

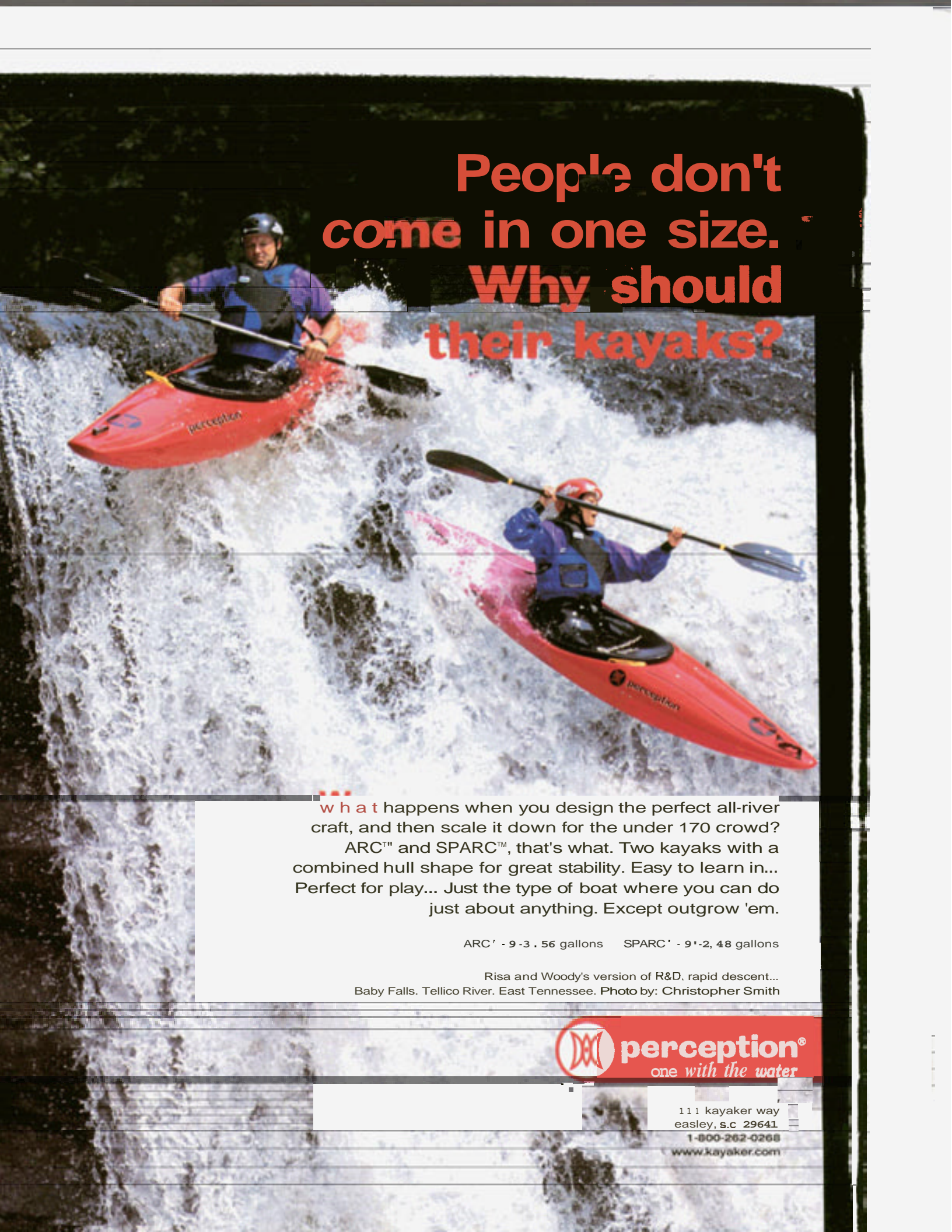
american whitewater

March/April 1998

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Whitewater Winter

By Bob Gedekoh

I spend a lot of time in my kayak. In 1996 I was on the river 207 days. 1997 was a bit of a disappointment. Low water, emergency surgery and a new job cut into my river time. I only got to boat 147 days. (I don't imagine I can expect much sympathy from most of you!) But 1998 is off to a promising start — 22 days in January and eight days in February — and it's only the 14th.

I've paddled with hundreds of people during the past twenty years. Many of these whitewater acquaintances became close friends. Unfortunately, priorities like wives, husbands, girlfriends, boyfriends, pets, children, elderly parents, careers and "other interests," prevent most of them from hitting the water as often as I do.

This seems to be especially true on winter days, when there is a foot of snow on the ground and the daytime temperature peaks in the 20s. You'd be amazed at the lame excuses people make to dodge winter whitewater fun! And while I'm perfectly willing to paddle alone under conditions that most people would describe as miserable, biking the shuttle afterwards in a drysuit with frozen feet can be nasty. When it comes to winter boating, it's good to have a little company.



But there aren't many serious winter boaters around. Oh, I know a lot of you claim to be winter boaters. But if you passed up a day on the river to watch the Superbowl, or spent Valentine's Day whispering sweet nothings instead of boating, you are suspect. Paddling the Gauley in November or the Cheat in March doesn't cut it. Neither does sneaking off to Chile or Costa Rica in December. In my book, unless you've boated at least four times in January, you can't claim to be a bona fide winter boater.

Genuine winter boating means skidding into a snow bank on the way to river. Windshields cracked by flying cinders. Frozen knots clutching your kayak to the roof rack. A sheet of ice on the seat of your boat. Glazed zippers on PFDs and drysuits. Icicles dangling from the front of your helmet. Frozen moustaches and ears and toes and fingers.

Now that's fun! I can't imagine why I used to have so much trouble talking my friends into going with me!

But this winter I've been lucky. I've had the pleasure of sharing rivers, not to mention shuttles, with two hard core kayakers who are just as fanatic as me. And although Chuck Morris and Joe Hatcher are relatively new acquaintances, when you run serious whitewater under adverse conditions with the same companions day after day, you soon find out what makes them tick. So I feel like I've known Joe and Chuck for a long time and I consider them to be very good friends. They are the kind of guys you can count on, both on and off the river.

Chuck and Joe have a lot of enthusiasm and I've learned quite a bit from them... new lines down the familiar rivers we paddle, and maybe a little radical creeking technique. I don't know if they have learned anything from me, besides tolerance!

Chuck and Joe are better boaters than I will ever be. This is particularly embarrassing for me to admit in Joe's case because, although he grew up in Morgantown, W.Va., within spitting distance of the Cheat, Joe has only been kayaking for two years. Chuck, on the other hand, has been kayaking since he was a teenager growing up in Ohiopyle, Pennsylvania, the put-in for the Lower Yough. So it should come as no surprise that he is an exceptional boater. Nevertheless, I've been kayaking three times longer than Chuck.

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You'd think that my years of experience would count for something!

But Chuck, 25, and Joe, who is 23, have two things going for them that I lack, youth and fearlessness. When they look at a long, treacherous rapid, they see possibilities. I, on the other hand, see consequences.

I remember the first day I boated alone with Chuck. We were running the lower Big Sandy (W.Va.) at 7.5 (fairly high) and it was well below freezing. I sniveled the rapid above Wonder Falls down the right; Chuck stormed down the meat of it on the left. I nervously negotiated the high water, river left sneak over the Falls, but Chuck confidently charged right down the middle, landing flat more than ten feet beyond the ferocious recycle. I struggled to maintain my dignity following him through Zoom Flume and Little Splat. But when we got to Big Splat my bluff was up.

"How we gonna' run this?" Chuck inquired innocently. Surely he's not serious, I thought, wiping the snow out of my eyes. But his grin told me otherwise.

I know when I've been licked. "What's this 'we' sh*@?" I exclaimed. "I don't know how you're going to run it, but I know how I'm going to run it. Up on the bank through those trees!" So, while I was dragging my boat through the snow, Chuck pounded Big Splat and made it look easy.

We hurried through the rest of the Sandy because Chuck had to get home for his father's birthday party.

Why did I have to ask? "How old is your dad?"

"Forty four", he said, shaking his head, as if his father were as ancient as Methuselah. "How old are you?" he continued.

"Never mind!" I replied, and paddled off fast. It was worse than I thought. Not only was I old enough to be his father, I was older than his father!

But when I paddle with Chuck and Joe I don't feel old. My lines might not be quite as crisp or daring and my reflexes might not be quite as sharp, but, hey, I don't see a lot of other forty six year old guys out there paddling Class V (Okay, okay, Class V minus!!!) water in January. And, I can sneak almost any rapid as fast as they can run the hero line.

Besides, Chuck Morris isn't just better than me. He's better than 99% of the boaters in northern West Virginia and western Maryland. I think Chuck knows how good he is, but he handles that knowledge well, without the arrogance and shameless self promotion that seems to have infected a lot of accomplished young boaters.

Chuck has mastered every hairball line on the rivers we paddle and he makes them all look easy. He tries to goad me into tack-

ling them, but most of the time I know my limitations. Every now and then his enthusiasm overwhelms my better judgement and I give one of his hot dog moves a shot. Sometimes I do okay. Hey, even a blind squirrel finds an acorn once in a while.

But sometimes I get worked. Most memorably three weeks ago, after I watched Chuck run Big Splat down the left at 7 feet. It was a straight shot and Chuck sure made it look easy.

"I can do that," I thought. "What could possibly go wrong?"

Granted, there was that obnoxious munchkin that lives inside my head telling me, "You know what can go wrong. You could get backendered into the recycle!"

"Nonsense," I told that munchkin as I slid into my kayak. "That didn't happen to Chuck, so why should it happen to me?"

"You really don't want me to answer that," the munchkin replied, but I wasn't listening.

So when I sailed over the lip of the Splat I just knew I had the perfect line. And when I landed at the bottom I was just as smug. But then, as the bow of my kayak gracefully arced skyward, reenacting in two seconds the entire last hour of the Titanic, I started to worry. An instant later I was tumbling in the maw beneath the falls.

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All during the subsequent thrashing that damned **munchkin** inside my head was snickering, "I told you this was going to happen... and now you're gonna' die." I hate that little smart ass!

Well, I didn't die. It was worse than that. I swam. Like a fish. But Chuck managed to retrieve the remnants of my aquatic yard sale and had me back in my boat before I even had time to shiver. And if he laughed, he did it when I wasn't looking. Needless to say that escapade quenched my thirst for excitement for a while.

Joe Hatcher, on the other hand, grows more daring every day. He has what I call "The Hunger." Joe is determined to be a hard core steep creeker and he is game to take an occasional thumping to reach that goal. As a consequence his confidence and skill are increasing at an exponential rate. I don't think Joe realizes how good he has gotten. He's learning a lot from Chuck. I enjoy watching Joe trying to master Chuck's bold moves, more or less successfully.

Joe and Chuck make an unlikely pair. Chuck Morris is 5'8" and built like a bulldog. He shaves his head and has not one, but two, earrings. He looks like a rowdy, but good natured, Mr. Clean. As best I can tell the only thing Chuck loves more than whitewater is his fiancée. And, in spite of his daring, I have never seen him trouble on a river. Chuck's

reflexes, honed by years of karate, keep him out of harm's way. Nothing seems to intimidate him. If I ever get into a brawl, I want Chuck on my side.

Joe, in contrast, stands 6'5" and is built like a Great Dane. He looks like a robust Abraham Lincoln. Joe's long arms give him tremendous torque and stability in his boat. When he throws a brace he's like one of those broad based water skipper spiders. Though not as smooth as Chuck, he's getting there. Joe's reflexes were honed by years of basketball. A graduate student at WVU, Joe seems to take life in stride. I don't know what it would take to rile him up. But if I get into a brawl, I want Joe on my side, too.

I know Joe is tough. A few days ago he pinned on the Upper **Yough** while attempting one of Chuck's lines — a perilous route that I avoid. The air temperature was barely above freezing, but I don't think that mattered much to Joe, since 90 percent of his body was submerged in the icy torrent. He finally had to drop his paddle to keep his head above water. After an anxious minute or two I managed to catch an eddy downstream, pop my skirt and grab my throw rope. Naturally, just then Joe managed to break free. Next he bounced through an ugly chute upside down. Certain that a swim was inevitable, I struggled frantically to pop my skirt back on so I could help.

I could have taken my time. In spite of what he'd been through, Joe hand rolled, not once, but twice, in a turbulent wave train. Then, he calmly hand paddled downstream and retrieved his blade. It was an amazing display of fortitude.

I can't match a lot of my young companions' stunts, but once in a while I pull off a move that surprises them even more than it surprises me. Like **boofing** into some inconspicuous eddy they've never noticed or tackling a ferry or attainment that looks harder than it is. Of course, the next time we paddle the river they duplicate my tricks. They usually make them look easy, but not always.

We don't just float the river; there is always some friendly competition. Mostly, we push one another to work on technique. As a consequence I think I'm kayaking better than ever. Boating with **Chuck and Joe** is not a frustration, it's a challenge. I can't **beat** them at their game, but I have fun trying.

Besides, my longevity has given me one advantage over Joe and Chuck. During the past twenty years I've traveled around the country, running dozens of rivers they've never seen. So I can embellish those whitewater exploits with impunity. And even if Joe and Chuck don't really believe my stories, they pretend that they do. What more could you ask from a friend?

As the winter boating season draws to a close, I know that I won't get to kayak with Chuck and Joe as often. They work as river guides and that will steal a lot of their time. And when they have days off and the water is high, I suspect they'll be tackling class V+ steep creeks that are too difficult for me. Just yesterday, while I was working, Joe followed Chuck down the Upper Blackwater for the first time. Joe had a good run and when he called to tell me about it, he was psyched.

I'm sure Joe will remember that day for a long time. Just like I'll remember New Year's Day, when the temperature was in the teens and the wind was gusting to 25 miles an hour, and Chuck talked me into paddling the Upper Yough, just so we could say we did it. Sure, I whined a little as we paddled through that blizzard on a ribbon of slush, but I wouldn't have missed it for anything.

Or the night of the February full moon, when I talked Joe into paddling the same river with me. The moonlight, slicing through the barren trees and ricocheting off the snow, ice and water, was spectacular. Maybe we were crazy, but it sure was fun. Like I said, it's been a good winter.

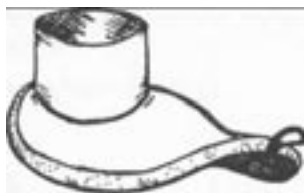


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Letters

Show Some Respect!

Dear AWA Editor,

I would like to express my opinion in response to Bill Hay's article, "Big Brother Is Surveying You," in the Nov/Dec 1997 American Whitewater. As I started to read Bill's article I was at first sympathetic to his view. After completing the article, I think Bill, and others with similar attitudes, will always attract the attention of "the authorities" and have to put up with signs and "stupid rules" wherever they go to boat.

From reading Bill's article it seems he has little consideration for members of the general public. Bill obviously has his personal standard, which he mentions the raft companies violate by their "rude boating, noise, trash, crowds and fun, fun, fun." Yet, it seems OK if his personal standard violates the accepted public standard. For example, Bill mentions the friction developed between locals and boaters during the history of the upper Yough. But now, according to Bill, the "boaters do a reasonable job of keeping nudity and public drinking down to an acceptable level."

I would like to point out, during the summer of 1997, it only took one complaint of public nudity by the locals living near the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Peshastin Access on the Wenatchee River to almost ban boaters from this access forever. It took lengthy negotiations and a concerted effort by the Washington Kayak Club and Wenatchee Whitewater Coalition to keep the access open to boaters. A changing screen had to be erected and educational flyers had to be distributed for eight consecutive weekends by boaters' volunteer labor and donated expense to keep the access open.

I would suggest keeping public nudity to zero. No, it's not me that would be offended. Chances are, in the 20 seconds a boater's naked butt is exposed to a road or a house, that's when some little old lady with her 10 year old granddaughter looks out, sees the nakedness, and goes straight to city hall. Be discrete; use the changing areas when provided or learn to change in your vehicle or wear a nylon bathing suit, etc.

Along with Bill's earlier mention of an acceptable level of public drinking are his comments of, "pulling my spray skirt up over all those Coronas," getting back to his truck to "have a well deserved Corona" and his disdain for "storm trooper park officials," "rooting out illicit drinking in the campgrounds." I think it would improve the public's image of boaters if the public didn't see them hanging out at river access points with a beer in their hand or getting in their truck and driving off chugging a beer. Some boaters

think alcohol is part of their river experience, but I think most will agree it is a safety hazard. Boaters in need of a taxpayer funded rescue due to their alcohol impaired state are certain to make a bad impression on the locals and the rescue team. After your river excursions why not head to a bar or have your boating friends over to your house for a couple drinks?

In Bill's article he mentions a park official at the put-in asking him to complete a verbal survey. Bill says he, "did so in my usual anti-authoritarian manner, giving gruff answers to insipid questions." This is a perfect way to confirm any bad opinions the parks service may already have about boaters.

I would encourage boaters to at least be respectful, polite and even (gasp!) friendly to officials managing the river. "The authorities" have a difficult job of trying to keep the public (majority of taxpayers) happy. Boaters (minority of taxpayers) need to keep on good terms with everyone just to keep the access we now have. I would also encourage boaters to be active in your local and national whitewater organizations. In this way, boaters can alert their whitewater organizations to river surveys, such as the one Bill mentions. There is the possibility a whitewater organization can get involved in the decision making process to hopefully influence the

outcome in the boaters' favor.

The straw that breaks the camel's back for Bill is when he finds a flyer on his windshield stating, "effective immediately all pets must be kept on leashes and may not be left unattended. This policy is due to numerous complaints of dogs barking and running loose." Bill can not understand how "the authorities" could ever come up with such a policy. It certainly could not have had anything to do with his dogs since they never bark or run loose, they only "yelped in pleasure" and "scamper happily around the quiet, isolated field." Even though Bill obviously does not believe in leash laws I am sure he scoops up after his dogs and in no way allows his dog poop to contribute to the myriad of litter such as cigarette butts, beer cans and monofilament fishing line that accumulates at an access point.

With river conservation groups out West battling ranchers in order to remove cattle from riparian areas, maybe Bill could take the lead in setting an example for the ranchers by leaving his dogs at home, instead of letting them run loose in the riparian areas of rivers he kayaks. I am sure the dogs would have more fun scampering in their backyard, as opposed to waiting for several hours in the cab of Bill's truck.

My point in writing this is not to dispar-

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age Bill, but to point out to all boaters that we generally use public land for river access and the locals were around before boaters were born. If the boaters' standards of behavior are too low in the eyes of the public then "the authorities" will raise the boaters' standard for them. Invariably this will involve signs, restrictions and possible loss of access. By being considerate and showing respect for others we will be able to keep boating without ruining the opportunity for everyone.

My sincere thanks and appreciation goes to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Garrett County Animal Shelter and others, who are working hard for the public.

David Russell
Vancouver, WA.

Not Just Danger Junkies

Hey Bob,

Just got the latest Nov/Dec 97 issue. Great job. As always, your editorial was the most interesting part and very thought-provoking. I wanted to share one thought that I had when reading it, the question of why people boat hair. The principal motivation that you attribute for running hair is adrenaline addiction, the rush that you get as a danger junkie, etc. I disagree with this and I think most boaters would. The real satisfaction I get from boating comes from performing a difficult task well and from minimizing the risk.

Your editorial makes it sound as if people boat hair because they get a thrill from putting themselves in a risky situation and then rolling the dice. This is the image of whitewater kayaking that is so often portrayed in the media (that we are mere thrill-seekers who hurl ourselves over watery cliffs), and that we have been trying to fight for so long. By this measure, I would get more satisfaction from driving around the Beltway (where I feel a lot more at risk—being surrounded by bad drivers who speed and swerve) than I do on Class 5 water (where I'm in control of my own destiny, at least to the extent that the river allows).

I would argue that for most boaters, the whole satisfaction comes from analyzing the risk, assessing your abilities, and minimizing the risk to acceptable levels. When you are faced with a challenging rapid, the reward comes from carefully analyzing the currents and obstacles in the stretch of water, finding a line through it, weighing whether or not you can hit that line successfully and then making a decision as to whether or not to run it. And as we know, difficulty is relative: a Class 2 paddler on a Class 4 rapid will feel much more challenged than a Class 4 paddler on Class 4 water. And as difficulty is relative, so is the feeling of accomplishment. The

satisfaction that you get from boating is identical whether you are a Class 3 boater navigating your first Class 3+ rapid, a hair boater running Big Splat, or a slalom athlete that gets satisfaction from cleanly and efficiently passing through a set of gates on Class 2 water. Sometimes you can get just as much satisfaction from portaging a rapid, knowing that the risks are too great for your skill on that day. As Dana Chladek says in her interview, it's the process that is important. Any idiot can make it to the bottom of a rapid; the key is to do it with style and safety.

Ron Stewart (AW Director) and Kent Wigginton (Regional Coordinator) are great examples of older, expert boaters who practice their trade with finesse and humility. They have real jobs and families and are still on the cutting edge. I'm sure if you asked them, they wouldn't say it was the thrill of risking their lives that made them pursue hair. Although they would be too humble to admit it, the truth is their abilities and discipline are at such a high level that they are able to boat very difficult whitewater safely. It just so happens that their threshold is at the cutting edge of what most people could do. I think the goal that ties all boaters together is the pursuit of individual excellence, the threshold experience, wherever that may lie. And the ultimate result is the feeling of humility and self-reflection, not conquest or self-promotion.

I've always liked the following passage, and this letter has already rambled on too long, so I might as well include it:

The great waterfall of Lu Canyon is thousands of feet high, with a halo of mist that can be seen for many miles. Nothing survives the violent waters at its foot. Yet once K'ung Fu-tzu saw an old man swim the tempest. K'ung Fu-tzu and his retainers ran with ropes to rescue him, but when they descended to the floor of the canyon they found the man sitting on a large boulder, quietly singing.

K'ung Fu-tzu exclaimed, "You cannot be alive! What are your powers to allow you to do what you have done?" The old man turned and smiled, "I am just a man, but I began to learn as a boy, and I continue to practice. I flow with the water, going up, down and around with it. I forget myself and do not struggle against forces far beyond my control. Then I use my meager abilities in the moments when the water and I share the same path." -Chuano-tzu

Hope to see you on the river soon,
Rich "Rainey" Hoffman
Silver Spring, Maryland

Editor's note: Rich Hoffman served as AWA's Access Coordinator for several years. During that time he accomplished a great deal, working on hydro relicensing and securing access to whitewater rivers across the country. He recently left our staff to attend law school, but has prom-

ised to stay active as a volunteer. (We're going to hold him to that!)

As usual, Rainey makes a valid point in a persuasive and coherent way. I wish I could agree with him wholeheartedly. But, if the true joy of boating really comes from "analyzing the risk, assessing your abilities, and minimizing the risk to acceptable levels," why did twenty kayakers perish on American rivers last year?

Bob Gedekoh.

Where Do the Old Hair Boaters Go?

Dear Bob,

Why don't you ask one? I guess I never considered myself to be a hair boater, but I probably have paddled most of the "Standard" Rapids listed through class 5.0. I'll tell you where I have gone. I am 56 years old and I just can't do it any more. A good Class 4 is all I need or can handle. Regardless of how much younger boaters would like to not believe it, your body does wear out. I don't have the strength and reactions I used to have and I am painfully aware of my mortality now. I've had 5 or 6 friends and acquaintances drown while boating and I've had a couple of close calls myself.

There is a sense of self-preservation that seems to come into play as one gets older, also. I don't know why, but I feel it in myself and have heard others say the same thing.

A few months ago, I was running the Tuolumne at low water with some long time paddlers. We were looking at Clavey Falls and commenting how we used to run it "down the throat," but that a paddler had gotten severely injured from pinning during just such a run. I said I was going to run the sneak route and Chris said, "Why not, what have you got to prove? You've probably run it dozens of times over the top. Why take the chance?" He was right. I don't have to do it any more.

As a segue, 25 years ago in Aspen, I noticed that the top rated hang gliders of last month were next month's obituaries. It really made me wonder then about a sport that the better you got, the greater were your chances of dying. Is that happening now in kayaking? Have our ambitions outstripped our skills and equipment without our being aware that we are inching over the line?

Ward Eister
California

Editor's note: Ward Eister is a well known "old-timer" who was an exploratory Appalachian hair boater and is a co-author of Wildwater West Virginia. It has always seemed ironic to me that as we grow older, we become more cautious. In a logical world the old timers would be the most daring and take the most chances. After all, in terms of longevity, we have a lot less to lose!

Guidelines for Contributors

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Profanity should be used only when it is

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

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

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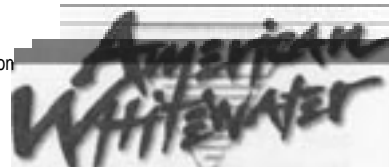
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83... And Still At It.

Dear Bob,

I have been reading your editorials in AW as long as you have been writing them, and I think you do a *very* good job, plus you put some good humor in many of them. Several times I have meant to write to you, but did not get around to it.

I am not a "hair" or "extreme" boater but I have been a Boston AMC Class IV open canoe and K1 boater since about 1963-65. I started with the Boston AMC in 1947 before they had ratings. I haven't done any IV rapids since about 1992-93, though I was on the easy parts of Deerfield and the New Boston section of the Farmington about two or three years ago.

My reasons for not boating now are as follows:

My boating friends mostly all quit years ago and I prefer not to boat IV water with strangers.

I retired from Boston to N.H. in 1979 and took up full time skiing from November to late April, and some years I was out West in April-May hiking and camping in the Southwest.

Last April I had a spinal operation and though I am OK now, it probably isn't a good idea to boat anymore.

So what does a retired boater do? Well, I was 83 last May and I am skiing three or four days a week most all winter, and do slalom racing in the USSA Master races. In 1995, after I turned 80, I was No. 5 in the U.S. in Nastor ski racing.

A year ago this summer I traveled over most of the Western U.S. from the Mexican border to the Canadian border and looked longingly at many whitewater rivers!

I see Jim Sindelar skiing once in a while; he is still boating. I was on a western trip in Sept-Oct and drove up along the upper Salmon River, admiring it. I did the Middle Fork and the Main Salmon down to Riggins in 1974 and around that time I did some parts of Panther Creek and The Gallatin below House Rock.

Keep up the good work with AWA.

P.S. I read Charlie Wallbridge's accident reports all the time and feel that there are just too many boaters taking bad risks. No wonder a few good ones get caught each year. You make a lot of good points in your editorial.

I have had my share of swims in heavy rapids (mostly on the Swift River in N.H. about 30 minutes from my home), but other than bruises I *never* was seriously hurt. I did tear my rotator cuff skiing out West one year after I tripped on my ski pole in a flat place! I couldn't K1 after that for a year.

Sincerely,

Ted Acton

Freedom, New Hampshire

Editor's note: Mr. Acton made the first successful double passage of the heaviest pitches of the Rapid River in a fold boat in 1941. When I grow up I want to be just like him!

The River's The Thing

Dear Editor,

I had my first kayak in 1970 when I was sixteen. It was an old canvas-covered wood thing that met a timely death on Antelope Lake, Ca. in the winter of '72. In 1973 we started running the Stanislaus River in wet suits and surf mats. What a free, fun, fearless time that was. For five years we spent every spring river running, camping, and drinking beer on the Parrots Ferry Bridge at midnight. It was there that the grizzly old vets, loosely known as the Orinda Commandos, introduced me to *real* kayaking. They had fiberglass boats with homemade paddles and Styrofoam chunks shoved in the sides for pads. There was no such thing as an Eskimo roll. Catching eddies and trying to survive without too many swims was the thing.

In 1974 I got my first glass boat, made for me from the old Sierra club mold. That boat is still around, living on The South Fork of the American. Enter the 80s, a roll class and plastic boats. What a difference!

Many boats and rivers later, it's now 1998. I am having more fun than ever with my new RPM. Which brings me to the point of this letter. In the Ottawa Worlds Rodeo festival article last issue there was a noteworthy observation; the difference between the "backpack, camping and paddling group," versus the MIV "EXTREME folks. For a lot of boaters I have seen recently, it seems that techno has passed up the outdoor experience. It's a shame for them that boating has become a "look at me" sport.

I think they are missing the point. This whole "EXTREME thing is mostly a bunch of marketing hype to sell products. Next it will be "EXTREME CAMPING." Give me a break! Why not just have rodeos in man made holes at the mall? Lest anyone forget, it is still the force and wonder of nature out there. **We are** running rivers, not televisions! Rant, rant, rant...

Sincerely,

Todd Sutterley

Martinez, Ca.

Rating Benchmarks Lauded...Except for "Splat"

Dear Bob,

Congratulations on a job well done to all who contributed to compiling the new classification system. It was a long time in coming.

I'm sure many people have expressed some concern over the ratings on some of the rapids (for either justified reasons or to satisfy their own egos). The classification system is designed, I believe, to bring some type of quantitative label to an extremely dynamic environment. It's an exceptionally difficult task at best. I would like to think that a Class III or IV in Tennessee is the same as one in Idaho in relation to their relative difficulty and the associated level of danger.

However, I'm worried about one of the rapid's new classifications in particular. I think, perhaps, Big Splat (Big Sandy, West Virginia) is out of place when grouped with the other rapids classified as 5.0. Although I'm no hair boater, I've paddled all of the rapids in this class listed in the North East except Rip Gorge, Maine. These are all pretty serious rapids, but I don't even get queasy at the tops of any of these rapids, except for Big Splat. Most of the time I carry Big Splat; if my stomach (and head) win out over my b@\$s. I think there is a big group of paddlers who feel about the same as I do about Big Splat... (Maybe even an AW editor or two.) I would hate to think that someone would run Big Splat nonchalantly because they have successfully run National Falls (Upper Yough, Maryland) or Insignificant (Gauley).

A quick, informal poll tells me that of the drops listed in Class 5.0; Big Splat would be the one rapid most people wouldn't want to swim. (Jeff Snyder was not surveyed.) This seems to me to be a pretty good indicator of its relative difficulty and its potential to do bodily harm.

All in all, the new ratings are excellent. Please keep up the great work. Sincerely,

Mike Maher

Saltsburg, Pennsylvania

Editor's Reply: Living nearby, I probably paddle the Big Sandy as much as anybody and I agree. Most of the time the biggest decision I have to make at Big Splat is whether to carry my kayak on my left or my right shoulder.



Dear Bob,

Thank you, thank you, thank you! I think. The new list of benchmark rapids published in the November/December issue of *American Whitewater* equates Big Splat on the Lower Big Sandy with Insignificant on the Upper Gauley, giving them both a flat 5.0. Maybe just knowing this will help reduce the adrenaline flow that somehow surges through my bloodstream every time I contemplate a run of Big Splat. Is it just the hype causing me to hyperventilate? From now on I'll try not to notice that most of the people I paddle with, many of whom I've always considered solid Class V boaters, consistently walk this drop. On the other hand, I've never seen anybody walk Insignificant.

True, I've never heard of any fatalities at Big Splat, though at least a few have swum it. And I do know that injuries, like shoulder dislocations, regularly occur at Insignificant. But I must say, it took me a long time to work up the courage to take on Big Splat, and out of four runs, I've screwed up three times. Here's a picture of one of those times (yes, I dropped sideways into the maw; no, I didn't swim). The level was 6.2, the benchmark level. I wonder if I can attribute the problems I've had to the following description, found in *Appalachian Whitewater, Volume II*, by Grove, Kirby, et al, the guidebook I read before ever paddling the Big Sandy: "Big Splat is next. Very aptly named, it is a complex double rapid dropping a total of over 25 feet. Although run by the most experienced boaters, this is clearly a Class VI rapids. If you find yourself wanting to run Big Splat, you should seriously question not only your skills but also your motives. The risks are significant and the margin for error is alarmingly small."

I do understand that the Class VI rating is way out of line by the revised scale of difficulty, but does this mean I've been over congratulating myself all these years? Am I a victim of guidebook hype?

Gib McGill

Volant, Pennsylvania

Editor's note: I do not profess to know the "best" line at Big Splat, but I do know that your line in the photo is definitely not it!

Although most hair boaters I know are in general agreement with the new benchmark marking system, there has been a lot of controversy about Big Splat. Lee Belknap, AWA Safety Chairperson and rating guru, tells me that Splat will probably be upgraded a bit in the revised list. (Come on Lee, don't be stingy - give Splat a 5.3 or 5.4!)

Questions Bow Rescues in Whitewater

Dear Editor,

I greatly enjoyed reading the Nov./Dec. 1997 issue of *American Whitewater*. However, the article "Stuck in a Hole... Then in the Hospital!" by Alex Henes raises an issue which I've been wondering about for some time.

On a trip down the Lower Yough, Alex flips in Cucumber rapid and runs the remainder of the rapid upside down. After being bow rescued at the bottom of the rapid, he wrote that he was at least happy that he was able to keep his wits about him and avoid swimming.

What's wrong with this picture?

Alex flipped again downstream in another rapid. This time his forehead and nose struck a large rock on the bottom, giving him a broken nose and same quality time in the hospital.

I think that Alex would agree that some mean and nasty things can happen while cruising a river upside down. I don't blame him in the slightest. However, I do wonder if we're doing beginners a favor when we teach them the bow rescue. I recall a fatality in the West River in Vermont when a beginner was reportedly as swept into a strainer and drowned while waiting for a bow rescue. Nasty.

Should we be teaching the bow rescue? Granted, it can be a useful tool for teaching the roll, but I feel that we are doing beginners a disservice when we teach them that it's okay to wait for a bow rescue to avoid swimming.

Keep on paddling,
Rick Morse
The Glen, N.Y.

"I'm The Maggot"

Dear Bob,

I enjoyed at first, reading friend and expert Bill Thornton's letter about his and my home river, Little River Canyon of Dekalb County, Alabama. Then I felt sick, for I realized that I might be the maggot who got the "Avalanche" name rolling as a substitute for the traditional "Suicide" name he speaks of. I found a reference in my logbook. March 10, 1989 — Five Inches, Highway 35 Gauge. Two Companions. "Avalanche - Little River Canyon."

Historically, a river guide book from the 1970s by an Alabaman, John Foshee, provided details for the "Chairlift" section of the Little River from Eberhardt's Point to Canyon Mouth Park. According to Foshee, anything above the abandoned chairlift was "Suicide." Paddlers I knew began putting in two miles above Eberhardt Point and this came to be known as the "Upper 2 mile" section. As we boaters improved, we began putting in, as Bill does, at the overlook one-quarter mile below the Ala. 35 bridge and falls.

"Avalanche" is the common name for the last sizeable rapid above "Cable Falls." I recall using this term to describe the whole section above the "Upper 2," hoping it might make continuing boating access more likely over time. I just felt more comfortable discussing our days' plans on "the Avalanche Section" with Desoto State Park Superintendent Butler and local shopkeepers. Pure public relations. Once the Canyon was protected by federal statute, and our access to the river seemed secure, new trips on this river are sometimes marked in my log "Avalanche," sometimes "Suicide."

I have never met or spoken to Mr. Foshee or Monte Smith; Just as John Foshee probably heard the name "Suicide" locally before he began using it in his green book, I suspect that neither I, nor Mr. Smith, nor anyone at MTV first invented this other name. But Bill is right, among core boaters, nobody calls any segment of this beautiful river and canyon "The Avalanche Section" anymore. Except when talking to Grandma and Grandpa, that is.

P. S.: Bill, imagine how I felt when I found out during Gauley Fest that the creek I crashed and burned on in December, 1996 is now called "The Teddy Bear!"

Yours very truly,

Dave Joyce

Kenner, Louisiana

Editor's note: Sadly, since I received this letter, there have reportedly been two fatalities on the Little River.

Deplores World's Rodeo Rule Change

Dear Editor,

John Weld's report on the Ottawa Worlds was interesting and informative. However, I'm still a bit pissed off after reading statements like "it's not a wave surfing competition..." and "We were really worried that there would be novariety in the event." With the winner of the rodeo doing thirty three cartwheels in one minute, was that VARIETY? I resent having these style police tell me what I want to see! Seems to me that they were all busy just covering their butts and marking territory after they got a look at some truly innovative boats. I should have sent up some of our Wisconsin cheese to go with all that "WHINE!" Have the people involved in the industry and competition no sense of pride, anger, or shame? When someone outdoes you at your own game, have some style. You can always rip off their designs in time for next worlds, or change the rules AFTER you've lost.

