31, 1996
- *Receive your **prizes!**
- *Three highest earning individual participants will be Grand Prize recipients.

For official rules and entry forms, contact:

- AWA, PO Box 85, **Phoenicia**, NY 12464 or phone (914) 688-5569

Proceeds to benefit AWA's Whitewater Defense Project. HOWEVER, IF YOU ARE **PADDLING** ON BEHALF OF A CURRENT AWA AFFILIATE CLUB, ANY MONEY YOU RAISE **WILL BE SPLIT WITH 75% TO AWA'S WDP AND 25% FOR YOUR CLUB'S USE IN ITS CONSERVATION, SAFETY OR TRAINING PROGRAMS.** Affiliate participants are also eligible for Individual and Grand Prizes.



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Wolf River Easter Egg Hunt April 13th

The Tenth Annual Wolf River After Easter Egg Hunt has been scheduled for Saturday, April 13, according to Donna Kallner, vice President of Whitewater Specialty of White Lake, Wisconsin.

Each year Kallner and her husband, Bill, owners of the paddling center in northern Wisconsin, hide about 25 dozen colored eggs on a boulder strewn section of the Wolf River. Whitewater paddlers, many specially costumed for the event, sign in at the store, then leave en masse for the put-in.

"This is a BYOB event—Bring Your Own Boat and Basket," Kallner says. "The action is fast and funny. The kayakers have the advantage of speed, but it is easier for the egg hunters in canoes to reach some of the eggs we hide higher up on the rocks."

After an official count prizes are awarded for the most eggs, least eggs and best costumes.

"The Egg Hunt is the official start of the new season for the Wolf River Century Club. The Century Club helps paddlers recognize their personal paddling accomplishments over a season's time. By logging 100 miles or more in a season, paddlers earn a free limited edition tee shirt," Kallner added.

Boaters wanting more information about the River Egg Hunt should call Whitewater Specialty at (715) 882-5400.

Second Cheat River Festival Slated May 4th

by Bob Gedekoh

The West Virginia Rivers Coalition and the Friends of the Cheat have scheduled the second annual Cheat River Festival for Saturday, May 4, 1996 in Albright West Virginia, within a stones throw of the put-in of one of the east's most popular Class IV whitewater runs.

This year's festival will feature a Cheat Canyon Whitewater Race, live music, a silent auction, food and drink, and a marketplace for gear and local arts and crafts. The festival is being modeled after last year's popular and successful inaugural event, which attracted more than 1500 people.

Like last year, every effort is being made to include local residents of the Cheat watershed in the festivities, according to Dave Bassage, WVRC President. Integrating local residents and civic organizations into the social and political activities of the WVRC and the Friends of the Cheat has been a long standing goal of each organization. Several conservation groups will also operate booths designed to educate attendees about environmental threats to the Cheat, and what they are doing to protect the watershed.

Last year the Cheat was ranked eighth on American River's list of the

Top Ten Most Endangered Rivers in North America, primarily as a consequence of mine drainage and the threat of flood control dams, according to Roger Harrison, WVRC Executive Director.

The Cheat River Festival is co-sponsored by the American Whitewater Affiliation. Proceeds will be used to protect the extensive Cheat watershed, which includes some of the Appalachian's premiere whitewater runs, including the Canyon, the Narrows, the Blackwater, the Laurel Fork, the Shaver's Fork, the Dry Fork, Fikes Creek, Red Creek, Otter Creek and the Big Sandy.

For additional information contact Roger Harrison at (304) 472-0025 or Dave Bassage at (304) 379-3141.

1996 New England Slalom Series

Announced

The New England Slalom Series (NESS), a point race series for unranked and ranked C/D boaters, will begin its eighth season on March 24. The NESS is made up of nine individual races throughout New England. To qualify for a NESS award boaters must enter at least five of these races in the same boat class.

The NESS Awards ceremony will occur after the final race, to be held in Farmington, Vermont, October 19-20. The series is sponsored by Adventure Quest, Mad River Canoe, Millbrook Boats and Mitchell Paddles. Individual races vary in water difficulty from class I to difficult class III; novice boaters will want to consider this in deciding which races to enter.

The races are open to boaters of all ages including cadets (kids) and masters (>40)... paddling any kind of whitewater canoe, kayak or decked canoe, plastic ABS or Kevlar, tandem or solo.

Previous contestants should receive an information packet the first week in March. Others interested in participating should contact NESS 1996 c/o Linda Kazimierczyk at 49 Lufkin Rd, Weare, NH 33281 (603) 529-3919.

Kayaking Kids Workshops Announced

For the third year Perception has scheduled a series of workshops for those involved with youth paddling programs or those interested in starting one. Workshops will include prominent speakers including Tom Long, Gordon Black and Peter Kennedy, as well as round table discussions. Agendas and speakers will vary from site to site.

The workshops are slated for March 3-5 at the Nantahala Outdoor Center, March 19-21 in Portland, Oregon, March 29-31 in Charlottesville, Virginia, June 2-4 in Camden, Maine and June 17-19 in Woodland Park, Colorado.

Additional information is available from Perception, Inc. at (803) 859-7518.

