



Adventure Conservation Access Safety River Stories

american whitewater

March / April 2002

Arctic Dream / 37 • California's Kern River / 51 • My Adventures on the Arkansas River / 64



Cotahuasi The Gem of the Andies

page 45

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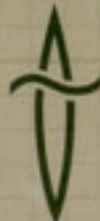
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american whitewater

American Whitewater Journal

Volume XLII, No.2

F e a t u r e s

Arctic Dream

by Mac Thornton **37**



Cotahuasi

by John Mattson **45**



California's Kern River

by Bruce Genereaux **51**



My Adventures on the Arkansas River

by David Crockett **64**

Forum	4
Corner Charc	8
Letters	10
Conservation	16

- Whitewater Flow Studies
- Can You Smell Victory?
- New Dams Proposed for the Dolores
- Swan River
- Dam Busters

Access	21
--------------	----

- Grand Canyon River Lawsuit Settled!
- A Golden Water Opportunity
- Access Flash Reports

Events	24
--------------	----

- Adirondack Creek Week
- Schedule of Events
- Teva Tour Update

2001 American Whitewater Honor Roll	59
---	----

Safety	74
--------------	----

- Whitewater Accident Summary

River Voices	66
--------------------	----

- Salvation is at Hand
- Open Boat Picasso
- Nostalgia
- Gorilla
- Reminders
- Why Join a Paddling Club



☐ Cover: The Mule Portage on the Cotahuasi by John Mattson.



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American Whitewater has always been a lean mean machine. I've been around long enough to remember when the journal was published on a schedule that was determined by how much caffeine the volunteer editor/layout man/ad salesman/board volunteer could physically endure. Times have changed. These days the volunteer editors never have to choose between getting the journal out on time and taking a day on the river. That's because we now pay staff to do the layout and ad sales. We still publish the best damn volunteer magazine in the world; we're just not killing editors.

Our other staff professionals are doing things that we used to do with volunteer labor. John Gangemi is the world's foremost expert on FERC relicensing, which means that every possible hydro dam in this country will eventually produce whitewater as well as electricity. Jason Robertson has become the point man for hundreds of river access issues and is handling everything that gets thrown



at him. Kevin Colburn has jumped right in as our eastern river advocate, sharing the load with John and Jason. Mike Phelan has designed and implemented an events program that covers the country with festivals and rodeos that support our mission and provide our members with a forum for publicizing important river-related issues. Our new Executive Director Risa Shimoda has taken the

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Matt Mathis on the Wave behind the NOC store.



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reins of this team of workhorses and is leading by example, virtually living in the Silver Spring office.

I have always been amazed at the caliber of people who want to work for American Whitewater. We can't even begin to compete with other employers in terms of salary and benefits, yet we get these people to put in incredible hours and effort with nothing to look forward to but more of the same. I see our Access Guru, Jason Robertson, on the river wearing a pair of river booties that are more hole than neoprene. We keep promising our employees that things will get better. But then we need to hire someone to take on a new burden, so we ask John and Jason and Kevin to continue to scrimp and save for a little longer. So if you ever see one of them standing beside the highway with their thumb out, please pick them up.

I don't think that AW will ever become a cushy place to work. I just spent two months working on the budget for this year with Risa. In one column is what it costs to pay our expenses, and in the other is our revenue. Over half of our revenue comes from the members through dues and contributions. We ask for and receive substantial support from paddling businesses, and charitable foundations. And our events make us some

money. But in the end we have to make the one column match the other. That is really hard. We know what it costs to pay all of our employees. We know what the office costs are. As hard as we look we can't see any more places to cut costs and keep on doing the important work that we do. The only way to match columns is to adjust revenues.

If you are reading this you are probably a member. Now I am coming to you for a little help. I'm not asking much, and I know that you can do this: Keep on being a member, despite the dues increase. Not so hard. And when you send in your renewal, tack on a few dollars to show your appreciation for what we do. And start nagging your boating friends to renew their memberships. You know who they are- the ones that always snatch your Journal when they visit; or the buddy that's let AW slip away in his or her busy life.

Because when I go to paddle a river that has water in it because of AW's hard work, and see all the thousands of boaters that show up to take advantage of the opportunity to paddle, I just know that they can't all be members. If they were, we'd be able to match those columns in the budget.

The solution is simple. If you're a boater, you gotta belong to AW.

For all the successes that we've had with

our programs, we deserve to see a corresponding jump in our membership. Instead, our membership has been relatively stagnant for several years.

That means a lot of boaters are freeloading when they paddle rivers that are flowing and accessible because of the work that AW does. You all know the ones I mean! .

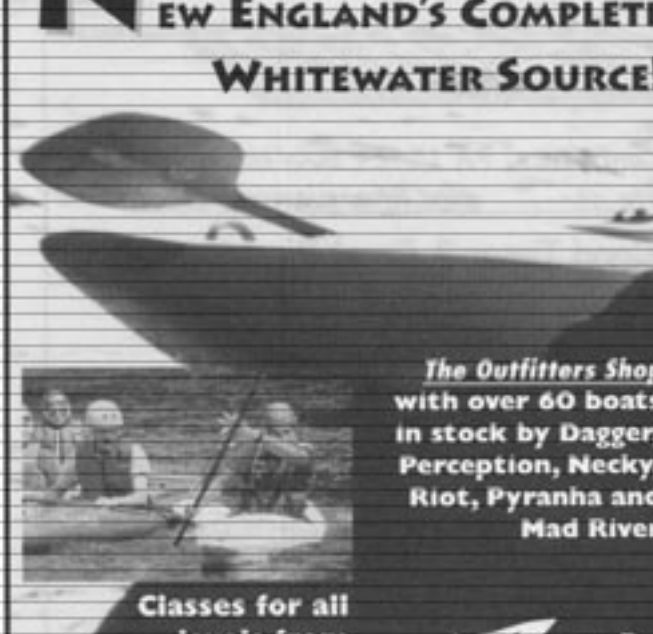
Do all the boaters at the Tallulah belong to AW? I think not! I'm sure that many of the boaters that paddle the Upper Yough weren't even born when American Whitewater negotiated releases there.

This year, thanks to AW, there will be releases on a new river in California, the North Fork Feather. I'll be there asking the boaters that show up to join and support the organization that made that possible.

Let's remind paddlers everywhere what AW has done for them and tell them that the free ride is over.

I am really hoping that this is the year that we can go ahead with the plans we've made but were too poor to implement. A lot of whitewater rivers are still under siege and we may lose access opportunities forever if we are not on our toes and ready to fight. We need more resources to get the job done. It is a big job, and if AW doesn't do it, no one else will.

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Risa Shrimoda
Executive Director
American Whitewater

You' got your waterpark. And then you' got your waterpark... It is an oft-used term these days. The word connotes more as the months pass: new and seasoned paddlers alike indicate interest in access to convenient paddling venues. 'Convenience' and paddling seemed at one time like oxymoronic concepts, and they are no longer: paddlers today rarely head out for a weekend in search of water knowing they might not find any at all.

We already take for granted our being able to quickly review gauge readings and planned precipitation before we head out the door... and are now hungry for more convenience. Having a predictable flow on a river near one's home or work during a lunch break, after class, in the evening... is a great concept. Pursuing a fitness routine in one's boat instead of inside a gym... would be terrific. Having a safe, easily accessible 'park' that Mom can drop off and pickup Junior... is, too, an awesome ideal.

On a parallel course, communities and urban planners have by now all seen models of successful greenway developments, plans for others. Greenways, funded by bonds or state lotteries, augmented by community fund-raising activities, have blossomed in Denver, Asheville, Chattanooga and Durango. As a result, there are dozens of waterparks in place and planned around the country, of which whitewater venues are a major feature.

American Whitewater's mission, and therefore our programs, support the safe enjoyment of whitewater. We also do not endorse modifying a river from its natural state, whether blasting it to facilitate transportation or moving rocks to make it easier

to perform showy blunts. Flat out do not endorse. The issue of modification, however, is a bit gray, so we'd like to define the gray in which we play...

Many urban whitewater rivers are lifeless, due to poor water quality, burned out industrial development, or their unattended shorelines that block public access. Others have been 'modified' and encumbered by dams and bridge pilings, perhaps no longer of use, or road construction that has lowered tons of riprap down the banks to the shore and into the water. Rivers like this deserve attention.

Modifications can restore some health back to the river. If recreational opportunities spring from the mods we are all over it. In fact, providing urban whitewater can create greater awareness of the value of our scarce resources than can the pleasure of a few on a wilderness run (note that I am not comparing the value of the run, just the potential volume of awareness than we might yield). From urban play can spring significantly increased river advocacy. You'll see and hear that we are strong supporters of relicensing mods like on the North Fork Feather below Oroville Dam, or on the Contoocook where we're working to decom-

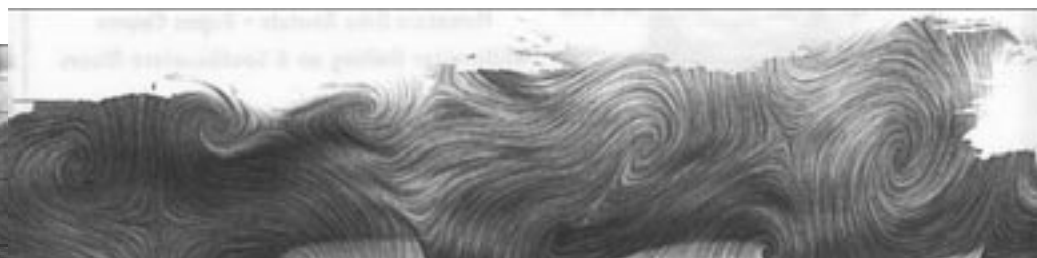
mission a dam, restore some health to the river, facilitating some enhanced play in the meantime!

As modifications for recreation only are planned, we hope that smart civic planners will think past next year's rodeo. Upstream and downstream features will be affected by streambed changes. Water temperature will be affected by concentrated new activity in one particular area. An altered riverbed can sustain and support change more easily than shoreline change: shoreline health may be affected by high levels of traffic.

If you are involved in a waterpark project, we'd like to link your website or contact information through a pass-through on our site. Keep dialog going. Share information about the river planning with others. Little information is known and disseminated about the maintenance that altered rivers require (Little wonder: this is the less sexy part of the process).

If you want to move rocks to be able to create an event for T.V. and are not particularly interested in the impact on the stream twenty years hence, please rethink either your motivation or the potential impact that you can effect. If you can see a win for the river by which we get to both play and teach others how to care for a resource, you'll be a part of one of the next significant movements in this sport.

Our 'boss' is the health of the flow and access to our whitewater rivers. In parallel, American Whitewater works for you and your ability to enjoy them. What do you think the best role for AW is relative to waterpark proliferation?





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the meeting you mentioned.

In the early 90s, I drove to Charleston to try and reopen Valley Falls State Park to paddlers. Since the park Superintendent was called away to handle an emergency, he could not make this meeting. The staff of West Virginia's Department of Tourism did make the meeting, and if you ever visit the Tourism office you can't miss the wall size mural of a boater running one of the big drops on the Upper Blackwater. The meeting took place right there in the reception area, as I explained the disconnect between promoting whitewater tourism and closing rivers. While the round-trip drive was about six hours, the meeting lasted 15 minutes. It was probably the quickest meeting I ever attended. After I left, Tourism got together with the Park Superintendent and they agreed to keep Valley Falls open as long as paddlers agreed to follow the restrictions described in the article.

Tourism, economic and rural development, and great resources remain key buzzwords for agencies in charge of rivers. When access efforts are successful (as with Valley Falls and Great Falls on the Potomac), they provide positive examples for opening other areas. Since there are big efforts to open nearby Ohiopyle Falls and gain scheduled releases on the Savage River, it is important that paddlers continue to recognize their role as representatives and the part they play in promoting whitewater.

See you on the river,
Rich Bowers
Former AW Executive Director

hiking. Needless to say we spent a lot of money in Colorado, not to mention the cost of airfare to get there. I also took some advanced kayaking lessons while I was there. During one of the lessons, I had to bail from the boat and go ashore. To my absolute amazement and shock, I was greeted by heckling and harassment by someone who represented themselves as the land owner, who, in short was asking me "just what did I think that I was doing by stepping ashore on his land." What I was trying to do was save myself from drowning and being battered to death! I couldn't believe what I was hearing nor the behavior I was witnessing. This guy could have cared less if I had drowned.

I'm not a kid. I'm a 50 year old mature and responsible adult that has enjoyed water sports all of his life. I've lived in Florida all my life. The behavior I witnessed that day by another 50 year old mature and responsible adult was sickening, for I truly believe that had I been injured in my spill this guy would have been of no assistance. It was me, him, my guide and the wilderness - and my guide was a long way down river. I believe this owner would have let me die to make his point. It is a shameful reflection on the state of affairs that someone like me, a guy from Florida, who had no inkling of the apparent hatred between the owners and rafters in the state of Colorado, a guy that was a visitor to the state vacationing, had become a pawn, and near casualty, in this Colorado river dispute.

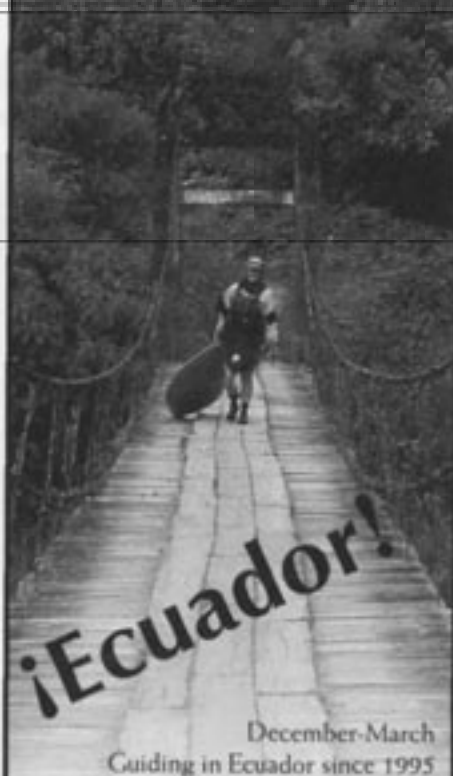
Let me ask you, what do you think I think about the people of Colorado and the laws of Colorado, and when do you think me and my family will return?

John Bowman
AW Member
Florida



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Photos may be submitted as slides, black or white prints, or color prints or electronic, digital photos, 300 dpi tiffs or high res jpegs minimum 3"x5." Keep your originals and send us duplicates if possible; we cannot guarantee the safe return of your pictures. If you want us to return your pictures, include a self-addressed stamped envelope with your submission. The better the photos the better the reproduction.

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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.

Profanity should be used only when it is absolutely necessary to effectively tell a story; it is not our intent to offend our more sensitive members and readers.