Dave Ekers

Schofield, Wisconsin

World's Rodeo Results Corrected

Dear Editor,

Just a quick correction regarding the world's results published in the Nov/Dec issue. Under the column labeled "squirt men" is the open canoe results. The unlabeled column to the right of that is the men's squirt. The column to the left that is labeled "open canoe" is actually the decked C-1 class.

Also in the squirt results, second place was a tie between Eric Zitzow and Andy (Snakey) Whiting.

Complete scores and results can be found at <http://www.synapse.net/~canyak/rodeo/results.htm>

Thanks

Eric Zitzow

Editor's reply: Sorry for the error!

Reflection on December Issue

Dear Editor,

I appreciate your continuing effort to explore and share in all levels of paddling (as expressed in "Director's Cut"). Extreme paddling may not be my forte, yet I thoroughly enjoy seeing videos and reading stories about paddlers on beautiful, difficult runs. I get a chance to taste the rush (eventhough second

land, from the safety of my shore-side rock) of hopping down a staircase of untamed water and mangled rocks!

I would love to join these paddlers as they explore these wonderful places, but, fear, which shrinks my adrenaline supply, keeps me on my Class III & IV rivers. I find exhilaration in taking the tough lines on Class III or nitting an eddy half the size of my boat just inches from a Class IV drop. The simple act of sliding into your well-fitted boat, pressing your toes against the foot braces and pushing off into the current, feeling it take hold of your boat and pull it down stream — what a thrill!

Exploring new remote creeks and rivers, some of which are not much more than Class II or III, have been some of my best paddling experiences. To see a moose in an eddy, instead of ten other paddlers or to bop down a continuous Class III plus with ten paddling companions and being the last one to peel into a crowded eddy and see nothing but smiling faces, is also a big rush!

Good rodeo is exhilarating and just plain fun. Competition rodeo should also be fun, as well as fair ("Ruckus at the Rodeo"). One way might be to designate a particular style boat to be used by all contenders, as the rodeo boat of the year. In the first heat, each competitor would use the required boat and do mandatory moves. This would bring some equality and show fairness in judging abilities. In the second free style heat, paddlers could use any boat they wanted and do any moves they wish. Judging could be simplified by using a three point system. One point for easy moves, two points for advanced moves and three points for difficult moves. Add a bonus point system for linking moves and for the amount of different moves used. One move repeated for the entire heat, no matter how difficult, minus three, two moves zero, three moves plus three, four moves plus six and so on. The free style heat could also have a showmanship point system. As a fan and spectator of rodeo, I want to see solid technical skills and be entertained by great stunts done in neat boats.

My brain is in overdrive, so I need to share an idea I have for safety and rescue. The recent tragic deaths of paddlers involved in under water pinnings just feet or inches under water made me add a new rescue tool to my safety kit - a 5/8" diameter flexible tubing three to six feet long (used for household water systems and sold in most hardware stores). A paddler stuck under water could use this as a breathing hose while another person holds the other end out of the water. This would allow more time for rescue to be performed.

Thank you so much for allowing me to express myself and for a great magazine.

Happy Paddling,

J. Okoniewski

Wolverine, Michigan

Boat Lust

Dear Bob,

I confess. I'm a bigamist. Well, actually a trigamist, counting my sea kayak. But I'm not as bad as Steve, who took nine kayaks to Oregon and left two behind in Maryland. I've been relatively faithful recently, if you don't count the brief affair with Steve's alligator kayak, one-day demos, and kayak swapping.

The guys are always showing up with the newest, sexiest models and surfing their brains out (at least, the guys who have brains). Yes, I, like Jimmy Carter, have lust in my heart. I lust after the latest models. The pricey Riot babes; the short, chunky Stubby's; the fast, planning hulls; and the Thrill Seekers.

I can't even keep my RPM, Animas and Serius satisfied. They want to go to the biggest wave and surf and ender all day. They want to travel regardless of cost, even to the Grand Canyon. They want me to be kinder and gentler, to do less boofing and, absolutely, no hole riding. Yes, they're scrapped and scarred, but I still love 'em.

I've even descended to searching for cheap love on rec.boats.paddle. Every kayak-for-sale posting is considered. Dagger, Riot, and Perception web pages turn me on. I post glossy centerfolds from kayak catalogs on my bedroom wall. (My bedroom only has one wall because my wife left me and took the other three.) What's aguy to do? I'll straighten out when there are no more new models. Promise.

Al Kubeluis

Bowie, Maryland

C-1 Paddler Frustrated No More

Dear Editor,

Well, I am now a happier man, and a lot less "frustrated." A Dagger Atom C-1 was my Christmas present this year from my wife, Paula (a sympathetic kayaker). I had paddled a loaned Atom on the Monroe Bridge section of Deerfield last June, fell head-over-stern in love with it, and have coveted one ever since. As you might expect, I was amazed when the Atom was introduced so shortly after the Joe Pulliam interview (Nov/Dec, 1996 issue) in which Mr. Pulliam indicated "not much" was going on with plastic C-1 development. My letter in the Mar/Apr 1997 issue may have been a little harsh in retrospect, given the soon-to-follow appearance of the Atom, but I don't completely regret my remarks, because they helped focus some badly needed attention on the C-1. My helmet's off to Joe Pulliam, with a qualified apology.

Sincerely,

Bruce Farrenkopf

Bridgewater, New Jersey

Dear Bob,

I have a favor to ask... Please ask contributors to clearly identify where the river, event or town is located, e.g., what state or near what major city. I'm new to kayaking and I'm not familiar with rivers outside of the Pacific NW. When I read about the twisting falls section of the Elk or the Black River gorge, I'm lost and the article loses some of its impact on me.

Thanks!

D. Lee

Editor's reply: A valid request. We'll do our best.


CORRECTIONS

There were a couple of errors in the Jan/Feb issue we would like to correct.

The cover photo was taken by Katie Nietert (not Nietart) as was the photo on page 16 "Reflections of Tallulah." The photo with the article name is Katie's, not Eric Young's.

Also, the Point Series photos of Rusty Sage and Brenda Ernst were reversed on page 36.


We are sorry for the mistakes and any problems it may have caused.



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Purpose

American Whitewater

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

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

CONSERVATION: AW 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, AW 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.

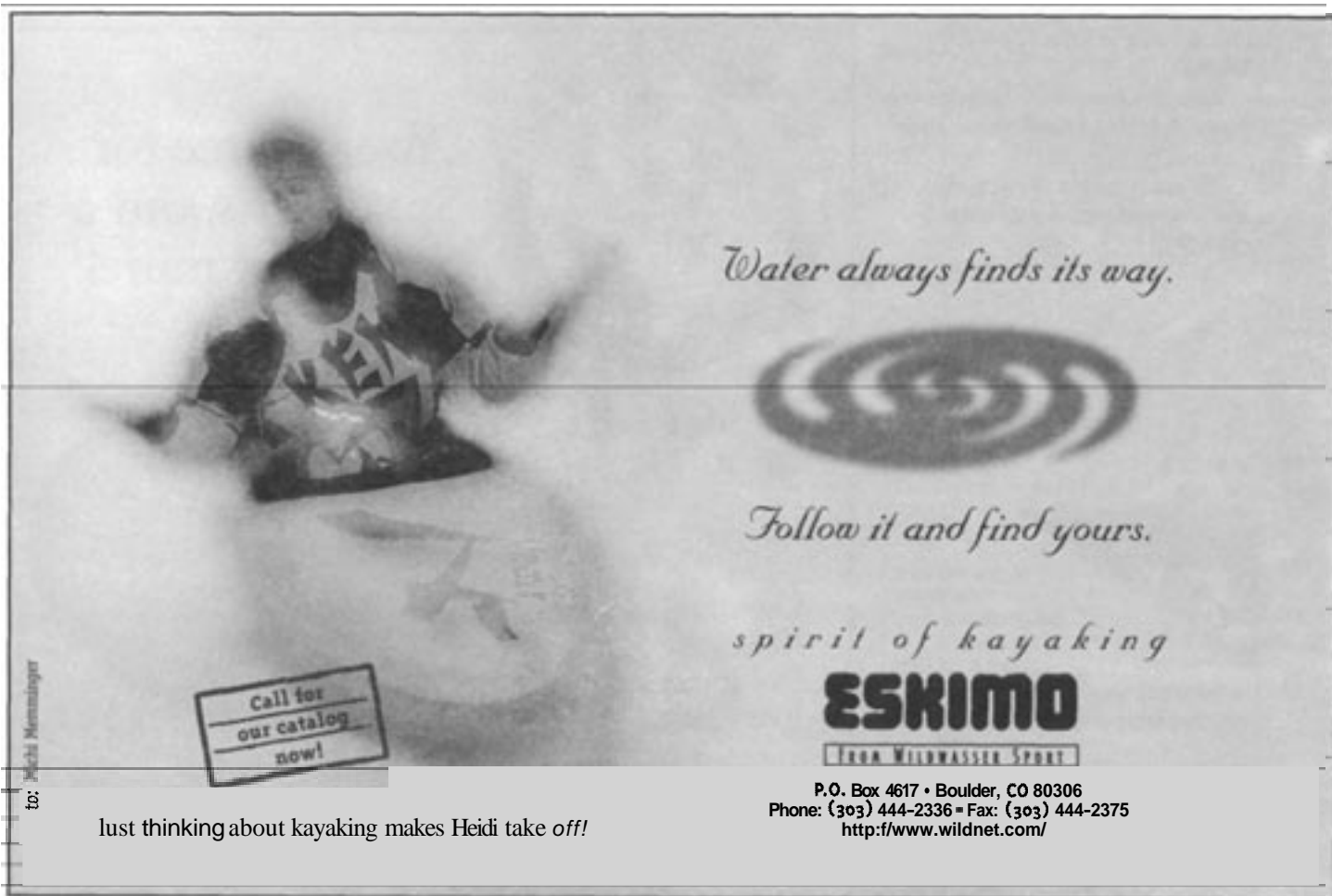
EDUCATION: Through publication of the bi-monthly magazine, and by other means, American Whitewater, (AW) provides information and education about whitewater rivers, boating safety, technique and equipment.

SAFETY: AW 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 AW Whitewater Safety Code.

EVENTS: AW 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.

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



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Conserve

Director's Cut

Rich Bowers doing a little R&D on the Kern.

By Rich Bowers

Access! Access! Access! Over the past three and a half years, ever since American Whitewater's River Access Program got its start with a grant from the Conservation Alliance, I have been continually amazed at just how many rivers and streams have access problems on any given day.

On some days, just for a little while, I was able to ignore access because we had Rich Hoffman who would start each day working on river closures, paddler arrests, and policies aimed at keeping boaters off rivers. That was fine because there was usually a ton of conservation, safety and other issues for me to work on. It was not unusual for both of us to close our doors, stamp out fires, and only see each other on the way out.

As many of you know, Rich has decided to pursue a law degree and has moved on to a real job complete with coffee breaks, dental plans, and (hopefully) secretarial help. While we will miss Rich, his decision makes sense and is a fitting conclusion to over three years of dealing with lawyers, bureaucrats and local sheriffs. Rich takes with him an enthusiasm for rivers and an expertise that will be hard to replace. We wish him well and hope to paddle with him soon.



As I write this, American Whitewater is very close to hiring a new Access Director, and I hope to introduce this person in the next Journal. It will need to happen soon, because a multitude of access issues continues to grow. Grand Canyon fees and allocations; a new DEIS for the middle and main fork Salmon (ID); threats of closures for safety on the Chattooga (SC & GA); and the recent closure of the takeout for North Carolina's Watauga, all of these issues have landed in this office in just the last week.

Look for a new takeout on the Watauga in early March. While high flows hit right after we signed the deal, we hope to have an open gate, a serviceable road and directions to the property soon. Thanks so much to local clubs and boaters for helping with this, and for patient landowners who have cut us a break as new neighbors.

American Whitewater hires Executive Assistant



If you call the Silver Spring office of American Whitewater, the friendly voice you hear is that of Kate Gribkov, who joined our staff as Executive Assistant in the Silver Spring, MD, office in early October 1997.

Kate is from the Portland, OR, area, and started boating on the Rogue

River. When not on the water, Kate was involved with teaching physical education to children. Kate returned to Oregon after a not-quite-successful bid to make the women's Olympic rowing team (last port cut). Rafting was a natural in Gold Beach, and the Rogue remains one of her favorite rivers.

Teaching didn't buy many river days, so Kate found the perfect solution: guiding for Idaho Adventures out of Salmon, Idaho, on the Main Salmon, the Middle Fork and Hell's Canyon of the Snake River for five summers. According to Kate, this was "...a great combination: teaching kids during the school year, and playing (oops!) working with adults in the summer."

Kate was an early member of Northwest Rafters Association in Portland, and in addition to enjoying whitewater, she is an avid fan of flatwater rowing. Kate won a gold medal in the Canadian National Masters in 1988, and two golds, one silver and one bronze in the 1989 U.S. National Masters in fours and eights.

"Kate brings a real enthusiasm for rivers," says Executive Director Rich Bowers, "as well as experience with western rivers and both private and commercial rafting. We are lucky to have her on board."

Life as a Regional Coordinator

(or how to get into politics and never see the river again!)

by E.J. McCarthy, American Whitewater Regional Coordinator

Regional Coordinators are usually recruited by American Whitewater based upon their close proximity to a river issue and their enthusiasm about paddling. These two qualifications don't necessarily mean that we know anything about negotiating solutions to access problems or understand bureaucratic organizations, like power companies, FERC or the National Park Service.

Generally, the scenario goes like this: an irate paddler will call up the American Whitewater office in Washington, DC to complain about an important river issue in their back yard. "Hey, the Dam-it-all Power Company closed up the best section of whitewater on the planet and I want to know what American Whitewater is doing about it?"

People don't realize that American Whitewater is a pretty small organization and the United States is a big place with more river problems than you can shake a paddle at. They think that staff members are going to fly to wherever the problem is in their black tights and cape (ascary thought) and slay the evil power company so that we can all get a quick river-run in before dark — not likely!

The more typical situation is one where the concerned caller is soothed, given some encouraging words, a little advice, and before they know what hit 'em, they're a full-fledged Regional Coordinator (RC) with their own letterhead stationary, a small expense account, and free range to raise Hell with dam builders and power barons everywhere. The prospects are dizzying and it takes a little while before the new RC realizes just how little they know about the beast they hope to slay.

I didn't know much about anything when I got into this stuff almost ten years ago. I used to bang out letters on a cheesy typewriter without benefit of an outline or draft of any kind. I shot from the hip, and as you can imagine, I missed on many occasions. When I look back at those old letters now I cringe.

But American Whitewater was always supportive and I was encouraged to drive on regardless of whom I ticked off along the way. Doing something was always better than doing nothing and, damn it, I was going to be a do-er. I'd take on a power company or a major northeastern city with the most irrational enthusiasm; blinded by the belief that good always triumphs over evil.

It was like climbing into the ring with Mike Tyson; I'd get clobbered, have my ear bitten off, and crawl back into my corner where Pope Barrow, conservation czar of the day, was waiting with the smelling salts. 'You're doing a great job, kid. Keep up the good work,' he'd say. 'You really let 'em have it that time.'

"Thanks, coach, but I'm getting pounded out there," I'd say as I spit out my bloody mouth guard.

"Don't worry about a thing, kid, you got 'em on the run." And Pope would pat me on the backside and send me back into the fray for another round. As outrageous as this analogy sounds, it was the reality of being a Regional Coordinator.

I think that anyone who has ever tried his or her hand at river politics has quickly learned that nothing happens fast, and frequently nothing happens at all.

Well, a few things happen; phone bills get large, paddling time turns into hours of letter writing, evenings get frittered away at meetings and your love life begins to fizzle. Why do we subject ourselves to such abuse?

Well, this past November I was fortunate enough to meet dozens of other like-minded idiots who also work on land access, liability, and recreation issues in the name of their respective sports. The ground-breaking Access Summit assembled an array of representatives from the worlds of whitewater, rock climbing, and mountain biking and hiking, along with officials from the BLM and a host of other "alphabet soup" governmental agencies. Many of those who attended were just like me, volunteers who spend long hours writing letters, making phone calls and attending meetings in order to protect our right to kill ourselves by doing what we love.

What I appreciated most was that American Whitewater was finally getting Regional Coordinators from all over the nation together in order to make us all a little more effective at the valuable work we do. We exchanged ideas and information that had taken some RC's years to learn. You see, every new RC who takes on a conservation project must be prepared to reinvent the wheel in many respects. Tactics that are effective in one region or with one Power Company may not work in another. There is no magic letter or phone call that will instantly clear up an access problem or arrange for water in a dry riverbed.

Of course this is extremely frustrating and time consuming but it is a cold reality.

If I learned anything at the summit, it was that river issues could take many years of work before anyone gets to go boating.

American Whitewater is always looking for new Regional Coordinators. Usually we sign up those already neck-deep in a pressing river issue, and with a rep for getting the job done. For more information, contact Kate Gribskov at (301)589-9453. And rest easy, unlike Don King, Pope Barrow has retired from American Whitewater (although he may still Tyson-your-ear off if you try to mess with whitewater). The pay's not great but the river rewards are worth it!



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The key thing to remember is that American Whitewater, with the help of its Regional Coordinator system, can out-last many bureaucratic organizations and strike when the time is right; when somebody gets fired or retired, we can be there ready to bend the ear of the next in line. In many instances that person may be more receptive to new ideas about recreation and that may mean it's time to get the boats out and do some **surfin'**.

In many ways **RC's** are the backbone of American Whitewater. We do the grunt work of river politics and conservation. We pound out

letters, attend scores of meetings and talk on the phone until we get cauliflower ear. It's fair to say that there isn't a single boater reading these words who hasn't benefited from the not-so-quiet work of a RC. The Access Summit gathered us all together for brainstorming and strategy sessions that will expand boating opportunities for everyone. It was a great experience and it proves that American Whitewater is finally "coordinating" the Regional Coordinators. I think that we can all look forward to more good things ahead. Surfs-up!

ACA SCORES VICTORY ON THE PIGEON! Strict New Standards Imposed on Champion Paper Mill

The pollution problems on the Pigeon River (North Carolina and Tennessee) are infamous, but a landmark agreement signed this past December will likely mean a long overdue end to the degradation of this wonderful river.

In Canton, NC, the Champion International pulp and paper mill has been turning the waters of the Pigeon black for the past 90 years. Over 50 miles of the river, including some great whitewater sections, have been decimated by pollution from the mill. The facility's pollution discharge permit expired in 1994, and in December 1996, North Carolina approved a new permit that did nothing to reduce pollution.

The American Canoe Association (ACA) and a number of local partners, including the Tennessee Environmental Council (TEC), the Dead Pigeon River Council, and the Clean Water Fund of North Carolina, decided to raise a ruckus. This effort caused the state of Tennessee to formally object to the new permit, and prompted Vice President Gore to ask the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to review the permit decision. For the past year, the state of Tennessee, ACA, TEC, Cocke County Tennessee, and the town of Newport, Tennessee, along with North Carolina and Champion, have been

negotiating with EPA over the issue.

In December 1997, an agreement was reached that imposes tough new standards on the Champion mill and establishes limits that commit Champion to reduce its color pollution by 50% over the next 3 years. The terms of the permit require Champion's color discharges to be below the 48,000 to 52,000 lbs./day range by May of 2001. The agreement also moves the compliance point for instream standards almost 20 miles upstream to Hepco, NC.

ACA's David Jenkins, a principal negotiator of the new limits, said "Tennessee Governor Sundquist, EPA, and the White House deserve credit for their diligent efforts to ensure that the Pigeon... [is] well served by the terms of this permit." John Noel, a key negotiator for TEC agreed, and added, "The many citizens who took time to attend rallies and write letters to EPA helped drive this effort and also deserve a lot of credit for making these limits a reality."

As for the polluter, river advocates may not be doing battle with Champion for much longer. The \$8 billion company has announced that it plans to sell the Canton mill. Whoever buys the mill will have to accept that the Pigeon's years of being a corporate sewer is over.

HYDROPOWER UPDATE

GAULEY RIVER ACCESS

The National Park Service (NPS) needs to hear from the paddling community regarding public access on the Gauley River. In 1997, Congress passed legislation requiring the NPS to purchase and develop Woods Ferry prior to acquiring any other properties in the Gauley River National Recreation Area (GRNRA).

While American Whitewater supports the purchase of any and all willing seller land within the GRNRA, this legislative requirement overlooks the fact that a September 1991 NPS survey revealed that private boaters overwhelmingly preferred the access sites at the dam, Panther Creek (Mason Branch), Bucklick, and Swiss.

Although paddlers would rather not have the NPS invest access dollars at Woods Ferry, the prospect of rescinding the legislative mandate is highly unlikely. Given that fact we should encourage the NPS to move forward with purchasing Woods Ferry but carry out minimal, if any, development of the site. It's important the NPS hear from the private paddling community. Send letters to the NPS voicing your concerns about Woods Ferry and future land acquisition in general.

Key points to make:

- Encourage the NPS to purchase Wood's Ferry and any other properties that become available for inclusion in the GRNRA as a general policy.

- Although the Congressional mandate to purchase Wood's Ferry sets a poor precedent for park management, it defines the rules the NPS must follow. Failure to comply with this rule jeopardizes opportunities for upcoming land purchases.

- Development of Wood's Ferry is part of the legislative requirement. Paddlers should request minimum levels of development for the Wood's Ferry site since it's unlikely this site will be used extensively by noncommercial paddlers and commercial use is prohibited.

- The 1992 survey revealed that paddlers overwhelmingly preferred Panther Creek, Bucklick, and Swiss as access points. Future land acquisitions and/or easements for public access should target Panther Creek, Bucklick, and Swiss.

Address letters to:
Pete Hart, Superintendent
Gauley River National Recreation Area
P.O. Box 246
Glen Jean, WV 25846

Send a copy to the following members of West Virginia's congressional delegation:

The Honorable Senator Robert C. Byrd
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Alan B. Mollohan
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nick J. Rahall II
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

For more information contact Conservation Director John Gangemi (406) 837-3155, or Dale and Anita Adams (304) 574-0482.

FLAGSTAFF HYDROPOWER RELICENSE: DEAD RIVER

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) issued the Draft Environmental Analysis (DEA) for the relicense of the Flagstaff hydropower water storage project on the Dead River in Maine. American Whitewater jointly filed comments with the Appalachian Mountain Club and New England Flow (collectively listed as the Conservation Intervenors) in January.

The Flagstaff water storage project regulates flows and thus, whitewater opportunities on the Dead River. The Dead River offers a 16-mile reach of whitewater below Grand Falls between Spencer Stream and the Forks. This is the longest reach of Class II to IV whitewater in Maine, making it a whitewater resource of statewide and national significance.

The Conservation Intervenors requested a release schedule guaranteeing a minimum of 20 whitewater releases, five of which will be greater or equal to 5,500 cfs. The exact dates, duration, and volumes of all whitewater releases will be determined by a whitewater advisory council consisting of representatives from the Conservation Intervenors, state and federal agencies, as well as representatives for the commercial whitewater operators, and Central Maine Power (CMP).

The Conservation Intervenors also requested installation of an U.S. Geologic survey equivalent staff gauge providing real time data accessible to the public via a toll free flow phone and the Internet.

Lastly, the Conservation Intervenors requested that CMP be required to secure public access to the river either through a conservation easement or some other contractual agreement arranged prior to granting of a new license. CMP, under a cost recovery program, charges an access fee for commercial and private boaters. The current recreational maintenance and proposed recreational improvements in the DEA do not specifically benefit the whitewater community. Therefore, CMP should not be allowed to charge private and commercial boaters a user fee now or under the new license.

FERC will issue a Final Environmental Analysis (FEA) based on comments on the DEA. American Whitewater will keep members appraised of further developments in this relicense. For more information contact Conservation Director John Gangemi or Tom Christopher, Director, New England FLOW and American Whitewater (508) 534-9447.

DAM PROPOSALS THREATEN THE YUBA RIVER

The Yuba County Water Agency (YCWA) is currently proposing the construction of a large, multipurpose, and multi-dam complex on the Yuba River. The YCWA campaign seeks construction of a \$670 million dam project on the main-stem Yuba at Parks Bar (about 12 miles upstream from Marysville), and construction of Waldo Reservoir, a \$240 million "off-site" water storage facility, which would siphon water out of the Yuba. The primary selling point to the public is flood control for the downstream communities of Marysville and Yuba City.

In October, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed a draft feasibility study that recommends against construction of Parks Bar Dam for flood control. The Corps found that levee improvements would provide the most cost effective and least environmentally destructive flood damage control for the Marysville/Yuba City area. Despite this report, the YCWA Board has proposed spending an additional \$7 million to "fast-track" dam permit and licensing requirements.

The principal whitewater run that would be affected is the 6 mile-long, class III and IV Englebright Dam to HW 20 run on the mainstem Yuba, which would be completely immersed (see page 107 of Holbeck and Stanley, Guide to Best Whitewater in the state of California). It is likely that some part of the final one mile of two other runs would also be immersed: (1) South Fork Yuba River, Rt. 49 to Bridgeport: Class V, 7 miles total and (2) Middle Fork Yuba River, Route 49 to Englebright: Class V, 12 miles total. (See pages 98, 99, and 106 of Holbeck and Stanley).

In addition to whitewater opportunities, the Yuba River currently supports the last self-sustaining wild run of steelhead in the Central Valley. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has estimated that a Parks Bar Dam would bury half a dozen miles and 70 percent of the total salmon spawning areas remaining on the Yuba River.

For more information contact: South Yuba River Citizen's (530) 265-5961 email: <syrcl@syrcl.org>.

Hydropower Relicensing on the San Joaquin (CA)

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) conducted a public scoping meeting and site visit to the Big Creek No. 4 hydroelectric project owned and operated by Southern California Edison's (SCE). Big Creek No. 4 is located on the San Joaquin River draining the western Sierra entering the Central Valley in the vicinity of Fresno California. The current license for Big Creek No. 4 expires February 28, 1999. SCE hopes to be granted a new 30-year license from FERC on that date. It is American Whitewater's intention, along with local paddlers, to have FERC include whitewater releases scheduled annually as part of the new 30-year license.

Big Creek No. 4 is the first in a series of hydropower relicensing on the San Joaquin River. Upstream of Big Creek No. 4, SCE operates an additional 6 hydro projects encompassing an elaborate system of reservoirs, water diversions, tunnels, powerhouses and the resulting de-watered river channels. The licenses for each of these projects expire over the next 11 years. Each of these individual hydro projects is operated in an integrated fashion with the other projects in the watershed, therefore, establishing whitewater recreation as a beneficial use in the first relicense of this series is important. American Whitewater will be there for each relicensing, ensuring that whitewater recreation opportunities are guaranteed in each new license.

For more information contact Conservation Director John Gangemi.

Canyon Creek Hydro Dam Proposal Dead in the Water


by Brooke Drury, American Whitewater Director

In May 1995, American Whitewater reported on a proposed hydroelectric project which threatened to kill the Class IV-V lower Canyon Creek run in Southwestern Washington by diverting a substantial portion of its flow into a pipe for power generation. Thankfully, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) pulled the plug on the project last December.

Dam developer Walter Musa has had his sights set on developing Canyon Creek for years, but seemed to be waiting for power prices to rise and render the project economically viable. FERC found that such "site banking" activities were illegal and canceled Musa's Preliminary Permit for the Canyon Creek and related Fly Creek Projects. The effect of the ruling is that Musa will now have to go back to square one if he wants to revive the project.

Proposed hydro projects such as this one do have a nasty habit of twitching to life when you least expect it, so it's worth keeping an eye open for a revival of this project if conditions change (e.g., energy rates skyrocket, we suffer an energy shortage, etc.). The fact remains, however, that the project has been dealt a major blow, at least for the time being.

Many thanks to everyone who made this victory possible. Particular praise goes out to American Whitewater Regional Coordinator Andrew Wulfer and the folks at Alder Creek Kayak in Portland, who did such a great job in attracting attention to the plight of Canyon Creek with the 1997 Canyon Creek Race and Rodeo. (See related article in the July/August 1997 issue of American Whitewater.) Alder Creek is planning a repeat of last year's event on May 1st and 2nd.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION	
Walter Musa, Inc.)	Project No. 11513-001
ORDER CANCELLING PRELIMINARY PERMIT (Issued December 18, 1997)	
Article 8 of the preliminary permit for the Canyon Creek Project requires that the permittee submit a progress report every six months on the feasibility studies conducted under the permit. The permittee was notified by certified letter dated August 19, 1997, that its progress report was overdue and must be filed within 30 days of that date to avoid cancellation. No response was filed, so the permit will be cancelled.	
The Director orders:	
(A) The preliminary permit for the Canyon Creek Project No. 11513, is cancelled effective 30 days after the issuance date of this order, unless that day is a Saturday, Sunday, or holiday as described in section 385.2007, in which case the effective date is the first business day following that day.	
(B) This order constitutes final agency action. Request for rehearing by the Commission may be filed within 30 days from the date of issuance of this order, pursuant to 18 C.F.R. § 385.713.	
 Kevin P. Madden Acting Director Office of Hydropower Licensing	

Kudos should also go to American Whitewater and to the Rivers Council of Washington, The Mountaineers, the Oregon Kayak & Canoe Club, and the Washington Kayak Club for devoting substantial resources toward the legal fight.

Nisqually weekends set for 2 weekends this fall

Starting this fall, two weekends of whitewater releases have been authorized for the La Grande Canyon of Washington's Nisqually River. Exact weekends have not yet been established, but are scheduled for the next three years and, if all goes as planned, should continue for a period of at least 30 years.

The Nisqually Hydroelectric Project consists of two dams and occupies an 11-mile stretch about midway between the Nisqually River's glacial headwaters on Mt. Rainier and its mouth near Olympia on Puget Sound.

When the lower dam's gates were first clamped shut in 1912, 1.7 miles of the river's spectacular LaGrande Canyon went virtually dry. The dams came up for relicensing in 1993 and American Whitewater spearheaded an effort to restore whitewater recreation to the LaGrande Canyon.

In March 1997, FERC issued a final license for the Nisqually Hydroelectric Project which, among other things, directs dam owner Tacoma Public Utilities (TPU) to develop "a three year plan for the continued evaluation of the potential for whitewater boating in the La Grande Canyon" in consultation with American Whitewater, fish agencies, and others. The plan was drafted and approved late last

year and calls for two weekends of releases at 800 and 1000 cfs.

Right now, all systems are go for November and December releases. However, details related to access to the Canyon are still under discussion with various landowners and with Tacoma. Stay tuned for future updates in upcoming issues of American Whitewater, or check the website.

The LaGrande Canyon is an advanced/expert whitewater run involving Class IV and V rapids. In addition, it has severely limited access in and out of the canyon due to the 200 to 300 footwalls, which run the length of the stretch. If you are unsure of your whitewater skills, please do not attempt this run. Boating accidents are always unwelcome, but are even more unwelcome during test releases such as these. Besides hurting yourself, you may seriously jeopardize future whitewater releases in this incredibly beautiful canyon.

For more information on the Nisqually Project or the 1998 whitewater releases on the La Grande Canyon, contact Conservation Director John Gangemi in Big Fork, MT (406-837-3155 or jgangemi@digisys.net) or Executive Director Rich Bowers at the Maryland office (301-589-9453).

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dbassage@access.mountain.net

The Festival is held at the scenic confluence of Muddy Creek and the Cheat River, where an indian village once thrived: A wide arc of booths surrounds the once quiet field like a wagon ring; in one corner the children's area is full of games, the focus tent teaches of the glories and perils of the watershed, the vendors peddle their wares and take in the river air. At the silent auction, deals abound. 'Round the stage are crowds of revelers, swaying to infectious rhythms. There is no better way to spend the day than at the 1997 Cheat River Festival. And in the morning, the river awaits.

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Access

MIDDLE FORK AND MAIN SALMON RIVERS, IDAHO

Part of this article was provided by Roger Phillips, a boater and reporter for The Star-News in McCall, ID; it is a partial re-print that originally appeared in the January 30, 1998 issue. Roger can be reached at stnnews@aol.com.

You can get a copy of the Executive Summary of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on the web at the Payette National Forest web site:

<http://www.mccall.net/pnff/crnwpp.html>

You can also get a copy of the DEIS on CD by calling or writing the Forest Service at: FC-RONR Wilderness Coordinator, RR2 Box 600, Salmon, Idaho 83467 — Phone (208) 756-5100 — Fax (208) 756-5151.

People commenting should remember they are dealing with a bureaucracy that does not see the comment period as a voting process. Saying you do or don't like a plan is not enough. Tell the Forest Service specifically what you do or don't like about the plan. Citing page numbers is always helpful. Giving your name and phone number will allow Forest Service personnel to get back to you and clarify your comments.

Include a copy of your Forest Service comments to your state congressional delegates as well as the following members of Idaho's congressional delegation:

The Honorable Senator's Larry E. Craig
& Dirk Kempthorn
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Helen Chenoweth
& Michael Crapo
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

For more information contact Conservation
Director John Gangemi

The Forest Service has issued a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and associated operational management plan for the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness in Idaho. This wilderness area encompasses portions of the Wild and Scenic sections of the Main and Middle Fork of the Salmon Rivers. The Forest Service considered five alternatives in detail, adopting Alternative 5 as their preferred alternative.

In the original DEIS, Alternative 5 proposed drastic cutbacks for river use on the Middle Fork and Main Salmon. However, an errata sheet corrected this and explains that the number of daily launches will remain the same during the high use summer season (7 total, 3 commercial and 4 private). Only the number of persons per launch will be reduced during the high use period: 15 per commercial launch and 10 per private, down from 30 and 24. This means a total of 45 commercial and 40 private, a rough parity if guides are included in the calculation.

Maximum trip length will be reduced from 8 days to 6 days. The Main Salmon would also see significant reductions in length of stay from 10 days to 5 days and implementation of assigned campsites.

In addition, the Forest Service would like to implement the following regulations for private boaters.

Spring Use:

1 private per day. Party size 8. Max days 5

Fall Use:

1 private per day. Party size 4. Max days 7

Control season:

4 private per day. Party size 10. Max days 6

Number of boats per party: Maximum 7

While news on the Middle Fork and Main was grim for boaters, the plan considers new opportunities for boaters on two tributaries: the South Fork of the Salmon River and Big Creek, both of which feed into the Middle Fork. The new plan proposes specific permits for those two waterways, which now must be run before permit season or with a permit for the Middle Fork or Main Salmon. The plan calls for specific permits for Big Creek and the South Fork, limited to six people and boats per permit, three launches per week and no more than one per day, and a four-day, three-night limit per trip.

Sandy Thomas, president of Idaho Whitewater Associationsaid the group has not yet polled its board and membership and taken an official stand, but there is a lot of initial concern about plans to limit party sizes and allowable days on the two rivers.

"I think boaters in general are going to be horrified," Thomas said. She also indicated that Idaho boaters already have a difficult time getting a permit to float the rivers. Last year, the odds were one in 23 of a person drawing a Middle Fork permit. "If you're an Idaho boater and want to see the Middle Fork, you're going to have to get a backpack," she said.

The Forest Service is also running the risk of alienating recreational boaters, who have traditionally supported wilderness areas. "If they take this away from Idaho boaters, they've lost their advocates," Thomas said.

The Forest Service has extended its comment period on the proposal to Dec. 1, 1998. Please take the time to research this issue and provide constructive feedback to the Forest Service. Your comments should address the Service's logic path for "purpose and need for change" in the current management plan. Support your argument with factual information and identify the shortcomings in the Forest Service's preferred alternative.



Rich Bowers presents The "Distinguished Friends of Whitewater Award" to Olympic Paddler Davey Hem.



AW past President Risa Callaway presents Perception's "Conservationist of the Year Award" to Tom Christopher, AW director and director of New England flew

Senate Bill 1489 – the Outfitter Policy Act of 1997

By Rich Bowers

It seems that every business and corporation today has its own set of lobbyists in Washington, DC. So, it should come as no surprise that commercial outfitters have theirs. Nor should it surprise anyone that in seeking to improve their lot in life, they are doing no favors for others who share the rivers.