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1996 North Branch of Potomac Releases

by Ed Gertler

Once again the Corps of Engineers has scheduled four weekends of recreational water releases from Jennings Randolph Dam (aka Bloomington Dam) on the North Branch Potomac River. The dates will be as follows: April 6, 7, 20, 21, and May 4, 5, 18 and 19. Flow will be 850 to 1,000 cfs. We expect to have at least seven hours of water each day, from 9 am to 4 pm. But in the event of a dry spring, either flow volume or duration of discharge could be cut back.

For that reason, paddlers are advised to confirm the releases a day or two beforehand by calling the Corps of Engineers Baltimore District Hotline (410-962-7687), U.S. Weather Bureau River Forecast Center (703-260-0305), or Canoe Cruisers Association Hotline (301-656-2386). In the event of unusually wet weather, which might force the Corps to release more than 1,000 cfs, the Corps would officially state that the release is "canceled." This does not mean that the dam is shut off. It just means that because more than 1,000 cfs is being released, which the Corps considers a dangerous level, the Corps is disavowing liability for anyone on the river.

The North Branch is located in western Maryland along the West Virginia border, near the Savage River, site of the 1989 World Whitewater Championships. The water release breathes life into a six and a half-mile stretch of Class 2 and 3 whitewater, set in a remote and scenic gorge. Comparable to the Lehigh, Casselman, or Nantahala, this is the sort of stream that novice and intermediates will enjoy as a downriver run, and more advanced paddlers will enjoy as a playground. Just show up at Bloomington, Maryland on any release morning and look for cars with boats. Someone will be glad to adopt you.

These releases are the product of over fourteen years of politicking by a coalition of the American Canoe Association, River and Trail Outfitters, and Cheat River Outfitters, and more recently, the Mineral County West Virginia Development Authority. Mineral County is sponsoring these releases (which means the Corps has palmed off legal and financial responsibility on these nice people). So please drive down to nearby Keyser, West Virginia and patronize the restaurants,

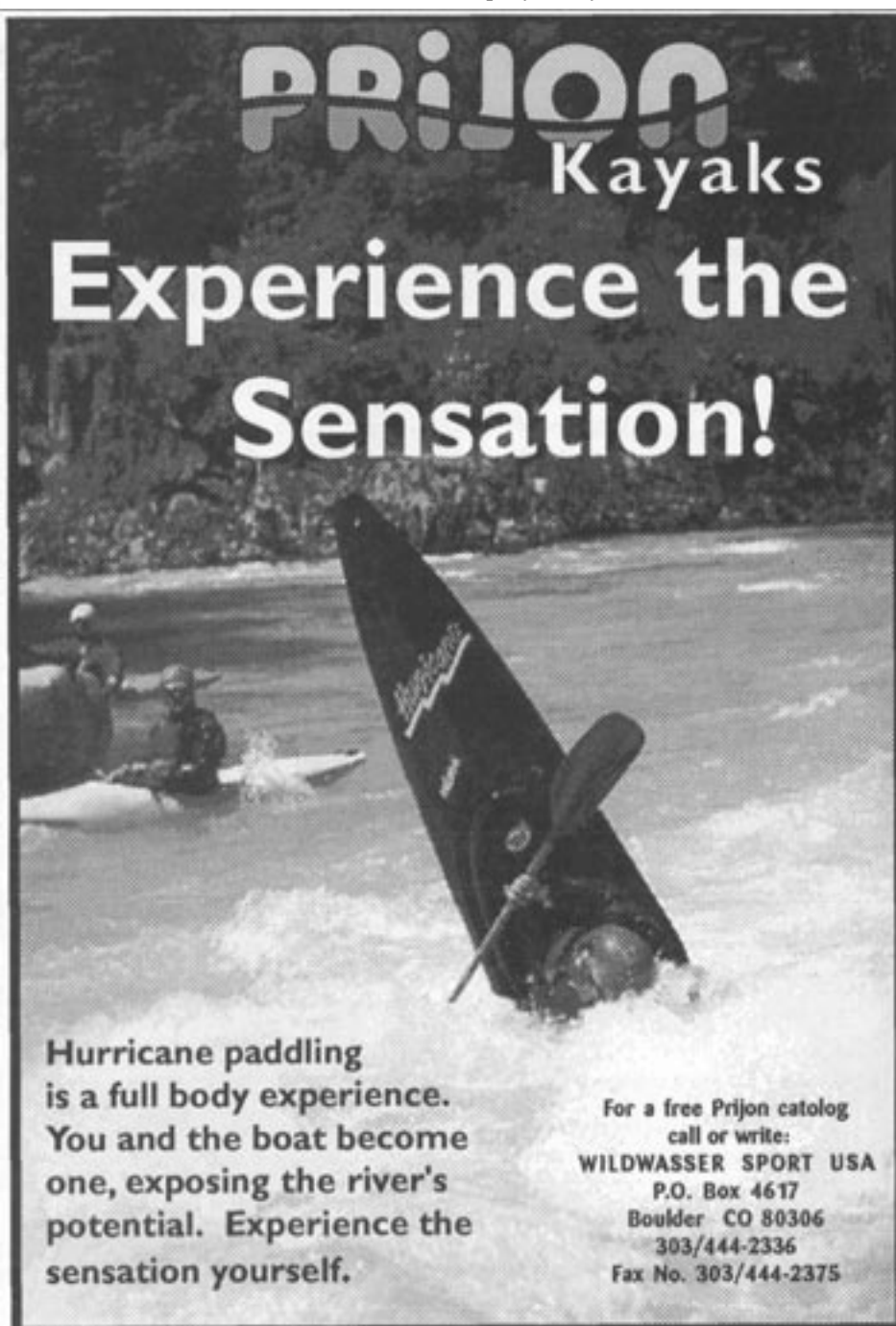
stores, gas stations, etc., and let your identity as boaters be known. Only if we prove to be an economic asset to the community can we look forward to their necessary support.