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

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

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



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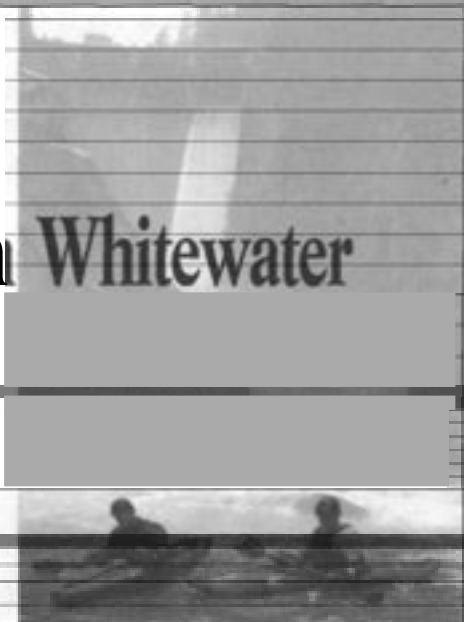
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American Whitewater

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 bimonthly 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), and the Deerfield Festival in Massachusetts.

AW was incorporated under Missouri nonprofit 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.

American Whitewater Journal Staff

Editor:

Bob Gedekoh, 8245 Mentor Road, Elizabeth, PA. 15037

Associate Editor

Ambrose Tuscano and Dale-Marie Herring

Art direction/Graphic design/Production:

John K. Victor, David Scardena, assistant

Contributing writers:

Dunbar Hardy, Sam Orevo, Lee Belknap, Bobby Miller, Mark White, W. Scott Morris, Joe Greiner, Teresa Gryder, Barry Grimes, Marion Boyer, Charlie Nalbridge, Bob Woodward, Matt Terry, Andrew Zimet, Bill Hay, Donnie Hudspeth, Whit Deschner, Tim Kelley, Rip Harwood

Photo contributors:

Tanya Shuman, Tom Ullman

Production Assistant:

Teresa Augustin

Advertising Director:

Phyllis Horowitz, Box 636, Margaretville, New York 12455 (845) 586-2355, e-mail: whiteh2o@catskill.net

Safety Editor

Charlie Walbridge, Route 1, Box 329F, Bruceton Mills, WV 26525, e-mail: CWALQ@compuserve.com

Conservation and Access Editors:

Jason Robertson, John Gangemi

jason@amwhitewater.org; jgangemi@digisys.net

American Whitewater Magazine Task Force:

Jeff Espey, Dunbar Hardy, Gree Herring, John Mason, Charlie Pettygrove, Tanya Shuman, Ambrose Tuscano, Andy Zimmerman

Missing Copies and Address Changes:

whiteh2o@catskill.net

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Directors, Officers & Staff

Barry Tuscano, President
tmri@kiski.net
Bolivar, PA

Landis Arnold
Landis@wildnet.com
Niwot, CO

Lee Belknap
rivergypsy@sprintmail.com
Hendersonville, NC

Tom Christopher
tchris@tiac.net
Lancaster, MA

Chuck Estes
estesoa@worldnet.att.net
Oak Ridge, TN

Bob Gedekoh
bobgedek@icubed.com
Elizabeth, PA

Jennie Goldberg
theleague@home.com
Seattle, WA

Joe Greiner
joekayak@worldnet.att.net
Raleigh, NC

Barry Grimes
bagriml@pop.uky.edu
Richmond, KY

Chris Kelly
ckelly1022@aol.com
Columbia, MO

Tim Kelley
kelleytm@carson-
2bde91div.army.mil
Colorado Springs, CO

**TOLL FREE NUMBER
866-BOAT4AW**

Jeff Leighton, Treasurer
jeffleighton@prodigy.net
LaFayette, CA

Kevin Lewis, Vice President
klewis@snowcrest.net
Anderson, CA

Sherry Olson
sdopc@mindspring.com
Cumming, GA

Norwood Scott
wns111@aol.com
San Francisco, CA

Dave Steindorf
dsteind@telis.org
Paradise, CA

Charlie Walbridge
ccwalbridge@cs.com
Bruceton Mills, WV

Kara Weld
Immersion Research
kara@immersionresearch.com
Confluence, PA

AW OFFICERS

President: Barry Tuscano
Vice President: Kevin Lewis
Secretary: Jay P. K. Kenney
Treasurer: Jeff Leighton

AW STAFF

Risa Shimoda
Executive Director
1430 Fenwick Lane
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Michael Phelan
Events Director
20 Battery Park Ave., suite 302
Asheville, NC 28801

David Knox
Events Coordinator
20 Battery Park Ave., suite 302
Asheville, NC 28801

Kevin Colburn
Eastern Conservation and
Access Associate
20 Battery Park Ave., suite 302
Asheville, NC 28801

John Gangemi
Conservation Director
482 Electric Ave.
Bigfork, MT 59911

Jason Robertson
Access Director
1430 Fenwick Lane
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Phyllis Horowitz
Administrative Director
P.O. Box 636
Margaretville, NY 12455

Nick Lipkowski
Executive Assistant
1430 Fenwick Lane
Silver Spring, MD 20910

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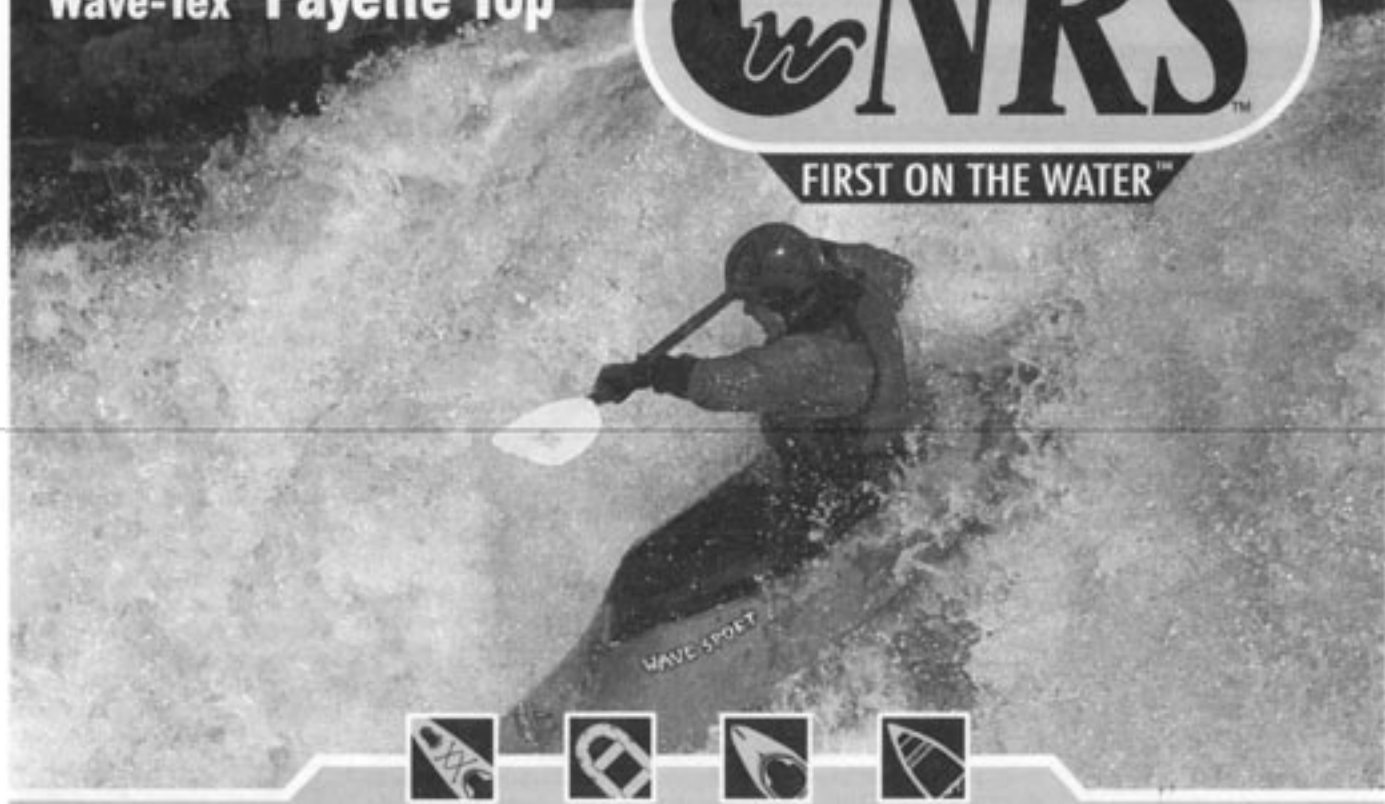


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Whitewater Flow Studies Planned for 2002

American Whitewater is currently developing a number of whitewater flow studies on rivers across the country impacted by hydropower operations. These studies are part of the five year relicense process required for utilities to get a new operating license. Licenses are issued for terms of **30 to 50** years. Developing an annual schedule of whitewater releases is critical to ensure whitewater opportunities for the life of the new license. American Whitewater works closely with the utility and resource agencies in the study design and execution. Depending on logistics and whitewater difficulty, participation is usually limited to a small number of paddlers. Participants in the flow studies are usually local paddlers that have worked hard in the relicense proceeding. By reducing the group size during the flow study we are better able to implement a strong safety plan. This precautionary measure is necessary since any accidents during a whitewater flow study would likely result in a prohibition of whitewater releases for the life of the license.

River	State	No. of Study Reaches	Difficulty
Pit River	CA	2	Class IV
Stanislaus River	CA	3	Class V
San Joaquin River	CA	5	Class III-V
Kern River	CA	1	Class III
Klamath River	OR	2	Class IV-V
Clackamas River	OR	1	Class V
West Branch Penobscot	ME	2	Class III-V
Hoosic River	NY	1	Class V

Can You Smell Victory?



On October 19, 2001 the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission revoked the preliminary permit for the Boundary Creek Water Power Project on Boundary Creek in Idaho. This is a huge victory for the paddling and environmental communities. Boundary Creek is a premiere creek run that also provides critical habitat for bull trout, west slope cutthroat trout, red-band rainbow, harlequin ducks, grizzly bear, wolf and mountain caribou. American Whitewater has been battling this permit since it was first proposed.

FERC granted the preliminary permit in **2000**. The preliminary permit grants the hydro developer exclusive rights to file an application for a hydropower license on Boundary Creek. The FERC issues preliminary permits for a period of three years. During the preliminary permit phase, the permit holder conducts studies to determine the economic and engineering feasibility of constructing a hydropower facility on Boundary Creek. The permit does not allow them to begin construction of the hydropower facility. The permit holder is required to submit reports every six months to the FERC describing progress on the engineering, environmental and economic studies. Continental Lands, the applicant for the Boundary Creek project, failed to submit progress reports in a timely fashion to the FERC thereby losing their permit.

The Boundary Creek hydro project would require diverting water from a significant length of the kayak run. This loss of water would greatly impact wildlife habitat and shorten if not eliminate kayaking opportunities. Boundary Creek is the quintessential creek run: Aten-mile paddle with gradients fluctuating between **250 to 375** feet per mile. It's described as a single rapid ten miles long. For more information about Boundary Creek visit the streamkeeper on American Whitewater's website <http://www.americanwhitewater.org/rivers/id/4217>.

Boundary Creek in northern Idaho. Photo John Gangemi.

Hoosic River, New York

American Whitewater has entered into settlement discussions with Erie Boulevard Hydropower, formerly Niagara Mohawk, regarding an annual schedule of whitewater flows on the Hoosic River below the utility's Schaghticoke Dam in New York. Schaghticoke dam is located just **10** miles upstream from Albany, NY. Project operations divert water around this steep section of the Hoosic. For a birds-eye view of the gradient and drops in this bypass reach visit <http://www.geocities.com/brabetz13/index.html>. American Whitewater anticipates wrapping up settlement talks in the spring of **2002**. Outcomes will be posted on the website at www.americanwhitewater.org.

Big Creek No. 4 Hydropower Project, San Joaquin River, California

On December **19, 2001** American Whitewater met with the FERC, the U.S. National Forest, state agencies and Southern California Edison (SCE) to try to reach agreement on conflicting recommendations for an annual whitewater flow schedule in the Horseshoe Bend Reach of the San Joaquin River, California. SCE has applied for a new hydropower license. FERC, the USFS and American Whitewater each proposed different recommendations based on respective interpretations of hydrologic and fisheries data. The parties have entered into a two-month collaborative process to attempt to iron out differences and develop an adaptive management plan for implementation of whitewater releases. The adaptive plan will likely include detailed biological monitoring of whitewater flows once the license is issued.

New Dams proposed for the Dolores River, Colorado

The Dolores Water Conservancy District recently unveiled a proposal to construct two new dams in the upper basin. The primary goal of these dams would be to maintain the current water right allocations for agriculture from McPhee reservoir and, ironically, store water to provide a more reliable water release for the nonnative recreational fishery that exists as a result of construction of McPhee dam. This additional storage in the two new reservoirs will thereby eliminate unnecessary 'spill.' From an ecological perspective these spill events are all that remains of the annual high spring flows providing critical ecosystem benefits for native riparian wildlife and vegetation as well as whitewater recreational opportunities.

The Dolores is a unique Western whitewater run which can be enjoyed as a great multi-day trip descending from the evergreen forests of the high country to the desert canyons of the southwest. While there is excellent public access to the run, construction of McPhee Reservoir in the mid 1980s for agricultural water storage virtually eliminated whitewater boating opportunities except in wet years on this once popular whitewater river. The proposal by the Dolores Water Conservancy District for two additional dams will likely eliminate whitewater opportunities in wet water years as well.

The Dolores River Action Group (DRAG) has formed as a voice for those who see the value in downstream flows, and in particular the peak flows associated with spring snow melt. This water is not "lost" water but provides a direct benefit to people who use the river and the native biota. DRAG supports incentive programs that would encourage improvements in irrigation hardware and timing of water application. This increased efficiency could produce water savings that would provide a direct benefit to the river.

Specific goals include:

- 1) maintain and increase instream flows in a manner that benefits both the river ecosystem and recreational river users
- 2) pursue Wild and Scenic designation for the Dolores River
- 3) change the perception of the Bureau of Reclamation that they are managing a river system and not a reservoir and require documentation of how they are meeting ecological objectives and the needs of river users
- 4) raise awareness of the social and economic benefits of recreational river use

For additional information and to get on the mailing list see the DRAG web site

<http://www.sanjuancitizens.org/dolores.html>
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Upper canyon on the Dolores River. Photo: Tom U'heide

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Swan River, Montana

In more positive news, PacifiCorp recently charted an entirely new course in the relicensing of the Bigfork Hydropower project on the Swan River, Montana. American Whitewater and PacifiCorp have been diametrically opposed on recreation mitigation at this hydropower project since 1997 (for background see American Whitewater's Top 10 Conservation Issues, September/October 2001). In November, 2001 PacifiCorp and American Whitewater along with other stakeholders initiated settlement discussions to resolve outstanding issues in the relicensing proceeding. In a short time PacifiCorp and American Whitewater reached agreement on public access to the Swan River, recreational facility improvements and easements on non-project lands. We continue to work on a plan for weeknight flow releases in the summer. The parties plan to submit the Recreation Management Plan to FERC for inclusion in the new license. This collaborative effort is a refreshing change in the normally conflict ridden relicensing arena.