Several years ago, I had the privilege of attending a meeting with Pope Barrow, American Whitewater's vice president at the time. The meeting had something to do with another group trying to run roughshod over American Whitewater.

"We realize that we are stuck in the same [rivers] cage with you," explained Pope, "and that you are this huge elephant taking up the entire cage. American Whitewater, on the other hand, is just this little skunk trying to stay out of your way."

"Sometimes, even though you don't mean to, you move around and squash us," continued Pope. "But believe me, when you do, we're going to set off a HUGE STINK."

Today, we have a similar situation with the introduction of Senate Bill # 1489, referred to as

the 'Outfitter Policy Act of 1997.' This bill was introduced on the Senate floor last November by Senator Larry Craig (R-ID) and cosponsored by Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR).

This bill is not new. America Outdoors, who represents commercial outfitters, has been pushing this bill for at least the past two years, but with little success. This last version, like those before it, is not meant to intentionally hurt noncommercial boaters – it just does!

Some of the provisions of this bill are acceptable, and would benefit all river users. For instance, S 1489 requires that commercial operators conform to certain standards for safety and resource protection. But other provisions lock in and guarantee commercial allocations, which would effectively kill any effort to change or balance allocation systems on regulated rivers, including the current system on the Grand Canyon.

The problem is that today's river resources are scarce and in high demand. Improving conditions for any one specific group automatically affects others on the river. And, any such attempt

to make these sorts of changes is destined to make life miserable for someone, especially when other groups are not included in the planning process. Bypassing river management agencies, and going directly for a legislative fix, sends a strong message that you are the biggest animal, and that you don't really care about what happens to others sharing the same cage. Here are a few examples of how S 1489 will hurt noncommercial boaters:

— River Management agencies (USFS, NPS, BLM and others) would be required to provide a stable business climate that offers reasonable opportunities for commercial outfitters to realize a profit on their operations as a whole. Sec.2 (5)(B)

— Agencies will not be able to charge commercial patrons for such things as Cost Recovery, nor will commercial patrons have to participate in the Fee Demonstration program. Sec.6(d)

— Agencies will be required to provide outfitters with a 10-year contract with a fixed allocation (Sec.5(d)2, Stc. 9(b)1)

— Agencies would not be allowed to transfer a concessionaire's allocation to the non commercial allocation, as any transfer would have to be made to the same type of outfitted activity. (Sec.9 (b) 3)

— Agencies would not be able to decrease commercial use and increase non commercial use, as in an open reservation model, or even consider an allocation model that could slowly change over a few years based on actual demand indicators. (Sec.9 (b) 4)

— If agencies consider increasing allocations at all, they would have to give first consideration to improving the economic viability of existing outfitter operations. (Sec.9(c) 2(B))

— Outfitters can lose user days if they're not able to sell at least 70% of the spaces on their trips for 40% of the years of their contract, but this rule doesn't apply if the outfitter lets another outfitter use the allocation. (Sec. 9 (d)(1)(A)(ii))

As we went to press, American Whitewater had learned that many on Capitol Hill are worried

about this legislation, including Senator Wyden who **co-sponsored** it. Noncommercial boaters may have a chance to defeat this bill once again.

To help, contact Senator Craig (fax # 202-228-1067), Senator Wyden (fax 202-228-2717), and Senator Dale Bumpers (D-AR, fax 202-224-6435), Chair of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, and tell them why this bill won't work:

— Explain that noncommercial boaters provide economic growth also and that any legislation needs to look at improving river conditions for all users.


— Copy your letters to American Whitewater, 1430 Fenwick Lane, Silver Spring, Md. 20910, or by fax (301) 589-9453; or to the Grand Canyon Private Boater's Association at gcpba@flagstaff.az.us

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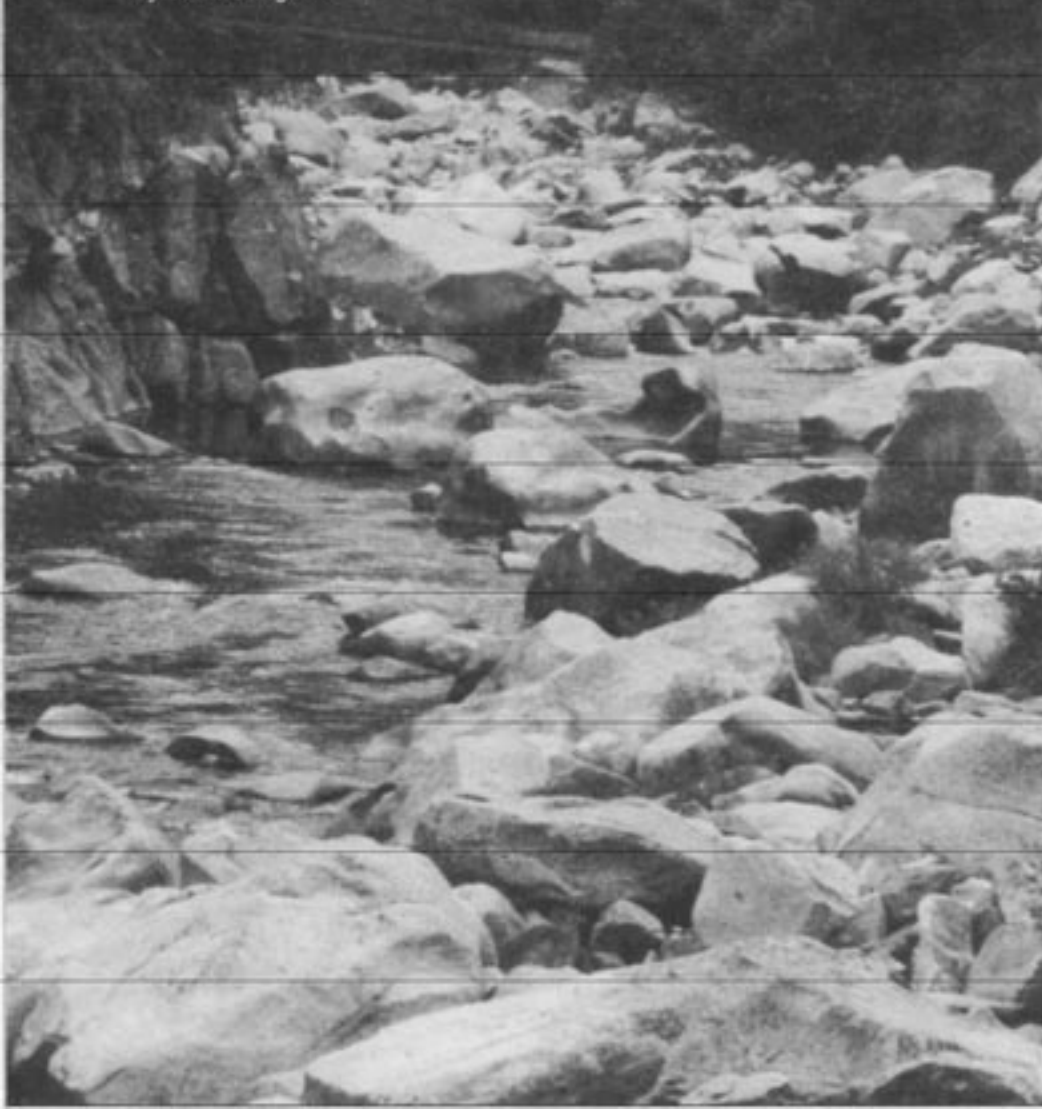
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NORTH FORK FEATHER RIVER— JUST ADD WATER

By John Gangemi



Above: The view upstream of Tobin section on the Rock Creek run. Tobin section is 1.5 miles of Class V sandwiched into the 9 mile long Class IV Rock Creek run.

The open trunk obscured my view of the Honda civic behind me. I didn't want to squash the little rice burner with this Lincoln Town Car. But despite the difficulty backing up, I was glad for the trunk — surely it would double as a bivy spot. In fact, the Veritgo almost fit in there but the stern just wouldn't clear the latch. Forcing the boat any harder against the seat back was likely to shred the white Corinthian leather. If these play boats were just a little shorter...

Anyway, I gave up and resorted to strapping two boats on top, rodeo boats on the roof of a Lincoln — probably a first.

Dave slunk down in the passenger seat, staring in disbelief at the contradiction I

provided in the driver's seat.

"Feels like I'm captaining the Exxon Valdez."

"Probably burning the equivalent amount of oil spilled too," Dave sarcastically replied. I knew the Lincoln and I would be the brunt of Dave's humor for much of the day. After all, I presented an easy target: Conservation Director for American Whitewater captaining a Lincoln Town Car.

I took his sarcastic comments in stride, confident the Town Car image fit well with our day's mission — a reconnaissance of the multiple hydro power dams dewatering the North Fork of the Feather River in California.

Years ago, Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) engineered a series of reservoirs, pipes, and powerhouses diverting water from virtually every mile of the 50-mile long North Fork river canyon. Prior to these hydropower projects, the North Fork Feather River would normally have carried 700 cfs during its lowest flow period of the year.

The Lincoln easily climbed the ridge out of Oroville and we headed toward the North Fork Canyon. With any luck, the recent heavy rains would give us some paddling on spill water. Others had been paddling earlier in the week. But planning a paddling trip to the North Fork Feather River is dicey. You can only count on whitewater flows during extremely wet storms, typically the winter months when runoff exceeds the capacity of PG&E's 12-foot diameter pipes and reservoir storage. And, PG&E operates an extensive list of stream gages, but refuses to make these available to the public. It's difficult to comprehend a river as large as the North Fork, situated in such a rural setting, being monopolized for industrial ends at the expense of all other users. Welcome to the routine scenario of the North Fork Feather — so much water, but never any to paddle.

PG&E, a private utility company, operates three hydropower projects in the main stem of the North Fork Feather River totaling six dams and seven powerhouses. Each of the projects is licensed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The licenses grant PG&E permission to generate power on the North Fork Feather River, a public resource. FERC issues private utilities hydropower licenses for 30 to 50 years. Sometime during the five years prior to license expiration, the utility must reapply for a new 30-50 year license. State and federal agencies, as well as the public, are given the opportunity to comment on the terms and conditions for the new license. When these hydro projects were licensed 30-50 years ago, few if any environmental regulations requiring protection of the river resource existed. Today, new hydropower licenses must meet the legal requirements of a multitude of state and federal laws crafted to protect the environment and provide for balanced use of



Cresta Dam and channel de-watered downstream, start of 5 mile class IV-V run.

natural resources. Under these congressional acts, we are able to restore balanced use of our rivers for whitewater recreation and other public uses.

It was clear from our first glance at the river 1500 feet below that PG&E was once again siphoning most of the river into its pipes. No paddling on this day. Cruising in the Lincoln would have to suffice for the day's adventure. I pulled on the joystick seat adjuster, reclining to the low-rider position. Surely, Dave couldn't find fault with this feature?

I stared in disbelief at the remarkable river and canyon the first time I saw the North Fork of the Feather River in June of '97. This canyon has the ingredients to be a world class whitewater run — all the ingredients except H₂O. The river channel has house size granite boulders, gradient and easy access, but there's no water. A phrase popped into my head that June day that I could not erase, "Just add water!"

By the end of the day, after seeing first hand the remarkable river channel, the phrase expanded to include, "Just add water—paddlers will come!"

Most state and regional paddling guidebooks devote few if any pages to the main stem of the North Fork Feather. Why should they when there is no reliable water source to attract paddlers. Charles Martin's 1974 guide book, "A Paddlers Guide to the Rivers of California's Sierra Nevada," poignantly summarizes the North Fork Feather River canyon.

"Pacific Gas and Electric long ago de-

stroyed the spectacular Feather River Canyon. They have built powerhouses every five miles and allow only enough water flow to keep the rocks wet. There was one stretch left open. Caribou Afterbay to the East Branch junction, that was ideal for whitewater boating. Its 80-feet-per-mile drop produced big waves in the narrow river bed. Pumpkinseed Rapid was a thrill for the most avid big-water boater. For years, the most challenging slalom races in the country were held near one of the Forest Service campgrounds. The river was also a favorite spot for fishermen.

However, to see water flowing down the river was anathema to the engineers: since 1969 the water has bypassed the river to the new Belden powerhouse. PG&E guarantees that no water beyond a small fish release will ever again flow down the Caribou Run unless \$4,000 is paid for a race weekend. The Fish and Game people are narrowing the river bed with the hope that a few fish will be able to stay alive in the trickle of water if the flow is concentrated in a small strip. In the words of Carl Trost: 'The PG&E giveth and the PG&E taketh away.'

I'd traveled to the North Fork of the Feather River in June of '97 to meet with staff from the local Plumas National Forest, in addition to see the river firsthand. Much of the North Fork Feather flows through the Plumas Forest. As the government appointed stewards of the North Fork Feather River, the Forest Service has a legal right to require the hydropower licensee to operate the facility in a fashion compatible with the Plumas Forest's guidelines and standards for natural resource

use and protection. In fact, under section 4(e) of the Federal Power Act (FPA) the Plumas Forest staff has the authority to require specific terms and conditions on the hydro-power operator congruent with the forest's Management Plan. My meeting with the Forest Service had one purpose; to encourage the Plumas Forest folks to exercise their section 4(e) authority requiring scheduled whitewater releases as part of the license terms and conditions.

Highway 70 crosses the North Fork Feather River on a bridge perched high above the river. Dave and I walked onto the narrow bridge to get a better look at the river below. This was the beginning of the Poe run, a 7.5 mile Class IV-V. The first two miles offered continuous Class V with a gradient of 120 feet per mile. From our perch high above the river we could only imagine the enormous size of the granite boulders below rather than feel the overwhelming mass as some paddlers had experienced from river level. The Poe diversion dam was just upstream, out of view from the bridge. Like the rest of the North Fork Feather, the dam diverted water via pipes to a powerhouse which in this case was 7.5 miles downstream. It appeared today, like most days on the North Fork Feather, that the majority of the water was flowing through PG&E's pipes.

The license for the Poe powerhouse expires in 2003. The relicensing process will start early this spring, five years in advance of license expiration. Now is the time to start lobbying hard for whitewater flows back in that 7.5 miles of river.

We climbed back in the Lincoln, passing Poe dam as we headed upstream for Cresta powerhouse. Cresta powerhouse, along with Rock Creek hydro facility upstream, is part of the current relicensing process. This hydro license, collectively referred to as Rock Creek-Cresta, encompasses two dams and an equal number of powerhouses that de-water 14 miles of Class IV-V whitewater. The Rock Creek-Cresta license expired in 1982. PG&E, in a clear case of abusing the relicensing process, has operated Rock Creek-Cresta under an annual license from FERC since 1982. In November 1996, FERC issued a Draft Environmental Analysis (DEA) for Rock Creek-Cresta. The preferred alternative in the DEA did not include specific language requiring whitewater releases. The Final EA (FEA) is expected out by the end of the year. It's highly likely the language in the FEA, or lack thereof, will be similar to the DEA unless the paddling community can persuade the decision makers to include whitewater releases as a license condition.

My June trip to the Feather River Canyon did not produce the outcome I had imagined. The meeting with the Plumas Forest people was positive, yet after six months of phone

continued ►

Pending Hydropower project relicensing in the mainstem of the North Fork Feather River.

project no.	Project name	License expiration	Licensee	No. dam	Reservoirs	powerhouses	length of bypass channel (mi)
2105	Upper North Fork Feather River	2004	PG&E	1	Lake Almonar	Butt Valley	9
				1	Butt Valley	Caribou #1 & #2	9
				1	Belden Forebay	Belden	9
				3	3	4	27
1962	Rock Creek Cresta	1979	PG&E	1	Rock Creek forebay	Rock Creek	9
				1	Cresta forebay	Cresta	5
				2	2	2	14
2107	Poe	2003	PG&E	1	Poe forebay	Poe	7.5
Grand total				6	6	7	48.5

tag, it was clear that although enthusiastic, they had little expertise with whitewater paddling or flows and facilities necessary for a quality experience. The urgency of the Rock Creek-Cresta relicense, and the upcoming relicense process for the other two projects, inspired me to schedule a second visit with the Plumas Forest folks. Unlike the first meeting, this meeting was held on the banks of the river. I was accompanied by a group of local paddlers and business owners knowledgeable about the local paddling and economic opportunities. The purpose of the site visit was simply to educate the Forest Service staff about the paddling community's needs for flows, access and primitive camping, and the ripple effects this would have in the local economy. Much of the afternoon

with the Plumas staff was spent visiting potential access and camping sites, discussing flows and, as always with kayakers, gawking, gesturing and describing various hydraulic features on the river. To their credit, the Plumas staff accepted and participated enthusiastically in the river tour and even asked where they could get some instruction.

The resource officer for the Plumas Forest, Charlie Brown, stopped me as we walked up from the river at the end of the day, "John, will paddlers come to the North Fork Feather?"

I had one response embedded in my head, leftover from my earlier explorations up and down the canyon.

"Just add water—paddlers will come!"

Charlie didn't believe me, so I explained the unique paddling potential concentrated right in the Canyon. Still, he seemed doubtful that any of you would set the North Fork Feather on your paddling planner. Send the Plumas Forest some evidence. Contact Charlie Brown via phone, letter, postcard, or internet. Correspondence can be brief and to the point: "Charlie, just add water — I will come." You might want to make reference to the hydropower relicensing.

The Forest Service needs to hear from us collectively in order to be convinced that we will use the river. Hopefully, our efforts on the North Fork Feather will require the next generation of guidebooks to devote entire chapters to accommodate all the runs in this canyon.

Address your thoughts concerning the North Fork Feather to:

Charlie Brown
Plumas National Forest
Mt. Hough Ranger District
39696 Highway 70
Quincy, CA 95971
(916)283-0555
email: jbrown3@jps.net

Contact Mark J. Madrid, Forest Supervisor for the Plumas National Forest, as well.

Late in the evening of my first trip, the Lincoln climbed the ridge out of the North Fork Feather River Canyon. The trip computer blinked — 21.9 miles per gallon. Not even ACA's Subaru fleet can boast that kind of mileage.

Lincoln, I'm sold.

S.EX, LIES, and EMERGENCY ORDERS

Kevin Lewis, Regional Coordinator

Imagine a hot July day in Northern California. You are floating in a beer-sodden stupor on your favorite inner tube. Suddenly, the sound of a car horn pierces your brain, and you look up to see a frantic woman on the roadside pointing upstream and yelling something about the dam. Glancing over your shoulder you see a fourteen foot wall of muddy water bearing down on you, "OH, SHIT!"

Hours later, cold and very sober, after a helicopter ride from a midstream boulder, you lament the loss of the rest of your beer and your favorite inner tube.

"Natural Selection" might be the first words from lips of the typical AW member who just read about that incident. But just suppose YOU were conducting your annual "learn to kayak class" when the dam unex-

pectedly released. Not nearly as humorous now, is it?

July 5, 1997 was a lucky day for a few tubers and fishermen on the North Fork Feather River below Cresta Dam when a massive 125' x 28' drum gate suddenly, and without warning, dropped, unleashing 14,000 cfs. Amazingly, nobody died or was seriously injured in this incident. And to the delight of local boaters, a virtually dry river was now alive for a short time while repairs were underway. All too soon though the river was returned to the trickle which, since the mid 1940s, has prevented recreation and destroyed a world class trout fishery.

The drum gates used on Rock Creek and Cresta are an unusual design and operate using the hydraulic pressure of the water in

the reservoir for their operation. Each dam has two drum gates 125' long and 28' high. These gates are a hollow structure, sealed at both ends and are wedge shaped with the pointed end hinged to the front face of the dam. Each gate weighs approximately 1.5 million pounds and can rotate down into a chamber built into the dam called the "drum gate chamber." Seals line the outside edges of the drum gate and a 52" valve assembly allows water to enter the drum gate chamber from the reservoir. A drain valve is located on the downstream side of the dam. Closing the drain valve builds the hydraulic pressure in the drum gate chamber lifting the drum gate. If the seal leakage exceeds the available water supply to the drum gate chamber, hydraulic pressure is lost and the gate will sink to the open position.

American Whitewater and numerous other organizations have been actively in-

WHITEWATER TRAVEL PLANNER:

PADDLING DESTINATION—

NORTH FORK FEATHER RIVER. CALIFORNIA

Dave Steindorff, regional coordinator
and John Gangemi, Conservation Di-
rector

Imagine boating through a modern art museum with exquisite granite sculptures that rival Yosemite's domes. Imagine class III, IV and V water flowing through a canyon that is in itself a work of art. To top it off, imagine a shuttle that you can measure with a stop watch. The Feather River watershed offers has all of these things — except water. The lack of a boatable flow in the North Fork of the Feather River usually keeps most people from enjoying this awesome river canyon. All the runs on the mainstem North Fork Feather River are contingent on spills from the hydropower dams, which at present only happen under two conditions; (1) the flows exceed the limited reservoir storage capac-

ity, or (2) the gates have failed on the dam (see S.EX, LIES AND EMERGENCY ORDERS). American Whitewater would like to add a third condition — regularly scheduled whitewater releases. Two of the dams are currently in the relicensing process with the remainder due for relicensing in the next six years. Call your American Whitewater relicensing agent to get an update on when the water starts flowing. In the meantime, polish up on your paddling and car camping.

In a five to seven day period, a group could easily paddle a different class IV-V run each

day on one of five sections on the North Fork Feather or numerous tributary creeks — some recently pioneered while others await first descents. Combine this with riverside camping, spectacular mountain bike rides and the nearby High Lakes Wilderness Area and you've got the recipe for a destination paddling vacation. The town of Belden offers paddlers a chance to sample beer and local food. The entire town was won in a poker game in the 1940's.

Probably the most attractive feature of all of this whitewater is its accessibility. An hour from Chico, two hours from Sacramento, three and a half hours from the Bay Area. The biggest challenge to boating this area is obviously flows but also flow information. PG&E periodically releases water in the various reaches of the river, the problem is finding out when and where.

The list of runs below progresses longitudinally upstream. This is a sampling of runs in the watershed, not a complete list. Refer to Holbeck and Stanley's "Guide to the Best Whitewater in the State of California" for general information.

Big Bend Run: Class II-IV, length dependent on pool level of Lake

continued



Cresta flume carrying approximately 2,000 cfs around the five mile Class IV-V Cresta run.

July 5, 1997 was a lucky day for a few tubers and fishermen on the North Fork Feather River below Cresta Dam when a massive 125'x28' drum gate suddenly and without warning, dropped, unleashing 14,000 cfs.

involved in the FERC hydropower re-licensing process for the Rock Creek and Cresta dams. We were distressed to learn that Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) might be trying to convince the California Department of Safety of Dams (DSOD) to issue an "Emergency Order" as a result of this gate failure. In California, most environmental actions are controlled by the "California Environmental Quality Act" (CEQA). Issuance of an emergency order by DSOD would suspend CEQA and exclude concerned parties, such as AW. PG&E would be free to implement its own Sediment Extraction (S.EX) program from the reservoirs, flushing massive amounts of sediment downstream. While the S.EX program might be viable from an engineering standpoint, little study has gone into the biological and recreational impacts on the river system downstream. If PG&E could compel, albeit deceive, DSOD to issue an emergency order, then all federal and state environmental pro-

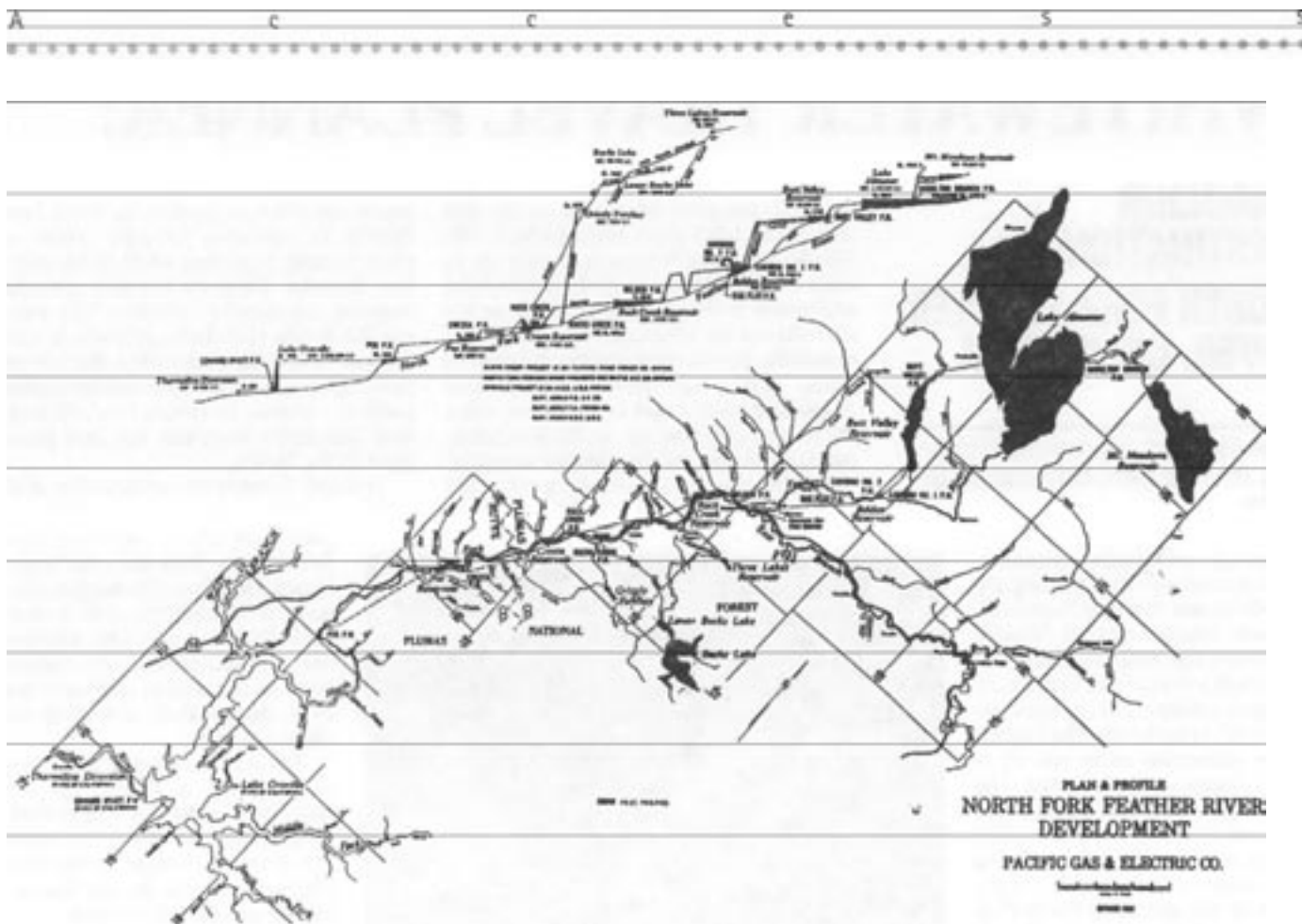
tection laws would be superseded.

Using the California Public Records Act, AW and Friends of the River obtained several hundred pages of safety inspection reports, maintenance logs, incident reports, and other documents from DSOD. After digesting these documents, we felt that PG&E was responsible for the sediment buildup by not using the low level outlet gates during high water events. These gates rapidly became inoperative due to sediment build up. In the mid 1980s PG&E drilled new 24" water supply openings to the drum gate chambers at a higher level above the sediment. We also discovered that PG&E had never replaced the drum gate seals in spite of the knowledge that the same style drum gates on Grand Coulee Dam (Columbia River) were resealed on a five year average!

After having our conclusions verified by a Civil Engineer, we then sent a letter to the Chief of DSOD expressing our concerns about

past operations. We also pointed out that this situation had been ongoing for 20 years and should be addressed in the FERC process — not under the guise of an emergency.

In early December, we received a very blunt reply from the director of DSOD telling us to "kiss off." The reply also had some veiled language referring to criminal penalties for "interfering with the operations of DSOD." On Jan. 6, DSOD issued an order to PG&E, giving them eight months to restore the dams to design specs. Did we accomplish anything with all this? Well, the order was NOT an emergency order and as you are reading this, DSOD is being challenged by federal and state agencies, legal staff, and conservation groups to validate their order. Better yet, the news media may have an opportunity to shine some light on an arrogant state agency that has forgotten just whom is paying their way and what responsibilities they have to the public!



Oroville. At full pool the run is inundated by the reservoir — more suitable for cigar boats and jet skis. At low pool (drought years) the run is five miles. This run starts below Poe powerhouse and has a spectacular 30 foot runnable dam abandoned years ago.

Poe run: Class IV-V, 7.5 miles. The bottom end of the North Fork Feather River, before it dumps into Lake Oroville. Poe offers a roadside put-in to a Class V run that quickly leaves the security of the highway for the length of the run. Enormous granite boulders. The Poe hydropower license expires in 2003, at which point, the paddling community hopes to get regularly scheduled releases for the 7.5 mile section.

Cresta: Class III-IV(V), 5 miles. Much of this run is described as class III and IV rapids punctuated by great ender spots. One class V drop occurs at higher flows at the County line and is appropriately named County Line hole. The lower 2.5 miles offers class III paddling. Cresta powerhouse currently diverts all but 40 cfs from the river. This powerhouse is currently in the relicense process. American Whitewater is asking for regularly scheduled whitewater releases on both the Rock Creek and Cresta sections.

Rock Creek: Class IV-V, 9 miles. Another classic granite riverbed with house size boulders.

The Tobin section sandwiched midway in this run is a busy 1.5 miles of Class V paddling. Roadside boating, but once on the river you wouldn't know the road was there. Currently, PG&E diverts all but 40 cfs from the river channel for the entire nine mile run, virtually eliminating all paddling. The current relicense process offers a singular opportunity to alter that scenario for the next 30 years.

Caribou Run: Class IV, 9 miles. Former site of the slalom nationals in the late 1960's. The last race was held on the Belden run in 1969. In 1970, Belden Powerhouse went on line, placing all but 40 cfs of the river in a pipe. Belden is due for relicensing in 2004, at which point the paddling community hopes to get regularly scheduled releases.

Seneca Run: Class ? (likely class IV), 9 miles. This section has rarely been paddled since most of the water is diverted into pipes feeding four powerhouses rather than flowing in the river channel. The run starts below Lake Almonar continuing for approximately nine miles to the Butt powerhouse. Much of this section is away from the road except for the put-in and take-out; de-facto wilderness boating in character. Butt, Caribou 1 & 2 and Belden powerhouses are due for relicensing in 2004.

East Branch of the North Fork of the Feather, Virgilia run: Class IV, 10 miles. Another roadside boating attraction with relatively dependable natural flows unaltered by hydropower diversions. The last five miles is Class III.

Indian Creek: Class IV-V, 3-6 miles. The lower 3-4 miles of Indian Creek is being done on a more regular basis by the locals. Upstream of the normal put-in is an extremely steep 1.5 mile section terminating in a braided river channel with the river right channel delivering the unwary into a succession of falls with fatal holes forever etched in my subconscious. The river left channel appeared to be a more reasonable, yet steep boulder garden. Via the windshield scout, we could see more rapids upstream of this section as we u-turned the Lincoln Town Car in the twilight, heading for the barn.

Yellow Creek: Class V, Length: check with locals. Yellow Creek, a tributary to the North Fork Feather entering opposite Belden Town, offers wilderness creek boating. Word has it this creek passes through several vertical walled canyons on its descent to the Feather.

Events Central

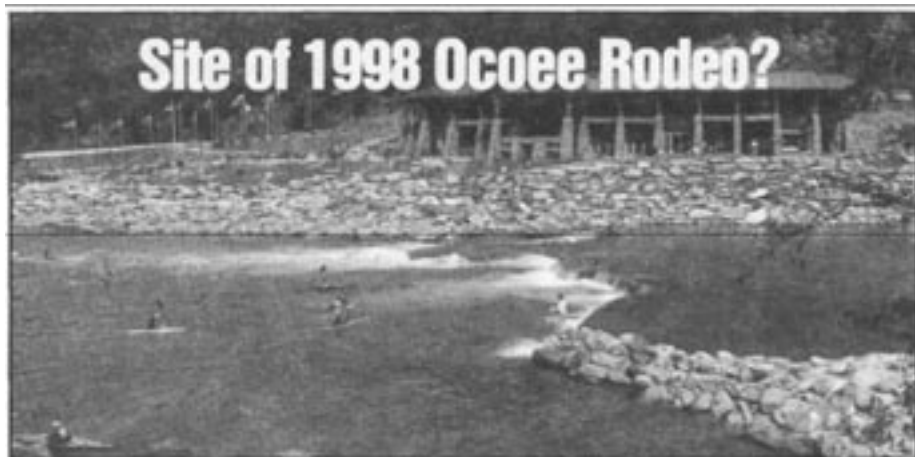
by Jayne H. Abbot

American Whitewater/NOWR Event Manager

There must be a better way... this thought kept racing through my head as Susan Wilson and I played beat the clock last September/October as we prepared for the 14th annual Ocoee Rodeo. Here we were struggling with such issues as parking, safety and shuttle schedules. Could our site handle the crowds if we promoted the event? Our conclusion, no way. My mind played this over and over and I couldn't help but focus on the gorgeous location just a few miles upstream on the Upper Ocoee, site of the 1996 Olympic Slalom events. Could we build a world class rodeo hole up there? Just think of the possibilities; tons of parking, great spectator and media viewing, the newly built and under utilized Ocoee Whitewater Center with room for food, band and even bathroom facilities. We could run multiple events simultaneously. Rodeo up top and Freestyle Through a Rapid and squirt down below. All kinds of booths would be up and down the river. I could hear the crowds cheering to the beat of a live band as the ends were flying in the perfect freestyle hydraulic... I was dreaming big time.

If you've ever attended the Ocoee Rodeo or even spent a day playing at Hell Hole, you know very well the access problems. Logistics of running the event are a nightmare. There's no parking close by so shuttles have to be set up. This is an amazing feat that Susan spends hours coordinating every year. And then a shuttle vehicle breaks down and our goose is cooked. Even the competitor boats have to be shuttled in and out. Many people choose to park off the tight two-lane highway on a basically nonexistent shoulder and then hike along the road as cars whip by within inches. There's no food or sponsor vendors allowed and spectators must sit on a dangerous loose rocky slope. The media tends to stay away; who wants to carry heavy expensive equipment down a rocky slope? And the real kicker, the port-o-potties teeter high on the riverbank with the highway on one side and river on the other. It's kind of scary in there when a truck comes by and the little shell surrounding you shakes in the gust of wind...

So, here we have this great hole and a very popular event that American Whitewater (through Susan Wilson dedication) has put lots of time, effort and money into but we seem to be losing ground every year. Our spectator numbers are dropping and the media's interest dwindling. What better way to punch up the event then to move it to the site of the Olympics, but how?



I just couldn't seem to drop this idea. Actually, I was thinking of Susan and myself and our sanity. After living through the 1997 event logistics, I really didn't want to go through that ever again! I picked up the phone and started calling around. Was the Forest Service, Park Service, Ocoee Whitewater Center (run by the financially strapped Cradle of Forestry in America), TVA, Chamber of Commerce, rafting outfitters and other interested parties receptive to the idea? Would boaters gasp at the thought of making another river bed modification to the already well modified Upper Ocoee? The overwhelming response was "GO FOR IT, what can I do to help?"

And the wheels started turning. A meeting was held at the Ocoee Whitewater Center in late January to determine the chances of creating a hole and to get a handle on the costs. John Anderson, the architect of the Olympic Slalom course, donated his time and expertise to the project as well as TVA engineer and kayaker Mark Mobley. They walked the riverbed evaluating various potential sites before, during and after a water release generously provided by TVA. I waited anxiously for their opinion. Was I all wet? Had I just wasted everyone's time? Could this really work? In short order, John found me. "Jayne, we've got it figured out". "early fell over."