If you desire more information on Mineral County facilities, give a call to the Chamber of Commerce at 304-788-2513. Also, there are some nice campgrounds near the Randolph Dam (probably available for May releases) and at Big Run State Park, in Maryland.

Unfortunately, the Corps has insisted on passing on their extra costs to the users. Paddlers can anticipate a \$2.00 access charge to use the Barnum put-in.

Also, Westvaco has posted most land at Bloomington. While we have so far had no problems taking out at the mouth of the Savage, be prepared for the possibility that Westvaco might enforce their warnings. Please do not give the security guards a hard time. An alternative take-out would be just upstream of the stone arch railroad bridge in Bloomington, with parking up at the school parking lot in town.

Finally, note that the popular parking lot in front of the two-story brick building is private property. Please take care not to block the driveway or to offend this company's very tolerant owner.



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WHITEWATER COURSE TO BE BUILT IN

MICHIGAN

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board (which is funded by Michigan's oil and gas revenues) has approved a grant to the City of Williamston to be applied toward the construction of a whitewater rapids on the Red Cedar River. Williamston (population 3,000) lies about 20 miles East of Lansing,

Michigan. The whitewater rapids will replace a dam which was built in 1840 and destroyed in a 1975 flood.

This project is unique because the Red Cedar River water volume is relatively small, so the facility will be aimed primarily at novice canoeists and kayakers.

Utilizing this grant of \$342,700, and \$425,000 already realized from the sale of bonds by the Williamston Downtown Development Authority, the City of Williamston expects to commence construction in the Fall of 1996.

The City of Williamston's previous efforts just to reconstruct the dam at the site were rejected by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources due to environmental considerations. City Council member Ed Noonan undertook to develop as alternative that would create a more natural and aesthetically pleasing route for migrating fish than a fish ladder, while at the same time creating a recreational resource. After many years of recreational canoeing in Michigan, Alaska and Ontario, Noonan conceived the project that is now being developed.

The Williamston whitewater project entails constricting the flow of river water through a combination of concrete anchors and large boulders, thereby forming a series of cascades for canoeing and kayaking. Though it will cost less than a dam and fish ladder, the whitewater facility will serve the same purpose. It will raise the water level by about 3 feet and restore an impoundment extending about 9,000 feet upstream. The impoundment itself is expected to be utilized for recreational activities: flatwater canoeing, boating, fishing and bird-watching.

The Red Cedar River through mid-Michigan was utilized by Indians and early trappers as part of a canoe route between Lake Erie and Lake Michigan.

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New Whitewater Frontiers: The AWA On-Line

by Joyce Vann and Rick Hudson

The AWA is constantly exploring new ways to fulfill its mission to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities for enjoying these resources safely. The Internet and the World Wide Web provides an effective new tool that enables us to offer boating enthusiasts and environmentalists information and opportunities which were previously unavailable or difficult to locate because they were scattered in a variety of places.

David Fallside and other volunteers have meshed the unique resources of the Internet well with the mission of the AWA. The Web and the Internet are all about information. They make it easy to connect information from many sources so that it can be accessed from one central place. Dispersing information, whether about safety, conservation issues, river access, or whitewater events, is central to fulfilling our mission. Our Web pages are the perfect complement to more traditional grass roots conservation and our journal because they provide us with the opportunity to reach even more people. Just by contacting our Web site, users all over the United States and around the world have immediate access to facts they need to take political action, to plan a trip, to buy the proper equip-

continued on page 64

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ment, or to enjoy river resources which are nearby or thousands of miles away. The response to this on-line resource has been so successful that we have thousands of visits to our site each week.

Our Web site includes the table of contents from our current journal and some of the best articles from our current and past journals. When an important conservation issue, such as the Colorado Stream Safety Act or the Kings River Project Relicensing, needs to be publicized, we put it on our home page. Due to the dynamic, constantly changing nature of conservation work and the frequent updates we are able to provide on the Web, most folks find themselves coming back regularly to the AWA Web pages.