Present chainlink fence makes it difficult for kayakers to access the Swan River.
Photo John Gangemi.

Housatonic River, Connecticut

Northeast Generation, operator of the Falls Village and Bridge hydropower projects on the Housatonic River, recently contacted American Whitewater as required by FERC's order to gather input on minimum acceptable and optimum flows for the Falls Village bypass, the Falls Village reach and the Bridge bypass. American Whitewater is collaborating with paddling groups on the Housatonic to develop appropriate recommendations for the respective reaches. Contact John Gangemi if you would like to provide input on these flows. jgangemi@digisys.net.

Record Year at Tallulah!

The fall of 2001 marked the fourth year of the worst drought in over 100 years for the Southeast. Along with this drought came 70 degree sunny fall days that encouraged a record number of boaters (409 runs in one day) to enjoy the dam releases on North Georgia's Tallulah River. American Whitewater negotiated the releases a few years ago and now works closely with Georgia Power and Georgia Department of Natural Resources to make sure they are a success each year. There is a possibility that Georgia Power will agree to provide additional releases each year as long as the ecological and DNR staffing impacts remain minimal. In a meeting held with AW, DNR and Georgia Power last fall, several concerns were voiced that you as Tallulah boaters need to help us address if we are to get more releases and continue the ones we currently have.

- **Trillium trampling:** Impacts on the endangered species of trillium was not overwhelming in 2001, but was significant. Boaters (and their boats) need to stay on the wooden stairs the whole way to the river, and should stay on bedrock as much as possible while in the gorge. We'll be modifying the base of the stairs to help alleviate the problem there.
- **Volunteerism:** Tallulah is full of good energy and appreciative boaters. Boaters must continue their volunteer efforts for Tallulah releases to continue. Call or e-mail Kevin Colburn as soon as possible and offer to volunteer for slots of time, and yes, there is plenty of time to boat and volunteer on any given day.
- **Respecting park rules:** The folks at DNR have done a great job of adapting to our quirky needs by doing things like opening the boater camping lot and by trusting us with their beautiful park. Please let the rangers know when you have problems or questions, and respect the property of the park.

All of us at AW would also like to express our warmest thanks to Sherry Olson, the volunteer queen of Tallulah. Sherry and her husband Ardie will be missed this year at Tallulah as they hike the Pacific Crest Trail.

Western North Carolina Relicensings Roll On:

One step at a time, American Whitewater is carrying your boat up a metaphorical river. It takes us 5 years to get it to the put-in, but then you get to paddle for 30 to 50 years. This process, known as dam relicensing, may be painfully slow to watch from the outside, but down here in the Southeastern Office we are excitedly working through the many issues and meetings. The following is a brief update of where the negotiations currently stand:

- **Cheoah:** The preliminary draft environmental assessment is currently being prepared and the various groups are discussing possible resolutions to competing interests. The next 6-12 months will be filled with intense negotiations and data analysis as the various stakeholders try to come together in a settlement agreement.
- **Tuckasegee:** Flow studies were completed in 2001 on the West Fork and Main Stem of the Tuck, and the East Fork will be studied in 2002. American Whitewater is working with the other stakeholders to design a better system for flow forecasting, reporting on the Main stem of the Tuck, and will continue to advocate for flows in the West Fork.
- **Nantahala:** The Flow studies are done on the Nantahala and the monthly stakeholder meetings are rolling along. We are in the brainstorming part of the process, and are actively sharing our interests with other stakeholders.

PG&E Proposes Bankruptcy Restructuring Plan

This past fall, Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) filed a bankruptcy reorganization plan in federal court. PG&E, a victim of the California deregulation plan and ironically an author of that same plan, filed Chapter 11 bankruptcy in April 2001. PG&E's proposal calls for transferring the state-regulated hydropower assets to unregulated affiliate companies. This reorganization plan is markedly similar to a restructuring plan filed before the California state legislature in 1999 and the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) in 2000. The CPUC Environmental Impact Report concluded that PG&E's plan would result in 49 significant adverse impacts, including impacts to water quality, threatened and endangered species and recreational opportunities. Further underscoring their intent to move forward with the reorganization plan, PG&E recently filed a request with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to transfer the ownership of 26 hydroelectric project licenses to individual Limited Liability Companies (LLC).

From a state perspective, the restructuring plan defies a state law passed last year that prohibits the transfer of any utility generating assets until 2006. PG&E's restructuring plan also conflicts with many other California regulations, including rules that require PUC approval of any substantial utility property sales entitling rate payers to share in the profits when utility property is sold. PG&E claims the

restructuring plan proposed in federal bankruptcy court is legal because federal bankruptcy law overrides state law.

PG&E owns the nation's largest private hydropower system, including 250 dams and diversions, 99 reservoirs, and 68 powerhouses. The system alters the streamflow of over 16 major California rivers draining the Cascades, Sierra, and Coast Ranges. Also included in the system are over 140,000 acres of wildlands many of which border classic whitewater runs. The massive collection of plumbing provides 5-10% of the state's power supply, but has decimated river habitat and fish populations.

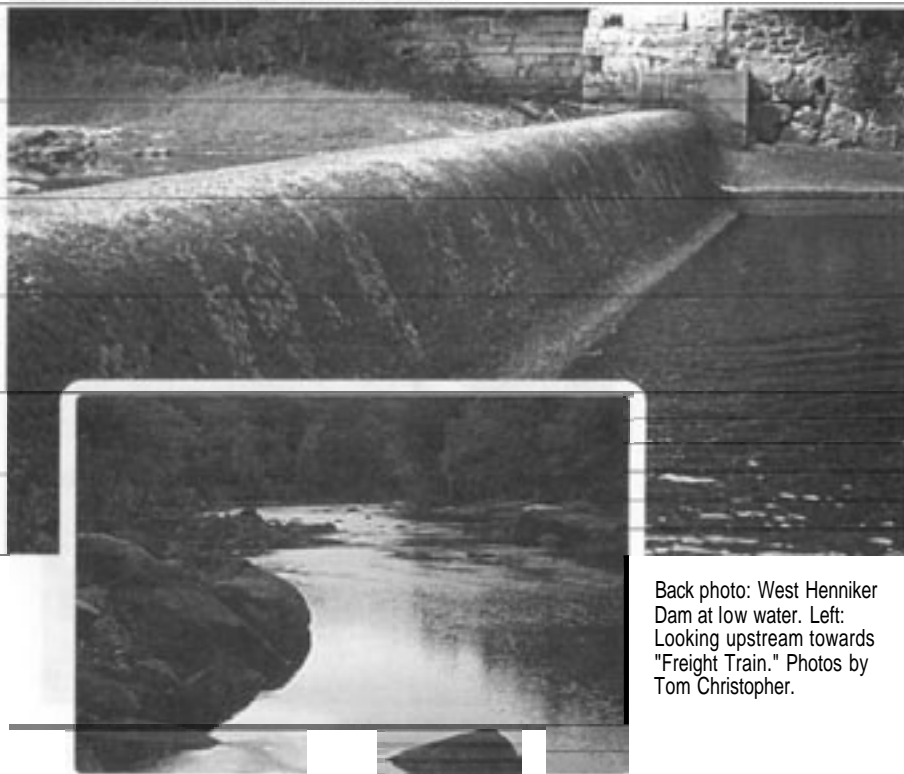
From the paddling community's perspective, PG&E's proposal does not bode well for California whitewater. State oversight of the utility provides necessary environmental regulations to help ensure adequate flows in rivers. Many of PG&E's lands currently regulated by the CPUC serve as the only public access to rivers downstream of the dams that impair navigation. Furthermore, transferring ownership of hydropower projects will likely make it more difficult to restore river corridors using a watershed approach where multiple hydropower projects exist. American Whitewater, led by the California Hydropower Reform Coalition, is a party to the bankruptcy proceeding.

DAM AMERICAN WHITewater INITIATES ITS FIRST BUSTERS!! DAM REMOVAL PROJECT IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

By Tom Christopher

Over the past several months American Whitewater and New England FLOW have been working together with the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services to remove a deadly dam located on the Contoocook River in Henniker, New Hampshire. The "Took" is one of New Hampshire's larger rivers and can provide some of the best "big-water" boating during the spring because it holds its water much later in the season than many of the smaller flashy streams throughout the state. An extremely popular seasonal six-mile run, when the river is up, it is not unusual to find crowds as large as the mid-summer releases on the Massachusetts Deerfield River. The Contoocook consistently provides Class III and IV boating at various levels and at higher levels rapids like "S-Turn" and "Freight Train" require significant experience and well-defined boating skills.

For a number of years parking at the put-in and access at the take-out have been problematic, with boaters' vehicles restricting traffic along Western Avenue. Since the road parallels the river most of the way, photographers, sight-seers, and friends often follow boaters during their trips down the river, causing traffic to slow, and increasing the potential for serious accidents along the winding, narrow road. In the past,



Back photo: West Henniker Dam at low water. Left: Looking upstream towards "Freight Train." Photos by Tom Christopher.

Conservation

cars have been ticketed by local police for illegal parking or obstructing traffic, causing some animosity between boaters and town officials.

As a result of this project, all of this has changed and the local boating community through American Whitewater, New England FLOW, and the Merrimack Valley Paddlers have joined with the Town of Henniker and the NHDES to actually fund a portion of the dam removal and construct a new take-out complete with a river-side park and a parking lot for boaters' vehicles. Overall, the expected financial contribution by the boaters towards the completion of this project will run between 15-20% of its total cost, and to date, local fund-raising efforts and "in-kind" services by local boaters have provided the mechanism for their participation.

Project History and Brownfield Issues

The dam was formerly owned by the Contoocook Valley Paper Co. and is located approximately 1.5 miles west of the center of Henniker. This composite gravity dam is 18-feet high, 137-feet long, consisting of a poured concrete cap and a spillway, and forms an impoundment extending approximately 0.6 miles, with 8 surface acres. It is an obsolete dam and does not provide any flood control functions.

The site was developed first as a gristmill and later converted to a paper mill facility that operated from the 1830s until 1987 with the current dam constructed in 1936. An old canal, approximately 2,000 feet long, connects the impoundment to the former site of the mill buildings, and discharges into the river about 300 feet from the former mill site.

When the town took ownership of the property it removed the former mill building in 1997, after the building had been cleared of hazardous materials by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency in an emergency cleanup action. Some soil contamination remains on portions of the site, but since the property is currently designated a state Brownfield site, funding for cleanup will also be provided as part of this project. Once the dam is removed it is expected to add approximately 1/2 mile of rapids to the end of the run after "Freight Train."

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services classified this dam as a low menace structure due to its deteriorated condition, and since the Town acquired the dam when it took possession of the abandoned mill property for taxes, it then became liable for the repair and upkeep of the dam. Upon a NHDES dam safety inspection in September 2000 the town fell under a state order to repair or remove the dam, due to the deterioration of the structure.

River Restoration Opportunity

The town of Henniker would like to eliminate their financial and legal burdens associated with the dam ownership. By removing the West Henniker Dam, it is committed to working with residents, recreational interests, state agencies and others to restore the river to a healthy, free-flowing condition, and to develop the abandoned mill property into a park with public access to the river. The dam's removal would restore about 10 miles of river to a freeflowing condition with its upstream sections and tributaries currently managed for trout and periodically stocked with Atlantic salmon fry.

Both the town and the recreational interests view this project as a fantastic river restoration and community revitalization opportunity. The proposed "take-out" for whitewater boaters would be located on the parcel of property associated with the former mill site. This access point would also serve as a "put-in" for boaters with lower skill levels, easier rapids, and flatwater, which will increase recreational boating on the 3 mile lower river portion that flows through the heart of Henniker. These new recreational opportunities will provide new tourism for Henniker and is expected to benefit local merchants and other services. The level of community interest and support in this project make this site an ideal location for a whitewater festival in coming years.

Project Completion This Year

Project evaluation and ongoing studies started in August 2001 and are expected to be completed by early summer of this year and will include an evaluation of the potential effects on historical resources. This will provide an opportunity to preserve the unique granite block construction of the old mill canal and will also take into consideration, wetlands, which developed in the canal after the mill ceased operations. It is expected to initiate removal of the dam during the late summer or early autumn months of this year, with full completion scheduled by December 2002. During the removal process American Whitewater and the state and local agencies will explore opportunities for construction of a rodeo "playhole" and other river amenities that add boating value to this reach of the Contoocook River.

A Unique Opportunity

Over the past several years much attention and notice has been given to the resource values provided from the removal of obsolete dams, particularly since the national publicity achieved by the removal of the Edwards Dam on Maine's Kennebec River. Nearly two years ago, a public-private task force was formed in New Hampshire to identify and remove dams which were old, unsafe, uneconomical, and were a primary detriment to river resources. By eliminating these structures the task force helps to remove hazards, improves water quality, enhances fisheries, and provides whitewater boating opportunities throughout the state.

However, this is the first time in American Whitewater history local membership has taken a lead role and actually committed funds to a large project with other partners to provide diverse recreational benefits, including whitewater boating. It is a serious commitment which involves the help and participation of many AW members and friends from throughout the region who enjoy the seasonal runs on the Contoocook River. The completion of this project will establish a number of milestones, the most important of which is the elevation of the boaters' stock with town and state officials as well as the citizens of Henniker. By working together boaters help the town solve the fiscal dilemma of expensive dam removal, establish an important working relationship with the state task force for future projects, and contribute to a potentially important economic benefit to the region. This is a far cry from the image of whitewater folks being an unkempt, uncivil, rude collection of river lunatics.

Collaborative projects like the Henniker Dam removal which include interaction and financial participation with partners, allow us to build our constituency, broaden our reach, and allow American Whitewater to achieve the level of important recognition necessary to continue our goal of protecting and securing whitewater in the years to come. It will also serve as a template for us to follow in other regions of the United States when similar opportunities become available to our local members.



Left to right George May, MUP Conservation Chair; Tom Christopher, AW director; Stephanie Lindeloff, NHDES Project Coordinator. Photos by D. Buchanan.



We Win! Grand Canyon River Lawsuit Settled!

Flagstaff, AZ— American Whitewater and three other conservation and boating groups announced the settlement of a lawsuit today regarding management of the Colorado River and proposed wilderness within Grand Canyon National Park. In the settlement, the National Park Service agreed to restart a public planning process for the 277 miles of the Colorado River and 1.1 million acres of proposed wilderness within the park.