As of this writing (early February) it appears we will be able to create an awesome hole located at Best Ledge directly in front of the Ocoee Whitewater Center. If all goes as we hope, the modifications will be small, easily done and fairly inexpensive. The modifications amount to filling in some cracks and building up a couple of spaces between a few rocks. Some sand/concrete mixed bags to

start for testing and then a final application of faux rock and voila, a fantastic freestyle hole riding event site is born. The site will provide us with an incredible opportunity to create a whitewater event like never before. The work should be completed, barring no unforeseen problems, by early summer. Next up, getting more releases on the Upper Ocoee from TVA ... It's amazing what can happen when you put your mind to it!

Now, just so you understand, I definitely do not advocate making riverbed changes to pristine undisturbed rivers across the country to accommodate rodeo events. That would be counterproductive to American Whitewater and the paddling community. However, the circumstances on the Ocoee are unique. The Upper Ocoee is devoid of river life and has already been altered significantly to create the Olympic Slalom course. The modifications proposed here are minuscule in comparison to the work already done. A beautiful building, the Ocoee Whitewater Center, sits much of the year with nothing really happening to bring it to life. The benefits are significant for all involved. Recreational paddlers and rodeo competitors will have a great hole for play and competition. The Ocoee Rodeo will have an event site for much needed growth. The area economy will benefit from increased tourism and media attention and the Ocoee Whitewater Center will be the center of it all. Is it worth it? I believe the rewards will be great for everyone.

Another update will be provided in the next issue of the journal so keep your eyes peeled. If you have any comments, questions or grips about this project please contact me. I'd very much like to hear from you.

1998 SCHEDULE OF RIVER EVENTS

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

AMERICAN WHITEWATER EVENTS

National Paddling Film Festival – East	February 21	Lexington, KY	Barry Grimes	606-623-9067
National Paddling Film Festival-West	March 7	Bakersfield, CA	Linda Ivins	805-871-6790
Kennebec River Festival	C A N C E L L E D – new organizer needed – if interested call			704-645-5299
Sacandaga Festival	July 11-12	Hadley, NY	Pete Skinner	518-474-2432
Black River Festival	July 25-26	Watertown, NY	Chris Koll	315-652-8397
Deerfield Festival	August 1	Charlemont, MA	Mike Coleman	718-646-2012
"Don't call this a Festival River Rendemous"	September 5-7	Belfort, NY/Beaver River	Chris Koll	315-652-8397
Gauley Festival	September 26	Summersville, WV	Phyllis Horowitz	914-586-2355
Moose River Festival	October 17	Old Forge, NY	Chris Koll	315-652-8397
Russell Fork Rendezvous	October 24	Naysi, VA	Brent Austin	606-278-2011

and introducing the AMERICAN WHITEWATER CASCADE SERIES

a series of American Whitewater premier level races from mild(er) to wilder held across the country

Canyon Creek Race	May 2	Clarks County, WA	Andrew Wulfers	503-285-0464
Potomac Great Falls Ra	May 30-31	Great Falls, VA	ky Rodriguez	703-742-8742
Black River Race	July 25-26	Watertown, NY	ris Koll	315-652-8397
Upper Yough Race	August 20	Friendsville, MD	s Whitternmore	301-746-5389
Gore Canyon Downriver Race	August 22 –23	Kremmling, CO	Paul Tefft	970-923-3955
Gauley River Race	October 5	Summersville, WV	Donnie Hudspeth	800-950-2585
Moose River Race	October 17	Old Forge, NY	Chris Koll	315-652-8397
Russell Fork Race	October 24	Haystack, VA	Brent Austin	606-278-2011

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF WHITEWATER RODEOS (NOWR) CIRCUIT

Kern River Festival	April 17-19	Kemville, CA	Linda Ivins	805-871-6790
New Riier Rodeo	April 25-26	McCoy, VA	Koanoke Co. Pks/Rec	540-387-6091
Merced River Rodeo	April 25-26	Mariposa, CA	Susan Scheufele	408-459-7978
Canyon Creek Rodeo & Race/Bob's Clackamas County, OR and Hole Rodeo				
	May 1-3	Clarks County, WA	Andrew Wulfers	503-285-0464
Gilman Falls Rodeo	May 2-3	Old Town, ME	John Miligan	207-827-4652
Maupin Daze Whitewater Festival	May 9-10	Maupin, OR	Dave Slover	541-395-2201
Bigfork Whitewater Festival	May 16-17	Bigfork, MI	Derek Thompson	406-862-4926
Kananaskis Whitewater Rodeo	May 23-25	Calgary, AB	Mark Taylor	403-266-1527
Jackson Hole Rodeo	May 30-31	Jackson Hole, WY	Aaron Pruzan	307-733-2471
Potomac Whitewater Festival	May 30-31	Great Falls, VA	Ricky Rodriguez	703-742-8742
Taylor River Rodeo	June 12-14	Almont/Gunnison, CO	Gunnison Chamber Of Commerce	800-274-7580
Skyfest	June 13-14	Index, WA	Randolph Pierce	206-789-0444
Headwater Championship/FIBARK	June 18-21	Salida, CO	P.T. Wood	719-539-3174
Willow River Paddlefest	June 19-21	Prince George, BC	Rick Brine	250-964-7400
Animas River Days	June 26-28	Durango, CO	Johnna Jacobson	970-259-3893
Gorge Games – WW Rodeo	July 11 -12	Hood River, OR	John Trujillo (TREE)	541-386-4286
Derby Creek Days	July 25	Bums, CO	Chris Emerick	970-736-0080
Kootenay Whitewater Festival	August 1-3	Castlegar, BC	Gerry Harrmon	250-362-7259

(NOWR) CIRCUIT continued

Wausau Whitewater Kodeo	August 29-30	Wausau, WI	Julie Walraven	715-845-5664
Ottawa River Rodeo	September 5-7	Bryson, QB	Paul Sevcik	416-222-2223
American River Festival	September 12-13	Placerville, CA	Larry Goral	916-621-1224
Outer Banks Surf/Kayak Rodeo	September 19-20	Nags Head, NC	Pam Malec	919-441-6800
Coosa River Whitewater Festival	October 2-4	Wetumpka, AL	Lonnie Carden	334-272-0952
Ocoee Rodeo	October 9-11	Ducktown, TN	Susan Wilson	704-628-1791

OTHER EVENTS

Carolina Paddlesports Film Festival	(Various dates around the southeast from Dec - Jan)	Clay Brennecke	803-777-9181	
Cheat River Festival and Race	May 1-2	Albright, WV	Dave Bassage	304-379-3141
South Yuba Pedal-Paddle	May 9-10	California	Dave Good	916-265-9653
Nike World Masters Games	August 9-16	Oregon	Dave Slover	541-395-2201

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

****Oops, the dates for the Wausau Whitewater Rodeo and Ottawa River Rodeo were incorrect in the Jan/Feb issue and the Animas has added a day to their event. Please note the correct dates provided here.**

FIRST ANNUAL TALLULAH FALLS FESTIVAL PLANNED

The success of the first Tallulah releases last fall has prompted the town of Tallulah Falls to organize the First Annual Tallulah Gorge Whitewater Festival. Hosted by the Tallulah Falls Events Committee and American Whitewater, the festival will be held on April 4, 1998 from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Main Street in Tallulah Falls, GA just fifteen minutes south of Clayton, GA on Highway 441. Music from the sublime to rockin' will be going on throughout the day as well as food and drinks from local restaurants, vendor booths and videos playing nonstop at the Interpretive Center. For more information, see the American Whitewater website at or call the Tallulah Point Overlook: 706-754-4318.

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Margaret Langford
Photo: Mike Dwyer

American Whitewater announces NOWR 1998 Point Series Championship

American Whitewater welcomes you to National Organization of Whitewater Rodeos (NOWR) 1998 season. It's shaping up to be a great year with an event schedule sure to keep rodeo boaters busy from one end of the country to the other. It's sure to be an exciting season!

Last year's Point Series Championship for **Expert/Pro** paddlers was such a success, we've decided to do it again with some improvements to strengthen the program. Points will be accumulated similar to last year but will take class size into account. This system assumes that class size and competitiveness are directly related. Here's how it will work.

There are 50 competitors in a class. The first place winner receives 50 pts, second place 49 pts, third place 48 pts and so forth up to the top 20 placements for men and the top 15 for women and junior. And, because we want to reward the top placements more than other placements, the first place winner will receive additional points in the amount of 50% of the number of people in the class, in this case an additional 25 pts (50% of 50 total competitors in the class). The second place winner will receive an additional 40% (20pts), and so on through fifth place.

50 Competitors in class		EXAMPLES		35 Competitors in class	
Place	Pts			Place	Pts
1	50 + 25 = 75			1	35 + 17.5 = 52.5
2	49 + 20 = 69			2	34 + 14 = 48
3	48 + 15 = 63			3	33 + 10.5 = 43.5
4	47 + 10 = 57			4	32 + 7 = 39
5	46 + 5 = 51			5	31 + 3.5 = 34.5
6	45			6	30
7	44			7	29
Etc.				Etc.	

Points will be earned only in the **Expert/Pro** K-1 Men, Women and Junior classes at all NOWR events. There must be a minimum of 3 competitors in a class for placements to count towards point series awards. If there is a tie, both competitors will receive the same points for their placement. The Point Series will not apply to Squirt, C-1 or OC-1 classes. These classes are held at too few events to warrant inclusion in the series.

The first place winners' photos and brief biographies will be announced in the **January/February** 1999 issue of the American Whitewater, as well as in press releases to media across the country. The first place winners of each class be awarded an engraved trophy from Nazazi Artworks and a CASH prize (see below for details); and the top three placements will receive certificates for their accomplishments.

REGISTRATION: There is one other change to this program that you need to know. To be eligible to win, you must be registered with NOW. The registration fee for 1998 is \$15.00 OR you can join/renew with American Whitewater and register for NOWR for only \$35.00 and receive a **\$5.00 discount** (AW individual membership is normally \$25.00). American Whitewater is responsible for the incredible growth of the NOWR circuit (in addition to the outstanding rivers across the country AW has opened to boaters) and is dedicated to developing the sport of whitewater rodeo to its full potential. Help support American Whitewater in their efforts by joining today as you register for NOWR.

The NOWR registration money collected will go into a kitty to be distributed equally to the winners of each class in the Point Series. The actual amount of dough the winners walk away with will be dependent on the number of experts who register with NOWR. So come on, what are you waiting for? **Register today, paddle like a hero, and you will be eligible to win big bucks!**

Registration will remain open until June 1, 1998 but it is highly encouraged that you register early. Forms received past this date will be returned.

While we strive to keep our NOWR mailing list up-to-date, we sometimes miss a few people and as a group, you sure do move around a lot! If your address changes, please let the Events Office know so you won't miss any important communications. Pass this information around among your friends and fellow rodeo enthusiasts and tell them to get on the list for information on the NOWR circuit. We're making lots of changes and you need to stay informed. And remember the more experts who register with NOWR, the higher the winning purse. Let's get psyched for a great season of whitewater rodeos!

—Cut here and mail—

NOWR 1998 Registration Form /Point Series Championship

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Fax _____ Email _____

Class (check one only) ☐ Men's K-1 ☐ Women's K-1 ☐ Junior*

Your sponsors: _____

Are you an American Whitewater member? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What do you like about NOWR? Where can we improve? Your suggestions and comments are welcome!

(Yes, I'd like to volunteer at _____ event. Please send me information on how I can help.

ing with NOWR and turn 18 after the start of the season (April 17 at the Kern River Festival), you will remain in the Junior class throughout the entire season. If you turn 18 prior to April 17, you must register for the adult class. Once registered, you can not change classes.

Please enclose \$15.00 NOWR registration fee or \$35.00 to register and join or renew with American Whitewater for a \$5.00 discount (Juniors pay \$25.00 for combined AW membership and NOWR registration). Make checks payable to American Whitewater Affiliation/NOWR and return to:

Jayne H. Abbot
American Whitewater Events
450 Ivy Hill Rd
Weaverville, NC 28787

**Registration due by
June 1, 1998**

***Juniors are defined as being under 18. If you are register-**

AND NOW A HUGE

**** THANK YOU ****

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Our sponsors support the NOWR circuit by providing gear and/or money for prizes, auctions and to help pay the expenses to bring these events to you.

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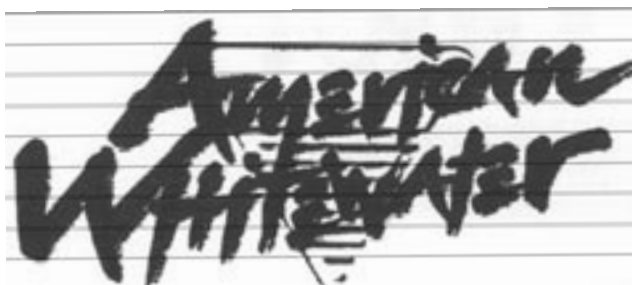
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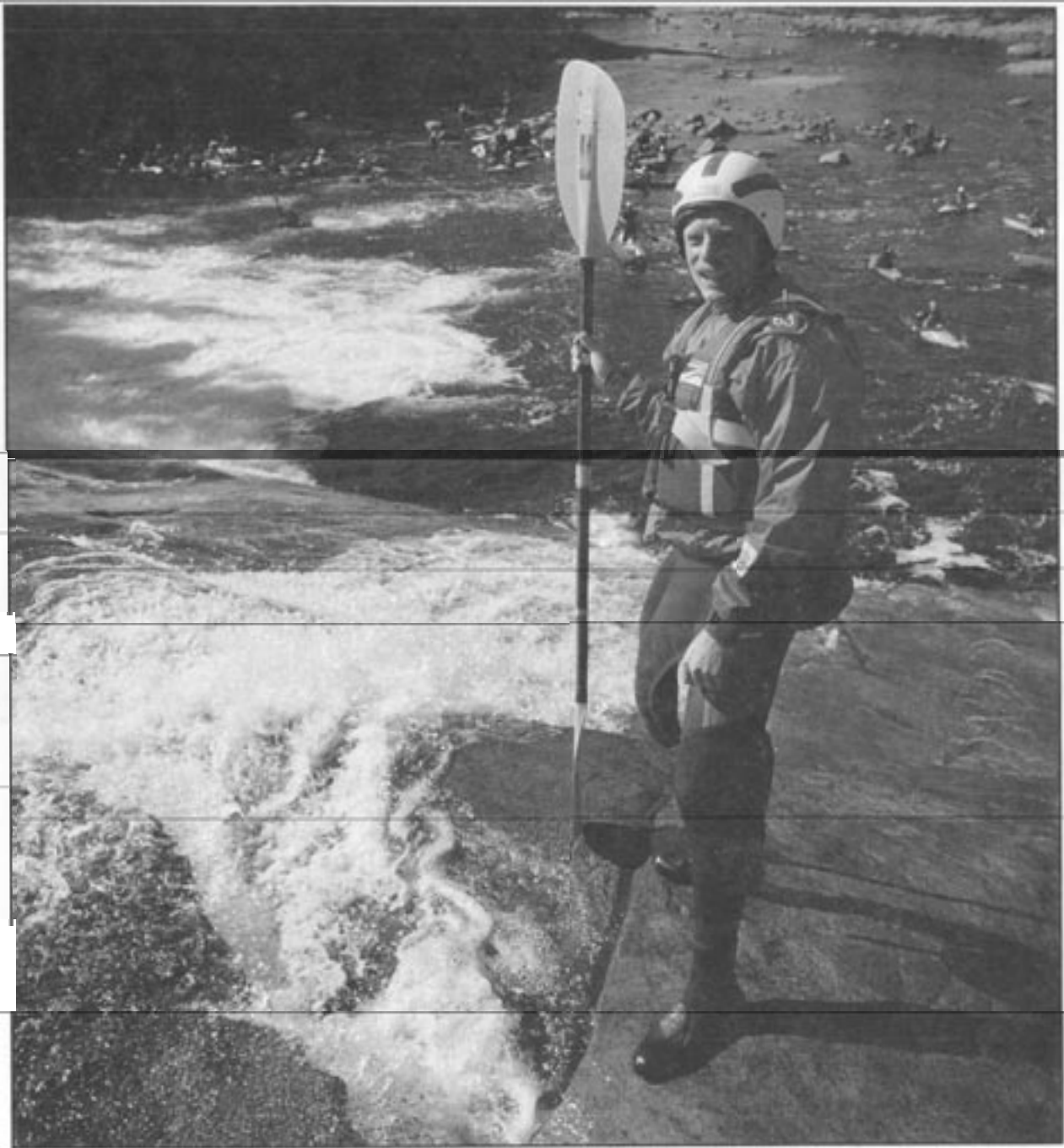
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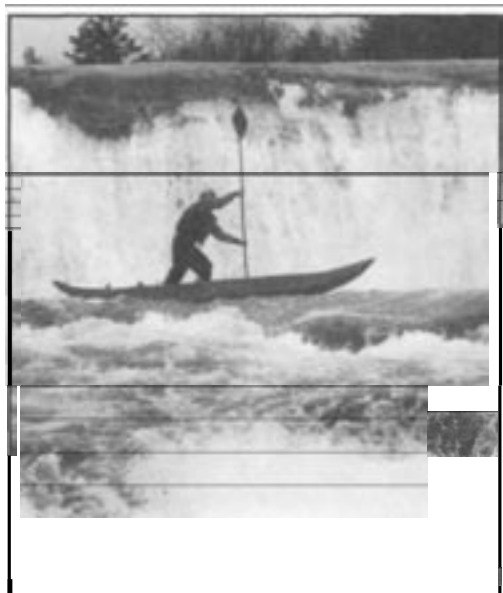
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97 Moose Fest a Wild One?

98 Moose Schedule Announced



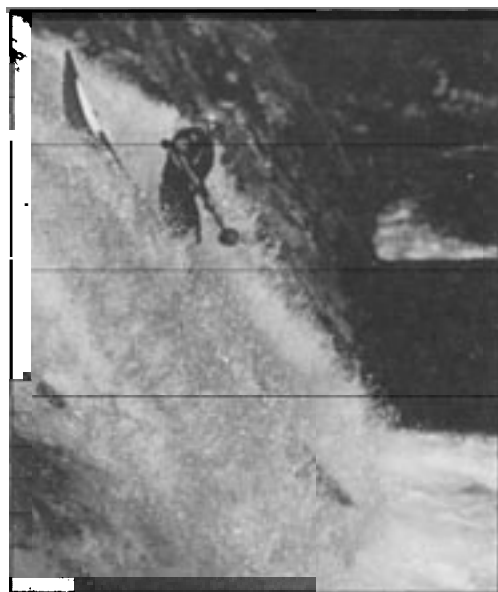
Somewhere between 500-1,000 whitewater boaters descended upon New York's Bottom Moose River and the tiny Adirondack village of Old Forge to celebrate the 3rd annual Moose River Festival during the weekend of October 18-19.

"I don't know how many boaters we had," said Festival coordinator Chris Koll. "There were too many to count. It was like that old movie starring

Marlon Brando — The Wild Ones — where a small town was over run by motorcycle gangs. Everywhere you looked you saw cars with racks and boats. Every restaurant, bar and store was filled with boaters. We took over the town."

The crowds of boaters produced a carnival atmosphere on the river, where hundreds of boaters lined up to take turns running — and running again — the Bottom Moose's

spectacular and challenging



Left page: Pete Skinner in his natural habitat. Photo by Don Cochran photography. This page top, photo by Bill Blauvelt; middle and bottom photos by Don Cochran Photography.

drops.



"It was crowded — but the Bottom Moose can handle a lot because most boaters just don't cruise the river," Koll said. "With drops ranging from 10 to 20 feet, most paddlers want to get out, take a look, and watch other boaters probe. Half the fun is in the spectating — cheering for the good lines and groaning at the carnage."

Photo by Don Cochran Photography.



A dry autumn reduced flows on the Moose to about 400 cfs — a low, but acceptable level for the Bottom section, but a bit scrappy for the Lower and Middle stretches. Consequently, most boaters opted to try the Bottom.

"The low level was a good news-bad news situation," Koll said. "The low flows definitely pushed more boaters onto the Bottom... but the low water also pro-

vided optimal conditions for many of the boaters who were making their first descent of the river."

As part of the Festival activities, the 3rd annual Bottom Moose Extreme Race was contested on Sunday. Over 20 competitors completed the five-mile course negotiating the Bottom Moose's eight Class 4-5 rapids and waterfalls.



Photo by Don Cochran Photography.

Ted Newton of White Haven, PA registered the best finishing time for the second consecutive year to claim the race boat division trophy and the Brothers Memorial Cup for the fastest overall time. The Brothers Cup is dedicated to the memory of Chuck Kern — a former Bottom Moose regular — and Luka Sribar, brother of popular Bottom Moose boater Rok Sribar. Both Chuck and Luka died in Class 5 whitewater accidents.

Karen Mann of Boulder, CO claimed the trophy for the women's open division, while Justin Beckwith of Holland Patent, NY finished first in the cruising boat

class.

The well-attended Festival party on Saturday night raised more than \$5,000 for AW conservation activities. But the primary purpose of the event — raising consciousness of the Bottom Moose as a whitewater resource — remained the big winner.

"Boaters who came here for the Festival don't realize that on most release weekends we only have 20 or 30 people on the river," Koll said. "And that's a lot more than were using the river before we started the festivals."

"But it's crazy to have only 20 people boating the Bottom when it's running between 3-4 feet when West Virginia has already dried up. Hopefully, some of the

Photo by Bill Blauvelt.



Photo by Don Cochran Photography.



boaters who enjoyed the Bottom at 2.7 on Festival weekend will come back for one of the spring release weekends, when we really have water."

The tentative Bottom Moose release schedule for 1998 is: Sunday, April 19; Sunday, April 26; Saturday and Sunday, May 2-3; Saturday and Sunday, May 9-10; Saturday and Sunday, May 16-17; Saturday and Sunday, May 23-24; Saturday and Sunday, May 30-31; Sunday, June 7; Sunday, October 4; Saturday and Sunday, October 10-11; Saturday and Sunday, October 17-18; Saturday and Sunday, October 24-25.

The tentative date for the 1998 Moose River Festival is Saturday, October 17.

Photo by Don Cochran Photography.



Photo by Don Cochran Photography

Once in A Lifetime is Enough — Getting Stampeded by The Moose

by Matt Muir
(with apologies to Byrne and Eno)



Photo by Don Cochran Photography.



Photo by Don Cochran Photography

You might find yourself
In your boat, upside-down, feeling foolish
You might find yourself
In the clutch of a man-eating hole
You might find yourself
Gulping air like there's no tomorrow
You might find yourself
Hoping someone can help save your sorry butt.

Saturday of Moose Fest weekend, 1997. My virgin run. I looked at Fowlersville Falls, the first drop and an impressive one. It's a whale of a rock slide: well over 40 feet, at a better than 45-degree angle. The route down the left is straightforward — just ride the tongue down through the roostertail at the bottom. I saw no one held, and few rolling, going that way.

Ah, but the right side. That's where it gets interesting. People who were running the right had to ferry above the slide through holes and weird eddies. At the bottom there is a bad, bad hole that can recycle a boat for a long time. At the weekend's low flow, you could punch it far right, but woe to the hapless soul who gets prematurely swept over the lip of the slide and hits it sideways. (Watch Steve A., a way better paddler than I, getting a bludgeoning in Beyond The Missionary Position, a recent Gusic video.)

My group all ran the easy route down the left. Couldn't blame them, but I wanted some excitement. With the MooseFest crowds, it was tough to get into position into the eddies, but I managed. As I began my ferry, I knew it wasn't gonna happen, so I headed straight down the right side. Fortunately, I punched through. No big deal.

But it wasn't the line I wanted, so I decided to run it again. This time, I aced the suckah. Jeff "Pride of Ohio" Simcox was impressed.

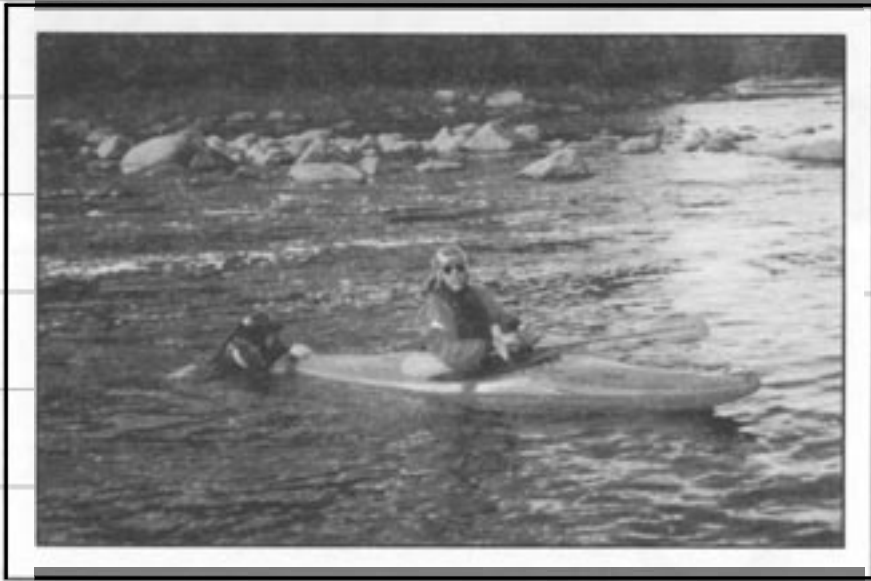
Then we all watched three boats pummeling around in the hole. One of the paddlers, out of his boat, recirculated for several minutes, staying down longer with each submersion. We got concerned. He was in the center; no one could get to him. He did eventually come out, and he spent the next five minutes splayed out on the rock, no doubt pondering the Beauty of Breath.

Now on to Sunday. As my buds finished shuttle, I suited up and hit the water. Stu Koster operates a bakery in Michigan and calls himself "Stu da Baker." Get it? Hahahahaha. He and I were ready; we got to Fowlersville Falls, and there was no need to scout. We'd seen it, and if I wanted two runs, I'd have to get moving.

No crowds to mess me up, no excuses. I just blew the line. I started too low in the eddy, and got swept over. But this time I was in the center. One sweep stroke, and I was pointing downstream. Head on down, punch the hole, and...backender!

Getting Stampeded by The Moose

Uh-oh. Upside-down, I got sucked in. Uh-oh. Tried an onside (upstream) roll; yeah, right. Rolled up on my off side, and I was *in the muthah*. Uh-oh. The downstream is aerated, so my brace wasn't holding me all the way up. And in a steep hole like that your lean is never sufficient; ain't no one flexible enough for that.



I may not always have the cleanest lines, may not always *look* great or get the best enders, but one thing I have: I can hang in there with the best of 'em. And I knew I'd need every bit of "hangintheredness" in this mess. There's nothing funnier than a harmless trashing, but this didn't promise to be the least bit innocuous. And I've seen some trashings in my day. The dam that made "Stuey McFlip" (AW, 11-12/96) famous has held me three times, for instance, terrifying my spectators; and National Falls seems to have my number this year. But *this* was a *hole*!

Well, there were guys in the eddy to the right, and they were motioning me that way. You read my mind, I thought. So combining braces, strokes and occasional rolls, I worked my way over, about 30 feet. With my head inches from the water, I was sucking air *big time*. This was not fun, and I knew that I'd need help once I got over there.



I might ask myself
"How did I get here?"
I might say to myself
"This is not my beautiful line."
I might say to myself
"This is not my swim-free run."
I might say to myself
"My God! What have I done?!"

Top photo : David Graham of Danbury, CT, being towed to shore. Photo by Matt Muir

Bottom photo: In the Ratt-hole. Photo by Joe Greiner. Is that another boat half a boat length behind me?

Watching your life pass by
Water flowing all around
Watching your life pass by
Getting slammed by the hydraulic
Into the hole again
Water lapping at your chin
Learning a lesson
Water splashing up your face
Trashed like I never was
Trashed like I never was
Trashed like I never was
Trashed like I never was

Getting Stampeded by The Moose

I was trying to brace, and these guys I didn't know were looking all concerned and waiting to see what I wanted. When I nodded, one came near. But it's tough for him and tough for me. He doesn't want to get too close and get sucked in. And I don't want to let go of my paddle unless I know I can grab his loop. He didn't seem close enough, nor did the next guy.

Soon they'd gone to plan B and tossed a rope. For the first time in my boating life, I grabbed it and hung on. Well, guess what! When you're in your boat, being pulled from the side, your head is under water. That's just the way it is. I hung in for a while, but it didn't seem they were making any progress pulling me out. And I was way tired, wanting another air gulp, by now. I let go of the rope.

I'm not sure what happened next; I may have hand-rolled up, with the help of the hole. But when I got up, Stu da Baker was there, and I was able to grab his bow. I saw him backpaddling hard; nothing. He tried to shift to more in line with the hole, trying to dribble me out the side. The throw rope was tangling with his right paddle blade. He looked very concerned, and I know he was working hard. After a while, he and I were in the eddy. The whole ordeal might well have taken four minutes. But, I was getting worked, man.

No, I didn't carry my boat up to run it again.

Have you ever been beaten by a rapid? I mean, really beaten? I knew I was beaten. You know you're beaten when your buddy's given you a bow, you can hang on, but for the life of you, you can't pull yourself upright. Another guy

came to the other side and pulled on my boat, righting it. I retrieved my paddle and headed over to join my other friends, noting the pink boat in the hole's middle, taking a trashing without its rider, who'd long since exited. Poor bastard.

That kind of experience shakes you up. I was shaky for a while. Funnel? Shaky. Knife's Edge (Class V), Double Drop? Shaky, Shaky. Finally, an hour later at Ager's Falls, I recovered my composure and no longer felt that I had to follow half a boat-length behind someone. The rest of the day went fine, including my first clean run through Crystal, the rapid that messes up many a Class-V boater.

It's also the kind of experience that makes you locally famous. The rest of the day, people were coming up to me:

"Was that you in the hole? That was *ugly!*"

Hey, I told them, you think that's ugly? You should see me with my helmet off!

Stu, man, you know what happened. My shuttle car was at the put-in, and you headed home from the takeout. But I owe you that beer, and I'm not gonna forget.

I respect Fowlersville Falls. I knew the risks, I went for it, don't regret it, will likely run the ferry line again someday. But next time, I'm dribbling down the left with my buds. You gotta show the river that you know who's boss.

You might find yourself
In the eddy after a trashing
You might find yourself
Hanging onto a buddy's boat
You might find yourself
Shaky, woozy, confidence shattered
You might tell yourself
"Get a grip! There's a river to run!"



Rescue at Knife's Edge. Un-ID'ed boater.
Photo by Matt Muir.

Same as I ever does
Same as I ever does
Same as I ever does
Same as I ever does!



Americans Kayak In Japan



A Date With Typhoon #8

by Nikki Malatin

Not long after moving near Osaka, Japan last fall, we made friends with a boating couple that lived nearby. The couple, Astushi and Shinobu Nishijima, were celebrating with a dinner party the fact that Astushi had made the Japanese National Rodeo Team. Early Friday night we converged with some other local boaters at the Nishijima household. The booze and Shinobu's wonderful food flowed freely. By eleven-thirty, my husband, Phil, and I decided to go home and get some sleep. The rest of the party decided that it was time to go out for karaoke.

Photos: Friday Night's Party at the Nishijima's House, Osaka, Japan.

We reunited with our friends at 8:30 the next morning to make the three hour drive north and east to the Nagara River. The Nagara, which literally means the "long good river," is the Ocoee of Western Japan. It's a good river, runs all summer long, and offers good play. This river is one of the few commercially rafted rivers in Japan. This morning we were also slated to take a short run down the Kiso River. The Kiso doesn't offer much in the way of rapids, but there are some deep eddy lines and some surf. Our wonderful friend, Kenji, had managed to dig up a Vulcan squirt boat for Phil to use. I was a touch jealous. I had not been in a squirt boat since I left the States. The high cost of imported equipment had prohibited me from acquiring a quiver of kayaks to select from, so I had opted for one all-aroundish boat. I was going to have to use all of my self control to keep from making myself miserable watching them play.

Squirt boating is quite different in Japan than in the States. Rodeo style boating actually became popular here before squirting. I have yet to see a squirt boat actually go down river, but many boaters own one to noodle around in. Sometimes they play around in an eddy near the takeout after running a river in their plastic boats. I liken it to hacky-sack or Frisbee. The popularity of owning a squirt boat may be due solely to Jim Snyder's annual trip to Japan to teach a clinic and spread the Gospel of Squirt. He seems to be quite a revered creature in these parts. I have seen people who have never entered a current in a squirtboat do beautiful cartwheels and elaborate moves on flatwater. This is why we were paddling the Kiso; it was more than enough river for the radically cut boats that are popular here.

On the way to the Kiso River the weather started to deteriorate. The

weather forecast predicted Typhoon #8 to hit Japan some time that day. By the time we wheeled into the takeout, the sky was forebodingly dark and there were short, but heavy, blasts of rain. The river was higher than normal (washing out many of the play spots) and our friends were wiped from the previous night of heavy partying. Phil ended up being the only person to launch in a squirt boat. But after the first rapid it became apparent that Phil couldn't paddle this boat. He was heavy enough to sink the cockpit and his ill-fitting sprayskirt caused the boat to fill with water. He could barely paddle it to shore. I weigh a little less than Phil so I tried the Vulcan. I floated fine and the cockpit rim stayed out of the water, but I was uneasy because I'm not used to such a long and cut boat. Back in the States, I paddled either an Enigma or a Ferrier, both relatively short, high-volume boats. Both boats are closer to surfboards than a true squirt boat.

The weather was also making me uneasy. The wind had whipped up to about forty miles an hour. For a while we had to paddle into the wind and the rain felt a little unpleasant on my face. I didn't have too much trouble with the boat but, after paddling a Kinetic for months and months, it felt like I was going through the waves, not up and over them. Also, my legs were bigger than the front wall, so they absorbed the pressure of the water on the deck instead of the wall. It was an eerie feeling. I was glad to see the takeout.

After the Kiso, we loaded up and drove to a hot spring resort where a party in honor of the recently married Mr. Hayakawa was being held. Mr. Hayakawa has the double distinction of being on the national team and having his name literally translate to mean "fast river." Fifty or sixty boaters showed up to take a soak, eat dinner, and then party down in honor of his marriage. All of the guests were staying over in traditional Japanese group

accommodations, which means sharing a room and sleeping on futons. I was assigned to the girls' room and Phil was in one of the other rooms. The real wedding had taken place a few weeks before and had been a very traditional occasion with many kimonos and three different outfits for the bride.

Well, this wasn't a stuffy affair at all. Once we were kicked out of the dining hall, the beer drinking began. Once again, Phil and I turned in sometime after eleven, but the partying continued into the wee hours. I still wonder why this particular hot spring was selected for the party. The other guests were all either very elderly persons or families with a lot of young kids. I'm sure that there was more than one complaint about the level of noise that our party maintained. By morning much of the paper in the party room's paper doors had been punched out and the groom's face was completely graffitied with lipstick. All of this while the typhoon continued to howl around us. According to the late news, highways were being closed, trains were being canceled, and some bus lines were not running.

After breakfast (fish, rice, a raw egg, soup, seaweed and tea), we found most of our bags deposited in a pile in the lobby. I think that maybe the management was giving us a little hint that they would be happy to see us leave. Showing no shame, our party lingered in the lobby until plans were made for the day. The weather was sunny, hot, and clear but the TV said that some places had measured up to eight inches of rain during the night. I was beginning to get excited. I love big water runs and was dreaming of a day full of flood level paddling.

Almost the entire party packed up and headed for the Nagara. It was evident on the way that the river was up, way up! We stopped at a roadside spot that has a legendary wave. The wave was there, but river was too high, and it was a little washed out. Also, the wave was on a bend in the river with a

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man-made bank. There was a small, violent eddy near the wave, but once you were blown past the wave you were swept down stream until the wall ended. It was a long hike back up to the wave. After two or three of these hikes, Phil and I started to talk about leaving to go run something else. After all, every river in the whole archipelago was going off. Unfortunately, none of our party was interested in leaving. They were going to just hang out and then go home. This made me a little crazy. In a land where there is no such thing as a recreational release, you have to take advantage of any opportunity. I was too excited to sit baking on the concrete bank waiting for my turn to drop down in the eddy and surf the wave.