However, the Web also allows us to offer information and resources which time, space, and economics prevent us from offering in our bi-monthly journal. Our Whitewater Resources page provides WEB paddlers with several ways to get up to the minute information about river levels all over the country. Paddlers can get phone gauge numbers from every state. Since the Resource page is also linked with the U.S. Geological Survey

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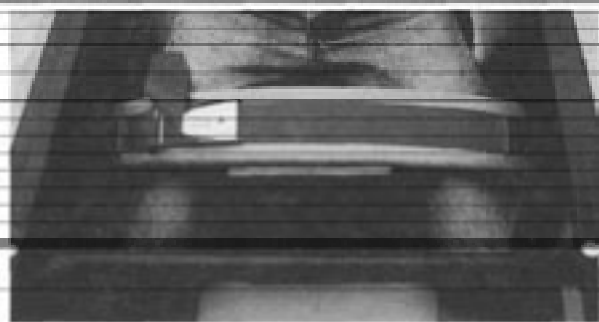
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NO FEAR!!

by Tim Williams

Below: Two paddlers climbing in Wyoming. Tim Williams climbing and John Clardy holding the rope.



A climbing partner once told me "Well rounded equals zero." His point was that unless I made the choice between rock climbing and creek boating, I would never realize my potential in either. During my fruitless efforts to discount his theory, I began to see more clearly that climbing and creek boating appealed to me for basically the same reason, to put one's self in the most precarious position imaginable and still remain composed and move gracefully. I soon realized that the similarities between climbing and paddling offered an effective metaphor for teaching climbers to paddle and paddlers to climb.

Realizing that the motivations of rodeo boaters and sport climbers were parallel and that traditional climbers and creek boaters shared similar passions enabled me to teach more effectively and also to understand more completely why these disciplines are so irresistibly fulfilling. Unfortunately, not all of these similarities are favorable. My perspective as a climber and a paddler has also made me

extremely cautious as to the future of creek boating.

When I began climbing a number of years ago, I did not have a grasp of the difficulty rating system. Each climb was a mystery. I was forced to look up at each climb and determine whether or not my partner and I were capable of ascending safely and gracefully. As I became more experienced and familiar with the rating scale, I was able to use climbing guide books to keep myself from getting in over my head. Instead of approaching each climb as an unknown, I began to rely on the information provided in guide books.

But I soon realized the dangers of my blind faith. As soon as I began to trust someone else's judgment, I lost connection with my own ability to judge wisely. Any paddler who has followed verbal directions over a blind drop, only to get stuffed into the front of the boat like an Umpa Lumpa, because you were supposed to boof right instead of left, understands the error of blind faith. Trusting

a numerical difficulty rating from a climbing guide book is analogous to listening to a paddler who may or may not know his left from his right.

The rating system in climbing has been refined with great precision. Subtle differences in difficulty can be easily described, thus allowing climbers to measure personal "success" with numerical accuracy. Although this accuracy has many practical advantages; it has also changed the focus of climbing from adventure and camaraderie to indoor gymnastic training and the boasting of personal success. When describing their best day, many climbers today do not even mention or remember who they were climbing with or where they were. Unfortunately, many climbers cannot enjoy a day on the rocks unless their success can be quantified. This drive for a quantifiable level of success leaves little room for adventure and camaraderie.

Paddling seems to be moving in the same direction. I recently overheard one paddler asking another about his first trip down the Narrows of the Green river. The emphasis of his questions was not about the people he paddled with or even the river. The only issue of concern was "Did you run Gorilla?". Testosterone laden boasting seems inevitable in any sport. Trying to prevent it is pointless. My concern is that an accurate open-ended difficulty scale for creek boating could promote competitive attitudes, thus creating more problems than it solves. Competition in rodeo boating or racing can be healthy and fun. Competition at the limits of creek boating difficulty can only be dangerous.

Climbing's open-ended scale has fostered both good natured and obnoxious competition at the crags and in the magazines. Some climbers believe that the sport has been ruined by pushing the limits of difficulty, as opposed to embracing a love of adventure. Whether or not this is true is a topic of interesting debate. But in the big picture, pushing the limits of difficulty in climbing is relatively harmless. The sport of climbing has a distinct advantage over creek boating, which enables it to handle an open-ended difficulty scale. As climbing becomes more technically difficult, it generally becomes more safe. Cutting edge climbers are pushing the limits of physical difficulty on bolt protected face climbs which require amazing technique and power, but minimal risk of death or injury. The cutting edge of creek boating is a little sharper.

As creek boating becomes more diffi-

cult, it inherently becomes more dangerous. Arrogance and competitiveness in climbing can be obnoxious, but rarely deadly. This attitude in creek boating is not only deadly, it is also dangerous to the future of the sport. When someone successfully runs the first Class VIII rapid, it will not be long before hordes of paddlers with "No Fear" stickers on their boats will rush to put their minimal skill to the test. Access and liability issues will multiply exponentially.

In climbing, I have learned to ignore difficulty ratings and guide books. I realized that I actually missed getting in over my head. The times I felt most alive in climbing were mid-epic. Knowledge of difficulty ratings had been robbing me of those epic experiences, and I believe it could do the same for paddling. A big question in paddling that has existed long before anyone thought of improving the rating system has been "how do I decide whether or not to do this rapid?". An accurate rating system adds some dangerous factors to that decision making process. "If I have already paddled a class 5.4 rapid, maybe I should push a little harder and do this 5.5 rapid." "Joe Shmo did a 6.1 rapid and I think I am better than he is. I should at least be able to do 6.2."