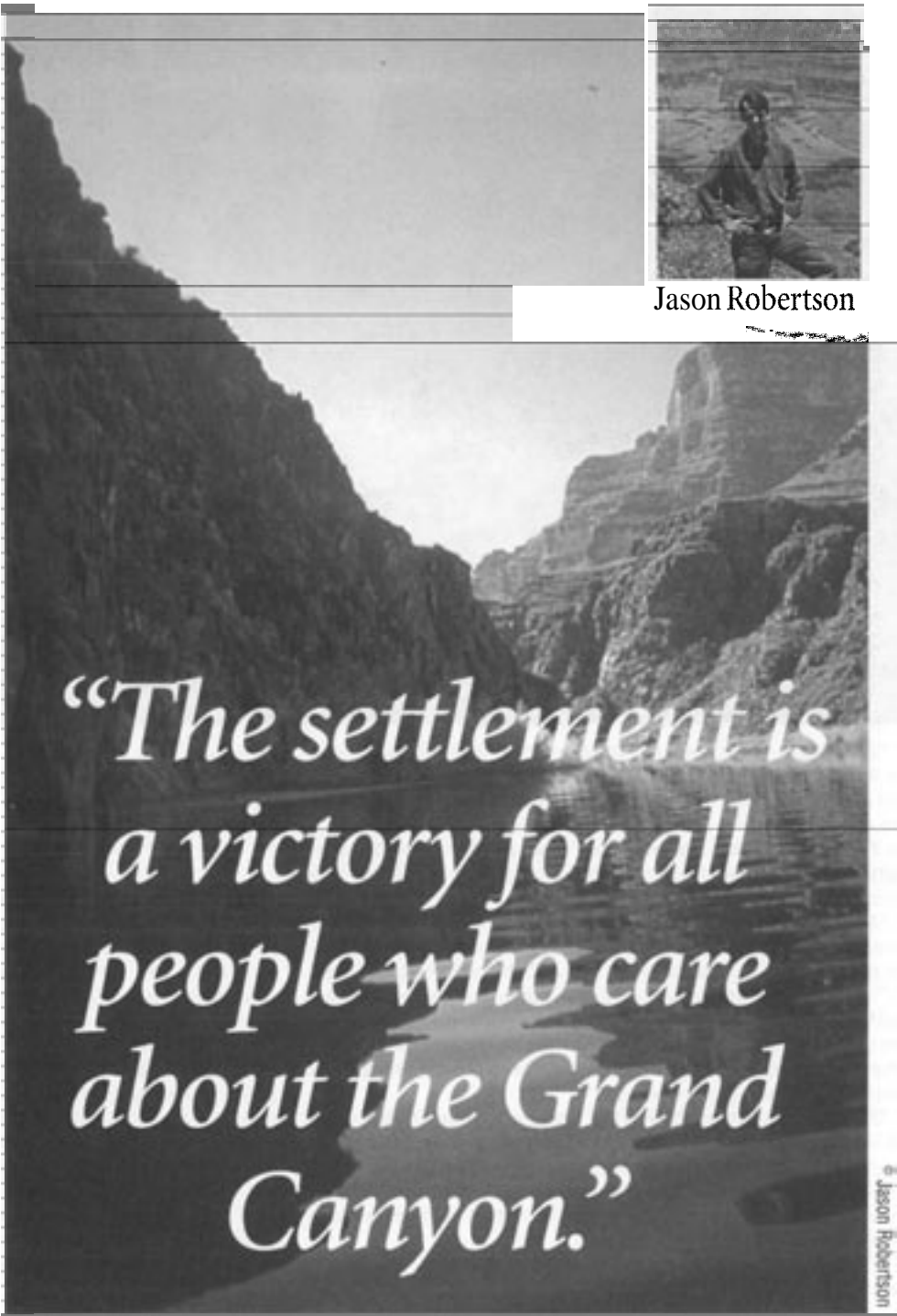
"The settlement is a victory for all people who care about the Grand Canyon," said Willie Odem, former president of the Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association. "It allows the public to regain their voice concerning the future of the Grand Canyon."

The settlement was filed in January 2001 in federal court in Phoenix, Arizona, and resolves a lawsuit filed in July 2000. The plaintiffs had challenged former park Superintendent Rob Arnberger's February 2000 decision to abandon work on a wilderness plan and a revised Colorado River Management Plan (CRMP) the park had begun in 1997. The settlement includes a list of issues the Park Service must address in the renewed planning process, such as the use of motorized boats and helicopters to transport river passengers in proposed wilderness and ways to improve access to the river for non-commercial boaters.

"This agreement is vital to preserving over 100 years of river-running tradition," said Jason Robertson, access director for American Whitewater. "Citizens deserve a fair shot at a self-guided wilderness-quality float trip through the Grand Canyon and a quarter-century wait for a private boater permit is unreasonably long."



Jason Robertson



"The settlement is a victory for all people who care about the Grand Canyon."

© Jason Robertson



"The impact of commercial motorized trips through the canyon is a serious concern that affects both the availability and quality of float trips for the public," said David Jenkins, director of conservation and public policy for American Canoe Association. "We expect the Park Service will undertake an open planning process that legitimately addresses this issue and takes public sentiment into account."

"A public process is the appropriate forum in which to resolve issues concerning motorized uses within the Colorado River corridor while preserving the canyon's unparalleled wilderness character," said Liz Boussard, an individual plaintiff in the lawsuit. "We are glad the Park Service agreed to address these issues in the upcoming plan. After two decades of impasse, it is time for the American people to have a voice in resolving the debate over the use of motorboats and helicopters in proposed wilderness."

The settlement commits the Park Service to restarting the Colorado River Management Plan within 120 days and completing the plan in 2004. Although conservation groups pressured the park to merge the river plan with the park's 1998 Draft Wilderness Management Plan, the Park Service retained the option to prepare these plans consecutively.

"The Colorado River forms the backbone of the park's 1.1 million acres of proposed wilderness" said Kim Crumbo, an individual

Clockwise:

John Bachrach contemplates the canyon, Richard Martin, current president of the GCPBA, Tom Martin, former president of the GCPBA, photos by Jason Robertson^o.

plaintiff in the lawsuit and the park's former wilderness coordinator. "We feel strongly that the river and wilderness management plans should be combined into one cohesive document. To do otherwise does not make sense because river issues are tied directly with wilderness issues and vice versa."

"The settlement is significant because all the parties to the lawsuit — conservation and private boating groups, the Park Service, and commercial river outfitters — agree it is important to restart a public planning process now," said Randall Rasmussen, program manager for National Parks Conservation Association. "We have confidence in the current park superintendent to guide the public through what no one doubts will be a controversial process concerning the future of the very heart and soul of the Grand Canyon."

Three Arizona residents and one resident of Oregon also were plaintiffs in the lawsuit.

See www.americanwhitewater.org/archive/article/348/ for more information.

Grand Canyon Lawsuit & Settlement Recap

The Grand Canyon settlement was a home run for American Whitewater.

The settlement met or exceeded our objectives, and was only the second time in more than 20 years that the Park Service responded to boaters by making substantive concessions. The first time the Park blinked was in 1997 when they were forced to reduce and simplify visitor fees in the Grand Canyon after American Whitewater's Access Director Rich Hoffman testified to Congress about the poor fee management in the Canyon.

While we would have loved to reassess the allocation and other permit management issues directly through this suit that was not practical, and could not be reconciled with our overriding goal to protect the public's voice in managing boating through the Canyon through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

American Whitewater's legal objectives in filing the suit were to get an order to: (1) Restart the Colorado River Management Plan (CRMP); (2) Comply with applicable law including the Organic Act, Wilderness Act, NPS Concessions Policy Act, Administrative Procedures Act, Management Policies, management plans, and Director's Orders; (3) Reduce or eliminate non-conforming uses in potential or proposed Wilderness areas (motorized rafts, helicopter exchanges); (4) Equitably reallocate permits between the commercial and private sector and provide a mechanism for their distribution; and (5) Recover attorney's fees.

The settlement meets these objectives by requiring the Park Service to: (1) Provide a no-motors river management alternative in the CRMP Environmental Impact Statement (EIS); (2) Fund and commence river manage-

ment planning within four months; (3) Reassess commercial and private boater use levels and allocation; (4) Hold public river management meetings in at least four major cities; (5) Assess the range of public services provided by concession outfitters; (6) File a notice of intent to revise the Backcountry Management Plan including use in proposed wilderness areas; and (7) Pay our attorney fees.

In addition, the settlement accomplishes several other things for the boating community; it: (1) Benefits the public by getting the Park Service's planning back on track quickly and affirms the public's voice by law under NEPA; (2) Allocates unused primary season commercial use days to the private boating community use in the secondary seasons through 2005; (3) Promises a new river management plan by the end of 2004; (4) Ensures that the controversial helicopter landings at Whitmore Wash will be reassessed; (5) and that there will be a complete re-

view of the impacts of motorized watercraft.

Notably this settlement is not an admission of wrongdoing by the Park Service, and protects our option to sue in the event the Park Service reneges on the agreement or fails to adequately address the issues related to allocation and permits. Furthermore, the settlement preserves the outfitter's current allocation and levels of use by contract for up to three years while the revised CRMP is completed.

Now the real work begins. American Whitewater looks forward to working with the new Superintendent, Joe Alston. Superintendent Alston is one of us; he is a boatman and has been down the Colorado through the Canyon at least three times, and has demonstrated a real interest in solving the management issues on the Grand. Stay tuned to the website and American Whitewater Journal for more information about where we go from here.

have fun stay dry




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A Golden Water Opportunity (CO)

American Whitewater is filing an amicus brief supporting the water right application for the City of Golden Whitewater Course. The course consists of several man-made drops in Clear Creek as it flows through downtown Golden.

The course has been a huge hit, and has hosted many local, national and international whitewater events. Golden settled with all objectors to its water rights application except for the State of Colorado (CWCB and State Engineer's Office) who remained opposed for policy reasons.

The State has appealed the Golden Whitewater Course water right to the Colorado Supreme Court. Some of the State's arguments, if they prevail, would eliminate any such water rights for recreation, even those consistent with the new legislation. Many organizations and public entities intend to file one or more amicus briefs in support of Golden. These entities include counties, cities, recreationists, water districts and environmentalists.

At trial, Golden was successful in acquiring the requested water right up to 1000 cfs. The drop structures "control and divert" the flows within the channel to create whitewater features, which are then applied to "beneficial use" by the boaters. Control and beneficial use are the main requirements for any water right. However, some traditional water buffalo types in Colorado were worried by this claim. Although a hydropower plant would pose no problem, a 1000 cfs kayak course is viewed as a threat to traditional water interests by some entities, even though it does not consume or pollute, and all water is available for re-diversion downstream.

The Golden case is one of many claims by cities for recreational water rights, including two cases going to trial for the Towns of Vail and Breckenridge in May, 2002 and pending water right applications for the cities of Pueblo and Longmont. Meanwhile, legislative changes have been passed by the water buffalos in an effort to allow the state to completely control such in-channel, recreational water rights. American Whitewater's representatives opposed that legislation and helped to get it watered down, but not defeated.

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Closed Door Meetings on Canadian Hydro Threats

In January 2002 American Whitewater reported on the serious threats of new hydropower construction to dozens of rivers in Canada. Later that month we learned that the regional government would be listening to the hydro promoter in closed session, on January 30th and that the boating community would have our own closed session with them on February 6th. As we go to press, we are expecting to learn of the regional government's decision at the regular monthly meeting on February 20th. This represents our best and easiest chance to shut down the process. If the hydropower promoter is rejected outright on the 20th, then this threat goes no further, at least for the immediate future. But if the promoter's vision is accepted, in whole or in part, then the provincial government review process kicks in, with public environmental hearings and the like. Obviously we want to stop him in his tracks, now. So, check out our website or read the January issue of American Whitewater to learn how you can help!

107th Congress on the Web

Find out what Congress is doing that will affect you and your ability to enjoy America's rivers. American Whitewater is tracking several pieces of legislation affecting river recreation, conservation, and hydropower relicensing during the second session of the 107th Congress. We will be providing monthly updates at www.americanwhitewater.org/archive/article/339/.

Skykomish Access Projects Proceed (WA)

Put-in: American Whitewater volunteers, Rich Bowers, Jennie Goldberg, Chris Joosse, and Thomas O'Keefe met with Washington state officials in January to discuss the access situation at the Sunset Falls put-in. They are optimistic that seasonal access can be worked out so as not to conflict with the fish transport operations around the Falls.

Take-out: Meanwhile, American Whitewater staff are preparing to meet with the Washington State Congressional delegation in Washington to ask for funding for the purchase of a take-out. We are seeking to purchase property from (1) a willing seller, (2) with matching federal funds, (3) to be developed and transferred to a regional land management agency for permanent access. American Whitewater established the Sky Fund in 2001 and is committed to spending the funds appropriately on access projects in the Skykomish region (see <http://www.americanwhitewater.org/archive/article/187/> to make a donation).

Write to Reopen Middle Fork Snoqualmie Access (WA)

In December 2001, American Whitewater wrote to the King County Council asking the county to reopen the traditional access point on the Middle Fork Snoqualmie River. This site was used by recreational river users for many years before road reconstruction blocked access with a berm and ditch. Restoring access to the river requires only that the ditch be filled in and that an old roadbed be converted into a short trail to the river. If this issue is of personal interest to you, please take the time to write the King County

Council c/o Larry Phillips, King County Council, 400 4th Avenue, Seattle WA 98104.

Round 2 Goes to Landowner on Gunnison (CO)

Gunnison, CO - After being allowed by the court to intervene, American Whitewater lost our second round gambit in the legal battle defending your "right to float" Colorado's rivers and streams. Judge J. Steven Patrick in Gunnison County District Court dismissed our attempt to use criminal trespass law to determine civil trespass. This decision has little effect on our suit. Jay Kenney, a practicing attorney, retiring president of American Whitewater and current president of the Colorado White Water Association observed, "A win on this issue would have been nice, but was not central to our defense. Boaters continue to defend the public's rights and privileges to float Colorado rivers without touching the bed, banks or land of private property owners." American Whitewater continues to seek funding to defend your right to float Colorado's rivers and streams. Please make a contribution at www.americanwhitewater.org/donate/ or call 866-Boat-4-AW.

Brown's Canyon Permits Delayed (CO)

In December, American Whitewater member Mike Harvey reported from the State Parks Board Meeting in Ft. Collins that the Board decided to table Browns Canyon permitting for one year. This means that the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area (AHRA) will do more thorough headcounts in 2002 to determine if private boaters have in fact met the permit implementation triggers set forth in the management plan. Boaters have one year to disperse use on weekends. In other words if you have always done Browns on the 4th of July weekend, you might consider paddling somewhere else this year. Meanwhile, the permitting committee will continue to work on a model permit system.

Amicalola and Etowah Access Resolved (GA)

Good news! In January 2002, the private landowner at the Etowah take-out called American Whitewater to announce their access solution for preserving the Etowah take-out. The owner is asking for \$2 per person on the honor system, envelopes are provided at the site. There is a gate to the parking area that is closed, but unlocked, during the day. While it is disappointing that the state dropped the ball and failed to renew their lease on the site to provide free public access, we are excited by the owner's continued interest in providing public access to the Etowah and Amicalola Rivers!