Some local raft guides showed up to surf the wave. They, too, were up for finding a run, so the raft guides, Simon, Lado (both Kiwis), Maki (Japanese) and Phil and I headed upstream for a creek that Phil and I had scoped out a few weeks before. The run was a small tributary called the Yoshida (the Happy Field River) that feeds into the Nagara. A road parallels the Yoshida for the entire 15 kilometer section we hoped to paddle, but you could only catch a glimpse of the river from the road. We had looked at the river from several of the bridges that cross the river and had scouted one section on foot. From the map we estimated the river dropped an average of 90 feet per mile, maybe more. Our map had a pretty large scale, so it was difficult to determine the precise gradient. The Green River this wasn't, and we were glad.

Putting on an unfamiliar river, which we hadn't thoroughly scouted, in a foreign country, at one thirty in the afternoon, is not a good plan if the river is going to be a lulu. We had learned this the hard way in Germany, where we put on a river, which a guide book recommended, only to have the entire volume disappear into a divergence duct used for hydroelectric generation. Boy, did we look silly dragging our boats down a dry river bed. But that's another story.

At the moment, we were just a couple of strictly recreational boaters looking for a fun creek to bop down. Weeks ago one of our friends claimed that he had run the Yoshida. He said that there were no dams and that it was similar to the Kuta River in Kyoto. We had run the Kuta in the spring and it reminded us of Wilson Creek in North Carolina. Sounded like a perfect match.

When we arrived in the village at the confluence of the Nagara and Yoshida Rivers, it was apparent that the Yoshida had a lot more water than when we had scouted it. After dropping Maki's car at the take out, we loaded all five boats and five people into our 1984 Toyota Corolla II, "Putt-Putt Chon." I couldn't wait to get to the put-in, but Putt-Putt Chon surely could. Her little 1.3 liter engine wheezed up to the put-in at an average speed of 60 kilometers per hour.

The Yoshida looked even more inviting at the put-in. The creek was about 50 feet wide, but immediately downstream was a sharp right hand turn. On the river left there was a 30 or 40 foot rock wall with green trees overhanging the top and mosses, vines, and plants dotting the wall. It was a cool contrast to baking on a concrete beach at the Nagara.

The Yoshida was wonderful. There were plenty of deep strong eddy lines, nice cushy pillows, fast little waves, and good pourovers. Our entire party was sporting rodeo boats, and, as often is the case, we played a little too much in the beginning. As we got deeper into the gorge there were some beautiful waterfalls supplementing the flow. The rapids became more difficult and a few were even intimidating. At the bottom of one rapid, a house size boulder stood directly in the center of the river. It was about half as wide as the rapid. All the current from the creek picked up speed going down the junky drop and then pillowed up on the rock. I opted for the far left sneak, but went a little too far. Slam, bump, booble, booble, slam, sploosh. I left behind several chards of my Kinetic. Next time I won't take the chicken route.

Our progress was slowed by four separate dams. The first was a large dam with no apparent portage route back to the river. The top of the dam was a least forty feet above the river and the sides of the gorge were shear. We found a creek bed a few hundred feet downstream from the dam. It was a tricky climb down the creek, which was only a few feet wide and choked with logs and limbs. At the steepest part, we formed a bucket brigade to lower our boats down to the river.

The first rapid after the dam made us stop and think. There was a choice of two routes, but both were sketchy. The river left route terminated in a nasty looking hole. Not one of those steep, slap-ya-in-the-face-and-spit-ya-out holes, but one of those deep, dangerous ones, where a thick slab of fast moving water disappears almost perpendicular to the foam pile. A hole that a canoe could disappear into. The river right route was a sneak that required making a sharp left while riding up on a curling wave. But we couldn't see what was below the curler. Our confidence in our friend's assessment of the river had evaporated. Had he really run the Yoshida, he would have not said that there were no dams.

Now we were no longer confident that all the rapids were runnable. Neither of these routes would have been too intimidating if we had the luxury of seeing ten people go through. But we were alone. At this point the gorge walls were steep, shear rock. The only way out was down. Simon took the bull by the horns and decided to run the right route. Much to our relief he had no problems. The rest of our party followed quickly. In the next rapid, four out of five of us were flipped by an unexpected diagonal hole.

At the next dam I made a glaring judgment error. The top of the dam was a long slide that ended with a 3-4 foot pourovers. Phil decided to run it. He made the move easily, but my boat stalled a little on the slide's transition and I failed entirely to take any power strokes. I went over the dam with almost no forward speed. Yep, I was in the hydraulic. After getting trounced a

A m e r i c a n s K a y a k I n J a p a n

bit, I decided to bail and try to escape before I grew too tired. Luckily, I was able to push off of something with my feet and I surfaced downstream of the boil. I lost my Teva's, a sweater, my pride, and much of my credibility as a boater. Since I wasn't recirculated, those insignificant possessions were but a small offering to the river gods. After that we encountered two more small dams, but wisely decided not to run them.

By this time, it was late in the afternoon. Everytime the gorge seemed ready to open up, the walls closed in and we were in another canyon. We were all anxious to finish the run. We had been moving pretty fast for several hours, but the rapids were not letting up. As the sun went over the mountains, the whole party began to bomb straight down river. No more surfing, splats or squirts. We were starting to worry that we would have to paddle out in the dark. Finally, about a half a

kilometer before the take-out, the rapids ended.

Miller time.

We traversed a total of four separate gorges, each with a set of technical rapids. I hesitate to slap a rating on the Yoshida, since I'm not so sure what Class III, Class IV, or Class V is anymore. Let's say that it was more technical than Wilson Creek run in North Carolina, but not as nearly as intimidating as the Watauga.

Creeking is possible in Japan, but it is time consuming and travel is very expensive. Gasoline runs about \$3.20 a gallon and tolls on the expressway are incredibly high.

The hour and twenty minutes or so that we spend on the expressway going to the Nagara River costs more than \$25 dollars.

Due to the small roads and surplus of vehicles, making good time on the road is impossible. Finding English language maps, outside of generalized

tourist maps, is difficult.

Luckily, Phil knows some Japanese and is a map fanatic. He pours over maps for hours scoping out possible runs for us to do.

There are many boaters in Japan, but most people want to concentrate on known runs and play spots. This is understandable because few people have very much leisure time.

Since many people in Japan still work on Saturday, boaters want to get the maximum amount of time in the saddle during their short weekend. It's a shame, though, because there is something wonderful about finding your own lines down a small beautiful creek. The eddies aren't crowded with a zillion people and you actually use your river reading skills to go down a rapid, not memorization.

Japan has thousands of such unexplored creeks, and we hope to check out one or two more of them.



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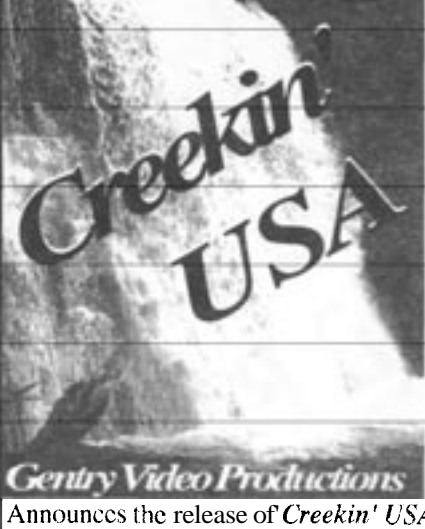
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Don Kinser on Weird Creek as things begin to heat up not far below the dam. Photo by Bill Bevins.

EAST **meets** **WEST**

on the Big South
by Don Kinser

Dirk Bertrand sticks Pin Cushion. Photo by Bill Bevins



Mosquitoes the size of small birds feasted on what little bare skin poked out of our drysuits as we took in the awesome high alpine scenery. I marveled at how different it was from our Southeastern stomping grounds and flailed at the bugs while standing on the Long Draw reservoir dam in the shadow of Rocky Mountain National Park. Bill joked about the first descent possibilities of the dam spillway. "No one has ever run this in an open boat," he teased (or any other boat for that matter). Western boaters just never seem to understand open boaters and they are always trying to talk us into something stupid. We looked at the spillway and laughed as we passed on the opportunity, knowing the river would provide all the excitement necessary.

For Fred Stokes, Dirk Bertrand and me, the past week had been our first paddling experience west of the Mississippi. Fred is retired from Eastern Airlines and now runs a house painting business. Dirk is a facility engineer at a manufacturing plant. I lead a consulting engineering business. We met up with our good friend Steve Frazier upon our arrival in Colorado. Steve retired from his job 2 years ago to paddle full time. He has boated in Colorado numerous times and was the guide of our trip. We all paddle open boats except Fred; he paddles C-1. We all live near Atlanta. Our normal eastern playgrounds include the rivers of North Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, North Carolina and West Virginia. The Colorado boating had been great fun but we wanted some steep creeking like back home in the southern and central Appalachians.

Dr. Bill Bevins is our good friend from Glenwood Springs. Bill is a physician in the local emergency room and is a skilled boater (K-1), an excellent combination to have along on any trip. He had been our gracious host when we first arrived in Colorado and had paddled with us a couple of days earlier in our trip on the Roaring Fork and the Arkansas. Hearing our requests for something steep and wild, he had suggested the Big South of Cache la Poudre just west of Fort Collins.

Banks' and Eckardt's excellent book, *Colorado Rivers and Creeks*, describes the Big South as a "low volume run of the highest quality" — a class VI-, wilderness run with 16 named drops (the unnamed stuff in between is pretty awesome too!). In spite of the class VI nature of this run, all of the drops can be easily scouted. Bill also assured us we could walk anything we didn't want to run and told us about the trail that parallels the stream bed, starting out on river left and crossing over about halfway to river right.

This seemed exactly the type of excitement we were looking for and we made plans to head north from the Arkansas toward Fort Collins later in the week for the Grand Finale of our trip. Bill would meet us there with his

friend Barry Chamberlain from Grand Junction. Barry is an ICU nurse in a local Grand Junction hospital and an outstanding boater (K-1). The Big South would prove to be a high adventure — a special trip we would never forget.

The Big South is not for the inexperienced or faint hearted. It is in a remote wilderness setting where rescue would be difficult and long in coming. The stream bed is congested and significant undercut hazards and sieves lurk in many of the major drops. We would encounter lots of trees across the stream bed, making every turn an adventure in the unknown. Not all the timber is easily seen as we would soon learn. Where there aren't undercuts and logs, there are keeper hydraulics. And the river isn't the only hazard. The mosquitoes could carry you away and suck you dry.

We had decided to break this long trip into two days — a good idea if you have the time and you are not familiar with the river.



Top: Don Kinser launches off Starter Fluid, the first rapid below the confluence of Weird Creek and the Cache la Poudre.

Bottom: Barry Chamberlain negotiates Bouncing Betty into Taco Bob's. Photo by Barry Chamberlain and Don Kinser.

There is a convenient trail access about halfway through the trip at Peterson Lake. We had set camp there the night before our trip. We would leave our boats and hike about a mile up out of the gorge to our camp, and return the next day to finish our adventure. While you can do this trip in a day if you know the river, the Peterson lake trail was a welcome sight to our six tired boaters at the end of that first day.

The Big South has a short window of opportunity after the Forest Service opens the put-in road once all the snow has melted from it. On the first day of our trip, July 17, 1997, the Pineview Falls gauge on the Poudre read about 2.9 feet, somewhat on the low side but still quite adequate.

We were just a little anxious and wondered what awaited us as we prepared to put on Weird Creek, the small alpine stream that gently meanders from the base of the reservoir. Weird Creek joins the Cache la Poudre river about 2.5 miles downstream from the reservoir and marks the beginning of a 12 mile wilderness run that starts at 10,000 feet and plummets some 1,600 feet through a remote and treacherous gorge on the edge of Rocky Mountain National Park.

About 1/2 mile below the Long Draw dam, Weird Creek changes character and begins to head downhill fast as it enters a congested little boulder garden called Pinball Wizard. At this point the stream is narrow, barely over 20 feet wide and, like much of the Colorado whitewater we had experienced over the past week, eddies were few and far between, at least by our Southeastern standards. Next was a bony and an even more



congested boulder garden appropriately called Rock Lobster. Barry and Bill ran the rapid on principle. This was not a particularly difficult rapid but those of us in canoes decided it was not worth the potential boat abuse. We shouldered our boats and started what for many of us would be the first of 10 portages over the next two days.

Weird Creek joins the Cache la Poudre not far below Rock Lobster and the volume increases, the stream bed tilts more steeply and the sides of the granite gorge close in ominously around you. Just as we reached the confluence, the sky darkened and began to rumble as a summer afternoon thunder storm rolled in.

Next came one of my favorite rapids of the trip. Starter Fluid is a fun class IV drop just after the confluence of Weird Creek and the Poudre. A nice little entrance rapid leads up to a 10-12 foot drop. As it turned out, this was one of the few rapids we would all run where everyone did well. We were all smiles as we continued our journey.

We worked our way downstream from one horizon line to the next. After Starter Fluid the class V(VI) drops keep coming one right after another. They are separated by short stretches of great class III-IV water. Bill led the way, alerting us to the major

drops and other hazards as we went. Even though many of us would walk most of the named rapids, we were having a great time. Things were going pretty well until Melt-down, the last major drop before our first day takeout.

Steve, Dirk and I had just finished our portage of Melt-down. Only Barry had run this log choked, undercut filled, boulder congested mess of a rapid. We were tired and had just returned to the river ready to finish the last quarter mile or so before our midway layover when we heard Barry shout that Bill was pinned. I anxiously looked downstream to see what was happening. Bill had just managed to extract himself from his boat as it disappeared under a submerged log in a little souse hole. Fred was quickly scrambling out of his boat to try and help — and to avoid the same entrapment!

We all gathered to examine the situation, watching the faint blue color of his boat beneath the roiling water.

Our relief at Bill's safety was quickly replaced by the realization that it was late, we were cold and we were hungry. Unable to get a line to the boat, our only choice was to try and move the log off it.

We quickly fetched pulleys, prusiks and ropes and set a Z drag on the log. A quick tug

Clockwise: Steve Frazier styling on the approach to Tubular Balls near the end of the trip. This tree across the river above was typical of many trees in the river bed. Don Kinser enters Prime Time Gorge. Bill Bevins rockets through Bouncing Betty into Taco Bob's. Barry Chamberlain ab to go deep on an intermediate drop in Slideways. Photos by Don Kinser, Barry Chamberlain and Bill Bevins.

showed the log would move easily with our mechanical advantage. Stopping momentarily, we dispatched Steve and Barry to recover the boat once it floated free. This remote gorge is no place to lose a boat. With Barry and Steve in place downstream, we heaved on the rope, quickly moving the log.

Surprise — noboat! We stood in amazement and frantically looked down river for any sign of Bill's boat. Bill hurried downstream on the trail as the rest of us quickly got in our boats to make chase. We reached our first day takeout a few minutes later with no sign of Bill's boat. By now it was about 7 p.m. and time for a new plan.

Barry and Bill would walk on down river in search of the missing boat. Fred, Steve, Dirk and I would hike out and begin dinner preparation. Since Bill was our guide and the only one in our group familiar with the river, our thoughts turned to the unpleasant possibility that we might have to return the next day and carry our boats out of the river gorge — none of us were interested in navigating this river without a knowledgeable guide.

Just as we started up the trail through the cloud of mosquitoes, Barry and Bill whistled and yelled. Just a few dozen yards downstream two fisherman had recovered the missing boat. The fisherman were relieved to see the boat's owner alive and well. They had feared the worst and were on the way out to report the incident to the authorities. Bill was grateful to find his boat in one piece and all his gear accounted for. Later we concluded that the boat worked free after our first tug and escaped our notice.

Now, reunited with our equipment, our spirits soared and our thoughts turned to dinner as we hiked out to our campsite. Bill, a little shaken by the experience, speculated he had the luck of a Leprechaun given his harrowing escape from the entrapment. This was not Bill's first encounter with timber



infested streams this summer and he related stories of several close calls earlier in the season.

It was already dark as we finally sat down to a hot dinner and recounted the day's adventures. No one had trouble sleeping that night. The next morning, our shuttle reset, we hiked back into the gorge to continue our adventure. Fred had aggravated a sore shoulder in his frantic effort to exit his boat and render assistance to Bill the day before. He had had enough of this treacherous stream and decided to carry his boat out of the gorge, no small feat as hail pelted him near the top of the gorge.

We had seven more named rapids and about six miles of river to run on the second day. The rapids on this river have some great names—Nitrogen Narcosis, Meltdown, Prime Time Gorge, Tubular Balls, Bouncing Betty into Taco Bob's, Bar Room Brawl, Bonk, Cool World and Fantasy Flight, just to name a few.

The second day on the Big South was great fun and only slightly less eventful than the first. Thunderstorms again added to the experience as we encountered one major drop after another and our experience with lost boats wasn't over yet.

We had been alone on the river the entire trip except for the two fisherman we encountered the evening before. Just below a rapid called Slideways we were quite surprised by the discovery of a lost kayak pinned on a midstream rock. Strangely enough it was the same type of boat Bill had nearly lost the evening before. We wondered what might have happened and retrieved the kayak, stashing it safely up out of the stream bed. After searching for some identification and finding none, I recalled having seen a note about a missing boat at the take out while setting the shuttle that morning. Sure enough this was it. We later contacted the unfortunate paddler and told him where he could find his boat. Having nearly lost Bill's boat the evening before, we marveled again at our luck and continued on down river toward our last and final portage around a dangerous sieve near the takeout.

Fred, who had hiked out of the gorge earlier that day, surprised us at the takeout late that afternoon when we arrived tired and hungry to a hot pot of chili. It was amazing how fast that chili disappeared and how good it tasted!

This was not only the end of our Big South trip but the end of our 10 day paddling sojourn in Colorado. We would head back to Atlanta the next day. Our first taste of western boating had introduced us to the classic runs of the Arkansas including the Numbers, Browns Canyon and the Royal Gorge. We had also enjoyed the Slaughterhouse section of the Roaring Fork, the Narrows of the Crystal and climbed Mount Quandary, a 14,000+ foot peak. The Big South of the Cache la Poudre had been the coup de grace of a great trip and whetted our appetite for our next western excursion.

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A black and white photograph of a steep, rocky mountain slope. The rock face is craggy and textured, with a small figure of a person visible near the bottom center, appearing to be climbing or rappelling. The overall tone is dramatic and adventurous.

STEEP CREEKING JAPANESE STYLE

STORY AND PHOTOS BY NATHAN LEWIS



Left: Yamoto in an early canyon.
Top this page: Kanai and Yamoto progressing up easy terrain. Bottom: Yamoto halfway up a large, two-stage waterfall.



The first hour was easy enough as we boulder-hopped in shin-deep water and scaled ledges of ten to fifteen feet. As we entered a fine canyon the creek became steeper and cleaner, a series of pools separated by waterfalls up to thirty feet high. Unfortunately, most of them were un-boatable.

Japan's geomorphology is not conducive to kayaking. Rivers here tend to fall into two categories: broad, braided, bouldery washes, and steep mountainside rivulets cascading over waterfalls. While canoers have some interest in the former, the latter is the domain of creek climbers who shed their skis in June and, after the spring melt and rainy season, don felt-soled boots and spend the summer and early fall clambering up waterfalls.

This is why, one hot, clear August day myself and two companions started up Akaishi (Red Rock) Creek, in Japan's Southern Alps. It was not a particularly hard excursion; it offered pleasant challenges without becoming outright terrifying the way some creeks can. The easiest creeks require no special skills, they're more like exotic hiking trails than climbs. Akaishi was hard enough to demand helmets, harnesses, a climbing rope, a light rack and enough climbing experience to get us through less-than-certain situations. Climbing the harder creeks becomes an extended act of faith. Though we were carrying climbing gear, Japanese creeks are often unprotectable and long lead-outs on laughable protection and gut-wrenching solos on grass-slicked rocks are unavoidable. The very best creek-climbers are called Grass-Stick Experts. Named for their ability to glide gecko-like up slopes of grass-covered rock holdless and unprotected, they engage in a constant test of character.

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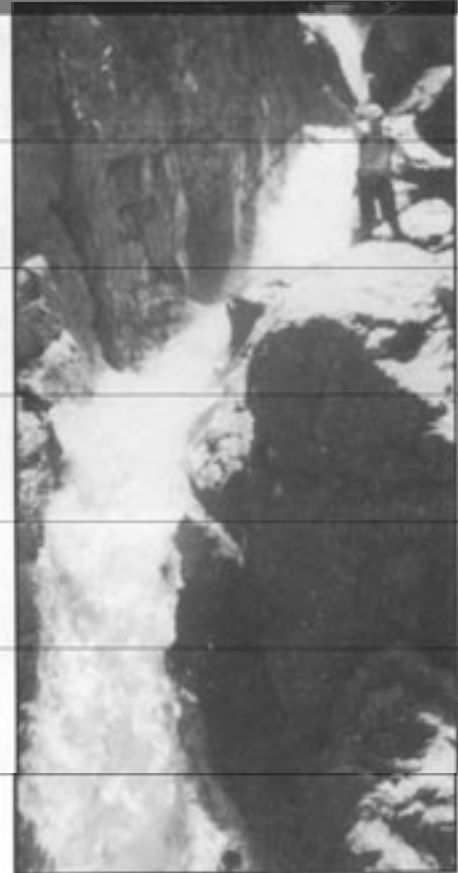
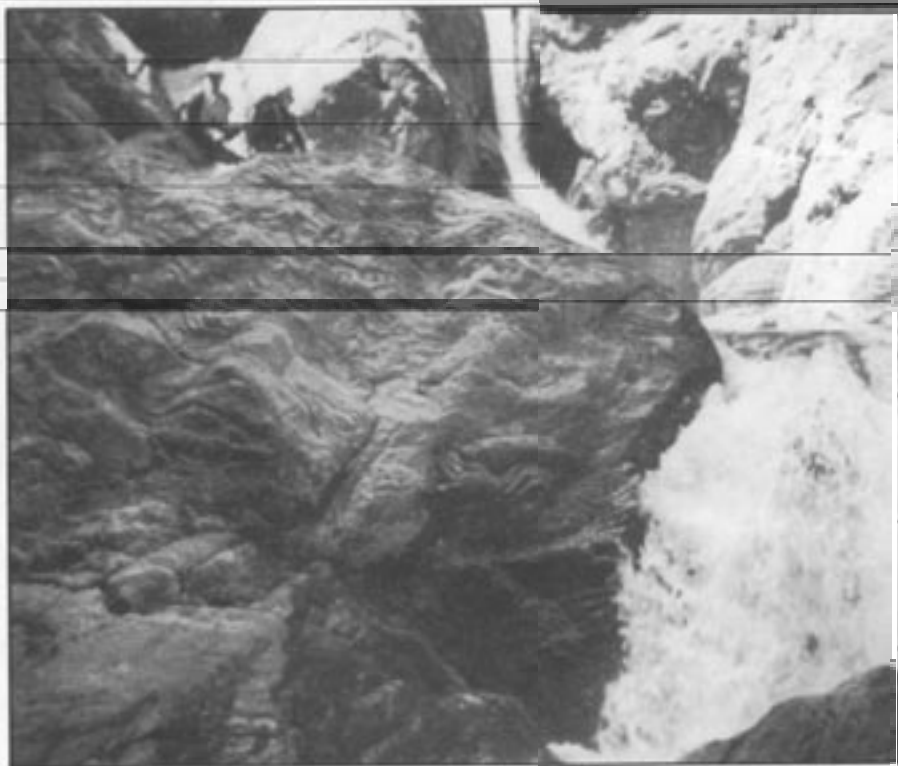


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From left to right, pages 58 and 59: Yamoto and Kanai take a breather in the main canyon. Yamoto feeling triumphant halfway up a long series of waterfalls. Kanai and Yamoto peering into an impassable canyon. Yamoto savors the trip's final waterfall.

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Yamoto, one of my partners, had scared me on a previous trip to Mt. Tanigawa. We traversed hundreds of meters in the dark below a huge, dripping snowpack which spanned the creek from side to side and threatened to collapse on our heads. Earlier that day, I had planned to have my picture taken under a much smaller snowpack, but as I drew within ten feet of the thing it

collapsed with a thunderous roar, leaving us giggling in a boulder field of slush. Later, I topped out a pitch to find Yamoto standing on a rock slab which sloped twenty degrees. He was wholly unprotected with the rope slung around his shoulder, maintaining the fiction of a belays so I wouldn't freak out about soloing the smooth slabs in my felt-soled boots.

This time we were accompanied by Kanai, who at 53, with three grown children, added the tempering influence I had hoped for. Though she gets in 100 outdoor days each year and had easily out-skied me on a descent of some backcountry peaks in the North Alps the previous May, she adamantly refuses to take imprudent risks.

After some hours of clambering we made our first camp on an impeccably flat gravel bank where we soon had a roaring campfire burning.

The next day brought us into the heart of the river, a series of waterfalls that, despite reaching heights of 70-80 feet, offered enough weaknesses for us to climb them directly. At one point, though, the canyon became impassable and we spent a couple of hours on a long traverse out and over the rim of the canyon before we tramped back down the other side—the creek-climber's equivalent of a portage.

That night we camped again, high up in the Akaishi's watershed and enjoyed another prolonged and slightly boozy campfire session, fueled by a bottle of whiskey that Yamoto had brought along. The next day brought us three hours of bouldery scrambling. The creek, now reduced to a tiny stream, had only one last 50 foot waterfall in store before topping out.

It took us two more days to hike out, as we followed a long ridge line stretching over a series of 10,000 foot peaks. On our fifth day in the wilderness, we finally boarded a bus and made the long journey back to Tokyo.

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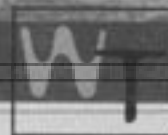
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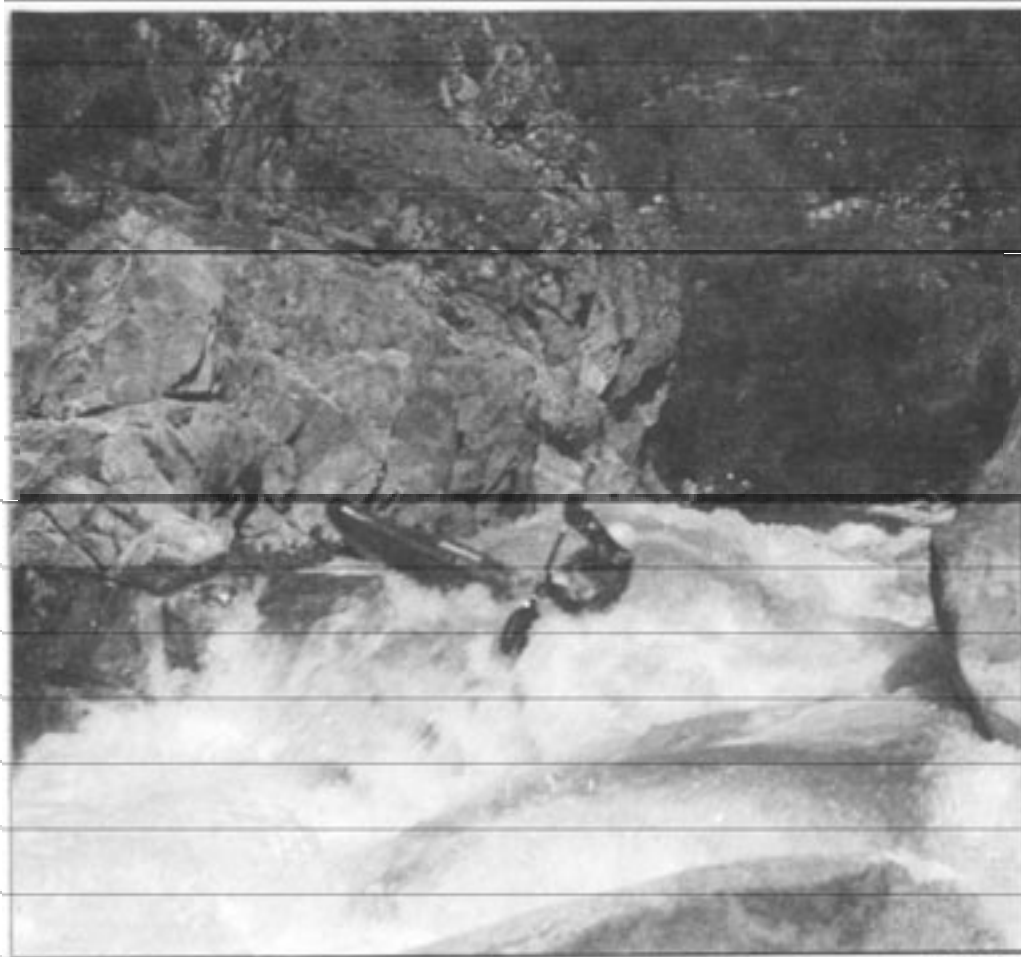
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Dieter King

An Adventure on the Clavey

Story and photos by Bruce M. Generaux

During the course of the day I devised a simple rule: Everything that Dieter and Lee scouted from shore I walked. Only once or twice in my nine portages did they have to wait while I made some class V portage. I used to think the Cherry Creek section of the Tuolumne was my upper limit and that Gore Canyon on the Colorado was pretty hard, but these guys ran rapids that seemed inconceivable to me. After watching the mental, physical and technical prowess of Dieter and Lee, I realized that my understanding of hard core needed re-calibration.

On the Friday night in March, I got a call from Dieter. He asked me if I wanted to do the lower Clavey with him and Lee Wilhelm. It would be an overnight trip with the first day easier and the second day harder at a good introductory level of 700 cfs. I had never met Dieter in person. I had only spoken with him once by phone, but knew him from the numerous references to his first descents in the various California guide books. I had bought one of his used boats after he lent it to me on Cherry Creek, but I hadn't even met him in person then. Why they called me to join them, however, was soon apparent.

Stanley and Holbeck's California Whitewater guide book describes the Clavey as "a stretch that no high gradient/low volume enthusiast should miss." The river drops 137 feet per mile and is not described in any detail. What information there is hints at bottomless class V+ drops, innumerable portages and no egress save by water. Additionally, ours was the first descent since the January floods, where the Tuolumne was measured at 50,000 cfs and the Clavey approached 10,000 cfs.

Because I was the least accomplished member of the group and had never run the river I was puzzled as to why I was invited. I had a suspicion that Dieter brought me along hoping I would bail at the put-in and run shuttle for them. Always game for an adventure and sensing a once in a lifetime experience, I agreed to meet them. I spent the night getting ready for the 10:00 AM rendezvous at Wards Ferry (the bridge crossing the Tuolumne that was actually bombed-yes, explosives-over the winter).

I drove down the windy canyon side road to Wards Ferry, weary with trepidation. Much to my relief, no one had arrived by 11:00 AM. However, as I started to drive home and make other plans for the weekend I saw their car. Dieter and Lee were both hung over from their reunion the night before. This particular morning they were amped on coffee and bouncing around. Before we got into Lee's car and headed toward the put-in, Dieter recommended that I pull my car to the uphill side of the road to make it tougher for some malcontent to roll it into the reservoir below.

As we began our drive to the river, a general feeling of uneasiness settled over me, a feeling only amplified by seemingly prophetic obstacles that lay

in our path. Our first snag came when we discovered that the gate on the road to the put-in is closed until April. Obviously we were not about to make the 12 mile walk necessary to paddle the upper section of the run, so we searched at length for a way to drive around the locked gate. Our next plan was to find another route that would intersect with the original put in road. Our effort took us on a dirt road that went by a weekend-long high school keg party. When we stopped we were offered and gladly accepted pre-lunch beer. The high school seniors from Tuolumne City wanted us to stay for the day and buy them a new keg. We politely turned them down when they proudly told us about the three fights the night before.

So off we went to find the midway put in. Our journey took us through the area burned by last summer's Tuolumne fire. As a result, the January rains did a number on the road. We were within eight miles of the put-in when we encountered James, Cindy and their miniature pit-bull. While camping near the put-in they got their pickup stuck and faced a 30 mile walk to the main road. They were only ten miles from their truck, and so pretty glad to see us. James thought that with our help we could lift the truck back onto the road. Everyone climbed into the shuttle vehicle (including the dog) and headed on toward the river.

Cindy supplied each of us with a vodka tonic from their nearby campsite before we went to work on the truck. First we untied the clothes line, which was supposed to be holding the pickup from falling down the slope. Then, it was simply a matter of manpower, as we heaved the rear end of the truck back onto the road with surprisingly little effort and no injuries. With the truck out of the way, we could continue toward the put in.

Due to the closed gate, keg party, vodka tonic and pickup truck extraction, we would not be putting on until the next day. After enjoying bit of 100-proof Southern Comfort, Lee told us about childhood behaviors not typically considered mainstream. I watched with curiosity while Dieter egged him on and realized that the next day's trip would be enhanced by the personalities of my companions. As the night wore on, the discussions devolved into bench-talk of boating, climbing, skiing, relationships, aliens and Hale-Bopp.

The put-in was only a half mile of boat dragging from our campsite. The river started out with a bang. Within 200 yards Dieter and Lee were scouting and I was portaging. They ran the drop and both got worked pretty badly. Nevertheless, they emerged laughing, exhilarated at the "fun" first drop. This was a preview of what was to come in the next 20 miles. At another drop, I was instructed to go off a 12 foot waterfall pointing 45 degrees sideways, to avoid the piton rock at the bottom. I easily missed the rock by keeping the prescribed angle.

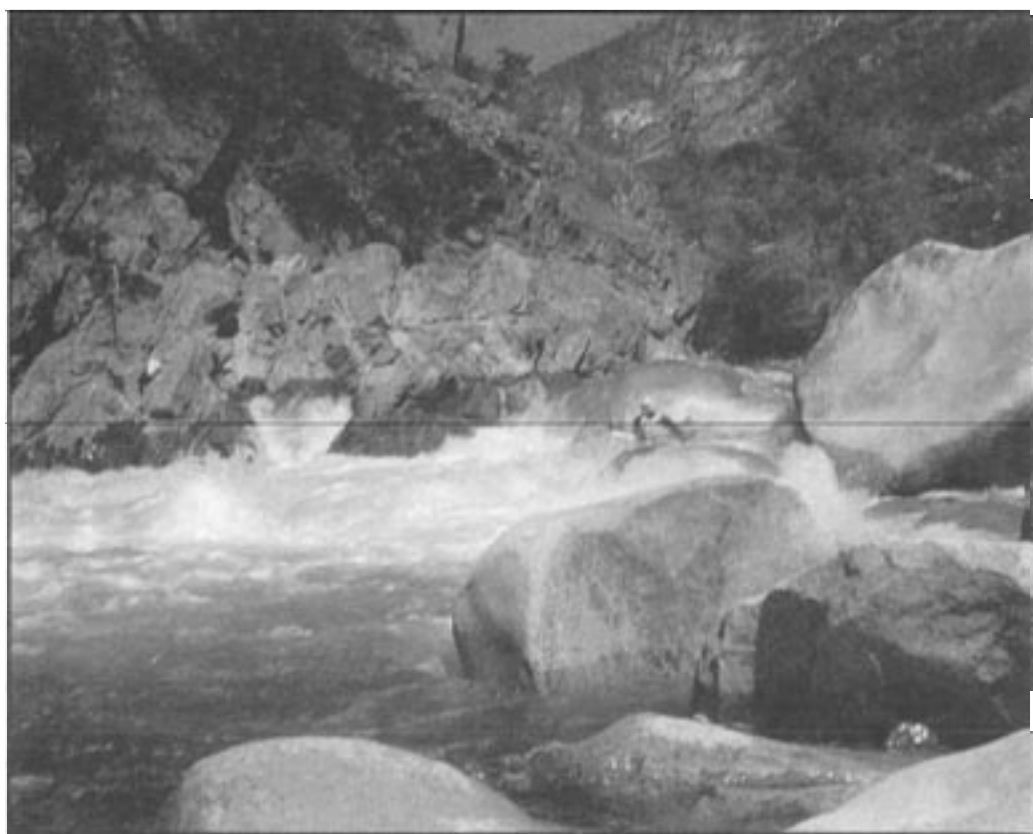
During the course of the day, I had two swims and only had to roll twice. My simple rule of "they scout, I walk" spared them from having to rescue me.