Thoughts like these should not even enter the minds of paddlers running serious drops. Thoughts like, "Am I having a good day?" or "If I blow it, who is ready to pull me out and how will that affect them?" or "Are there any lemmings on the bank?" get irresponsibly pushed aside. I like the idea that rapids such as "Stairway to Heaven" are off the numerical scale and require a long winded and detailed explanation. This rapid deserves and demands more than a number. Deciding to run it and many other drops like it based on anything other than personal inspection and skilled intuition is beyond stupid. An accurate difficulty rating system could possibly facilitate this stupidity.

Our present inefficient means of rating rapids has an advantage in that it forces each paddler to make these monumental decisions based on thought and observation, not numerical calculation.

Being able to accurately rate the difficulty of a river will obviously help the wise and cautious paddler from getting in over his or her head. My concern is that wise and cautious paddlers will soon be a very small minority. All one needs to do to see the future of paddling on its present course is pick up a copy of Climbing magazine. The push for higher num-

bers and boasting rights has transformed a once informative magazine into an obnoxious showcase for personal achievement at any cost. If one still doubts that paddling could go down this road, just sit on the bank and count the number of boats with "No Fear" stickers on them. The sad fact is that the "No Fear" attitude sells boats. This type of boater will be salivating at the opportunity to run the first class VIII creek, with no concern for who will have to risk their own lives to pull them out of an undercut. Their only concern will be whether or not it was caught on video.

I am writing this article from a point of enlightened ignorance. My perspective as a climber and creek boater allows me to see the problem coming, but does not offer an effective solution. The sport of

climbing has barely begun to address the problems that an open ended numerical rating scale have created. Pushing the numerical limits of difficulty in climbing has resulted in obnoxious attitudes in magazines and on the rocks. As offensive

as this has become, one can still find secluded climbs away from the "No Fear" crowd and far from the reach of guidebook authors.

Pushing the numerical limits of difficulty for the sake of bragging rights in creek boating will be deadly to the unwisely motivated paddler and to the sport itself. Pristine creek runs with no access problem are already extremely rare. I believe that creek boaters and the paddling community have the opportunity to address this problem as discussions of a new rating system are beginning. It could be that the adventure of the unknown is not only more fulfilling for the individual, but ultimately a more wise choice for the future of the sport.

EDITORS NOTE: Tim Williams is uniquely qualified to contrast the rating scales used in whitewater and rock climbing. Recognized as an accomplished paddler and outstanding climber, Tim has been featured in various whitewater videos and is a newly designated River Coordinator for AWA. Tim considers himself to be among a group of safety conscious boaters and climbers who are interested in advancing the level of steep creek boating and technical climbing.

Below: Jim Fortune negotiates a small technical drop under the watchful eye of Ron Stewart



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Eric Jackson appears with the permission of the U.S. Canoe and Kayak Team.

THE RATINGS GAME

by Scott Shoup

For the past year I've observed the commentary involving our outdated whitewater rating system here in the United States. So far, there have been some excellent suggestions, and the current trend seems to be toward a modified 1-6 scale that will mimic the system used by the climbing community. Today I see three key problems with our current system.

The first is that when I started boating, 12 years ago, and ever since the people that taught me how to boat learned, back when the dinosaurs roamed the earth, the whitewater rating system had been a closed 1-6 scale. Nobody except for suicidal maniacs, on rare occasions, ran even class 5 whitewater. The "pros" went up to the Gauley or the Meadow for class 5 action and a 200 feet per mile creek was considered to be scary steep. Today the game is a bit different.

The Gauley is revered by many as a great play river and 200 ft. per mile on a creek is only considered to be moderately difficult. However, the rating system has not moved along with these changes. These days the "pros" go to the Green for class 5 action, and rapids, unfathomable ten or so years ago, are being run on a regular basis. The result has been that a large number of rapids have been stuffed into the class 5 category, because nobody has had the guts to say hey, "WE ARE RUNNING CLASS 6".

In all the discussions that I have seen, this trend continues; everyone seems to want to chop up the class five category with a bunch of confusing little numbers, without admitting that class 6 is run regularly now. If we allow ourselves to admit to running class 6, rating rapids like Gorilla, for example, class 6; and explain that the scale is free to move upward to class 7 and beyond, we would allow for the infinite growth of the rating system and an unstuffing of the class 5 category.

The rapids that would remain class 5, along with those in classes 1 through 4, can continue to be subdivided with the current pluses and minuses that we all use. If you look at the climber's system you'll see that they have no "unclimbable top end". For instance, I just read about how the "worlds hardest free climb (5.14d)" is being challenged by a new French route rated an unheard of 5.15b. Anyway, my suggestion is to **open up the top of the current whitewater scale to class 6 and beyond.**

The second problem I see with our current rating system is its truly fatal flaw. It attempts to describe how difficult a rapid is and how dangerous a rapid is at the same time. As a result most people equate class 5 with death and dismemberment and class 3 with safety. I can think of a number of rapids that are difficult enough to deserve a class 5 rating, yet they are very unlikely to severely injure someone in the event of a swim or pin. On the other hand, I have seen a class 3 kill. Of all the issues faced in the rewriting of our whitewater rating system, I think this is the most important.