Temporary Parking Closure on the Green (NC)

The Gallimore Road access area for the Green River in North Carolina has been closed temporarily during January and February

2002 to reduce destruction of the parking area during the muddy season. The operative word is "temporary," and, while inconvenient, this closure is really no big deal. The two public spaces remain open by the trailhead, and there is parking up the road (just don't park in the grassy yards). Drive down, drop your boats off, drive up, park at a pull off on Big Hungry Road, and then bike or hike back down; this adds a couple hundred yards of fitness to your day, but is really no big deal. If you're capable of boating the Upper Green or Narrows in the winter, then you should be capable of accepting this minor inconvenience for two months. The landowners have been very cooperative during the past year; let's work with them to protect the parking for summer. At press time, the lot is scheduled to re-open in March.

Upper Yough Sang Run Management a Success! (MD)

Thanks to everyone who visited and contributed to the upkeep of the Upper Yough Sang Run Put-in. Since adopting the property from Maryland's Department of Natural Resources last summer, we have raised just over \$1000 to manage and maintain the site. We would like to especially thank Charlie Walbridge, Tim Spangler, and Hal Perez for going the extra mile and volunteering to mow the grass and perform other maintenance duties. If you are interested in learning how you can contribute in 2002, please contact Jason Robertson at 866-Boat-4-AW or Jason@awa.org.

EBMUD to Reopen River Access at Middle Bar (CA)

"We're delighted to see East Hay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) moving to build facilities that will help people use the Middle Bar reach of the Mokelumne River," said Pete Bell of the Foothill Conservancy, regarding EBMUD's action of November 27, 2001. On that day, EBMUD's Planning Committee directed utility staff to move forward with review steps that will likely lead to construction of take-out, parking, and sanitary facilities near the Middle Bar Bridge in 2002. This is a reversal of a decades-long policy in which EBMUD has done its best to prevent the public from using the Mokelumne River between Highway 49 and Pardee Reservoir. The decision is also a testimony to the fact that the public never gave up on their dream of access to this California classic.

American Whitewater began working with the Foothills Conservancy in 1999 when several kayakers were charged with trespassing for running this river. In late 1999 and early 2000, district attorneys in Amador and Calaveras County refused to prosecute whitewater kayakers who had paddled down to the Middle Bar Bridge. By then, the State Attorney General's Office had also become involved in the river access issue on behalf of the State Lands Commission and the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors and the city councils of all five cities in Amador County had expressed strong support for Middle Bar access. In June 2001, EBMUD's board adopted a set of principles to guide its staff on this issue. A series of meetings and continued pressure from the Attorney General's Office and Foothill Conservancy led to the decision to open access in November. Conservancy

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President Katherine Evatt said, "When you consider how long people have worked to gain access to the Middle Bar reach, it's amazing how far we've come in the last two years! We're very grateful to Deputy Attorney General Lisa Trankley and to the organizations, citizens, and officials who helped move things to this point."

Fishermen's Eddy Improvements Proposed (VA)

Great Falls, Virginia - In November 2001, Superintendent Audrey Calhoun announced the availability of the Environmental Assessment (EA) for "Improvements to Trails and Overlooks at Great Falls Park, Virginia." The park is seeking to improve the overlooks, which are "in a deteriorating condition, visually incompatible with the surroundings, and inaccessible to disabled visitors." Several alternatives recommend improving the Fisherman's Eddy access trail for kayakers; however the Park's preferred alternative (C1) recommends deferring improvement of this trail "pending future investigations to determine whether such improvements are sustainable and feasible." American Whitewater is supporting this alternative with the caveat that Fishermen's Eddy trail safety improvements be implemented immediately.

The trail is the put-in for the Rocky Island Loop. Boaters who visit the Potomac from the Virginia side generally park, hike down and launch at Fishermen's Eddy, paddle to surf the nationally famous Rocky Island Surf Wave or S-Turn Hole where the Potomac Fest Rodeo is held, and complete the loop by hiking back to their cars. It is often said that the hike down to Fishermen's Eddy is the most

dangerous part of a whitewater run on the Potomac. Visit our website for updates.

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Events

2002 American Whitewater Grassroots Events

National Paddling Film Festival	February 23-25 th	Lexington, KY
Bangs Falls Rodeo	April 6 th	Bangs Falls, Nova Scotia
Styrofoam Cup	April 14 th	Bryson City, NC
Stony Creek Rendezvous	April 20-21 st	Johnstown, PA
American River Festival	April 27-28 th	Placerville, CA
Tim Gavin River Festival	April 27-28 th	Harpers Ferry, WV
French Broad River Festival	May 11-12 th	Hot Springs, NC
East River Whitewater Festival	June 1-2 nd	Sheet Harbor, Nova Scotia
Big Fork Whitewater Festival	June 1-2 nd	Big Fork, MT
Womens' Invitational	July 6-7 th	Charlemont, MA
Black River Festival	July 27-28 th	Watertown, NY
Deerfield River Whitewater Festival	August 2-4 th	Charlemont, MA
"Don't Call This a Festival" Beaver River	TBA	TBA
Gauley Whitewater Festival	September 21 st	Summersville, WV
Ohiopyle Falls Race	September 28-29 th	Ohiopyle, PA
Russell Fork Rendezvous	October 5-6 th	Haysi, VA

Other Events

Gore Canyon Race	August 16 th	Kremmling, CO
Cheat River Festival	May 4-5 th	Albright, WV



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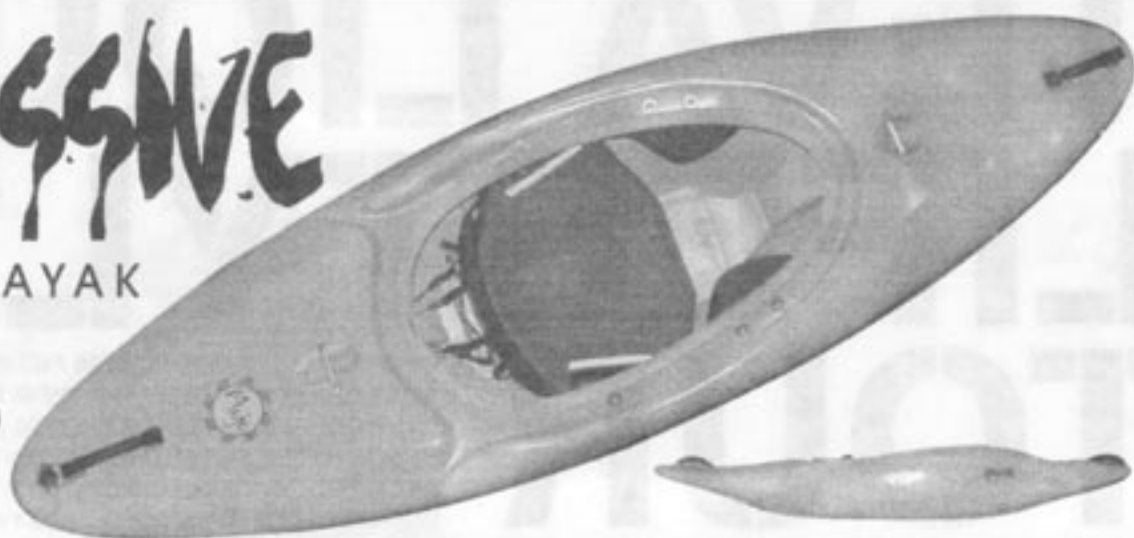
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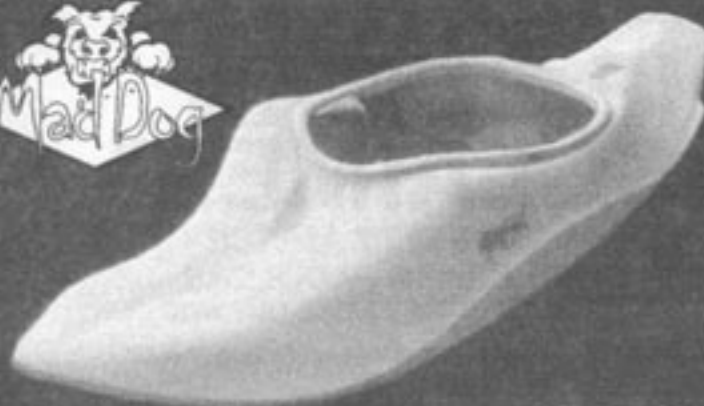
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TEVA TOUR Update

Michael Phelan, Events Director

American Whitewater and Teva have teamed up to deliver a series of the thirteen best whitewater events all culminating with the first ever National Championships. The number of events participating in the series was reduced in mid-January in order to maximize the effectiveness of American Whitewater's events program. The series includes a completely restructured competition framework that includes four geographic regional circuits located in the Northeast, Southeast, Rocky Mtns., and Pacific Coast. Each regional circuit includes three events. Athletes will receive points at each event to earn a spot to compete at the "Teva Whitewater National Championship." For the first time in the history of freestyle paddling athletes will gain and lose pro status based on how they perform at the Teva National Championships. For more information, check out www.americanwhitewater.org.

A combination of factors created the opportunity for restructuring. Since last August, the AW Events Staff have been meeting with athletes, sponsors, and event organizers to breathe new life into AW's competitive series. Many regarded the new model to be just what the doctor ordered. Components of the new events program reestablish AW's commitment to using its events program as a platform to promote its conservation and access work.

The fourteen events that were invited to participate in the series

were selected based on their consistency with American Whitewater's mission, their ability to generate revenue to support AW's work, the overall quality of the event including river features, event organization, venue, and the amount of exposure the event could generate for the event's sponsors. When selecting events to remain part of AW's series, AW attempted to maintain a balance of larger and smaller events and events that will allow AW to reach a wide cross-section of paddlers.

Like any organization, American Whitewater is sometimes forced to make hard decisions and this decision to modify the AW event's schedule was necessary for the long-term health of American Whitewater's programs. AW is hoping that independent events will remain connected with AW in a way that demonstrates the event organizer's belief in AW, as the only full-time whitewater conservation and access organization. AW is committed to conserving and restoring America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely.

If remaining connected with AW is a priority for an independent event, events are encouraged to consider AW's Grassroots Events Program, which offers specific membership benefits and establishes a working agreement between the event and AW. The Grassroots Events Program will be the pool of events that AW will consider when adjusting its events schedule in the coming years.

Teva Tour 2002 sanctioned by American Whitewater

Northeast

	Date	Location
Teva Tariffville Rodeo	April 12-14 th	East Granby, CT
Teva Moose Extreme Freestyle Games	April 27 th	Old Forge, NY
Ottawa Rodeo	TBA	TBA

Southeast

Coosa River Whitewater Festival	May 17 th -19 th	Wetumpka, AL
Potomac Whitewater Festival	May 31 st -June 2 nd	Great Falls, VA
Gauley Rolling Rodeo	September 20 th & 22 nd	Summersville, WV

Pacific Coast

Trinity Rodeo	April 13-14 th	Big Flat, CA
Teva Kern Whitewater Festival	April 19-21 st	Kernville, CA
Teva Oregon Cup	May 4-11 th	Maupin, OR

Rocky Mountain

Teva Wyoming Whitewater Championships	June 1-2 nd	Jackson Hole, WY
3 rd Rocky Mountain Event	TBA	TBA
Teva Animas River Days	June 7-9 th	Durango, CO

Open

Teva Wausau Double Up Challenge	August 23-25 th	Wausau, WI
Teva Tour Whitewater National Championships	October 10-13 th	Ducktown, TN

For more information on the Teva Tour and National Championships go to www.americanwhitewater.org

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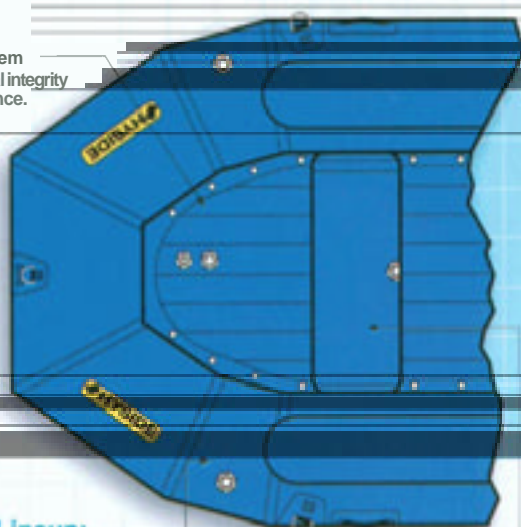
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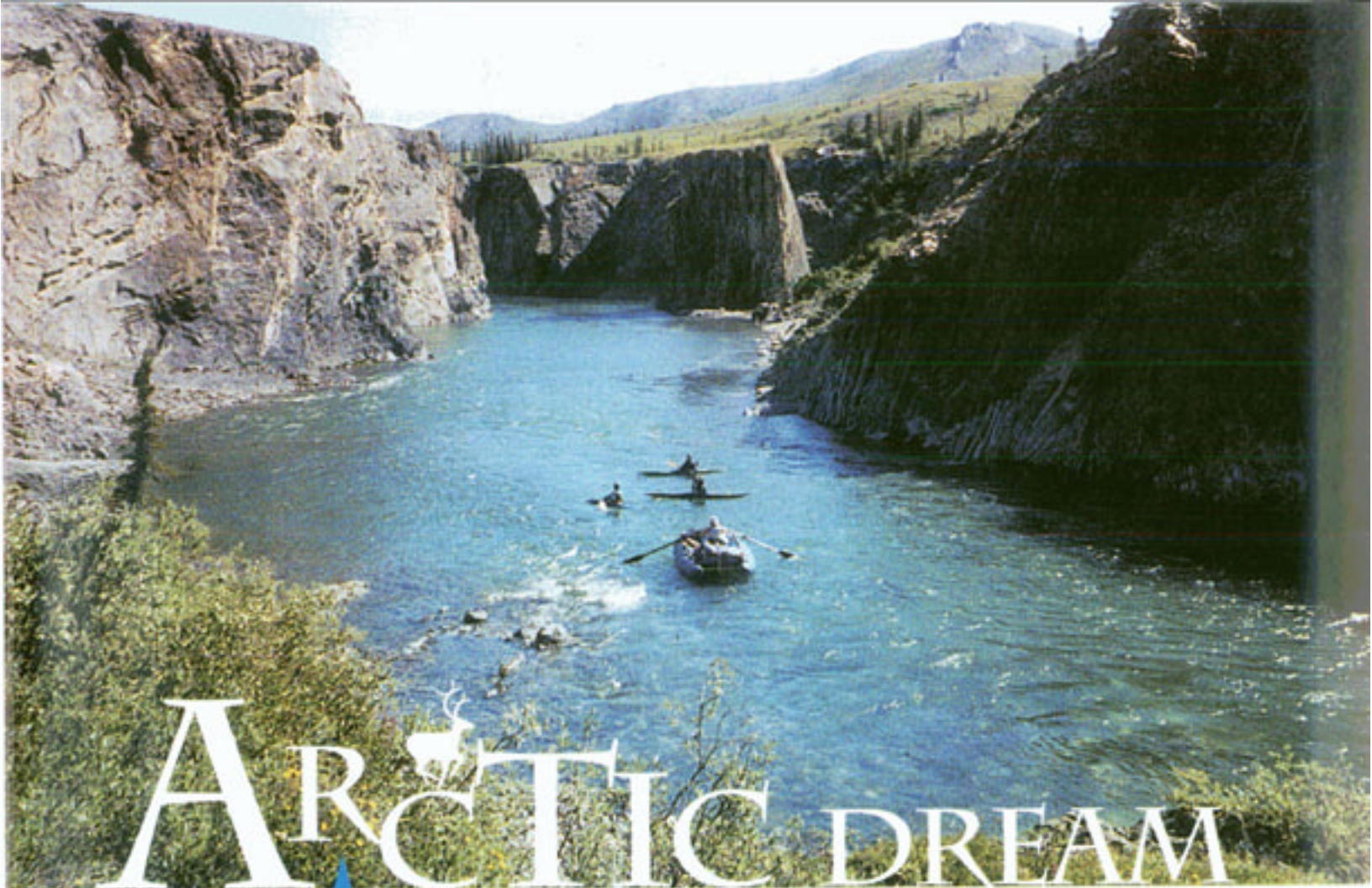
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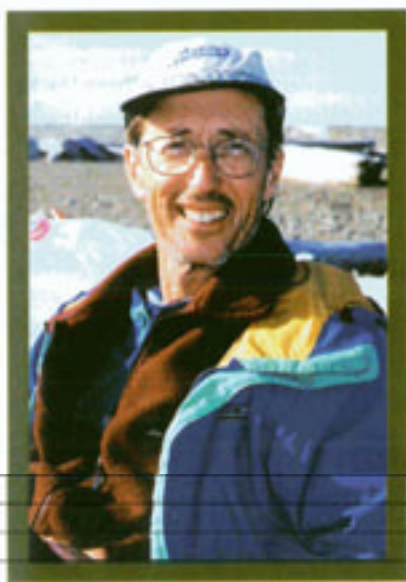
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ARCTIC DREAM