On a few occasions Dieter and Lee got far ahead of me and I had to pick my way blindly through drops without having seen their lines; portaging would have consumed too much time. We had to finish the river in a single day because we didn't have overnight gear. Eventually, they realized that self-preservation instincts would get me through the rapids alive and so they rarely waited for me in the pools. I certainly had my doubts and was occasionally angry at the pace and lack of help. The difficulty of the rapids I had

to negotiate on my own was greater than anything I had ever experienced. Any thoughts of walking out of the Clavey were put out of my mind when I studied the 1,000 foot walls of the canyon.

Occasionally, after a quick portage, I would be sitting in my boat at the bottom of a rapid, when Lee and Dieter emerged with maniacal grins on their faces as if having just cheated something. We spent seven hours doing 8.8 miles on the Clavey including one hour for lunch. Finally, to my immense relief the main Tuolumne canyon came into view. Since I was already walking the last unbelievably steep drop, I continued trudging along the shore all the way to the confluence. By the end of the Clavey, Dieter had not walked a single rapid and had only received one involuntary thrashing. According to Lee, this was the first non-portage descent of the Clavey.

We hit the main fork of the Tuolumne, locally known as "the T," at 3 p.m. However, we still had 12 miles of class IV whitewater to negotiate before Wards Ferry. I had never paddled this section of the T before. Lee and Dieter were somehow much less tired than I, and so they left me behind pretty quickly. This left me to run the



Lee Wilhelm

Adventure on the Clavey

river more or less alone and in a state of extreme fatigue.

Several miles into the T, we came across a rapid called Steamboat. Dieter and Lee were, of course, somewhere ahead of me, so I was surprised when I crested the lip of this substantial class IV rapid to see Lee surfing a wave/hole about forty feet wide and fifteen feet high. From the expression on Lee's face I could tell that he didn't want to be there. Since neither of us wanted to see us surf the hole together, I stroked hard to river left and punched through the side of the beast. I made it out, but Lee was not so lucky. He side-surfed for another 10 seconds then deliberately got stern ended back into the hole and flushed out upside down. He rolled up without a problem and appeared unfazed by the whole experience.

After two hours of into-the-wind paddling and hole dodging on the T, Wards Ferry bridge finally appeared and we paddled across the top of Don Pedro Reservoir. Fortunately the infamous log jam was downstream. At the car, Dieter and Lee celebrated with the bottle of bourbon stashed in Lee's take-out bag. I, too, felt a sense of accom-

plishment; I had survived another adventure. Had I joined some new local club by doing this run or did I just prove my foolish sense of adventure was enough to take me to the edge of my mental and physical capacities?

We started driving the two hour shuttle and by a quarter of the way enough of the bourbon was consumed that Dieter and Lee were becoming philosophical. I participated in the conversation to the extent possible, considering that I was designated driver. Now it was dark and raining and we were trying to navigate a four-wheel drive road in the middle of the burned out forest. Multiple topo map consultations yielded no clues and intuition took over. The funniest event of the day occurred when I, being the only one actually looking out the windshield, saw the boats loosening up in the rope straps. My deliberate abrupt braking woke Dieter up to the sight of his brand new boat careening across the hood and bouncing down the road in front of us. He shouted at me to stop the car, then jumped out and chased his still-moving boat. Lee and I were beside ourselves with laughter at the sight of Dieter sitting dejectedly in

the mud with his now-scratched and dirty boat.

After a shuttle involving some sport-driving, we ended up near Sonora. As I dropped off Dieter and Lee, I gave them the bottle and their gear and wished them good luck driving home. I spent days recovering physically from this paddling adventure and to this day am glad I saw the Clavey River canyon. However, I am still not sure that I am hard core enough to go back there with some of the best boaters in California.



Dieter and Lee

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My river — a place of perspective

By Dieter King

I awake, alone again. I get out of bed and go to the window. At least it looks like it's going to be a good day.

The sun is beginning to coat the forested hills above my house. Ducks bob on the glassy surface of the lake, some with their bills still stuffed under a wing. In the cattails, a flock of Red-winged Blackbirds begin sounding their shrill cries. Harry, the resident Great Blue Heron, spears a blue gill with its long, sharp beak and tosses it into his gaping mouth. With numerous contorted motions of his snakelike neck, Harry swallows the still wriggling fish whole.

It's a calm, the spring California sky is turning bright blue.

I pull on my favorite purple shorts and start to the kitchen. At the door to my daughter's room I stop. Still asleep, she looks so innocent and beautiful. I'm lucky to have her. So young and so much has happened in her life. I kiss her on the cheek and, feeling sad, I look out the window at that blue, California sky.

"Time to get up Emme. It's a beautiful day, C'mon baby."

Gently, I shake her. She opens her sleepy, dark eyes, but turns over and goes back to sleep. I pick her up, blanket and all, carry her to the kitchen and set her in a chair.

While I put on a pot of water for oatmeal and a kettle for tea, I make another feeble attempt to wake Emme by singing. It's either my song or the bright sunshine pouring into the kitchen that finally results in a yawn, a stretch and then two big, dark eyes peaking out from under the blanket.

"Good morning, Emme." I give her a big smile.

"Good' morning Daddy." She gives her smaller version.

She climbs out from under the blanket, down out of the chair and waddles over to the bay window. She climbs up, kneels on the cushion and looks out the window at the lake.

"Duckies, duckies, the duckies are there! I love the duckies!"

I go over, sit by my daughter and watch the ducks paddle in lazy circles.

"Look at the sky Emme."

"It's so blue, Daddy."

"Yes it is. C'mon, time for breakfast."

Breakfast is oatmeal with yogurt and banana, milk for Emme and peppermint tea for me. After breakfast, I dress Emme and brush her long, fine dark hair. She has her mother's beautiful hair. Then, we head out to the bright sunshine and a fine spring day.

I set my bike into the rack and put my gear into the back of the truck. I hand my paddle to Emme, set her in my kayak and drag her in my boat over to the truck.

All set, we drive out the dirt road past the lake, the ducks, Harry the heron and the hundreds of screeching blackbirds.

After dropping Emme at school, I head for McKay's, the take-out for my backyard run, the North Fork of the Stanislaus. I bounce down the steep, partially paved, rutted and potholed road. At a corner I spy the river below, sparkling in the morning sunshine among the pines. My heart jumps and I smile. Looks like



Above and below: Emme.
Photos by D. King



My River — a place of perspective

good water. Down at the river I hide my bike, then walk down to check the flow. It looks like about 800 hundred cfs, pretty good for this somewhat dry year.

Back up that hideously steep road, bouncing away. I'm happy. I've got on my shorts, flaps and sunglasses, my favorite reggae tape is blasting away on the tape deck and I'm singing along. I travel up the highway to Dorrington and then down to Sour Grass, the put-in. It's midweek and nobody is around. I've got the place to myself.

I scamper about the cliffs above the first rapid, scouting the drop. No problem, no logs, looks clean. What a way to start the run. Not really a difficult rapid if you break it up. But it's long, congested and somewhat intimidating in this little, granite gorge — especially when your not warmed up and alone.

Back at the truck I sing along to more Bob Marley as I stretch and suit up. Finally in the water, I look downstream past the bridge toward that first rapid. The concrete pillars, steel girders and wood beams create an ominous arch that frames the white turbulence below. I take a deep breath and go.

Beneath the shadow of the bridge I am immediately struck by a couple blinding, white waves and catch a eddy in the midst of the torrent. Bobbing in the eddy, my boat sliding up and down against the smooth granite, I feel good. I've run this rapid several times over the years. Off I go, zigzagging back and forth from eddy to eddy. I boof around a boulder, slide down a ramp and punch through a powerful hole and finally over a pour-over and into a deep hole that marks the end of the rapid. I exit in a spectacular tail stand that impresses absolutely nobody but myself.

Good to get that first one over with — it's the most difficult drop until after the park. The drops are easier now and I'm warmed up. There are spots to play, a surf hole, a wave, eddies to catch, boofs to make. It's good to be here. I know this river, it's like a good friend. I feel home.

In the flats I lay on the back, of my boat and look up at that blue sky ringed by tall, stately pines. I close my eyes and drift, spin and swirl in the dark gentle current. I think of my problems — my divorce, the house I built that will have to be sold and what this all means to my daughter. So much for a child so young.

For a moment I'm touched by sadness. But only for a moment. I'm on the river and this is not a place for sadness.

Onward we go, the river and I. Past granite boulders, heavy with green moss, past black oaks, shiny with fresh spring foliage. Past azaleas full of cream colored flowers. The air is heady with their fragrance. The river sparkles, swirls and dances on it's way downstream. How incredibly fortunate I am to be here.

I stop, strip off my clothes and eat my lunch naked in the warm sunshine on a multicolored granite slab. A Red-tailed Hawk flies up the canyon and lands on a snag. He settles down and gives me a hard look. After watching each other with equal curiosity, the hawk jumps off and sails effortlessly away.

Back in my boat I press on and soon come to the bridge in Big Trees State park. I could take out here but I've decided to run the next couple miles down to McKay's — a bit more serious whitewater than the five miles I've just done. Instead of easy Class 4 rapids with lots of room in between, it's several Class 4-plus rapids and, of course one biggie for drama.

It's a good thing I've got this river wired. I feel confident. I don't need to scout. The first couple of rapids pose no problems. As I travel on, the character of the canyon changes. It becomes more of a gorge, darker, the granite more imposing.

At the "biggie," the one I call Drop Out, I jump out of my boat for a quick look. It looks the same as it always does, intimidating. A complicated entry that

Above and below: Uncle Rocket.
Photo by Dieter King

My River — a place of perspective

leads into a 8-foot drop that shoots you into a maze of boulders with a series of steep, swirling shoots in and around them.

Back in my boat I thread my way through the entry moves and over the lip I go. I remain upright.

I flow through the last mile enjoying every drop, every eddy turn. The apprehension I felt earlier, is gone. The river slips by and around the corner the take out comes into view. I pass the beach where Emme and I will build sand castles this summer. I wind my way among the rocks, the Indian rhubarb and finally catch the last eddy above the old diversion dam.

For a moment I sit and reflect on the day. I feel good. I made clean runs. No problems. No shaky moments. After reveling a bit, I pop my spray skirt, hop out of my boat and stash it and my gear in the bushes. I retrieve my mountain bike and begin the long haul back to put-in.

I arrive back at my truck and quickly I load up — 4 p.m., not bad, a full day. Got to get going and pick up Emme.

"Daddy, Daddy!" I get a hug and a kiss when I arrive. "Push me on the swing!"

After lots of pushing on the swing, it's back to the truck and down to the take-out. At the bottom of that steep, rutted road, Emme and I retrieve my kayak and gear. Once again, Emme gets a ride.

"Emme did you tell the kids at preschool what I told you to tell them?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"I told them my Daddy is the best kayaker in the whole world, but nobody knew what a kayaker is."

I sigh. "Oh well, Emme."

After we've loaded up, Emme and I hold hands and walk down to the river. We collect sticks, throw them in the water, watch them tumble and swirl in the current, then go over the dam.

A bird that was perched on a rock jumps into the water, disappears, resurfaces and bobs once again with a nymph in its beak. A spider web floats in silken strands in the evening sun. Lady bugs swarm into huge plies in the grass and rocks. I point these things out to Emme and she takes them all in with childlike curiosity.

"Rivers are wonderful things, Emme."

"Daddy, will you always take me to the river?"

"Of course, Emme."

"Daddy, do you love kayaking more than anything?"

"No Emme, there's one thing I love more than anything in the world. It's you!"

I hug my daughter and she hugs me. For a moment, we're quite by the river. Father and daughter. But it's time to go. Holding hands, we walk back to the truck.

At the top of the ridge we pull over for a final look at the river. That blue California sky turns orange, then purple, and finally

it's dark.
It's been a good day.

Left: Sourgrass. Photo by D. King.

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Photos by Brandon Knapp



At top left and bottom right of this page, the late Chuck Kern on the North Stan. Chuck's brother, Willie, is pictured in the large photo, this page. On the opposite page from left, B.J. Johnson on portage #24 and Mark Hayden.





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Help! A typical Stekoah rapid.

Creekin'...Southern Style

Exploring Stekoah Creek—A Chattooga IV Tributary

Story and Photos by Ben Solomon

Every raft guide has a standard patter: bits of river history, tall tales of whitewater terror and lots of bad jokes. On Section IV of the Chattooga, the guide routine usually includes a mention of Stekoah Creek, a tributary that dumps (no pun intended) into the Chattooga less than a mile below Seven-Foot Falls. While the Chattooga is a federally protected Wild and Scenic river, some of its tributaries, like Stekoah, do not enjoy such protection. Floating by Stekoah, the poor water quality is obvious, especially compared to the Chattooga. Stekoah is darker, and the water looks milky. Erosion from local farms and construction projects, as well as a sewage treatment center about fifteen miles upstream, greatly compromise Stekoah's waters.

Despite the pollution, Stekoah looked like it might be a pretty exciting run. My friends and I couldn't find anyone who'd run it, but rumor held that there were some big drops, three separate gorges, and that it was fourteen miles long. It sounded worth exploring; all we had to do was (and I'm sure every boater can sympathize) wait for rain. One morning after a long dry spell the heavens opened up: by that night the Chattooga was five feet. It kept raining and the next morning we loaded up our kayaks and headed off to Clayton, Georgia to take a look at Stekoah. The drive was just a wee bit intimidating. Every tiny little creek was roaring. We even saw a few confused-looking cows up to their knees in the water of a flooded field. Stekoah itself was monstrous - a flood of brown water up into the banks. We thrashed around in the bushes for a while, trying to get a closer look, but our hearts weren't in it, so we drove away with our tails between our legs. Luckily, Ian, who knew the area well, had heard of some great drops on nearby Brasstown Creek. We spent the day throwing our selves off a couple big, fun waterfalls, and decided to check out Stekoah when it dropped.

With a little weaseling, we all managed to get the next day off. That morning things looked a lot better. Stekoah had lost a lot of volume. Remembering the wastewater treatment plant just upstream, we vowed not to do any rolls. The run started out with a bang with some good warm-up rapids, followed by huge, scary drops. We were surrounded by thick forest, careening through a magical place we knew few others had ever seen. Rhododendrons sparkled with raindrops, a vibrant green against the changing leaves. But after the second portage, I didn't want to see rhododendrons for a long, long time.

Our first shot of excitement came in a nice-looking rapid not far into the run: a short slide into a six-foot vertical slot. No problem, except that a log extended from the bank into the slot. Jay crawled down close and poked around with a stick, then turned back to us with a shrug: "Can't really tell if there's much log underwater. Might be OK."

With this "definite" assurance, we figured things were good to go. A well-placed stroke on the right would land us parallel to the log. Ian decided he'd give it a shot first. As usual, his run was right on-line. He slid down the first part in good position and threw in a strong right sweep, just as he dropped into the slot. Perfect. Except that an instant later, he came up almost vertical on his front end, the bow of his boat pinned beneath the log. Ian's eyes went huge, but he managed to stay in control and pivot away from the log and out of harm's way. The rest of us scurried upstream to carry our boats around the rapid that Dan named, "Ian Says No".

The action didn't let up a bit for several miles. Stekoah provided tons of tough drops, hard moves, and incredible scenery. There were also quite a few unrunnable drops (at least for us). The only drawback was the state of the creek. Below one great rapid we dubbed "20/20" (two back-to-back twenty-foot drops), a huge mound of garbage had collected. Soda bottles, fast-food wrappers, tires, and other debris formed a monument to people's carelessness. The fact that so many people obviously didn't care about what they were doing to the area was astonishing.



Trying to get left at "The Hole": The move involved punching a bad hole with a log in it and working left. The entire right side of the drop funnels under a log.

After the first gorge Stekoah flattened out, and we paddled hard, well-aware that we had a lot of distance to cover before dark. The creek twisted through farms and cow pastures, another major source of pollution for Stekoah and the Chattooga. Silt from farm erosion and animal waste have easy access to the creek.

Exploring Stekoah Creek—A Chattooga IV Tributary continued..

The flat water continued for miles, broken every now and then by small rapids. Finally, we entered another gorge. Many of the drops here were among the biggest I'd ever seen: sixty foot vertical falls right onto boulders, choked with logs, and incredibly painful to walk.

We quickly lost count of the gorges we traversed (I guessed around ten). Now the sun was dropping and we were exhausted and starting to get lazy. With only a few miles to go, we eddied out above another enormous rapid. Jay spied an eddy a few feet downstream and headed down to it. I was just getting out of my boat to scout when I heard Ian yell, "Ben! Jay lost his paddle!" I tried to get to Jay as quickly as I could, but the slippery

water. "About a five-foot seal launch."

As soon as we got closer to Jay it became obvious that we were way more than five feet above Stekoah, but we were determined to look for Jay's paddle as quickly as possible. Jay held my boat while I crawled in. He let go and I fell into the water. The launch was high enough that the jolt hurt my back a little. I turned back, gave them a shrug, and started to search for the paddle.

To make a long story short, we never found it. Luckily, I had stuffed some homemade hand-paddles in the back of my boat. Jay took my paddle and we headed downstream. The hand-paddles were a big source of amusement for my friends. They were big, heavy pieces of shaped wood strapped to my hands with bungee cords and webbing. I was really proud of them until about three minutes after I put them on, when I realized they were absolutely awful.

We figured we still had a few miles before we would hit the Chattooga. We moved as fast as we could, despite the difficult rapids. The Chattooga corridor was an unbelievably welcome site. After the big vertical drops and tight moves of Stekoah, the Chattooga (at just under three feet) seemed like an amusement ride in which "moves" were barely necessary. We raced down to the lake, getting there just about dark. We were cold, exhausted, but happy as clams: and we were almost home.

Local outfitters and activists have been campaigning for years to keep the Chattooga pristine and to clean up its tributaries. The Land and Water Conservation Fund provides money to buy privately owned property along the Chattooga's headwaters. But more support is necessary to ensure the best possible use of this fund. In addition, the Clayton wastewater treatment plant needs improvement; the plant emits waste right into Stekoah. Finally, erosion control needs to be enforced, from both road construction and private farms. Stekoah is a great run, but it, as well as the entire Chattooga watershed, needs your support.

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Year End Whitewater Fatality Report July 10, 1997 - January 10, 1998

by Charlie Walbridge

1997 will be remembered as the worst year ever for kayaking fatalities in the U.S. The toll from July to December stands at five deaths, raising the annual total to 19. This is double the usual number of 8-10! Surprisingly, the typical victim was a skilled kayaker, and the casualties include six true experts! This is a disturbing trend for readers of American Whitewater, who are mostly trained, experienced kayakers. By contrast, those who die in canoeing or rafting accidents are usually inexperienced. The narratives that follow are certain to make even the most dedicated boaters reconsider their approach to difficult whitewater in the coming year. As always, I am indebted to a number of people, especially Kevin Sulewski, who take the time to surf the net and forward postings of interest to me.

Kayaking Accidents

The Snake River near Jackson, Wyoming is a stretch of fast-moving flatwater within sight of the Grand Tetons. Although not true whitewater, it is quite capable of killing inexperienced paddlers. On July 26 the National Park Service reported that **Glenda Remington**, 49, capsized after her kayak hit a snag in the river. She held onto the snag momentarily, then washed downstream. Her three friends were unable to effect a rescue. They lost sight of her and 45 minutes later called the Park Service for help. A helicopter spotted her floating unconscious in a riverside eddy. They landed on a nearby gravel bar and removed her from the river. The probable cause of death: hypothermia brought on by her lengthy swim. It's unfortunate that self-rescue and kayak-based rescue skills were not used!

Many readers of American Whitewater have heard about the August 14 accident in the Black Canyon of the Gunnison that claimed the life of world-class whitewater athlete **Chuck Kern**. The articles and Internet postings I've seen don't fully explain what happened in this extremely rugged Western Colorado gorge. This account is based on discussions with several members of the party who were kind enough to discuss the incident with me.

Kern's group included his two brothers and three other expert paddlers. The level was an ideal 1200 cfs. By early afternoon they reached a mile-long section that's usually portaged on a trail above the river. Based on advice from previous Black Canyon paddlers, the group elected to stay at river level and run or portage the drops individually. They soon encountered an 8' sloping ledge on river left with a pool below. Chuck boat-scouted from an upstream eddy while the others inspected the drop from river right. It appeared to be a straightforward Class IV+ run. They gave the thumbs-up signal, and probably would have followed him had he made the run successfully.

No one in this very experienced group, despite careful scouting, could see that the ledge itself was formed by a table rock perched on two smaller boulders. This created a deadly sieve, with much of the water going under the table. Chuck ran, hung up on the lip, slid back, and settled in sideways (momentarily) with his head above the water. After 5-10

seconds the kayak shifted again. The bow dove, plunging Chuck under water and leaving only a foot and a half of his stern visible.

The group responded immediately. They were able to clip a rope to the stern grab loop with within minutes, and used a variety of systems and pull angles in an attempt to release Chuck's boat. They had plenty of rescue gear and broke a number of prusiks in the process. After over an hour of strenuous effort the group realized it was hopeless and decided to continue downstream. They ran the remainder of the river and contacted the National Park Service.

After the dam release was cut from 1200 to 600 cfs, a 9-man team from Vail Mountain Rescue, headed by Mike Duffy, was flown in by helicopter to recover Chuck's body. The kayak was pinned across the mouth of the sieve, with the bow folded over, probably trapping Chuck's legs. The rescuers reinforced the Kern group's system with heavy-duty hardware in an attempt to pull Chuck's kayak back upstream, without success. They then decided to cut the rope. This allowed the kayak to float through the sieve and into the pool below. The lower water level, which reduced and altered the force on the pinned kayak, made this recovery possible.

This is the third death caused by this type of hazard in less than a year. Large underwater sieves give no warning of their presence and are almost impossible to spot. Many of the best known examples were found when someone blundered into them. The treacherous nature of this type of hazard, not the extreme paddling that **Chuck** was known for, caused the accident. Chuck's brother John said that the sieve was almost invisible even after the accident, even when everyone knew it was there! These deadly traps may form on any high-gradient river where a lot of big rocks pile on top of one another in a narrow streambed. The Gunnison, like West Virginia's Meadow River and many others, are deceptively dangerous. Anyone with ideas on how to best to spot sieves or drains should share them with readers of American Whitewater.

The Ocoee River was the scene of a complex and disturbing accident during the last scheduled release on November 1. This summary is based on a report by Tom Parson, a member of victim's group, that was published in the Tennessee Valley Canoe Club

Newsletter of January 1998. The weather was initially sunny and warm, but became cool and rainy later in the day. Mike Reisman, an experienced paddler, was returning to the sport after a long layoff. He had three experienced friends with him, but despite their support he had a tough day. He swam twice; once at the put-in eddy and again at Double Suck. Barefoot and lightly clad in a polyprop top and shorts, Reisman complained of being cold as his group paddled downstream. After his second swim he had trouble putting on his sprayskirt and needed assistance from one of his friends. It is likely that his grab loop was inadvertently tucked inside the sprayskirt at that time.

Mike flipped a third time just above Witch's Hole, set up to roll, then drifted upside down for some distance. He probably hit his head hard, spoiling any chance for a roll. His wet exit was compromised because his grab loop was tucked inside his sprayskirt. One member of the party, a physician, bailed out and attempted to help. As Mike reached up out of the water, Parson sprinted into position parallel to Mike's boat. He grabbed his hand and pulled his head out of the water. At this point a third member of the party, thinking that Reisman was still dangerously trapped, pulled up along the other side. Reaching across the flipped boat, he cut across the front of the victim's sprayskirt in an effort to

release him. Unfortunately Mike was partially out of his boat, so his legs were pressed against the skirt. The knife cut Mike deeply and may have severed the femoral artery or vein.

Reisman cried out and let go of Parson. Mike was bleeding profusely. Parson exited his boat and began to pull the victim, who was still partly inside his boat, to safety. After a desperate struggle (during which the rescuers were also trying to stop the bleeding) they gained a foothold on some slippery midstream boulders. Here they were able to pull him from his boat. They continued their efforts to stop the bleeding and covered him with PFD's to provide some protection from the elements.

A former EMT and firefighter, posting to the Internet as Greatful Ed, was running shuttle when he saw the struggle going on mid-river. By now it was raining. He arrived on the scene, borrowed a boat, and ferried out to mid-river. He felt that the bleeding, while serious, did not look arterial. As he worked to assist Reisman's companions he saw a badly swollen and bruised area on the victim's left temple about the size of a half-dollar. This can result when a loosely-fastened helmet is pushed back just before an impact. The human skull is very thin here, and it's possible that intracranial bleeding was responsible for Mike's rapid decline.

In the 30 minutes it took for an ambulance to arrive, Reisman's condition deteriorated. He was initially responsive, but gradually slipped away. He complained of being cold and had difficulty breathing before slipping into unconsciousness. Eventually he stopped breathing entirely. Artificial respiration, then CPR, was administered. These vigorous efforts continued after the ambulance arrived. The paramedics who evacuated Reisman worked hard to save his life. Ultimately the combination of hypothermia, head injury, and severe bleeding probably pushed him into irreversible shock. Because no autopsy was done, the exact cause of death remains unknown.

The chain of events behind this accident was surprisingly complex. Although Reisman was a skilled paddler, he was out of practice. He was probably dressed fine for conditions at the put in, assuming he didn't swim. But after his second swim the weather deteriorated. He was probably in the early stages of hypothermia, which may have reduced his coordination and impaired his judgment. Although cold, he did not put on the paddle jacket he was carrying, probably because it was wet and would not have offered much protection. Many good paddlers don't dress for immersion, but this precaution would have been a helpful counterbalance to Mike's rusty skills. Roadsides runs are an ideal choice

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for paddlers unsure of their abilities, and taking out early might have been a good option after the second swim. But this is not an easy decision, even for someone whose mind was not numbed by the cold.

Modern spray skirts do fit tightly! When choosing one, look for a design that makes it difficult to inadvertently tuck the grab loop inside. Even if the loop is not available to you, most sprayskirts can be released by grabbing a fold of neoprene in front of your waist and pulling up hard. Although it's not easy to do this with cold hands, this technique is worth practicing at your next pool session.

Most discussions of this accident on rec.boats.paddle have focused on the use of the rescue knife. Knives are most often used in rescues to cut rope or fabric in an entanglement. The use of a sharp blade to free an individual trapped in a tight-fitting kayak requires care, especially when visibility is poor. Unfortunately, this may not be easy during the rescue of a disabled or semiconscious paddler in the middle of a significant rapid. Any cutting should be done in a controlled fashion. I recommend pinching the knife blade near it's tip to minimize the depth of cut, or placing the tip of your finger over the back end of the blade to allow you to feel ahead of the cutting edge when working

close to unprotected human flesh. With a single edged knife you can place the blunt back edge of the blade against a person, then cut away from them if necessary.

On November 9 Class II-III Kishacoquillas Creek (the Kish) in central Pennsylvania was running high following heavy rains. Jay Ernest, 47, an experienced paddler, was kayaking with two friends when they encountered a low-head dam. Clippings from the Lewistown Sentinel sent by Dave Guss, an active racer from the '70s, reported the accident as follows: The first paddler went over the dam, flipped, and became trapped in the hydraulic. Ernest, the second paddler, followed with similar results. The third paddler landed, portaged the dam, and reached into the hydraulic with his kayak in an attempt a rescue his friends. The first paddler was able to fight his way out of the hydraulic and made it to shore. Ernest was unconscious when he was ejected. The first paddler began CPR while the third ran for help. Rescue squads responded quickly, but Ernest never regained consciousness.

On December 22nd Jonathan Harris, 26, became vertically pinned in a narrow chute on the lower "Chairlift" section of the Little River Canyon. The National Park Service Morning Report indicated that he was "un-

able to right himself or get out of the kayak," indicating that he "flipped in the chute." Another Internet posting set the height of the drop at six feet. Two companions who were photographing him worked to free the pinned kayak for over 30 minutes without success. Exhausted, they hiked out to summon help. Forty rescuers worked into the night to free Harris, then hauled his body over 1000 feet up the steep walls of the gorge. More information on this accident is needed. I'd like to hear from anyone who can provide it or put me in contact with the survivors.

Raftina Fatalities

Ian Coble reported via email that his aunt and uncle were on a commercial raft trip in mid-July when a member of their party died. The accident occurred at Shoshone Falls on the Colorado River near Glenwood Springs. The victim, Hal Mullery, was in one of three rafts that dump-trucked in a breaking wave and spilled 5 of 8 people into the river. The guide and several other people swam to shore; Mr. Mullery and a few others apparently recirculated in a hole downstream. The victim clearly took the worst beating in the hole. He was picked up by a raft that was waiting downstream and



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taken ashore. CPR was performed and paramedics took him to a local hospital where he was pronounced dead. Mr. Coble's relatives high-sided and were able to stay in the boat.

Vince Thompson, manager of the Idaho Whitewater Page, reported that Douglas Balls, 35, drowned on the Main Stem of the Payette River on August 8. He was rafting with three friends when he arrived at a rapid called "Go Left or You're Fired" by outfitters, and "The Play Wave" by kayakers. His group did not know the river. They ran right, hit a rock, and flipped. Balls' life vest, a Type II horse collar PFD, was pulled off over his head as he went underwater. A Horse Collar PFD, in addition to being uncomfortable, is extremely hard to adjust to fit properly. Anyone smart enough to adjust one correctly probably already owns a comfortable vest-type PFD. His three companions were able to swim to shore safely.

On September 6, the first day of Gauley Season in southern West Virginia, a commercial rafting guest washed under Shipwreck Rock. This straightforward rapid (Class III) has a huge undercut rock blocking the center half of the river at the bottom. This dangerous obstruction claimed the life of another rafter a few years ago. Local guides reported that the raft collided with Razor Rock, a barely visible obstruction just below a big wave on the right side of the left chute. Both the guide and the guest were thrown into the water. The guide reportedly swam up to the guest, a 36-year-old military man, and ordered him to start swimming to safety at once! There was plenty of time to do so, but the guest did not respond. While the guide swam to one side, the guest drifted passively into the rock and disappeared. He was recov-

ered by divers and park personnel who, because of the previous accident, knew exactly where to look.

In a baffling incident in the Grand Canyon, Tony Fry, 43, disappeared from a commercial outfitter's camp five miles upstream of Diamond Creek on the evening of September 13. The body was found downstream on September 21 after a lengthy search. No one has any idea what happened.

On September 27, Melvin Fisher, 40, died while rafting the Colorado River through Cataract Canyon. The National Park Service reported that his trip included four rafts and two IK's. The river flow was 17,220 cfs, a moderate level. Fisher's raft flipped in Little Niagara, a bad pour-over in Drop #2, dumping seven people into the water. This hole has been the site of several other fatalities. The stretch downstream is very continuous, and rescue is not easy. Furthermore, his group was rescuing an IK paddler and was probably out of position when the flip occurred. Fisher washed two miles through four more rapids before his party could catch up. He was found blue and pulseless. The group started CPR, then following wilderness protocols, stopped the procedure after 30 minutes. They paddled out and reported the accident to the Park Service. The body was helicoptered out the next day.

Slim Ray reported the first fatal accident of the new year on January 8, 1998. It occurred when the French Broad flooded after the watershed received 5-16" of rain. Ernie Gosnell and Rusty Watts bought a raft this past summer and had rafted the stretch of river near Marshall a number of times. For this run they tied themselves into their

boat so they wouldn't be thrown out by the turbulent water. After the raft flipped, the pair was in serious trouble. Watts struggled free and swam to a tree, where he remained for several hours until plucked out by an Air Force helicopter. The raft itself was finally spotted in a midstream debris pile. Mr. Gosnell was visible, but rescue crews waited until the water went down enough to safely access the site.

Canoeing Accidents

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission reported two separate canoeing fatalities on northwestern Pennsylvania's Allegheny River. On August 24, a 43-year-old man, paddling with a friend, broached and capsized his canoe in the "Oil City Riffle." The victim was unable to hold onto the canoe as it floated downstream; the body was found by fishermen two days later. The survivor, whose dry-rotted life vest fell off, was picked up by another boat and taken to shore. On October 28, a 60-year-old man purchased a canoe, took it to his riverside camp and launched. No one saw the accident; a neighbor found his unlocked pickup truck, became concerned and called 911. The canoe was recovered the next day but the body is still missing. Again, no PFD was used. The man had bronchitis and this may have caused



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him extreme distress when he hit the 45 degree water.

The Pennsylvania Fish Commission also reported another canoeing fatality that did not make previous AW accident reports. The incident occurred on Blacklick Creek, a class III whitewater stream located north of Johnstown, Pa., on May 26. The river was running high due to recent rains when two men, both experienced paddlers wearing life vests and helmets, broached and flipped their canoe against a midstream rock. The two held onto their boat and were discussing what to do next when they hit a second rock. They were pummeled under water with such force that both helmets were ripped off! One man made it to shore. After a brief search he found his partner floating unconscious in the water. The survivor, a former EMT, pulled him to shore and began CPR. It was, unfortunately, ineffective.

MISCELLANEOUS

The water in the concrete flood channels built in desert areas can rise quickly, as a group of five San Gabriel, California High School students discovered, to their sorrow. They were walking in the dry channel of the Rio Hondo on November 27 when they were hit by a fast-moving wall of water. Only one person climbed out on his own; a second was pulled out by a swiftwater rescue team. The bodies of two 14-year-old girls were found entangled in brush when the water subsided; a 17-year-old boy is missing and presumed dead.

On January 7, the Doe River in Tennessee rose six feet in ten minutes, cresting at 17,000 cfs, after Avery County, North Carolina was hit by 16" of rain in a few hours. Several homes were carried away; six people are confirmed dead and others are missing. This was a small part of the extensive flooding that hit the Smoky Mountains in early January, 1998. We can expect that many rapids have been altered by these high flows.

Often when I hear boaters discussing accidents I hear people say, in essence, the victim made a mistake; I don't make mistakes, so it can't happen to me. That's the biggest mistake of all! A "missed line" or a "missed eddy" may seem unlikely to a well honed paddler, but everyone makes errors once in awhile. Remember that several of the experts who died this year were full-time professional paddlers! Every river must be approached with caution, alertness, and respect. We show this by carrying the right gear, getting the right training, and taking the appropriate precautions on the water.

Unfortunately, there will be more accidents, and the process of learning what we can from them must continue. I need your help. Please send newspaper clippings, club newsletter accounts, or your own writing. Do so even if you think that "someone else will do it," lotsof times they don't! Contact Charlie Walbridge, American Whitewater Safety Com-

mittee, at 230 Penlllyn Pike, Blue Bell, PA 19422; phone is 215-646-0157; email is CWAL@compuserve.com. Thanks!

Whitewater Fatalities Reported to

American Whitewater 1997

	Jan-July	July-Dec	Total/1997
Kayak	14	5	19
Canoe	2	3	5
Raft	3	5	8
<u>Total</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>32</u>

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Fly

sea kayaking
Seayak
Olysee

creek boating
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Canyon

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Much to Be Learned Close Calls 1997

by Charlie Waibridge

Near misses always have a lot to teach paddlers. They serve as an early warning system for future accidents, and show by example how ordinary paddlers work successfully under pressure. This can help you if you face a similar problem. Unfortunately many close calls are never reported outside of the small groups that regularly paddle together. I received ten reports in 1997. I'd like to thank those who sent them in for their generosity, and to encourage anyone who survives such an experience (or hears about one) to share it with the readers of American Whitewater.

Slim Ray forwarded a near-miss report from the AKC website (www.alpine-kayak-club.org) that occurred on the Amahac River in Mexico in January, 1997. Rip Harwood was with a group running the river when he was shoved to the right side of a drop. The boulder was undercut and he and his rodeo boat were shoved under the rock. His kayak pinned, he bailed out, and he was carried still further down. He opened his eyes, swam for the light, and popped out in the pool below. He was under water about 30 seconds. His boat and paddle never reappeared, although a pair of sandals which were not tied in washed through.