We can no longer combine difficulty with danger. What I suggest is continuing the current scale as a basis for difficulty and adding a letter that describes the level of danger involved. An aspect of the rating system used by the climbing community is similar to this. They use R's to describe routes that have potentially lengthy or dangerous falls and X's for routes that have sections where a fall may kill you. A whitewater system that denoted a few degrees of hazard would be of great use to boaters, particularly out of towners or beginners. An R could mean that there is an unusually dangerous situation and an X could mean that this rapid has a tendency to severely injure people or has killed. This would

give boaters a quick reference as to a rapid's hazards, be they seen or unseen, and a rapid's history.

A third problem in trying to keep a grading system consistent. Throw in variables such as volume, gradient, push, style (i.e. creek vs. big water), and technical difficulty and things can quickly become problematic. It has been proposed that we come up with "standard rapids" (benchmarks) for the various grades. On this I have mixed feelings, but I must say that I don't think a set of standard rapids is particularly necessary. I say this because of the number of rapids already rated by guide books, and the fact that we will always argue about how hard or easy rapids are.

Regardless of what becomes of the rating system, we must all remember that we must make the decision to run, or not to run, ourselves, while carefully considering the particular time and situation. Remember - even the best walk the easy stuff from time to time.

P.S.- KILL THE ROMAN NUMERALS!!!

Editor's note: Scott Shoup is an accomplished and experienced paddler whose award winning photo is featured on the current AWA poster.



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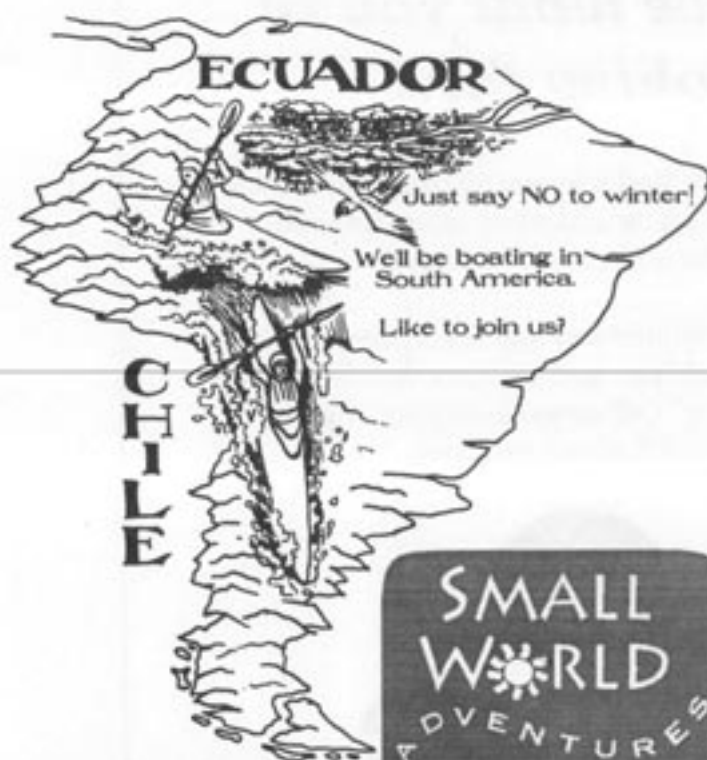
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The editorial staff of American Whitewater carefully reviews all material submitted for publication. We are particularly interested in receiving full length feature articles, conservation and club news, special event announcements, articles pertaining 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, AWA 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 using Wordperfect on a 5 1/4" single sided flexible disc. Please use the standard default settings; do not alter the margin or spacing parameters. If you use a different word processing program and/or smaller disks, send us one anyway... we may be able to transfer it to our files. 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 dupli-

cates 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 sto-

ries 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 intentionally offend our more sensitive members and readers.

Please check all facts carefully, particularly those regarding individuals, government agencies and corporations involved in river access and environmental matters. You are leaally resuonsible for the accurav 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.

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Author's note: In late winter, 1996 Bam Bam McBride and Kenny Omaha shut down their chemical factory and journeyed to the Deep South, in search of the mysterious and deadly Aquadrome. While they were away a psychopath hacked her way into their database and stole the specifications for their new, top secret kayak design. The nameless maniac (rumored to be Omaha's ex) peddled the plans to Deception, Gagger and No Wave, the Chevy, Ford and Chrysler of U.S. paddlesports. None of the "big three" offered her a dime, so she traded the stolen data to AWA for a free subscription to American Whitewater. Here, in its entirety, is the technical literature and advertising material for McBride-Omaha's revolutionary new megaboat.

Tomorrow's Kayak Today!

By Jonathan Katz

So you want to buy a whitewater kayak? And you've clawed through the "Special Buyer's Guide Issues" of all those slick canoeing magazines. And now you're drowning in a river of jargon: volume, **layups**, outfitting, chines and rails. Not to mention rocker, which you know perfectly well is something grandma sits in. You've bought **cars**—new cars—before, and you're not going to let the Big Three of the American Kayak Market [you know who they are] feed you the same sewage of claims, counterclaims, disinformation and downright lies you ate the last time you sucked in your gut and stepped onto the killing floor of an auto showroom.

So what do you do? You journey beyond the cutting edge, deep into the tangled thicket behind the lunatic fringe, to a small factory in a poor backwater of North Appalachia where an insane chemist and his depraved partner throw you their sales pitch, a screwball over the outside corner for Superyak: Tomorrow's Kayak Today.