KAYAKING YUKON'S FIRTH RIVER

By Mac Thornton



The author enjoying life on Nunluk Spit.
Photo by Joe Bryson.
Above: Firth River party of five. Photo by
Vicky Hoover.

A cold wind blows strongly across the Firth River on the next to last day of our trip. Here, the river gradually descends Yukon Territory's coastal plain to the Arctic Ocean. We are picking our way down braided channels separated by sand and pebble islands. Joe Bryson is in the lead. He paddles to the right bank to check out a huge pile of fur — something which has died right there on the shore. When he pulls up to it, a shaggy ear pops up on the far side of the fur pile, and then another ear. Suddenly, there is a great commotion and a cloud of dust. We can see Joe's paddle wind milling, as he heads fast in the opposite direction.

As the dust starts to settle, a monolithic, ancient looking beast rises from the ground. Staring at us from little eyes beneath short, menacing horns, joined at their bases, what the hell?? We'll get back to this later.

The closer we get to the ocean with its icebergs and ice fields, the colder and harder the wind blows. It sends gray clouds scudding from the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska west towards the MacKenzie River delta to the east. The Firth, now in its delta reach, is beginning to braid extensively, but maintains its brisk pace. Our two hardy 63 year-olds, Jack Hession and Vicky Hoover, are manning our single cataraft. They are continuously pinballing off the gravel bars, as the strong wind makes it impossible to keep the raft in the center of the current. I get out of my kayak and climb into the raft to help push it away from the banks and shallow water. My wife, Molly Carr and Joe stay in their kayaks, with Joe towing mine behind him. Our little party of five must get to the coast this day and paddle a mile offshore to a long sand spit to meet our float plane the next morning. As long as the polar bears, which occasionally stop by the spit, are not there!

But at this point we come up against a massive sheet of ice at least a mile wide, covering most of the delta, with most of the river flowing underneath. This is neither

KAYAKING YUKON'S FIRTH RIVER



Top Down:
Twin Otter on the tundra bench next to the river. Firth River valley neat the put-in. Molly Carr at possibly the northern most surf wave on the North American mainland. Camp at Caribou Creek on the Firth.
Right: Jack Hessim runs the cataract through the hole at Sheep Slot.

glacial ice nor sea ice. It is called afeis, formed, during the colder months, by the river itself as it continually freezes and overflows itself repeatedly. Ever immune to cold and discomfort, Jack hops in a kayak despite being **dressed in only jeans**, a shortie **wetsuit** and his **worn** windbreaker. He paddles off to scout ahead while the rest of us hunker down in the wind and spitting rain.

Just within our binocular range, we see Jack pull over and beach the kayak. He looks ahead for a while. Then he wades back up through the braids and across the gravel bars to report there is a way past the afeis to the far left, he thinks. We shove off and eventually make it around the afeis to the mouth of the Firth. Then we need to paddle a mile offshore across a bay to Nunaluk Spit, but if we misjudge the power of the wind, we will be blown down the coast. Luckily, the tide is low, and the water shallow. Joe and I can literally **walk on the bottom** pushing the cataraft **and the crew** pushes and rows it to the spit. We are all cold and exhausted when we finally get there, and we empty the raft and brace it up on edge to break the constant cold wind. Vicky immediately starts cooking up hot soup.

Later we have our first fire of the entire trip, made with **ocean driftwood**. On the Firth we had no fires because they are against park rules. The sun never sets here in July. It travels an elliptical pattern, higher at noon in the south and close to the horizon at midnight. On the spit, as the sunlight mellows a bit in the evening, the moon comes up. We warm ourselves at the fire and sip Yukon Jack. No polar bears. Life is good.

Our last day is stunningly clear and bright, with a magnificent view before us from the spit. We face the mainland. The vast coastal plain stretches right to left, with the British Mountains in the background, through which the Firth has carved a rugged whitewater slot canyon. We can easily see back up the entire 15-mile course across the coastal plain we traveled the day before, back to the hills where we had made our previous camp. Behind us, the icebergs bob in the ocean with a seal floating here and there. This is all part of Canada's **Iwvavik National Park**, which means "place of birth" in the native Inuvialuit language. It was so named to celebrate the remarkable biologic productivity of these lands. Under Canadian law, Iwvavik National Park will be preserved forever from oil and other development.

Twenty-five miles to the west, just across an invisible border, the same coastal plain is part of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. There, Alaskan politicians and their oil industry backers have been waging a lengthy campaign to open the coastal plain to oil and gas leasing. Alaska's Congressman Don Young claims that the Refuge's coastal plain is really a wasteland. He criticizes people who defend the refuge without having been here. I doubt if he has **REALLY** been here. Oil pumps in the foreground would certainly make it more like West Texas.

Jack suggested the Firth for its unique landscapes, transparent water, the chance to see Arctic wildlife, and its remoteness. According to Parks Canada, the Firth "may be the oldest navigable river in Canada as this part of the continent was missed by glaciation during the last ice age 18,000 years ago." Its diversity is displayed in four distinct reaches—afeis, mountain, canyon, and delta—with the Class III-IV+ whitewater in the mountain and canyon reaches. In 2001, a record number of outsiders visited Iwvavik National Park — a total of 150, most of whom ran the Firth.

Eight days prior to our arrival on the spit, we depart the far northern Mackenzie River town of Inuvik in the Northwest Territories in a Twin Otter. Our flight path leads through fog most of the way to the Park. But as we come over the last hill, the





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KAYAKING YUKON'S FIRTH RIVER



Top down:
Joe Bryson at Sheep Slot Rapid, Firth River. Cooking dinner at
midnight...Joe Bryson, Molly Carr, Vicky Hoover, Jack Hessim.
Molly Carr and Joe Bryson standing on an aufeis.
Photo by MacThornton.

Firth valley is clear and the plane sets us down on the tundra bench next to the river. Half an hour later the plane is up over the hills and the sound of its motors dies away, leaving only the murmur of the river and the breeze rustling the carpets of wild flowers and tundra grass. We make camp, prepare dinner, and look up to see six caribou wade into the river. With only a few scraggly black spruces around, we can see wildlife approach and leave until they are specks in the distance on the far green slopes.

We hike upriver to view the vast aufeis field in the upper Firth valley. The ice appears to stretch all the way to the Alaska border, with the Firth incised the whole way in a slot canyon made entirely of ice. The next day, we walk up and then back from the river. A solitary grizzly sees us and sprints impressively straight up a steep hill. We return to camp and finish setting up the cataraft, which must carry two people and most of our gear. Perhaps the most important piece of equipment is our toilet, a mandate of our permit, which requires that we leave "absolutely nothing" behind. We shove off about 4 pm under sunny skies, and float for several hours with a steady current. Joe is out front and a caribou charges out of the brush, jumps in the water and swims right for him. He backs off and the caribou swims by, intent on getting to the other bank as quickly as possible. As "evening" approaches, the clouds come over, the temp sinks into the forties and the wind picks up. We reach camp at Joe Creek about 11pm and have a feast of fresh Arctic grayling at about 2 am. With the heavy clouds, the light is eerie and shadowy at this hour. Our sense of time is becoming irrelevant. We kick back for a day, sleep till noon, follow big wolf tracks, and hike the tall hill next to the river.

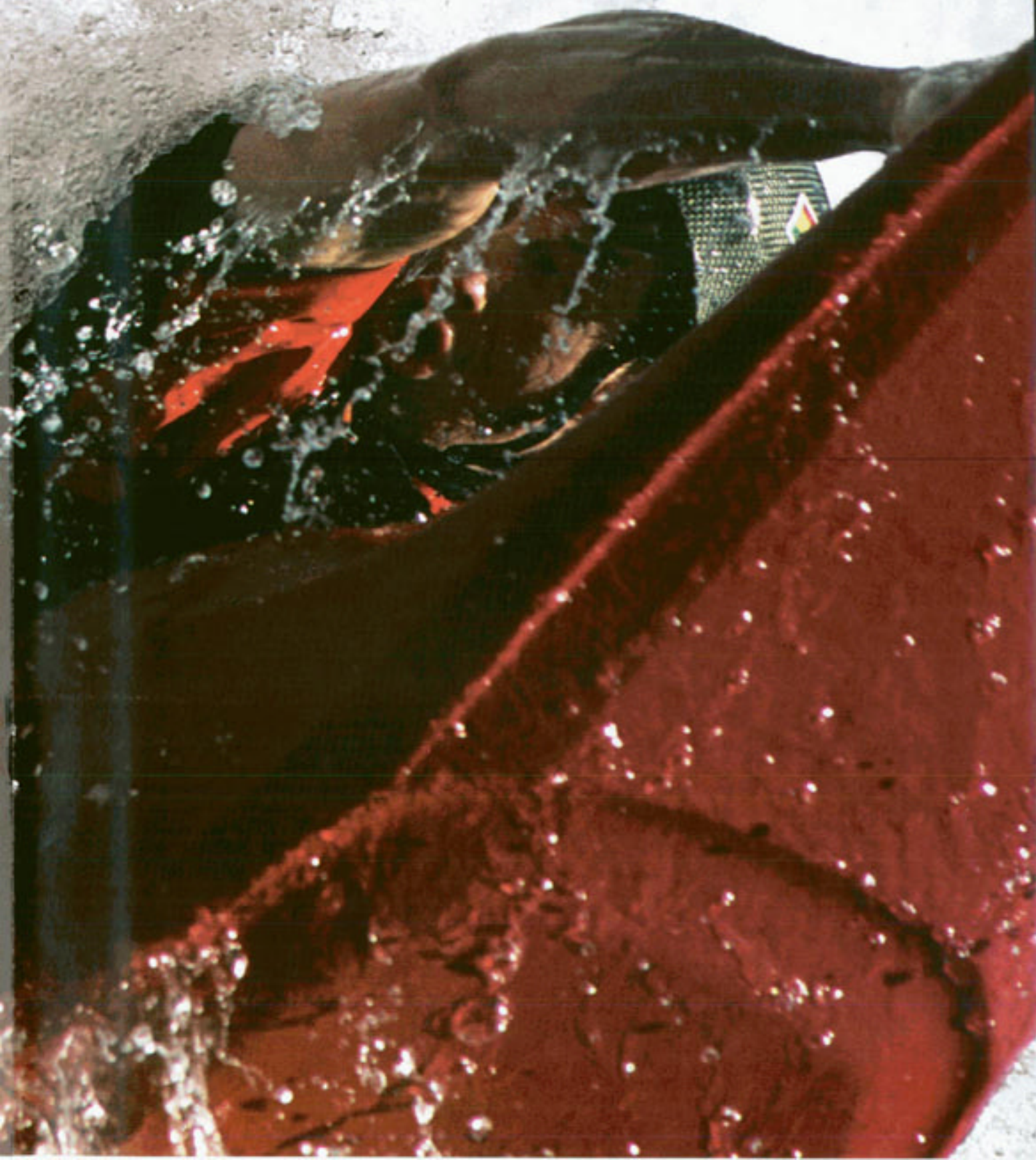
Now the first whitewater day. We shove off from Joe Creek and soon the walls rise up to 200 to 300 feet, the river (running at perhaps 1200 cfs) narrows and the current picks up. We pass a tributary canyon at Wolf Creek and see a funny-looking brown rock on the right bank. Then the rock moves. Hmm. It's a big grizzly feeding on a caribou kill and he is not anxious to leave. All the books say things like, "Do not approach female grizzlies with young," and "Do not antagonize feeding grizzlies." We pull over as close to the left shore as possible and wait. He eats, stares at us and snorts. Finally he walks back into an alder and willow patch and Joe says, "Mac, why don't you go check out the kill." Apparently, Joe has his eye on my portion of food at dinner. We all go down the left.

Just after lunch at a beautiful outcrop, we run our first significant rapid and have more whitewater fun approaching the crux rapids at Sheep Slot and Ram Rapid. Appropriately, just above the rapids we spot white Dall sheep on the hillside, protected from predators by their perches on impossible cliffs. Sheep Slot is an unexpectedly serious rapid; with two parallel holes, the second blocking 80% of the river from the left side. It is very mean looking and has an active, ten foot long

▶ continued on page 61



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Today we had our first look at the rapids of the Cotahuasi. Yahoo! Scott, Randy and I paddled about five miles of continuous, Class IV+, sparkling clear whitewater. We stashed our boats and are now flying high as we hike out of the canyon and through the narrow streets of the ancient village. My mind is filled with euphoria and apprehension. Today was only the warm up for about a hundred miles of Class IV and V in a remote canyon.