Bill Robertson and Michael Stein from the Three Rivers Paddling Club of Pittsburgh were entering River's End Rapid on the Lower Yough on July 18 when he noticed two people on the shore gesturing for help. A woman on a self-guided raft trip had fallen out of her raft at the top of the rapid and become wedged at the hips, head downstream, between Snaggletooth and an adjoining rock. She was fighting to keep her head above water but was rapidly becoming exhausted. Her friends were in the downstream eddy but could not get close enough to help.

Bill and Michael eddied out below. Bill exited his kayak, grabbed his throw bag, and started to work his way across the rocks. As Michael shouted encouragement to the trapped rafter, Bill scrambled to the top of a huge boulder above the accident site. Once he slipped and dropped his throw bag, but Michael snagged it and tossed it back to him.

Bill could not see his target from the top of the rock, so he threw the rope in upstream so it could drift to where it was needed. The rope allowed the woman to pull herself free. Thanks to their alert action she was able to continue her trip after a brief rest.

On July 20 there was a near-miss on the Limestone Run of California's Kern River. Four kayakers, two using old-style, small-cockpit kayaks and two using sit-on-tops, were attempting this Class IV run at 920 cfs, a very low level. At Joe's Diner one of the boaters pinned end-to-end at the bottom, between a midstream rock and the right shore. After several minutes he flipped and tried to extricate himself. But he was quite tall (6'2) and could not do so. He was held under water for 1-2 minutes before other members of the group could get to him. Dan Mulvahill, who submitted this report, arrived at the scene just after the victim was revived with CPR! The victim is doing fine, with no problems except residual pain in his legs from struggling out of a too-small cockpit.

Eric Hendrickson dropped mealine about a close call at Coliseum Rapid on West Virginia's Cheat River. With the Albright Gauge reading 3.0' a woman, paddling second to last, missed the narrow open line and pinned under a huge log pinned against a giant rock on the left shore. Radwan Hallaba, the sweep boater, landed on river left and quickly climbed out onto the log. He held the woman's head above water until reinforcements arrived from downstream. With the additional manpower they were able to release the boat. The woman was shaken, but able to paddle out.

A single-person oar raft missed an eddy and was flipped by a river-wide strainer on Tumwater Canyon of Washington's Wenatchee River on August 30. This steep, class V run was carrying 1,250 cfs, a low, but prudent, level. As the boat went over the rafter's legs became entangled in his gear. When the raft hung up under the log it left him hanging in the current with his head barely above the surface. His friends supported his body and took over 15 minutes to free him. He was taken to a hospital where he was treated and released. The raft was released from the strainer the next day.

A channel cut below the powerhouse at Thunder Rock carries water to the Lower Ocoee River in Tennessee. Crede Calhoun reported to rec.boats.paddle that a very nasty hole is created when water from the Upper Ocoee drops into this channel. He witnessed a female boater being trashed and recirculated there. A companion made a daring boat rescue and plucked her from the hole. An article in the Tennessee Valley Canoe Club Newsletter reports a similar incident in which throw ropes were required to get the paddler out. Several rafts also got stuck here and needed ropes to escape.


A New Hampshire man almost drowned after falling out of a commercial raft at Little Poplar Hill Falls on the Dead River in Maine. This was during a fall high-water weekend when 5,500 cfs is let go, turning the Dead into a wild big-water roller coaster. David Thompson, 31, was one of four paddlers who fell out of the boat. Three were plucked from the river by their guide, but Thompson was recirculated in a hole. Guides from another company pulled him from the river and began rescue breathing. He was then boated a few miles to the takeout. An ambulance was called and Thompson was taken to a local hospital where he was treated and released.

Rescue Magazine reported that on the afternoon of October 6 three individuals, paddling a tandem canoe and a kayak, accidentally ran 30' Sandstone Falls on the New River downstream of Hinton, WV. Two man-

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aged to swim to shore, but a third was trapped on a rock in a narrow chute at the base of the falls. For nine hours NPS Rangers, rescue squad personnel, and a Coast Guard helicopter attempted to reach him. The rescue was only completed after the Corps of Engineers closed all the gates at Bluestone Dam, lowering the water level enough that a park ranger could reach him by boat.

American Whitewater's **Steve Taylor**, who serves as a liaison between the paddling community and law enforcement authorities on the Lower Potomac near Washington from Great Falls to Tidewater, reported a very unsettling incident. The river rose sharply following heavy rains, then dropped to 6' on November 11, Veteran's Day. A kayaker, wearing only light polypro and no paddle jacket, flipped and swam the entire S-Turn and **Mather Gorge** from the Observation Deck put-in below Great Falls, a distance of several miles. The gorge is sheer-walled and the rapids, though not difficult, are fast and squirrely at these flows. His buddy was unable to rescue him and ended up swimming too! The first swimmer ended up at the old George Washington Canal cut, where a climber found him incoherent and barely able to move.

The climber ran to the ticket booth and reported that he had found a kayaker who was so cold that he was delirious and could not

stand! The park rangers called 911. This brings out several rescue squads, not to mention the newspapers! The rescue squads found the paddlers' kayaks; the boaters themselves walked out under their own power and refused assistance. Unfortunately some very negative stories were published in the local papers and heard on the radio the next day.

Taylor writes, "Even the best of us occasionally swim. However, turning a simple swim into a 911 incident by failing to wear cold weather gear has consequences far beyond the immediate technical and medical ones. Just as a wilderness river poses added risks due to its isolation, a river near a large city has added problems due to its visibility. In this case, these consequences included having to deal with the authorities, reporters, and the general public, who may think this sort of problem is typical. We must therefore always be on the lookout for, and advise aggressively, any inexperienced boater who appears to be headed for trouble."

Will Reeves from Clemson University forwarded a report of a rescue made by a group of friends while making a low water (1.2) run of Section IV of the Chatooga River. This river forms the northern border between Georgia and South Carolina. It is known for its bizarre rock formations. At the end of Jawbone Rapid there is a large

rock with a hole through it. Many people have swum through "Hydroelectric Rock", but there's always a concern that it could become blocked with debris. Tricky currents just upstream and bigger drops farther above make the drop difficult.

Reeve's friends had just run the rapid after setting throw ropes at the bottom. They were getting ready to leave when they heard a call for help. Running up river, they saw a woman pinned against Hydro. Her kayak was jammed in the hole stern-first! She was stable for the time being, but it was a precarious situation. The group was worried that she could slip farther back into the hole. One person threw a rope right to her while another person downstream got out of his boat and set up a safety rope backup. By this time others had arrived. It took four people to pull her upstream, out of the hole. They ferried her boat to one side and lowered her into a side chute so she could complete the drop. Their fast actions kept a dangerous situation from getting out of control.

Help us learn from your experiences. Send your accounts of near-misses to Charlie Walbridge, American Whitewater Safety Committee, 230 Penllyn Pike, Blue Bell, PA 19422 phone 215-646-0157; fax 215-643-0668; email: Cwal@Compuserve.com. If they are well written, send them directly to the editor of American Whitewater.

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The Woe of Blue Ridge Lake

By Ken Strickland

The belief in monsters is as old as the mind and imagination of mankind. Dragons inhabited ancient China as did the Chimera in ancient Greece. The likenesses of anomalous creatures adorn cave walls in Europe and feathered serpents are frozen in the stone facades of temples in Mesoamerica. In ancient times it was rare that the wayward sailor survived long enough to sail off the edge of the world, since the scaly sea serpent patrolling this realm was an opportunistic brute, as any wily predator would be.

Then there are the modern day fantastic creatures. In the terrestrial domain, the Yeti, Sasquatch, and Jersey Devil are still seen or heard by a few individuals, while Nessie, Tessie, and Champ are the aquatic denizens that prowl the dark depths of our lakes and lochs. But all of these creatures are put off by the brightness and clamor of our florescent, electronic and mechanical world. They're rarely seen anymore, and therefore, most people scoff at any mention of their presence. Truly endangered species, all of them.

However, if you were to solo hike deep into the wilderness and set a camp, I can assure you that as the embers of your fire die away and the shadows begin to creep in, you will feel them out there...lurking.

I raced wildwater kayak for several years back in the 1970's. I was never a star, even in this esoteric branch of our sport, but it was a delightful and consuming interest of mine. Fitness and good whitewater technique in the "skinny boats" are the keys to success in this sport as Zbel, Hipshire, or McEwen will tell

you. As I recall, a stroke rate of about 110 or 120 spm must be maintained for the duration of a race. Good whitewater racers also must have a photographic memory of each race course, right down to individual rocks and waves and the specific route they will take in relations to these obstacles. Paddling a lot of whitewater will hone technical skill, but paddling a great deal of flatwater is required for the fitness part. I used Blue Ridge Lake for my flatwater training site.

Several years ago, following a rather strenuous flatwater workout, I was letting my pulse drop back (resting) while I floated on the placid waters near Starr Creek Cove. My respite was suddenly interrupted by an incredible spray-blowing snort, not five feet off the stern quarter of my kayak! I almost tipped over from my startle reflex, but a reactionary brace, the reward of many years of running whitewater rapids, saved me. It's incredible how the mind can make adrenaline induced determinations about an unknown in the span of half a second. At that instant, and sight unseen, I knew that this thing was BIG, very CLOSE, and ALIEN to my world! As the hackles on the back of my neck began to settle, I slowly turned my head, not knowing exactly at what I would soon be looking.

And there IT was! It had a crown that protruded several inches above the water and big, dark, yet somehow benevolent eyes that stared back deeply into my own. The nostrils

rose from the water a foot or so below the eyes, and like the blowhole of a whale, clouds of mist periodically erupted from them. Swirls in the water eight feet behind its head indicated that, like an iceberg, most of this creature was still below the surface. Then it turned and swam away toward the other side of the lake. As the creature took its leave, the crown and nostrils were but silhouettes in the sun's glare on the water and the occasional noisy snort mistily danced in the brightness. This encounter had been but a brief moment, but in that moment I had connected with some long lost primeval past, a past when beasts lurked...in daylight.

Heartbeat back to near normal, I paddled away. As I passed Rocky Point three men waved me over to shore. As I paddled within conversational distance, one of them asked, "You ain't seen no cow 'round here, have you? We-uns had one to bolt clean out'a the truck soon's we pulled up to the slaughterhouse. Musta smelled the place or somethin." It then dawned on me that, as the crow flies, the Morganton Abattoir sat not far from where we talked.

Have you ever watched a movie or read a book where the successful escape of a fugitive from certain death hinged upon the words of a third party?

"Nope, haven't seen a thing," I answered. They turned and walked off in the opposite direction.

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Big Thrills in New Jersey!

Taking It

By Donna Nussenblatt

Before I get started, let me tell you I live in New Jersey. Everyone, everywhere in the country, has heard of New Jersey. But not for whitewater. Oil tanks, sure. Funny smells. The Power-Line Garden State. The Shore, in capitals, as if it's the only one. The Statue Of Liberty's butt; New York gets to look at her face. But, no whitewater rivers. Even the Delaware's flat, by the time it gets here. New Jersey, The Flatwater State.

Around here, we take what we can get. It's not that my paddling buddies and I wouldn't want to go rapid-chasing. Thing is, most of us are tied to those corporate desks that pay for our homes, our food, and our "exotic" hobbies like paddling, and give us precious few days away from that. About all we can do here, rapid-wise, is watch videos of other people seeking out their favorites. Doesn't mean we don't paddle every chance we get. We just have to look at it a little differently.

The kayak salesman asked me whether I'd be paddling flatwater or whitewater. No question. We have two kinds of water here, salty and not salty. But all flat. The only time you see whitewater is when the wind blows real hard, which it's been known to do. With much apprehension, I bought a Spectrum. Fourteen feet, four inches long. Turn it over and it looks like a canoe - straight at the ends, wide in the middle, and flat. Just like the water. But it was safe. It didn't flip over when I tried it. Didn't mean it wouldn't. Someday. After all, I had spent most of my then-41 years swearing I'd never be upside-down under a boat I was tied to; at least, not without my SCUBA gear. Come on, now, I've seen kayaking on TV. I know what these boats are capable of upside-down half the time! But kayaking looked like so much fun, when other people did it. "Just do it", that ad says. In my mind, it's more like "what the hell?"

You see, although other people have two voices in their head, Mr. Fun and Mr. Caution, I have only one. Procrastinate long enough, and that little voice says "what the hell?" What the hell, if kayaking were really dangerous, you'd need a license. You'd see kayak accidents in the paper all the time. But you don't. What the hell, if it were that

dangerous, the Eskimos would have died out ages ago, and they're still here, icebergs and all. What the hell? I'm 41. My life is flashing before my eyes! If not now, when?

And it wasn't hard. Of course it wasn't. Little kids do it on their first try. I took a couple of classes, just to make sure, read a couple of books. Piece of cake. Forwards, backwards, spin around. Even a few rescues, just to be sure.

But, there was that Eskimo Roll thing. The Great Unknown. Eskimos can roll. Playboaters can roll. Hell, playboaters can roll in their sleep. At least it looks like they can. It can't be that hard. And then I saw the ad for a whitewater place on the Lehigh River (not in Jersey, of course) that said they'd have you rolling the first day. Not after the third or fourth lesson, like the flatwater teachers around here did. The first day? That made it sound even easier. Certainly cheaper.

So, my Spectrum and I showed up at the Lehigh, with the other students and their school-supplied whitewater boats; my almost 15 feet of angles surrounded by 11-foot bowls. And I rolled. Of course that was after falling out twice, for having no padding to hold me in. Coming around the first rapid the next day, the safety boater said it looked like a Lincoln Continental. Exclamations from the rafts, "Oh, wow! A sea kayak!", and me flying by too fast to tell them it wasn't. Got flipped between a chute and a wave, from sidesurfing before I knew what that was. All I knew was the boat was sideways, I wasn't going anywhere, my paddle was in the air, and everyone on shore was jumping and screaming like I was doing something good. Found out I like wave surfing a lot. Not too surprising; I grew up by a beach. But, man, if this stuff wasn't even more fun than it looked! I don't want to go home! We don't have any whitewater! You can't make me...

Sure they can.

You know, it's strange; sit on the same water long enough, and you begin to see it differently. Maybe it's just that when all you've got is flatwater, you get to notice the distinctions. If you're a whitewater boater, and that's all you do, you probably equate

flatwater with your bathtub. But, when you're sitting on flatwater, after looking at whitewater, you start to notice...

There's still flatwater, bouncy flatwater, pushy flatwater, pushy-bouncy flatwater, and downright-obnoxiously-pushy-bouncy flatwater. Now, those last 4 come with curves of decreasing size, Class II whitewater, blindfolded, on a cloudy night with no moon, is easier than tightly-winding-downright-obnoxiously-pushy-bouncy flatwater any day, especially New Year's Day, when it's over its banks. No rebound waves to keep you off those banks, about 6 inches down there, somewhere. In 27-degree air, the 33-degree water pushed me all over the damned river, from one bank to the other, into trees and anything else that was right below the surface. Eddy out? Tree limb in the way. Peel out? Not enough room to turn around. Your line is that 2 feet river left, where the fallen tree isn't blocking the flow, and *that's after* coming around a bend that's pushing you (obnoxiously) right, right into a briar patch. Tree stumps that normally stick out enough to see, but instead are about 2 inches below the surface, now reach up to upset your boat. Phantom eddies, and eddy lines, in the middle of the river, behind nothing you can see. Good thing that Spectrum can sit on eddy lines, while all the whitewater boats are upside-down.

I have to hand it to my buddies. They pulled me out of more tight spots that I care to remember getting into. They'd jump out of their canoes, foldable saw in hand, and cut a path through the debris, while I sat there in my nice, warm kayak, feeling like Cleopatra in her barge. Not a single comment about never again going paddling with a girl. It had to be, they said, my boat's total lack of rocker.

What the hell. If rocker I needed, rocker is just what I'd get. My trusty expedition flatwater craft, that surfed Class II on the Lehigh and taught me to roll, went into the shed, in favor of a Corsica S. So what, if it looks like it's going to tip over, on land. And sure, it took some getting used to. My little voice was screaming its head off. It leans the OTHER WAY! What the hell, I can swim. Leave the paddle in the water one nano-

second too long, and where I was going isn't where I'm going now. What the hell. Just one look sideways, and it does a 180. Something about my big butt, uh, low center of gravity.

Back to the Lehigh, back to that beginner class, in my new boat. The new boat, by the way, that I couldn't roll in a swimming pool. And Instructor Dave and his pals came through again. No comments, this time, about the size of my boat, or its place on this river. And surfing those waves was even easier. By the end of our river run, we were permanently joined at the hip, and my insides once again were screaming, "I don't want to go home! There's no whitewater in New Jersey! You can't make me!"

But, **there was** that job, and that new boat to pay for.

Back home, on that **tightly-winding-obnoxiously-pushy-bouncy** flatwater, my eyes sought out anything remotely like a rapid. Class I. Class one-half. A bump. Anything. Look hard enough, long enough it's there. Down on Cedar Creek, I sat facing upstream, surfing a wave after the railroad-less Bridge To Nowhere, waiting for the other guys, and along came George in his canoe. Under the bridge, he broached, and suddenly it was the Lehigh all over again, on the **Million-Dollar-Wave** with a raft bearing down on me. Just a twitch got me off it; but now, what everyone wanted to know was what I got off. How was I sitting in the middle of the current like that, paddle in the air, not moving?

"That wave", I said.

"What wave?"

"That one -"

OK, it wasn't that easy to see. Three inches high, if that much, a trough about the size of a salad bowl. But it was a wave. Like I said, we take what we can get. What the hell.

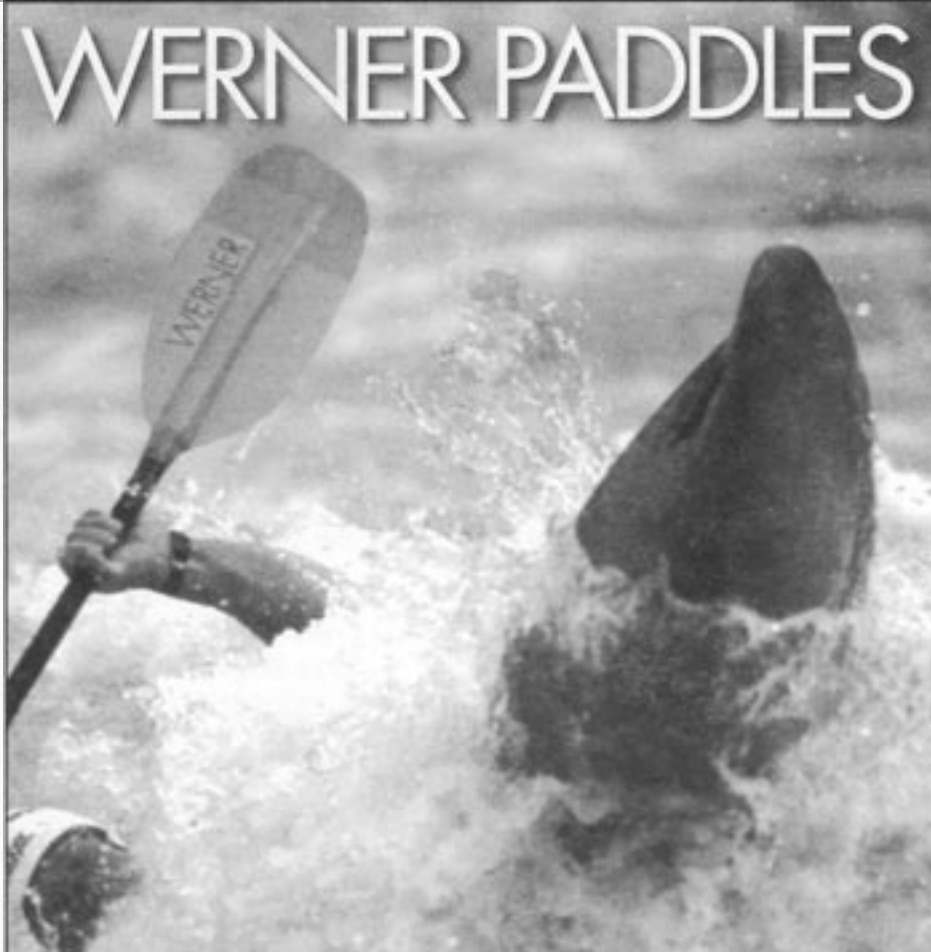
Listen. You've got one of those voices. If you're reading this, you've undoubtedly heard yours. Even my perpetually dry husband heard his, not so long ago, when he finally decided to get his feet wet (ouch!), and took that same whitewater class. All the way there, he swore there was no way he was going to even try to roll. The wet exit was scaring him enough. You know, upside-down under a boat you're tied to? And him not a swimmer. All he'd do, he said, was help me practice mine. And he did, a couple dozen times.

Finished, as I paddled back to work on my eddy turns, I heard behind me. "Where are you going? It's my turn." What the hell. Sure enough, the first time, his body turned to petrified wood. It took me, plus an instructor, to pry him upright. The next couple of times, the same thing. Time after that, to his amazement, he did it. No help. That voice had spoken. Of course, during the ride home, when he had a chance to realize what he'd actually done, he didn't know what got into him. Taking up kayaking at his age, he said, quizzically. Closer to 50 than he like to




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Photo: Rick Matthews

think. Must be a mid-life crisis.

Now, back with my flatwater friends, I've been doing my part to increase their whitewater awareness. My pal Annette told me how she went over the wrong part of a wing dam, over the end of a wing instead of sliding down the chute. Seems her boat caught on the edge, stuck there for a moment as the stern started to come around, then went over the drop. She landed flat, upright, and amazed. What else could I say?

"Annette, you boofed!"

"What's a boof?"

You get the idea what I'm dealing with here.

Same Annette, different day, Cedar Creek again. In front of us was a tiny gauging-station dam, all of a couple of feet high. Testing the waters, George's canoe went over OK, if slowly. I took a few strokes in over-drive, leaned back to raise the bow, and launched myself over it, without leaving too much blue plastic on the concrete. Six-foot-five-inch James got out of his canoe and straddled the drop, one foot on each side, and was lifting his boat over, as Annette came up slowly. Almost to the lip, she paused, not sure if she'd do it or not. At the last minute, I heard it. Didn't even have to see the wild look in her eye, to know that her little voice had spoken its piece. "Lean back!" I yelled. I knew she hadn't anywhere near enough speed.


She leaned. Valiantly. The bow reached outward, over the lip of the wall -

Then it dropped. Straight down, into the trough at the bottom. Piton. Nine-foot boat, two-foot wall. First, everyone broke out laughing. Then, everyone ran for his camera. She could only sit there, stern in the air, river rushing by on both sides, laughing her head off, until all the pictures were taken, and enough hands were freed to pry her off.

"What do you call that?" she laughed.

Still in the throes of laughter myself, I said "An endo - the hard way."

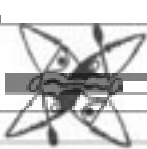
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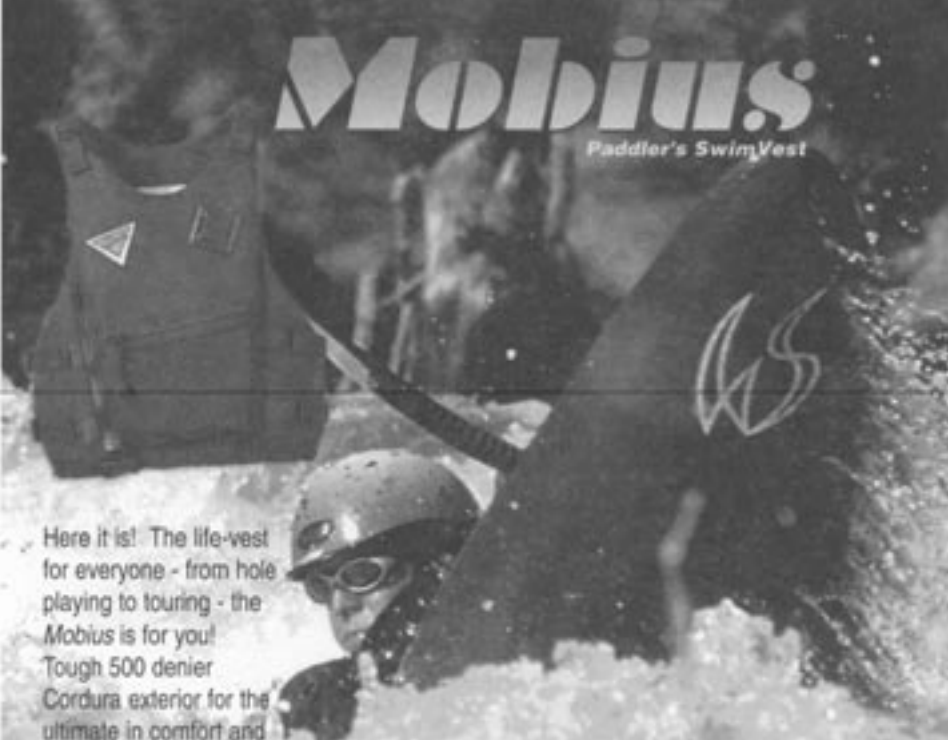
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Dan Gavere working the wave for the FIBark '97 rodeo.
Kevin S. Warren photo



We are the animal human. **We were** meant to explore, to learn lessons, to search out the meaning of things. We were meant to grow physically, mentally and spiritually. In a world where there is "nothing to do" how can one expect to grow?

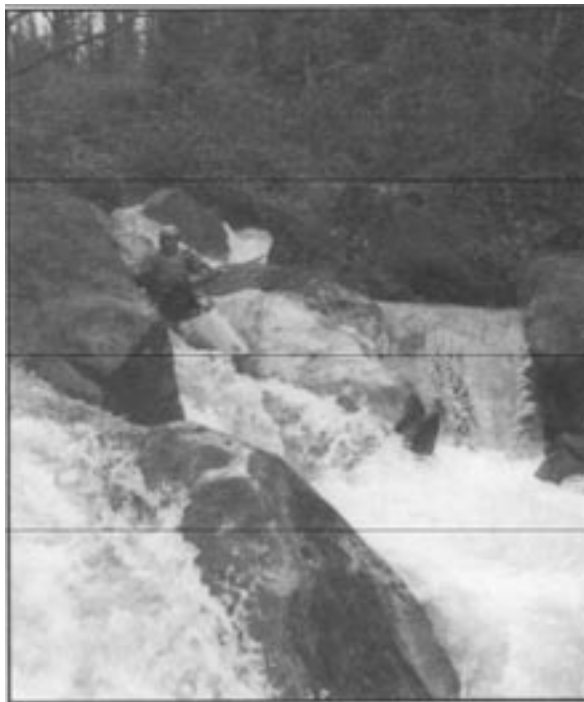
As a child, I remember employing the phrase "there is nothing to do" many times over, day in, day out. "Nothing to do. Nothing to do. Nothing to do." Often, I was bored.

I guess, looking back now, I was a normal child. It seems, according to the experts, that most children, rural and urban, grow up bored.

I had room to be bored, I thought. I was growing up in rural West Virginia where there is never anything to do. Instilled deep within me were ideals built from peers who I thought had all the answers. West Virginia is not a cool place to grow up, they said. So, as soon as I could I was determined to live in a cool place, a where there is asphalt. Lots of asphalt. I wanted to be in a place where there were plenty of people and where I thought I could live and find all the answers.

Well, when I grew up (actually, I'm still in the process) I moved to where people were. Fascinated at first, life was fast and I knew what it was all about. I had all the answers, at least to the questions I knew. I became part of the daily grind, part of what life was all about. Or was I?

Crowds of people? Asphalt? Where were we all headed and what for? What questions did I really have the answers to? It took a while. Realization is a tough thing. In reality, I had few answers to very few questions. Things seemed so plastic. Life was racing by at a pace I wasn't sure I liked. Nor did I necessarily like where life was taking me.



Into my classroom

b y

T r o y

H e l m i c k

Finally, I left the big city and moved back home.

What I soon realized was that I grew up in one of the most incredible areas of the world. People drive from all over the world to experience what West Virginia has to offer. They come to kayak, or raft, or rock climb, ski or mountain bike. They come here every year to absorb the beauty that flourishes on the mountainsides. It's been here all my life. I just grew up with all these misconceived notions about what the world is all about and I never stepped foot inside the "real classroom." I missed a lot.

So what's this have to do with paddling?

Well, we all started paddling for one reason or another. Some are looking for the adrenaline buzz. Some for adventure. Some to get away from things. But for most of us, I believe the sport of life just found us. We've stumbled into her grace and here we are, and here we remain, for what ever reason. I paddle for many reasons. But I do know that paddling has helped me grow physically, mentally and spiritually. Although there are still many unanswered questions, the river has taught me many lessons. She is constantly teaching so as long as I am willing to listen.

It took me almost 25 years to realize I don't have all the answers, and I probably never will. But I continue to grow and learn. And because of paddling, I also look at West Virginia differently now. I have stumbled on to some of her many "things to do" and I thank god every day that he exposed me to this state's offerings. I can surf some of the worlds best waves, boof some of the best drops, ride intense single track, lay down tracks through fresh powder, climb a 5.10 sport route and not leave my back yard. I can even attend class at a major university. I live about thirty minutes from West Virginia University in Morgantown.

This area is filled with some of the best white water in the world. Pick up a local guide book and read about some of it's treasures. From the mighty Cheat, the famous Big Sandy and all the creeks and water sheds in between, this



Top: Scott Wade on Deckers. Bottom: White spit, crossed arms, common site on Deckers. Note: strainer and undercuts...the whole thing is full of decisions! Photos by Troy Helmick



Top to Bottom:
Carl catching big air on one of WV's
steepest...Deckers.
Lost cause, boater survived, boat didn't.
Scott Wade on Deckers.
Photos by Troy Helmick



area has just as much or more to offer than any other place on this wonderful earth. And by the way, there are asphalt and people in West Virginia, just not nearly as much asphalt or as many **people** as some places. And some of us even have our own teeth.

So what type of boating is in my backyard? Take Decker's Creek, featured in the video "A Token Of My Extreme." Its insane section is only about a mile long. It drops from heaven, and I'm not sure where you land. And it's only about ten minutes from the heart of the WVU campus — close enough to catch a real adrenaline rush before or after class.

Other local runs include Elsy Creek, featured in the video "Falling Down." Also in that video is Big Sandy Creek. There are so many "top secret" runs not featured in the guide books that only God and the locals know of their existence. I can leave my home and be on one of more than 20 runs in less than ten minutes. One of my favorites is, of course, the Big Sandy... Or, maybe the Upper Yough. I don't know, it's hard to choose (however, the Upper Yough is in Maryland, about 25 minutes away). Insane runs, or calm runs and all those in between, they're all here in magnitude.

A few weeks ago I had the chance to see Decker's and watch a few good friends "drop from heaven." It's steep and hairy, filled with strainers and undercuts. If you are not at the top of your game you can get hurt really bad, and even if you are on top of things you still can get hurt. I am told that regardless of your ability, it's a run that no one ever feels comfortable about. Clearly, this is a run for a chosen few. I don't know if I ever want to be ready for a run such as this one, but I do know that a great force must stand watch over those who survive its power.





With the exception of the first drop, day at Decker's went well. One of my friends didn't have enough speed going into that first drop and was pulled back in for a super rodeo show — one of those with lots of tricks. Unfortunately, Frank grew tired and wanted to end the exhibition. It was a sensational ride for a while. In good fashion, Todd plucked Frank from the grasp of the drop, but it was too late for Frank's boat. The drops on Decker's are only yards apart and the boat wrapped and folded at the top of the next drop. A few mechanical advantages and about two hours later, Frank's boat was freed. But an unmanned boat on Decker's doesn't last long. Though we had a line on the boat, it ended up being sucked into a cavern. Such is life on Decker's, and in this grand old state.

Gee, it's good to be back in West Virginia.

Editors note: *Troy Helmicka professional photographer who lives in Kingwood, West Virginia with his wife Suzanne, sons Jake Ian, 9, and Miles, 5.*

Left: Three Rivers Paddling Club's Bruce Berman knows steep creeks.

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Eddying Out in the Entrails of Ernie

By Katie Nietert

Five boats, three cameras, two folks and the dog.

Driving out of Boulder in a snowstorm, we've just wrapped up some long, boring days of sport shows in the Midwest and are off to spend a month with our pals, Colby and Jamie, who are wintering in Washington State.

Ah, the great whitewater state of Washington.

Soon, we find ourselves surrounded by valiant peaks and promising valleys. Straight up and down, jagged white peaks — my favorite kind. Jagged white rivers too, full of history, teeming with clues providing evidence about the story of time. At first, it is sensory overload for me. There is so little time to look at so much in these deep canyons. I feel rushed on the river trying to take it all in. These are younger rivers, full of character, not yet polished by the flow of time.

Just like back home in West Virginia, Washington's rivers feature plenty of undercut rocks. There is a difference, though. The undercuts of the Cascades have teeth, they're young and sharp. They look like they'll bite if you get close enough. On rivers like West Virginia's Meadow, the teeth have been worn down. Those old rocks just swallow you whole.

We've only paddled two days so far in this Washington trip — two out of maybe four hundred days in my short career, but my first days of paddling in the Cascades. We've scouted 10 out of 10 days, however. Climbing like goats on the steep river banks, up magnificent canyons bearded with moss. Crawling, scrambling like monkeys, Colby is the most talented, agile, decisive, human goat I've ever seen.

It is satisfying work, total body hiking, scouting in these canyons. Walking here is probably more dangerous than kayaking, but

it's amazing how easily one can cling to the mountain side on this fertile carpet. We try to be low impact but I still feel guilt when I rip the moss, kind of like pulling out your mom's hair. Colby is playing host as he always does so well. He has kept the daylight hours full of purpose. Feeding us stories, visuals, and promises of rushing waters.

A lot of water there isn't. I can see it locked up in the high country. As we snowboard some on Mt. Baker, I do my best to shovel it off of the mountain to lower country. I've never ridden a board in so much snow. It was hard to let it roll and go with the pull of gravity. The locals thought I sucked, they didn't know that I had a plan, trying to push that frozen water down to my level. The creek is my level.

Finally, we feel acclimated and it rains, so we decide to hit a steep creek. This one is close to Colby's Peaceful Valley. It's March pre-snow melt and a good time to hit this short section of the Nooksack, above the falls. "A warm up, you know," says Colby, "for the big stuff ahead."

We scout the gorge from the road 500 feet above. It helps me. Colby points out a harmless looking hole that a friend, Dinver, had been surfed in last week. We park above snow line and post hole through the snow to put it. My butterflies are more like giant moths, I haven't paddled anything really hard in a month. I say so long to the pooch. He is guarding our gear in the back of the truck and as always on a challenging day, I hope to see his sweet face again.

We start to cruise with light rain and snow falling on us. Colby yells back, "Just a warm up, Class 3 for a while!"

From behind, I hear BJ mumble, then paddle. He's anxious to get to the goods.

As usual, I'm tucked in between these two. The old lady in the middle, I've got seven

years on each of them. But they're years beyond me in kayaking experience. I've had countless epics with them and I'm about to have more. The walls build, the river narrows, and we are in business.

It feels good to be in my Micro. We bust a few moves and catch the eddy above Dinver's rapid. Colby takes off and catches the mid-way eddy, I run it all as one rapid, nailing the crucial boof. Yes, it feels good! Thanks for the insight, Dinver! I look up and see the guard-rail. I am proud to be one of the few people in existence to travel through this canyon. I'm here because I can kayak.

With that warm-up run under our belts, we take off for Ernie's Canyon, a steep, Class 5 run on the North Fork Snoqualmie River.

Ernie's Canyon — I've read about it in American Whitewater, and, of course, Jeff Bennett's guidebook, *Guide to the Whitewater Rivers of Washington*. I know that it's going to be a challenge. The stories in Bennett's book are fairly modern. Class 5 is really Class 5, not what people thought the Gauley was in 1973. The people who probed this run had plastic boats. So, we pack it up, the boats, the gear, and the dogs, and head south for some Class 5.