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The Cheat River Festival is co-sponsored by the American Whitewater Affiliation. Proceeds will be used to protect the extensive Cheat watershed, which includes some of the Appalachian's premiere whitewater runs, including the Canyon, the Narrows, the Blackwater, the Laurel Fork, the Shaver's Fork, the Dry Fork, Fikes Creek, Red Creek, Otter Creek and the Big Sandy.

For additional information contact Roger Harrison at (304) 472-0025 or Dave Bassage at (304) 379-3141.

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Superyak makes driving to the river quicker and livelier, too. Bioplasm is virtually invisible to radar and harmlessly reflects laser beams and other speed-trapping technology into the sky and away from John Law. Don't fatten some foreign state's coffers with needless speeding and drunk driving tickets. Don't waste valuable vacation time in jail. **Superyak** is Stealth technology for the car. Less time behind the wheel means more time on the river. Strap your 'yak on your rack and speed like there's no tomorrow! Warp factor seven, Scotty!!

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Coming next: Its a plane! Its a playboat!! Its Skyyak!!!

©Jonathan Katz January 4, 1996



PHOTO BY ED MICHAEL

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Werner paddles have been helping paddlers be fast and clean for more than thirty years.

Our paddles the Wenatchee and the Ocoee have been setting the standards for years. We're now offering three new blade shapes to enhance your paddling pleasure.

The Rogue has an asymmetrical shape and less dihedral for those paddlers who prefer a flatter power face.



The Quest is shaped like the Rogue but with a smaller blade face for anyone who wants a quicker stroke rate.



The Rodeo is narrow at the tip for finesse in the green water, widening toward the shaft for power in the pile.



The Werner name stands for quality, performance and great design—exactly why Werner Paddles are the ones you see on the water! Call 1-800-275-3311.

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

See where Werner can take you!



WERNER

EVERETT, WASHINGTON USA

Loving...

And

Lying....

The Water Flows Both Ways

by Carla and Patook Garrison-Grotok

We found the lists of Lies That Boaters Tell published in the November/December issue of American Whitewater most amusing:

lies boaters tell other boaters... lies they tell themselves... lies they tell their paramours.

But you left out the most important and insidious category of boat related lies of all... lies told to boaters by their non boating significant others.

Since we are both hard core whitewater boaters, we have never had occasion to lie to one another... as least regarding our activities on the river. But we have many friends... and we have heard many sad, sad tales.

And so we offer the following list of Lies Told to Boaters by Their Non Boating Significant Others as a cautionary tale. Those of you who are still single... take heed. Those who are already in the throes of blessed matrimony... read it and weep!

1. You kayak!!! I've always wanted to learn how!

2. A sprayskirt and helmet! Just what I wanted for Christmas!

3. I'll work on my roll... when it gets a little warmer.

4. I don't mind running shuttle at all.

5. I love camping in tents... especially in sanitary landfills.

6. Sure. I'd love to see your video of the Green Narrows again.

7. I just love your kayaking friends. They're so colorful!

8. We simply have to go to cousin Sandy's wedding. She came to ours.

9. If you would rather go to the Russell Fork than spend the weekend with my family, go ahead. I won't hold it against you.

10. My mother never says a word about you're boating all the time.

11. Once we have a baby to keep me company, you can go canoeing as often as you like.

12. The baby cried all weekend long. She missed you so much.

13. It's a big promotion and a hefty raise, but if you really don't want to move to Kansas City, I understand.

14. I have no idea why Little Mike would rather take tap dance lessons than learn to kayak.

15. I have no idea where your sprayskirt is.

16. How should I know why you don't get the N.O.C. catalogue anymore?

17. I don't remember any boater named Chris calling Friday night.

18. I have no idea why the junk man hauled your kayak away.

19. If you give up boating I promise I'll never ask you for another thing.

20. I am not being unreasonable in this settlement. All I want is the house, the car and monthly support payments. After all, I'm letting you take all the boating gear.

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PADDLER: Vernon Keith

PHOTOGRAPHER: Bobby Hall

We build Probes in 4 different sizes to accommodate a wide range of paddlers of different sizes and skill levels. High performance, yet user friendly. We believe our Probes meet the needs of a greater variety of paddlers than any other whitewater playboat. We have sold many hundreds to paddlers who praise their performance.

PROBE 11, 12 & 12-II — Viper-like performance, yet extremely user friendly. Dry, agile and quick to accelerate. Spins on a dime and slips into the smallest eddies. Yet they easily hold on ferry angle and track surprisingly well. Due to the extreme flare of the sides, the Probes have an amazing amount of final stability. A choice of three lengths to fit your weight and/or paddling skill. The paddlers who own these boats rave about their performance. This is a playboat you may never outgrow.
rocker 4-1/2" and 5" **\$612.50**

RODEO...A new shorter playboat for rodeos and steep creeks. Never have ends been so easy. Spin in the hole - Surf on the wave - Grab a smaller eddy. 10'6" **WOW!** This canoe took 4 of the top 6 places in the 1995 World Rodeo.