The Cotahuasi River starts high in the Andes and follows the deepest canyon in the world through the Atacama desert to the Pacific ocean. The Village of Cotahuasi sits on the rim of this great canyon. There is an old Spanish Cathedral and cobblestone streets that are lined with adobe buildings. One of the merchants has a huge, old, clay jug that is full of the local wine. It is quite tasty, and we sample some while we practice our Spanish with the friendly locals.

My friends (including the late John Foss) had done the first descent of the Cotahuasi in

Downtown Cotahuasi ©J. Mattson



1994. I had missed out because of work. Their stories and photos have been on my mind ever since, and now, I am finally here. Now I feel apprehensive, but it is probably just my brain trying to keep me alive. If I listened to it all the time, I would stay home, get fat, and eventually die anyway. My life is good, and I don't want to throw it away, but I love the rivers, and these canyons are so incredible. The awesome gashes in the earth where so few have been are not easy places to be, but they are worth the effort. I have gathered notes from the '94 trip and have talked two of my friends into joining me. Randy Kennedy is a hardy member of our Team Advil, and Scott Young is a very strong young probe. It is a good team, and we have two more days of warm-up before we load our boats and head into the great gorge.

The next morning, we meet with Renee (our burro driver) and make plans for the portage of the big falls. This is an important part of our logistics, but we burn valuable daylight, so it is mid-morning when we hike

Cotahuasi



The Gem of the Andies

Story and photos by John Mattson

Scott Young in Last Gorge ©J. Mattson



Cotahuasi



Scott Young in Flatwater Canyon ©J. Mattson

back into the canyon.

The next section of the river flows through a box canyon with a sieve, so we carry our boats up a very steep trail. The weather is hot and sunny as we huff and puff up the brushy trail. It eventually gets easier, and we find a path back down to the river. The river is now Class V, and we have about three miles to the next bridge. It is great to be back in the water, and we are feeling confident until we reach a very long Class V+ rapid. One quick look, and I head for the right bank. It is a nasty bushwack, but it looks a lot safer than the rapid. Scott and Randy go left and try to run part of the rapid. We meet in the middle at a drop that cannot be portaged.

I am photographing Scott and Randy when the meter on my camera reminds us that the day is nearly over. The weather is great on the equator, but the days are short and this one is about to run out.

We continue down some classic big pool drops, looking longingly for a bridge where we plan to stop for the day. There is another solid Class V that cannot be portaged, but Scott finds a line, and we follow in the twilight. He runs a very big drop in near darkness, and we continue running Class III around a very scary corner in the dusk. Scott has never bivouacked and thinks that we can make it to the bridge. The river gets easier for a little ways, and then we drift blindly into a Class IV with a large hole at the bottom. We all barely make it through and decide to stop short of our goal at the bridge. There is enough wood for a good fire, and we share our remaining lunch. The air is chilly, but the fire is warm; the stars are bright and the night passes. It is downright pleasant compared to the mountain bivouacs I did when I was young and foolish.

We start again at dawn, and it takes another half-hour to get to the bridge. There is



Scott Young and Renee ©J. Mattson

Scott Young in Flatwater Canyon ©J. Mattson



another solid Class V section between this bridge and the falls, but Team Advil is tired, and a very reluctant Scott Young goes with the flow. There is a good trail, and we drag our boats to Renee's farm. He has been worried and is very happy to see us. We agree to postpone the burro-assisted portage around the big falls for one day, and head off to Cotahuasi.

The trail is not marked, but it is the only one on river left and seems to be well used. We are tired from the bivy and the sun is hot, but we trudge along. This hike gives us a great view of this barren land and the canyon that we will soon enter. After three hours of hard walking, we reach a small village and are greeted by Segundo Flores. "The village of Cotahuasi is not here. It is over there," exclaims Segundo. We have taken the wrong trail! We laugh in pain, and he feeds us potatoes with eggs and fig juice and shows us his pet snake. He has a great home with lots of chickens and a huge garden with many fruit trees. The lunch and rest are good for our spirits, and we head back to the river. Walking down the hill is easy, and we reach the bottom by dusk.

We are very tired, but at least one of us really needs to get to the village of Cotahuasi. Randy decides to stay at the ranch, so we bid farewell at the gate and leave him with his electronic translator for company. We all hope that Renee's dogs will understand his Spanish.

Scott and I are now very tired and my feet are sore, but there is a full moon and the correct trail is easy to follow. The last three days have seen lots of scouting and portaging, and my new river shoes are wearing holes in my feet. The moleskin ran out on day two and duct tape is a poor substitute, but we

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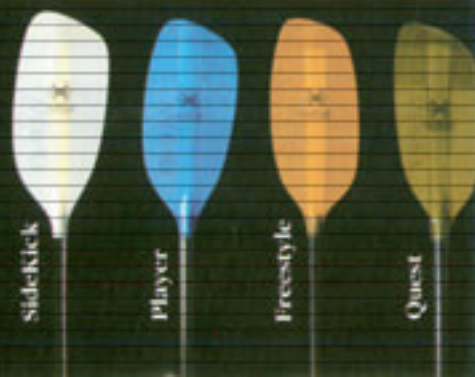
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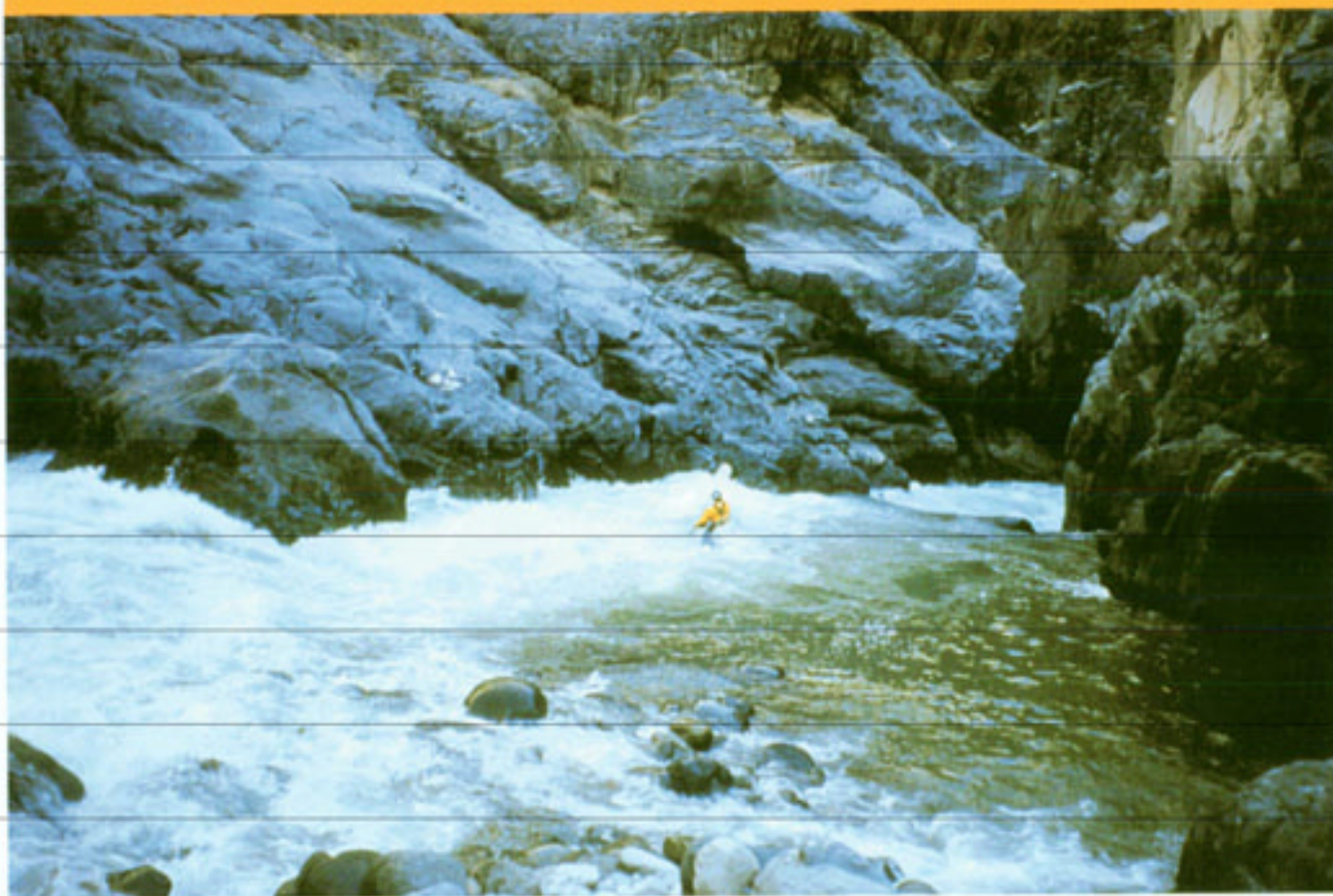
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Cotahuasi



Scott Young just before Bivouac ©J. Mattson

trudge onward. The canyon seems magical in the full moon. We can see the lights of the village now, but the trail seems to go on forever as we trudge along in an almost hypnotic state.

Suddenly, the trance is broken by a loud growl- we are being attacked by two wild dogs! I shine my headlamp into their eyes and we grab rocks to throw at them. Our hearts are pounding, but the tactic works and we pass without harm. I am completely exhausted when we finally reach the hotel, but I must take care of my feet. After this task is completed, I immediately fall asleep and I dream about wild rivers and deep canyons.

It is well worth the effort to be in Cotahuasi. We awake refreshed and take care of our last minute errands, which include obtaining medical supplies for my feet. They are feeling much better now, and I switch to wearing my sandals.

Renee meets us for lunch and helps us carry our gear to his mom's house. We are greeted by a very fit and friendly 80-year-old woman who helps us load the burros. She has a big smile like her son and a face that reflects a long, good life.

Soon, we are back on the trail, chasing the loaded burros down the streets of Cotahuasi and back to Renee's farm.

It is great to see Randy again. Renee and his family take good care of us. We set up camp in his yard and have a marvelous dinner with his family. He has fresh fig juice and we have a little Jack Daniels. The combination is very tasty, and we hope the whiskey will kill the stomach bugs. We have been sampling lots of local food and are a bit nervous about our stomachs. It is a very pleasant evening and we fall asleep dreaming about the great adventure that will start tomorrow.

Renee wakes us early and gives us a tour of the big waterfall before breakfast. He tells us that he wants to kayak the falls when he is a very old man. On the way back, he shows us the rest of his farm... an incredible paradise in the bottom of the great canyon.

After breakfast, we load the burros and get ready for the big portage. Renee is nervous about the narrow trail and loads the boats very carefully. There is a large scar on one of the burro's backs caused by a kayak that was not loaded properly.

Renee shows us how to control the burros, and we head off on the narrow trail that is carved into the steep walls of the great

canyon. We walk behind the animals chanting "burro, burro" and guiding the kayaks around the sharp corners. The trail is very narrow with huge drop-offs and no guardrails.

Renee shows us where one of his mules had fallen to its death on a previous trip. Tears come to his eyes as he recalls the incident. Two groups had met on the trail, and his mule was pushed off by a burro. It had plunged bellowing into the river and had never been seen again.

The trail gives us an incredible view of the incredible canyon and the ominous looking whitewater that awaits us. We are about three or four thousand feet above the river, but the rapids still look big. The whitewater that we can see is called Flatwater Canyon, because the locals in Cotahuasi had told the first descent party that the river was very mellow after the big falls. It turned out to be solid V+, but the name stuck. The canyon is foreboding, but we continue on this trail of no return. As we head down to the river, there are some very steep switch-backs, and it is challenging to keep the kayaks from hitting the rock wall.

The last part of the trail to the river is so steep that the burros cannot traverse it. Renee

stops at the edge of a cliff in the middle of the desert. He assures us that there is a trail to the river. This man has become a good friend and his big smile and rolling accent are reassuring. We give him some presents and bid him farewell as he heads back up the rail with his burros.

We are truly in the middle of nowhere. The great desert, an empty canyon, and a mighty river will be our lives for the next five days. We sit and ponder the enormity of our situation for while, then shoulder our boats and head down the steep trail.

The wind is howling and the trail is steep and precarious. At one point a strong gust blows me over. I nearly drop my boat, but manage to grab a bush and gain my footing.

I wonder whose spirits are hovering over us in this strange wind. Could it be my old friend John Foss, who discovered this river and later died exploring another? Is he here to warn me, to help me, or maybe just to say hello? If I had dropped and lost my boat, I couldn't run the river, and I would have to hike out. But I didn't drop my boat, and the decision to run this river was made when I bought my ticket. We use ropes to lower the boats past the steepest portion of the trail and arrive at a beautiful and serene camp.

We have a long afternoon to try to relax and absorb our surroundings. After dinner



we find some comfortable rocks and watch the stars. There are no artificial lights or airplanes, and the stars are incredible. Tomorrow will be a hard day.

We start paddling early and soon reach a section of serious whitewater. We scout one long section and pick eddies to get out and scout again. I am still nervous, but it is good to be moving. The waiting is over and it is

Randy Kennedy in Flatwater Canyon ©J. Mattson

continued on page 79

Randy Kennedy in Last Gorge ©J. Mattson



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California's Kern River

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BY BRUCE GENEHAUX



In my efforts to minimize pressure before the trip even started, Janna and I had slept an extra hour and were slow leaving Las Vegas. As a result, by the time we reached the trailhead, we were three hours late for our meeting with Andy and Anita, our partners for our week-long hiking/kayaking adventure on the Kern River.

"We were just about to invoke plan B and go on our own," Andy said. "Glad you made it." He was understandably perturbed by my choice's impact on our schedule. He had our group's overall interest in mind and pushed to get us back on track.

Our shuttle to the trailhead took until midnight.

"The packers arrive at 5:30 am, have your stuff ready for them because they want to hike when it's cool," Andy instructed as he went to bed. We slept carside, under the flank of the Sierra Nevada, postponing packing for our Kern River expedition till morning.

In their book, *The Best Whitewater in California*, Stanley and Holbeck describe the headwaters of the Kern as "somewhat crazy. . . [having] overwhelming logistics . . . [and] incredible scenery." Snows on the flanks of 14,495-foot Mt. Whitney in the southern Sierra Nevada melt to form the headwaters of the Kern River, 160 miles from its near-sea level terminus in California's central valley. Incising a north-south aligned and mile-deep trench along the Kern Canyon Fault, its paddleable whitewater section descends 9,000 vertical feet over 100 miles (90 feet per mile). By comparison, the Colorado River through Grand Canyon descends only 2,000 vertical feet over its 250-mile length (eight feet per mile).

The lowest 60 miles of the Kern River course through flat cotton fields. The middle 60 miles are road accessed, whitewater paradise. The upper, 40-mile-long *Headwaters* section has been descended, on average, once a year since Reg Lake, Royal Robbins, and Doug Tompkins' pioneering first descent in 1981. Its rapids are uncharted, but have been rated Class V (the top end of whitewater difficulty) with most parties portaging 12 times around the difficult sections. The near-tree line put-in can be accessed either by hiking 40 miles up from the take-out or by hiking 20 miles over the three-mile-high crest of the Sierra Nevada. We chose the steeper approach.