The gauge says 512 as we hit North Bend. I try not to treat guidebooks as bibles and am ready to calculate what outside knowledge I think I have into a level of acceptance for the run. At about 600 cfs I think, that's when I tell the boys I'm staying with the dogs. After seeing the run, I think that 600 on a first run would have been terrifying, but then, maybe not, if things had gone smoothly.

"Ernie's Canyon," Colby keeps saying. I feel the pterodactyls in my stomach every time he says it in that Pennsylvania Surfer's Slur spoken only by him. I'm considering which boat to paddle. I have my Micro and my Mountain 300. The Micro is my favorite. It is the most fantastic agreement between whitewater and myself that I know. But I like down river racing and am looking for a good, fast, steep creek boat too. My Mountain 300 is a fantastic big boat. I'm pretty light for this boat though, and I know that it's going to feel like a lot of plastic. Yet, this may be big water and I want to learn to use a bigger boat to stay on top of some of this new terrain. So a decision is made and we drive up into the tree farm. We shake our heads at the clear cuts and peek at the river. It looks like some healthy whitewater. The stars are shining as we call it a day, climb into our trucks, tuck the dogs in, and say our goodnights.

"Errrrrrrrnie's," Colby draws, one last time.

We wake up to a blanket of snow. I know that this will make scouting a little more difficult but I am excited by the video enhancing snow. We are amped, and as always, I feel rushed as Colby and BJ are sprinting through the motions of getting ready.

My choice of boats feels good as we paddle

the warm up stuff. Little by little the canyon narrows and the holes start to punch back. Still boat scouting, our boofs are getting bigger. We boof through a tricky slot, I don't have enough speed and have to pull off a quick roll before paddling away from the hole. I look back upstream and BJ looks small as he pulls himself past the hole. I decide it's time for me to start scouting even if the boys don't feel it necessary. My boat feels heavier.

We get out to scout the next one. The entrance move involves punching a big hole, driving right, and missing the undercut on the left and the sieve on the right. Not for me this day, I'm not feeling sharp enough to be messing around with the obvious hazards. BJ and Colby have nice lines.

Back in the river, downstream, I blow an eddy. Running a drop I see right, hear Colby yell left and I swear that Ernie's got a line on my bow. My boat's not turning. I boof the drop on the right, head left, boof the next one off of the middle and find a sweet eddy to video from, if only the boys knew that I was set to video. They choose a different line and scowl at me. I've just blown an eddy! That should not happen here or anywhere you don't know the lines. For the first time in many descents I feel a debilitating anxiety. It tightens my forearms and clouds my thinking. I know I either have to get this act together or hike out.

When I had peered at the creek the night before, I noted a section of clear cut that was not too far downstream, I would decide there. A few solid moves later and I determine my fate and possibly the fate of the trip by watching that clear cut (all of the way to the creek, bless their hearts), float behind me. Really, Ernie's is a pretty maneuverable canyon. Scouting wasn't difficult. The rapids reminded me of Mann's Creek back in West Virginia, with good water.

I walked one more rapid. It was a slot fed by a left to right curler. I wasn't sure how to approach that curler and saw the potential to

be really out of control even before the drop. That's how Colby's run went. He did a few 360's before running the slot upside down and backwards. It was one of the first out of control runs that I'd ever seen him have. "I'll be back, Ernie!" Colby shouted back upstream.

Continuing downstream, we know that there's a big drop somewhere ahead after an easy section. Every couple of rapids, someone says it must be coming. We recognize the banks by Bennett's description and hit the eddy on the left. Up to this point I was praying that I had blown the only eddy for the day. The guidebook had mentioned a 30-foot unrunnable falls. This was definitely a falls but looked to be about 20 feet. It also looked runnable with a nice green tongue lining you up for the deep canyon below. I was sure I could hit the line but wasn't sure how the hole and the foam pile would treat me once there.

So, I carried. It hadn't been a five star day for me and I didn't feel like chancing it. Colby and BJ were looking positive so I got out my camera. "Eject" was flashing on the screen. Anight in the cold had created condensation inside, so it had to be dried before I could use it. That was it for this day's video.

I watched as Colby came paddling downstream, hit the line, went deep in the foam, and backended. I thought he might be in for a surf, but he immediately rolled and was pushed into the eddy on the left. He gave two attempts at paddling out past the point of the cavern that the eddy had carved. He didn't even come close to where he needed to be.

I ran up the cliff so that I could yell encouragement. He gave another try, disappearing back into the cave when he failed. Pretty soon he was just swirling in the eddy, going in circles, sometimes disappearing. I couldn't see how far back the cave went, but it was enough to hide his boat. He'd come out on the spin, paddling to avoid going back into the falls, paddling to stay away from the overhanging walls of the canyon, paddling

hard. I knew he was going to run out of energy. Things were going to hell here.

I waited for Colby to come out on the cycle, and asked "rope?" Yes, was the look on his face as he disappeared again. BJ arrived and I stepped back to let him get a look at the picture. The point that Colby needed to make it past was too far downstream for us to get any downstream angle on the rescue. We had to get to him from directly above. I found a slab of granite to brace on and BJ threw him a rope.

Then I heard BJ say, "Oh shit, he's out of his boat."

By now, Colby was very tired. And the life jacket he was wearing was ancient and barely floated him in that aerated water. He pulled up on the rope so that he could catch his breath, he was cold and exhausted. We had rescue ascenders but Colby was beyond functioning, he was spent, and it was going to take the two of us to get him out of there.

We were ill equipped to set up the mechanical advantage that we needed for the 30-foot vertical rescue. We hadn't thought that a vertical canyon rescue was a possibility on this run. All we had were two ropes, two carabiners, and a prusik. We sent the prusik down for him to use as a harness. It was looped on the end of our throw bag and Colby managed to get it under his arms.

BJ tied on a second rope to use as a backup/brake and we began to belay. The edge of the cliff was sharp and I prayed that the ropes could hold the stress. We began to pull.

BJ was at the edge of the cliff, pulling straight up, I was 15 feet behind him, locked in on belay. We had to synchronize our efforts to bring him up just a few inches per pull. We'd pull a few times, I'd lock it — BJ would run back and tend the back up rope.

It was slow going getting Colby out of this huge overhanging cliff. He was now completely exhausted, 155 pounds of deadweight. We knew that this was our only chance to rescue him. If something failed and he went

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back into the drink he would drown.

"Come on, baby, pull!" BJ yelled back at me.

I counted, "1, 2, 3!" Together, we put everything that we have into it and gain an inch or two.

The way I was braced I could use my legs for most of the work, doing monster sets of leg presses. It was hard work and we were getting tired. I tried to relax different muscles while BJ tended the backup. I realized that all of my muscles were tightened and that I needed to conserve any energy possible. I could relax my forearms while on belay and save my strength for the pull. But it was difficult to relax any muscle knowing that Colby was hanging above a terminal eddy. So I focused on positive thoughts.

"I'm strong, I'm strong!" I kept telling myself.

BJ must have made 20 trips pulling and tending until we stopped making any progress at all. We traded positions.

I walked up to the lip of the drop and Colby was nearly there. If he could just pick up his knee and brace against the ledge it would help us immensely. I asked him to do that but he just mumbled that he could not move anything. He was completely immobile with no feeling in any of his limbs. His face was white and his eyes were barely open.

BJ and I tried our system again. Nothing. Together, BJ and I could have leaned over the edge and pulled Colby up by his life jacket. But we had no ropes to tie us off and the risk was too great on the slippery precipice. At this point our ropes were also showing some wear. It was amazing they had held so long. BJ got back on the edge and told Colby that he had to flex something. To move any part of his body would give us what we needed to get him over the edge. Colby said later that it all came from his abdomen, the only muscles that he had any control over. It was enough swing for us though, a little better than dead weight, and five minutes later we had him with us and out of immediate danger.

But Colby looked bad. His mouth was foaming, he was disoriented and numb. I knew that we had to watch for shock. Then, we had to get him across the river and out of the canyon. It was 1:30 p.m. and I was thankful that we had gotten an early start on this day. We dragged him away from the edge. I got some water and gave him small sips to wet his mouth. His arms were numbed by the prusik. He had no feeling or movement from the biceps down.

I told him to start rolling his shoulders to start his motor functions again and to warm up. We were watching for shock and hypothermia. He had no balance and I made him sit

down but keep moving. I didn't want to shock his system with too much cold water, but he was incredibly thirsty.

Looking down into the canyon, I noticed that all of Colby's gear had ended up in a swirling eddy on river right. On the bottom of the boat that was bobbing stern up, in Colby's handwriting, were the words "KAYAK FOR SALE." I pointed it out to the guys and we were provided with some comic relief. It would have been a classic photograph.

BJ started to scout for a way to get across the river. I was stuffing our haggard throw bags when I saw Colby try to stand up, only to fall down hard on his hip.

"Whoa, buddy! You're not moving until I am next to you," I said.

It didn't look like any feeling was coming back to him. He couldn't even hold onto his paddle, which BJ had rescued. I put a pile hat on him and big, thick, pile mittens. I put his arm around my shoulder and we hobbled to a location that was a little more out of the wind. BJ came back.

"It looks like we'll have to launch him off of about four feet of rock and into a pool to get across the river."

We waited an hour and Colby still couldn't hold his paddle. If he went upside down and couldn't roll, even in the pool, he would be in trouble. There was a Class 5 rapid down-

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stream, too.

Colby did have his leg strength back and he finally suggested swimming the pool.

"I could have been an Olympic dolphin kicker," he said.

He definitely didn't need to be immersing himself again but we were running out of time. So I got in my boat and slid into the water, BJ and I set safety in the pool and Colby dove in. He was good for only two kicks but it was enough, with some nudging, to get him across. I walked with him up out of the gorge to where we saw a road. He was moving well so we made plans A, B, and C to meet on the road and I climbed back into the canyon.

BJ and I walked the next rapid. It looked perfectly runnable but we were a little spooked and just wanted to get downstream. At a shallow rapid we found his boat wrapped around a rock. We got out the ropes again and pulled it off, it wasn't easy but it was successful. We stashed it on shore and continued downstream. Along the way, we found all of Colby's equipment but one neoprene glove.

We met Colby back at the trucks that day. It was almost dark, so we camped at the put in again. That night he started throwing up and complaining about pain in his back. We encouraged him to drink lots of water. I thought that maybe his kidneys were hurting from dangling for so long, or dehydration.

He was having a hard time keeping anything down. The next morning he assured us that he felt better and wanted to drive home to Sumas. BJ and I stayed on the road for a couple days of scouting and met him back in Sumas. He was still feeling poorly, not sleeping and throwing up. We convinced him to go to the hospital and he was admitted immediately after it was determined that his kidneys were running at three percent. He recovered quickly with the help of an IV. Had he waited much longer he would have needed dialysis. The doctor thought that it was a combination of exposure and dehydration that shut his system down.

Looking back, we are trying to learn what we can from this frightening experience. Colby is one of the best kayakers I've ever met, also one of the fittest. Had we been equipped for a canyon rescue before he ran the falls it would have taken only a couple of

minutes to pull him out. Instead, it took us 45 minutes. If he had had a rescue jacket on, (like the Lotus jacket that arrived in the mail for him the day after the event), we could have used the rescue belt as a part of the harness, saved time, and not done any nerve damage. It was about three weeks until his hands felt normal.

A closer look at the canyon below the falls may have revealed this potential for disaster. The drop was easier than many that I've seen him run. From our point of view on shore it was difficult to get the scope of the eddy and the cave in the canyon below. Possibly just landing on a left stroke would have prevented his becoming trapped.

Colby learned another lesson, too, about admitting the need to go to the doctor, and about spending the dough to recover. His first hospital bill was \$5,000. That was a big drop in the checkbook for someone with no insurance.

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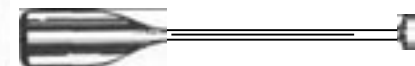
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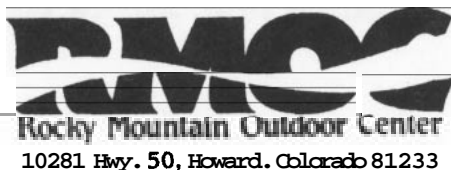
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Telemetric Gauges & Politically Correct Prediction Models

As budgetary cutbacks force the closure of telemetric gauges, paddlers may at last come to appreciate Norman Knight's pioneering work

By Monte Smith

If there's a bane to whitewater paddling, it has to be low water, especially on steep creeks with small watersheds. These little streams provide some of the most exciting paddling opportunities available, but they run off quickly and are difficult to catch with sufficient water.

Unless, of course, there happens to be a telemetric gauge somewhere along the run. These marvels of electronic wizardry have put paddlers into the information technology mainstream, enabling them — often with no more effort than an inexpensive or free phone call — to pinpoint the most promising paddling destinations.

Some of the best small streams, however, are still without telemetric gauges. Moreover, some gauges now in operation may be shut down in the future due to budgetary cutbacks. This scenario is unfolding already in east Tennessee, with TVA's recent threat to eliminate gauges on both the Tellico River and the Little River in the Smokies.

Not surprisingly, area paddlers are rallying to preserve these gauges. Whether their efforts will be successful, remains to be seen. (TVA's past history is not one of kowtowing to paddler requests.) And regardless of the fate of these particular gauges, budgetary constraints and the dreaded downsizing ax are likely to threaten other gauges on other rivers. Indeed, it may be time for the paddling community to explore alternatives to telemetric gauges.

Fortunately, there is at least one alternative.

Introducing Dr. Norman Knight

Norman Knight is a Professor of Ergonomic Adaptation Mechanics at Dipstick University in Nashville. His little-known but fast-growing discipline, concerned with how people get themselves into and out of tight spots, has suddenly come into prominence — perhaps because it represents one of the most successful applications of chaos theory, which is the mathematical specification of complex sequences of events heretofore considered random and essentially unpredictable, and hence beyond the pale of normal scientific investigation.

The main thrust of Norman's work has been directed toward aerospace applications, but in recent years he and his colleagues have applied principles of Ergonomic Adaptation Mechanics in an astonishing variety of other settings.

Fortunately for the paddling community, Norman has recently turned his attention to tight-spot problems with a distinctly riparian flavor. It all began when he noticed that principles of Ergonomic Adaptation Mechanics were highly effective in extricating objects from beneath undercut rocks. As he expanded his repertoire of extrication strategies, his stature in the paddling community grew. Today, Norman Knight knows more z-drag permutations and Telfer lower arrangements than Bill Gates knows monopolistic business strategies. If an object becomes trapped anywhere on any river, forget all those rescue manuals and waterproofed idiot cards with knot diagrams, it's Norman Knight you want on the scene.

Recently, Norman boldly switched his focus from rescue to prevention. Instead of extricating people from tight spots, Norman decided to apply his talents to helping people avoid bad predicaments in the first place.

And one of the most vexing whitewater predicaments Norman had ever experienced was spending hours driving to a river only to find it dry when he arrived. This had happened to him any number of times with the Piney, a little wildcat of a river that pitches off **Walden Ridge** near the hamlet of **Darwinville** in east Tennessee. Like the nearby Tellico, the Piney is small, steep, technical, and with a narrow window of paddling opportunity following locally heavy rains.

Unlike the Tellico, however, the Piney River has no telemetric gauge. There is a hand painted gauge on the takeout bridge, but one of the most notorious beer joints in the South (Piney Tavern) is located on the remote road leading down to it. Local residents consider it dangerous even to drive by this establishment. Accordingly, it is next to impossible to convince a local to go down to the river and take a gauge reading.

These circumstances make remote determination of Piney flow levels exceedingly difficult. About the only way to know for sure



if the river has water is to drive over there and see for yourself. Norman had made the long drive to the Piney on numerous occasions, always hoping that it would have sufficient flow when he arrived. Occasionally, he was rewarded, but more often than not his reward was a dry stream bed.

And arriving at the Piney to find it dry troubled Norman greatly. It was ergonomically maladaptive behavior. For a worshiper of precision and efficiency and predictive certainty, it simply didn't calculate. So he decided to do something about it. He decided to put the principles of Ergonomic Adaptation Mechanics to work and figure out a way to predict water volume in the Piney.

The Pioneering Work of Dr. Knight

Norman attacked the problem with his characteristic enthusiasm and rigor. He dispatched a small army of graduate students to locate every shred of evidence, every iota of data, that could possibly relate to the Piney River and its water volume. His conscientious minions scoured every reference work in the vast archives of the Dipstick University Unified Library. They surfed the Internet until they were dizzy, examined a million web sites on the World Wide Web, called every

employee of every local, state, and federal agency that could conceivably have any knowledge whatsoever of Piney River, interviewed scores of paddlers and traveled to Danvinville to interrogate a stratified random sample of residents. They crawled beneath the bridge at the takeout and checked the gauge for reliability, validity, and homoscedasticity. They administered questionnaires, recorded conversations, scanned **topo** maps into Norman's computers, downloaded forty-three years of weather data from NOAA, and even donned Teflon vests to venture inside Piney Tavern and request help from Alphonse, that venerable establishment's burly bartender.

Then, Norman took up where the stalwart graduate students left off. He fed the mountain of data into Dipstick University's biggest Cray computer. He massaged and manipulated the data. He checked the output against the inviolate tenets of Ergonomic Adaptation Mechanics theory. Lastly, he derived the following equation for predicting Piney River water volume:

$$Y = 0.07435(X1) + 1.395(X2) - 0.33(X3) + 38.215467(X4)$$

where ...

Y = Volume of the Piney, in cfs.

X1 = Volume in cfs of the Emory at Oakdale.

X2 = Number of unsuccessful calls to Piney Tavern, pleading with Alphonse to go down to the bridge and read the gauge for you.

X3 = Miles you'll have to drive in order to reach the river.

X4 = Number of six-packs of beer that passengers in your vehicle will consume enroute to the river.

Evaluation of Dr. Knight's Prediction Model

According to Norman, his new model predicts water volume in the Piney with 87 percent accuracy. The model can be useful to paddlers in at least two ways. First, by confining their pilgrimages to instances when the model predicts ample volume, paddlers can avoid long and fruitless drives when the river is dry. Second, and of potentially greater importance, is the possibility of actually influencing water volume in the Piney River by exerting control over one or more of the predictors in Norman's equation.

Unlike ordinary scientific models of causality, Ergonomic Adaptation theory states that causation is bidirectional. If this actually proves to be the case, then it may be possible to cause changes in the outcome measure (Piney volume) by manipulating levels of the predictors (the Xvariables in the prediction equation above).

In order to determine if paddlers can reasonably expect to exert any influence over Piney volume, each predictor on the right side of Norman's equation must be examined. The first term, volume of the **Obed/Emory River at Oakdale** (X1), is not something anybody can influence. Cfs flow at Oakdale is determined by Cumberland Plateau weather patterns, and nobody has yet determined how to make it rain more often on the plateau. And even when it does rain in the **Obed/Emory** system, it's still not the same watershed as the Piney River — even though both streams are on the same plateau. So this predictor is surely outside the realm of potential paddler control.

The second predictor, calls to Piney Tavern (X2), is even more immune to paddler influence. No matter the sheer volume of calls, nor the size of the proffered incentive, Alphonse simply will not cooperate with paddlers. So forget (X2) as a potential target of influence.

That leaves only two variables over which paddlers can reasonably expect to exert any influence: Miles driven in order to reach the Piney River (X3), and number of six-packs of beer consumed by passengers in transit (X4).

Notice from the signs in Norman's equation that these variables have opposite effects: The more six-packs consumed in transit, the greater the predicted Piney volume;

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however, the longer the driving distance, the less the predicted volume. The ideal combination of these two variables, in order to maximize river volume, consists of mass six-pack consumption during a short drive to the Piney. The worst possible outcome occurs when a bus load of teetotalers travel egregiously long distances to reach the river.

The Horns of a Dilemma

An advanced degree in Ergonomic Adaptation Mechanics isn't required to spot the problem here. In order to maximize Piney volume, enterprising paddlers must travel short distances to the river and yet accomplish mass six-pack consumption en route. Except for paddlers with beer guts the size of Bo Rucker's, this contradictory requirement poses insuperable difficulties.

Then how can it be done? How can mass quantities of six-packs be consumed during short travel distances? Everybody who has ever driven to a river knows that, all other factors held constant, passengers can swallow more six-packs if the drive is long than if it is short.

When Norman's model was first tested in the paddling community, its paradoxical requirement of mass six-pack consumption in the shortest possible driving distance led to all sorts of insane strategies, such as the designated driver proceeding at a snail's pace from nearby campgrounds while passengers sucked up six-packs like giant sponges. This tactic produced major problems due to the narrow, curvy roads down the side of the escarpment, where traffic jams a mile long would develop behind paddler vehicles. Moreover, even when the goals of mass six-pack consumption and short driving distances were both accomplished, and Piney volume accordingly was pumped up to healthy levels, few could enjoy the benefit — by the time slow moving shuttle vehicles finally reached the put-in, passengers were too bloated with beer to paddle the river and the designated drivers were exhausted from tedious hours behind the wheel.

Dr. Knight's Most Excellent Solution

But Norman wasn't known as a premier extrication engineer for nothing. He got paddlers into this dilemma in the first place, so it was his responsibility to bail them out. Fortunately, he came through in grand style. According to Norman, the inhibitory effect of driving distance on Piney volume is vehicle specific, while the facilitative effect of six-pack consumption applies to all passengers in a vehicle. In other words, the inhibitory effect of driving 500 miles to reach the Piney River is the same regardless of the number of passengers in a vehicle. Yet the facilitative effect of six-pack consumption is derived from all the beer consumed by all the vehicle's

passengers. Ergo, the best way to overcome the inhibiting effect of long distance driving is to drive to the Piney in a bus or super van, said vehicle stuffed to overflowing with beer-guzzling passengers, and of course, with a designated nondrinker behind the wheel.

Thus, Norman solved the dilemma and overnight became a cult hero among Cumberland Plateau paddlers. Not only had he demonstrated how to avoid fruitless drives to the Piney, but he had also empowered paddlers by demonstrating how they could boost the river's water volume through their own behavior. Paddlers hailed his work. So did several national and regional brewers, one of which promptly appointed Norman to its board of directors.

Practical Guidance

We'll omit most of the details of Norman's derivations. Interested readers with a scientific bent can find them in an article entitled "On Predicting Piney River Volume," in the *Journal of Homo Automobilus Behavior*, Volume XLVMI, Number 12, Pages 376-389. Every paddler will be interested in knowing, however, that using Norman's findings is as easy as one, two, three.

Step 1: Calculate the number of miles from your point of origin to the put-in. (Be sure to include shuttle mileage if you plan on first dropping a car at the takeout.)

Step 2: Divide the miles in Step 1 by 19.3. The resulting quotient is the number of 12-ounce beers needed to neutralize the negative influence of long distance driving on Piney River volume.

Step 3: Divide the result from Step 2 by 6 to obtain the number of six-packs needed to neutralize the negative influence of long distance driving on Piney River volume.

A couple of examples will clarify the procedure.

Example A

Distance to the Piney River is 188 miles. Therefore, $188/19.3 = 9.74$, and this value, divided by 6 = 1.62. Passengers in the vehicle need to drink a little more than 1-1/2 six-packs in order to neutralize the negative effect of long distance driving on Piney River water volume.

Example B

Distance to the Piney is 416 miles, or $416/19.3 = 21.55$ beers, and this value, divided by 6 = 3.59 six-packs. To be safe in this situation, three six-packs plus four beers must be consumed to preclude a possible net desiccatory effect of long distance driving on Piney River water volume.

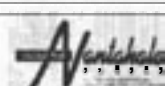
Political Accountability

To be sure, Norman's equation has its shortcomings. It accounts for only 87% of Piney volume. Moreover, most terms in his prediction model lie outside the realm of paddler control. But worst of all, his model has been assailed on the grounds of political incorrectness. He has been accused of encouraging drunk driving. (An unfair accusation since he was careful to stipulate designated sober drivers). He has also been accused of encouraging excess alcohol consumption by passengers. (There's some merit to that one, I suppose.) And he has been accused of encouraging drunken paddling. (To which I can only reply that the balance impairing effects of alcohol are well known, and nobody values balance more than whitewater paddlers.)

Personally, this writer doesn't think Norman is encouraging anything. He's merely pointing out that there's a lot we don't know about rivers, and he's showing us a promising empirical approach for adding to our storehouse of riparian knowledge. Although I'm not ready to jettison telemetric gauge readings altogether, I will concede that he has made a worthwhile contribution to the ergonomic adaptive study of whitewater paddling. Norman has demonstrated not only that paddlers can predict water volume without the aid of telemetric gauges, but also that they may actually be able to beneficially influence flow rates by their behaviors en route to the river.

I suppose his prediction model would have received a much warmer reception among politically correct paddlers if beer consumption had not been one of his two key predictors. But Norman had little choice in the matter. That was how it worked out. It was an empirical outcome, an ergonomic adaptive outcome. Norman is merely reporting what he found.


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Generalizability

When I first stumbled on Norman's model, my fervent hope was that it could be applied to other rivers. To that end, I called him up to ask if the Piney model might be used to predict water levels on the Tellico River, which stands in imminent danger of losing its telemetric gauge.

"Definitely not," he assured me. "The equation applies specifically to the Piney. With any other river, I would have to start from scratch and identify an entirely new set of predictors."

He did say, however, that in recognition of the Tellico's potentially tragic plight, he is already hard at work developing a separate prediction equation for it. The good news is that beer consumption hasn't entered into the Tellico prediction model at all. The bad news is that the most powerful predictor he has discovered so far is a variable that politically correct paddlers are apt to find just as distasteful as beer consumption: Number of kayakers lost under Reeders Rock in the most recent six week period.

"You've got to be kidding," I said. "I'm not kidding," he insisted. "That is absolutely the best single predictor of Tellico flow rates."

I suggested that a lot of politically correct kayakers might choke on that one.

"What do I care?" he replied. "I'm a scientist, not a political contortionist. And science marches relentlessly onward."

I asked Norman if he couldn't substitute number of open boaters lost under Reeders Rock in the past 6 weeks. My thinking was that open boaters get so little recognition that they might welcome being included in an important prediction equation.

"I tried that already," Norman grumbled. "And it doesn't work. Open boaters are too adept at swimming, I guess. They're in the water half the time anyway, so they get plenty of practice. Apparently, they see Reeders Rock coming up on the downstream horizon and swim like hell to avoid it. And that just bums me up."

"Bums you up?"

"Yeah," he said. "That's the kind of selfish behavior that completely blows my predic-

tion equations."

Hummmm.

Oh, well. At least, science marches on.



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Spiritual Eddy

by Ted Owen

crafted wood and angled feminine curves. The group agreed that the current was too strong to risk bodily entrapment for a paddle. In a moment of remorse, thinking about waiting out the water to get my blade, I saw Jim materialize his breakdown and put it together, as if signaling the next day's hike. Through my sorrow, I realized that, in a way, I had been very lucky. The same undercut that held my paddle might have trapped my ankle if I had been out of my boat. Luckily for me the water was going down. I paddled quietly to the takeout.

The Tuxedo Power Station didn't release on Monday. I bush-whacked river right alongside the now placid stream. I crossed to river left just below Pin Ball and scrambled toward the pin boulder. To my utter delight, my paddle bobbed in the gentle current, vertical and with a third of the shaft and the blade out of the water as if signaling me to come get her. It seemed to jump into my hand as I snatched it from the undercut.

I was truly blessed. The physical reward for the respect of other people's gear, was the recovery of my paddle. But a belief beyond that, into the Holy day spent on the water, put the right move into my head. Maybe one day I'll have the Karma to run the biggest in the gorge. Until then, I'll see the in swirling eddy: "do unto others..."



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I stalled at Boot or Consequences. I was too high on the left, and landed in the eddy off balance, flipped then hit a roll and kept from getting hammered in the bottom hole. I flushed through on a left brace, paddled furiously for the river right eddy and, safely there, signed my deliverance. Further down the river, toward the end of the "Dirty Dozen," I came to fully appreciate the spiritual quality of the gorge, with its towering gray sides like the sanctuary of an Old English Chapel. The God of the Green Narrows smiled on me once more, not as matter of life or death but as a matter of what goes around comes around, like the swirling current of an eddy. I've never met a bible thumper on a creek but every boater I know is a closet spiritualist; we talk about Karma and relish stories of the last hair run that cheated death. It's in the good book; you know, "do unto others..."

A month ago, after my first trip down the Narrows, Jim and I were the last to shuttle back to the Big Hungry put-in. One other car remained beside the road and, due to its conspicuous lack of kayak racks, was obviously not a boater's vehicle. As we transferred boats and gear, I spied a bright orange throw bag in the weeds. It was partially mesh and seemingly brand new with no signs of dirt, sand or grease. I exclaimed my good luck to Jim but he awkwardly shook his head and softly said, "Wouldn't take it. You had a clean run today. No broken bones or family tragedy. Bad Karma to cop someone else's gear."

I considered the "finders, keepers" adage. If a boater can't keep up with his/her gear, they shouldn't own it. I've never been superstitious but an uneasiness came over me. Maybe Jim had a point. He also had fifty runs down the Green against my one. Did I need a second throw bag? My paddling group all had them. I could give it away at Christmas but more than likely it would just sit in the back of my Forerunner and collect sand. I placed it back in the weeds exactly where I'd found it, hopeful that this good deed might produce better luck.

On the next trip Rick accompanied Jim and I. This time he was the Narrows virgin as I had been two weeks before. We walked Gorilla and Sunshine after clean runs in he the gorge above. Somewhere above Toilet Bowl, I came across a woven, red and blue wool blanket wadded up on a rock, wet and dirty but with a fine texture, neither worn nor tattered. Jim and Rick palled over, silent, as if seeing what I'd do. It came again, as if

a test administered against something inside, known but sometimes not respected. I wondered out loud how the blanket had ended up in so remote a place. Probably lost by lovers, Jim yelled. It was an offering, so I draped it over a rock where it would dry. The three of us hit perfect lines at the drop known as Hammer Factor.

A month later I hooked up again with Jim and two paddlers from Atlanta: Milt, who paddled a fourteen-foot canoe and Tom, a C-1 boater and virgin on the Green. Boof or Consequences found me upside down in a bad place again, but a quick roll kept me from getting hammered in the bottom hole. Jim ran Gorilla for the first time and Milt got in on video, just before the water shut off. But then the creek dropped six inches and luck disappeared as I suddenly pinned horizontally in a no name Class III two miles from the takeout. Milt's huge red monster of a boat ran over the top of my bow and created a world class cluster #@&! in the middle of the now bony creek. Tom hit Milt squarely in the head with a throw bag and, after taking a minute to secure Milt's boat, Tom finally waded out and lifted my stern free from the entrapment. "No more bad lines. Read the water!" I swore under my breath, frustrated at my lack of concentration. With Milt and his pontoon underway, I paddled last, convinced that the line of the big boat would surely show good water.

In a moment of indecision, a rock in the middle of Pin Ball bounced my Freefall LT to the left, the wrong angle to make the river right move to miss the pinning boulder at the bottom. I stroked for the narrow left crack I had made two weeks ago but another bump slowed the bow and turned the stern. I slammed the boulder with my right side and flipped, suddenly broached, not moving in the pillow. I don't know if I let go of my paddle with one hand in an attempt to bail out or if the deep current pulled it away as I tried to set up for an off-side roll. I'd like to believe the later but in the next instant my paddle left my hands. The thought to bail out was suddenly replaced by something so pure it had to be heavenly instance; stay in the boat. I shifted position to the right, found the boulder with my hands and rolled up in the pillow. I pushed off the boulder, flushed backward into the sluice and hand paddled into the river left eddy.

Finally beached, I crawled out of the Freefall and scrambled onto a rock above the boulder. My beloved paddle was nowhere to be seen. I had long ago given it a personality and it was as dear to me as my boat. I had come to love it beautifully

While paddling one should choose the right line...

Or at least the right design!!!



SCREAM

Photo Steve Hitesman
Paddler Mark Mathews

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North Branch Potomac Releases Slated

By Ed Gertler

Once again the Corps of Engineers has tentatively consented to schedule four week-ends of recreational water releases from Jennings Randolph Dam (aka Bloomington Dam) on the North Branch Potomac River. The dates will be as follows: April 18, 19 and May 2, 3, 16, 17, and 30, 31. 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 p.m. But if we have a dry spring, flow volume or duration of discharge could be cut back. The last weekend is particularly tentative. For that reason, paddlers are advised to confirm the releases a day or two beforehand by calling the Corps of Engineers Baltimore District Hotline (410-9627687) or website (www.nab-wc.usace.army.mil), U.S. Weather Bureau River Forecast Center (703-260-0305), or Canoe Cruisers Association Hotline (301-656-2586). Also, be aware that 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 "cancelled." 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 believes is a dangerous level, the Corps is disavowing themselves of liability for anyone getting in trouble on the river.

The North Branch is located in western Maryland, along the West Virginia border, 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 a stream that novice and intermediates will enjoy as a downriver run and more advanced paddlers will enjoy as a playground. If you are unfamiliar with this river, its shuttle route, etc., 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 fifteen years of persistent hounding and politicking by a coalition of private boaters, River and Trail Outfitters, and Cheat River Outfitters, and more recently, the Mineral County West Virginia Development Authority. Min-

eral County is sponsoring these releases (which means the Corps has palmed off legal and financial responsibility on these nice people). So we cannot urge you strongly enough to go down to nearby Keyser, West Virginia, patronize their 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. This and your participation in these releases can hopefully lead to continued releases and more of them. If you desire more information on Mineral County facilities, give a call to the Chamber of Commerce at 304-788-2513. 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 of Westvaco enforcing their warnings and please do not give the security guards a hard time. An alternate takeout would be just upstream of the stone arch railroad bridge in Bloomington, with parking up at the school parking lot in town.

ULTRA IMPORTANT MESSAGE

Note that the popular parking lot in front of the two-story brick building is private property. Please do not to block the driveway, change clothes in the open, or do anything else to offend this company's very tolerant owner or the caretaker. Because of poor behavior in 1997, we almost lost the use of this spot.

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Trouble on the Waters

If you had trouble getting to the river, let us know. Use this form to report access problems so that AW can convince legislators and government authorities where and when river access is a problem. If you have met an irate landowner, noticed signs forbidding access, or were stopped by a landowner, barbed wire fence or a locked gate, tell us about it on this form. If several boaters are arrested or involved, only 1 form should be filled out per incident naming a boater available for future contact.

Date of incident _____

Reporter name _____

Address _____

City etc. _____

Phone _____

email _____

Boater contact _____

Address _____

City etc. _____

Phone _____

email _____

Total number of boaters involved: _____

State where access incident happened:

2 letter code _____

Access code categories: Use categories at right,
multiple categories are ok.

Brief description of incident:

Send to Ken **Ransford**, 475 Sierra Vista, **Carbondale**,
CO 81623, 970-963-6800, FAX 970-963-6700.
ransford@csn.net

- 1 Trespass
 - 1.01 Trespass on private property
 - 1.02 Trespass on public property
 - 1.03 Criminal trespass
 - 1.04 Civil trespass

- 2 Public Access Closure
 - 2.01 Denied by federal law
 - 2.01.01 Denied by BLM
 - 2.01.02 Denied by Forest Service
 - 2.02 Denied by state law
 - 2.03 Denied by local law
 - 2.04 Denied by administrative edict

- 3 Injury from **manmade** obstacles
 - 3.01 Barbed wire
 - 3.02 Fence across river
 - 3.03 Low head dam

- 4 Obstacles to scouting and portaging
 - 4.01 Fence blocking access
 - 4.02 Posted no trespassing sign

- 5 Closures: Rivers closed that were once open
 - 5.01 Closed by private landowner
 - 5.02 Closed by government agency
 - 5.02.01 Federal
 - 5.02.02 State
 - 5.02.03 Local
 - 5.03 High water closure

- 6 New access fees
 - 6.01 Charged by private landowner
 - 6.02 Charged by government agency
 - 6.02.01 Federal
 - 6.02.02 State
 - 6.02.03 Local

Access is a constant struggle. The AW Access Committee needs your help.

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Schenectady, NY 12301

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151 Hamilton Drive
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