VIPER 11 & 12 - Dry, quick and agile. The choice of steep creekers and rodeo competitors. A winner if you can handle the edge. rocker 4-1/2" and 5"

Winner 1993 World Rodeo (1st, 2nd & 3rd)
Winner 1993/1994 Ocoee Rodeos
Winner 1994 Ottawa River Rodeo

PROBE 14...Mohawk's new tandem/solo playboat has all of the hot performance features of the Probe 12 in a larger boat. A great boat for those tandem paddlers looking for extra performance. The Probe 14 can be factory outfitted in a three position, two position or a solo configuration. An excellent choice for larger paddlers or those who prefer a longer boat. As a solo boat, it's so quick and easy to spin you think you're in a much shorter boat. length 14'2" beam @ gunwale 30-1/2" rocker 6"

XL13...Dry, stable, user-friendly. A Mohawk classic, **Good** for beginners and large paddlers. It is still a favorite of many Paddlers. rocker 3"

XL14...For large paddlers or tandem paddling. It can be outfitted with two position outfitting for tandem paddling or three position for both tandem and solo paddling. rocker 3"

XL15...A tandem whitewater boat and favorite of outfitters, schools and anyone during tripping or play on whitewater rivers. Available bare, with web seats, with kneeling thwarts or foam saddle (2 or 3 position). rocker 3"

NEW ADJUSTABLE THWARTS

Allows you to adjust your Probe, Rodeo or Viper for maximum performance or maximum stability. **\$25.00/pr**



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MOHAWK'S NEW SADDLE with THIGH RETAINERS

Mohawk has a new foam saddle with integrated quick release thigh retainer and knee wedges. It holds you comfortably and firmly in place and is adjustable so it will fit practically anyone. This innovative thigh retainer holds its shape so the paddler easily slips into "paddling position" without readjustment or having the hassle of getting into thigh straps.

By pulling on a single strap, located just forward of your lap, both legs are released at once for a quick exit. The four inch width of the unit and its thick micro cell foam give very comfortable and firm support to your thighs and hold you firmly in the boat with very little knee lift.

"The quick and easy to get in and out of. New thigh straps to move with and to hold me firmly in place, yet it is very comfortable." Jeff Richards - Steep creeker, winner 1992 Ocoee Rodeo & Winner 1994 short boat class Dixie Division (slalom races).
"I've used a Mohawk thigh retainer on big water in Costa Rica, the Upper Yangtze and Steep Creeks and it's just great. It is extremely comfortable and holds you tightly in the boat. It fits anyone, is easy in and out, and last but not least, pull on one strap that is practically in your lap and it releases both legs at once. The students in my canoeing classes just love it!" Mike Aronoff - ACA Instructor, Washington DC area

PROBE 12-II: The narrower version of the Probe 12-II is my first choice among the new 12 footers. I have tried the others but like the predictability of the symmetrical hull. The design makes the II quick and very responsive. Upstream attaining, ferrying, turning, and surfing maneuvers are very easy and effective. Crossing currents and peel nuts feel solid and predictable; without surprises as with some asymmetrical hulls. The R-84 lay up makes the boat a pleasure to carry and after a year of hard use, is holding up fine. The boat does great on big rivers and creeks. My boating pals and students who have Probe II are happy with them. If people don't try the II they may be literally missing the boat. Mike Aronoff - ACA instructor, (Washington DC area)



MOHAWK'S NEW SADDLE WITH THIGH RETAINER

Includes saddle, thigh retainer, thigh wedges, knee pads, Yakima foot braces \$132.00

Specs	Length	Beam	Depth	Weight	Material	Suggested List+	Factory Price
RODEO	10'6"	26 5/8"	16 5/8"	42 lbs	R 84	\$850	\$595.00
PROBE 11	11'8"	28"	15 5/8"	45 lbs	Royalox	\$875	\$612.50
PROBE 12	12'8"	28 5/8"	15 5/8"	49 lbs	Royalox	\$875	\$612.50
PROBE 12 II	12'2"	27"	15 5/8"	46 lbs	R 84	\$875	\$612.50
PROBE 14*	14'	30 5/8"	15 5/8"	59 lbs	Royalox	\$940	\$658.00
VIPER 11	11'6"	27"	15 5/8"	45 lbs	Royalox	\$875	\$612.50
VIPER 12	12'6"	27 5/8"	15 5/8"	49 lbs	Royalox	\$875	\$612.50
XL13	13'3"	30"	15 5/8"	56 lbs	Royalox	\$920	\$644.00
XL14*	14'3"	32"	15 5/8"	60 lbs	Royalox	\$940	\$658.00
XL15*	15'4"	35"	15 5/8"	65 lbs	Royalox	\$970	\$679.00

* Tandem or Solo - Prices do not include freight

WOOD GUNWALES AVAILABLE

WHITewater OUTFITTING... Whitewater playboats are available fully outfitted and ready to paddle. This outfitting includes: Foam saddle or pedestal, knee pads, thigh straps or retainer(s), Yakima foot braces, air bags & quick disconnect lacing kit.

\$235 Solo \$350 Tandem \$395 Triple

MOHAWK ACCESSORIES...Air bags, lacing kits, life jackets, rescue ropes, Yak foot braces, foam saddles and much more
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