This river trip epitomizes expedition kayaking in the Lower 48, something I had aspired to during the two years I lived in California. This trip would combine two activities about which I am passionate. I felt comfortable with uncharted whitewater at the upper end of the difficulty spectrum. I also loved mountaineering and had climbed



Anita, Andy, Janna and the author outside of Independence, California. June 1999. Photo by Bruce Genereaux.

a smattering of peaks near where this trip would take us.

Brutal approaches, complex logistics and unknown river character motivated us. My partner for this expedition, Andy Zimet, a Whitefish, Montana anesthesiologist, is a veteran of numerous first descents in British Columbia and multi-day, expedition-style first river descents and climbing ascents of 6,000 meter peaks in the Himalaya. He knew of the *Headwaters of the Kern* through campfire lore and his

intimate knowledge of North American geography. A mutual friend initiated contact and we planned the trip.

Andy never questioned my credentials. I presumed that he might have thought that anyone knowing and desiring to do the *Headwaters of the Kern* was also capable. A few e-mail's back and forth and a plan developed. Andy had researched the trip extensively, plotting out each day on 7.5-minute topographic maps, highlighting the highest-gradient sections, arranging for permits and hiring packers to assist with loads.

We would start near Independence, California, hike over the Sierra crest at 12,000-foot Shepherd Pass and access the river at its highest navigable point. We planned for conditions ranging from desert heat to alpine snow. He expected we would kayak 50 miles after hiking 20 miles to the headwaters in seven nights and eight days. Our greatest distance from a road would be 30 miles. Our loads would be about 50 pounds of food and camping gear and 50 pounds of kayak and paddling gear each.

Anita Zimmerman, Andy's partner and Janna, my high school sweetheart, would accompany us, carrying backpacks while hiking the river-parallel trail by day, camping with us at night. Both Janna and Anita were novice backcountry travelers and, despite having been told what to expect, were taking a leap of faith by joining Andy and me on this trip. I had confidence in Janna's physical strength. After five days driving cross-country, I was looking forward to spending another week with her, having found that we were a super fit philosophically.

Day 1: Symmes Creek Trailhead (6,000 feet) to Anvil Camp (10,000 feet)

The low groan of the packer's pickup pulling into the lot invaded my sleep. Peering out of my sleeping bag, I saw the first light of dawn hitting the line of jagged peaks above. Janna looked too and said with some apprehension in her voice, "Is that where we're going?"

"Yeah, the trail goes up there," I said pointing in the general direction of the trail, reluctant to reveal the reality of what we were about to undertake — 6,000 vertical feet of hiking — well beyond what was visible — followed by miles of descent to the river. I had sold her this trip as a hike through scenic mountains punctuated by my vision of a moonlight sled from the pass to the river in my kayak.

"We're not even ready for the packers," Janna groaned.

Anita came over and pitched in as we dumped grocery bags filled with innumerable bags of beans, rice, oatmeal, gorp, salami and gear out of our car and onto a large tarp. She helped us weed out unnecessary items. Andy glanced with skepticism at our heavy foods. I could sense that he was wondering: "Who have I chosen to do this trip with?"

"Do you think we need all of this cheese? What about the peanut butter, and the gorp?" Janna asked.

"Leave 'em behind, too heavy," Andy advised.

"You don't need two rolls of this, Janna!" said Anita, bringing to the fore the reality that some creature comforts would have to be left behind. Janna's face fell momentarily, but she remained game.

"What about these ice axes?" I asked Andy.

"I'm not concerned with the snow other than making sure Anita gets over it easily. I don't think we'll need them," Andy replied.

"Please bring your pack over here to be weighed," requested the head packer. With nary a wisp of fat on his 45-year-old frame, John, from Bishop, California, marked down 70 pounds, punched numbers on his calculator and pocketed our \$210 dollars (50 cents/pound/mile) and set off with his partner who carried Andy and Anita's similarly-laden pack on the six-mile, 4,000-foot vertical ascent to our first camp. We followed shortly with the kayaks and remaining gear strapped to pack frames. Nearly nine hours later, we stumbled through a grove of Douglas Fir into Anvil Camp at 10,000 feet.

"Drop us a line when you finish. No one really knows what that river is like, all we hear are third and fourth-hand accounts," the packers said, apparently impressed with our plan to cross the Sierra carrying all of our gear and these huge boats to run an essentially uncharted river.

Perched two-thirds of the way up the two-mile-tall, eastern flank of the Sierra Nevada, we saw Shepherd Creek cascade down 6,500 feet to the Owens River valley below. Mt. Tyndall (14,018 feet) rose 4,000 feet above, etched against the bright and clear western sky. Between the Kern River lay and us the snowfields of Shepherd Pass (12,000 feet) that we would have to cross using kayak paddles and throw ropes for protection if the need arose. Janna and Anita had never crossed a snowfield or climbed over such large and imposing mountains before. Janna had no idea how dangerous it could be.

Day 2: Anvil Camp (10,000 feet) to Pacific Crest Trail (11,000 feet)

"Janna, I am going to dig a deep hole and bury this cheese and some of the gorp," I said, desperately trying to lighten our staggering loads. Andy was right about our heavy foods. I had to lift Janna's pack to her back and my kayak threatened to topple me over with each halting step.

"Are you sure we'll have enough food?" she asked.

I rationalized, "If we don't drop some weight, we'll never make it." I realized that this was going to be a committing moment. Rationing was likely before we were done. But, I knew that without taking a chance, we would never get to do it. I was game to try, but was admittedly a bit nervous.

"How does the snow look?"

I called out to Andy a few hours later as he started to kick steps across the 45° snowfield. One slip and his 100-pound, shiny plastic kayak would toboggan him 600 feet down the snowfield to the talus moraine at the base of the mini-glacier. He kept his waist belt unhooked.

Once across, he returned for Anita's pack, allowing her to cross her first snowfield without the complication of a heavy pack.

The altitude and our loads slowed our pace to one step for each breath. Janna and I traversed slowly across the snowfield and met them on the plateau above. Here, the view changed abruptly from steep, incised couloirs and valleys to the broad valleys, plateaus and seemingly-endless parade of high peaks of the Kings-Kern-Kaweah Divide.

Only a few hundred feet away was a lake, bound above by a football



Andy suffers loose scree, snow and a 100 pound pack on the final 500 vertical feet of the eight mile, 6,000 foot ascent from the East side of the Sierra to the Crest at Shepherd Pass. Photo by Bruce Genereaux.

field-sized snowfield. "Wow, look at that snowfield and cornice right above that lake," I observed excitedly. This was where I envisioned sledding down the pass 2,700 feet over snowfields to the Kern River. But, with only 60% of normal snowfall the previous winter, there were only a few discontinuous patches at the pass and none below. Right here though, only a hundred yards away, was a way to partially fulfill my dream. I could sled down the snow in my kayak, jump off the cornice and skim across the lake. In my blind enthusiasm, I quickly untied my boat from my pack frame and started to gear up.

My idea was greeted with silence. Andy obviously thought "better safe than sorry." I guess I presumed that anyone who enjoyed risking life and limb on Class V whitewater might also enjoy a side diversion.

He was uninterested in this apparently frivolous activity beyond the scope of the trip he had planned. I enjoyed spicing up even difficult trips. But now I had to temper my instinct.

I changed the subject; "Climbing Mt. Tyndall is on my list for later this summer." I was going to return to the Sierra Nevada for some mountaineering later in the summer — part of my training for an adventure race that fall.

Andy was studying the map and his watch, intent on keeping us on track. "I had planned to make the river tonight, but getting over the pass took longer than I thought. Now it looks like we might take an extra day to make the whole trip," he said to the group. "We should keep going." Andy and Anita picked up their packs and set off down the trail, leaving us to catch up. What my thought at this time should have been was "how can we conserve energy and food?"

"Can't we climb Mt. Tyndall now?" asked Janna after Andy and Anita departed. "I want to do it with you. It looks close and easy. If Shepherd's Pass was supposed to be the crux, I can do more." I thought, "wow," I had just checked my instinct on the sledding and now the woman I was with wanted to do this side hike. I was in a pickle again.

Knowing that a digression from Andy's plan might negatively affect group dynamics, I tried to dissuade her, "Do you realize it's 2,000 vertical. It'll take us two hours up and about that down." In the silence that followed, I looked at Janna and the peak and realized that having such prizes so close were rare. My conviction faltered.

In a combined motion of courtesy and advice, I ran down the trail, catching Andy and Anita, "Janna and I are going to bag Tyndall. We'll catch you guys on the trail tonight. I'll radio you on the half-hour after 5 pm with our whereabouts."

I returned to Janna on the pass, "He would rather we stuck with the plan. But the peak is right there, so let's do it quickly." Spoiling our relationship with Andy and Anita and possibly disrupting the schedule so early would put our goal at risk, but the peak was tantalizingly close. Janna really wanted to do it and I couldn't say no to her.

We climbed for two hours through the car-sized boulders and sharp granite ridges that define Tyndall's northern summit ridge. Moderate risk, physical exertion near one's limit and stupendous views of the local geography reminded me of why I loved mountaineering.

Janna was a natural climber, but the effects of altitude, exertion and exposure manifested themselves in a persistent case of diarrhea. Adding insult to injury, I had left the one roll of toilet paper in my pack below.

"It's normal to suffer the first time you go to altitude." I observed, letting her know she wasn't alone in her experience.

On the descent, her gastrointestinal symptoms subsided, but overall physical weakness persisted, forcing her to crawl crab-like over steep and mobile scree, slowing us to a round-trip time of six hours. I had planned on four. I didn't want to jeopardize the trip. It was now 8 pm and I knew Andy and Anita were already resting four hours ahead. I was suddenly tense and anxious.

After two hours of hiking in increasing darkness on an unmarked trail that crossed stream channels, wandered amongst grass tussocks and through boulder fields, we were tired, cold and frustrated. "I'll set up the tent here, you dig out some food for dinner," I said sharply over the wind and now biting cold.

Janna had been lagging far behind and my anxiousness was affecting the way I treated her. I saw her biting back tears. All of her efforts were towards keeping up so my additional layer of pressure—my truculence threatened our well-being. I hadn't made myself clear how Tyndall might upset the group's balance, and now it was upsetting her and my balance too. I had a sinking feeling in my stomach that we had bit off more than we could chew. And this was only day two of eight. In 31 hours we had ascended 8,000 vertical feet and walked about 15 miles, carrying staggering loads. Not trivial.

"Andy, do you copy?" I said for the final time, having failed all evening to raise him on our two-way radios. Not only are we slowing our progress, but also they would be worried about us overnight. We ate peanut butter with our fingers straight out of the jar and suffered a fitful sleep because of the altitude, wind and cold. I was uncertain about the effect of our detour on both the trip and our relationship.

Day 3: Pacific Crest Trail (11,000 feet) to Junction Meadows (8,000 feet)

We awoke with the first light of dawn, intent on finding Andy and Anita as soon as possible and following through on our commitment to the river trip. I couldn't stand the thought of them wondering about us. I didn't want to look more irresponsible or cause them any more worry than we already had. The way Janna hustled down the trail with me told me she better understood my reaction the day before when we fell so far behind.

After two hours hiking along an intermittent trail, Andy spotted us. They finished their breakfast at the junction of Tyndall Creek and Pacific Crest Trails and were starting back up the trail to look for us. My heart sunk further, for I thought this was the worst way they could have found us.

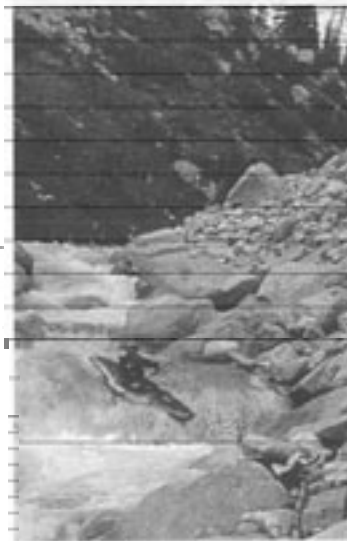
"We are here to paddle the river, not climb mountains, Bruce. Let's not have any more deviations from the plan. We have only so much food and time. And the river ahead is an unknown," Andy calmly, but coolly, entreated. They looked worried. It would take time to regain Andy's trust. I felt sheepish again, having been chastised for my impulsiveness. But, already, summiting Tyndall was standing out in my mind as a significant shared experience for Janna and me.

Shortly after lunch we heard the roar of the Kern River from the indistinct, switchbacking trail we followed. The walls of the canyon rose higher overhead as we descended into the heart of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. We were nearing our maximum distance from

civilization. The river ran through forest and appeared to drop precipitously after a couple of miles. Our sense of commitment to each other and our plan solidified.

Our put-in, at 9,200 feet above sea level, was 51 river-miles from our expected take-out point. Andy and I stripped the pack frames from our boats and added gear that had been stuffed into the cockpit of our kayaks to the women's backpacks. I couldn't fit it all into Janna's now bursting-at-the-seams-pack, so I decided to bury the excess. As I dug the hole, I wolfed down handfuls of gorp, knowing that we would definitively now be one day short of rations. I felt as committed as ever.

Anita would, for her first time, be responsible for reading the map and finding the



Class V expedition kayaking. The river descends around the toe of a massive landslide.

Photo by Bruce Genereaux.

California's Kern River A Renaissance

proposed campsites. As backup, Andy and Anita carried two-way radios. The women's adventure would include map orienteering, watching for bears among the giant, 200-foot Jeffrey Pines and enduring 43 more miles of dusty and hot trail. The women staggered off down the trail as we launched our boats.

"It looks like about 500 cfs, a good introductory level—not too pushy," Andy said, judging the river's flow as he settled naturally into his laden boat, a glint in his eye. Unknown wilderness kayaking awaited. We had driven 25 and 70 hours, respectively and hiked 21 miles over two and a half days to get to this point. I was psyched to paddle and glad to be done hiking. I was also nervous.

"I've never paddled a boat this heavy before," I said putting my spray skirt on.

I guessed that my boat would feel like a runaway torpedo and I wouldn't be able to make half the eddies I thought I could. I knew to watch carefully for strainers—because trees overhung the river as far as I could see.

Our boats each weighed about 90 pounds and rode deep in the water. Paddling and turning took substantially more effort than I expected. However, greater momentum conversely reduced the risk of becoming trapped in a hole.

Andy and I fell naturally into the cadence of mutual support required of difficult and uncharted whitewater. One of us would proceed down river only as far as could be seen from above, where he would eddy out and signal the easiest line to the other. Considering my track record so far on the trip—wanting to sled in my kayak at 12,000 feet and being proven rash and impulsive for following through on Mt. Tyndall—I was relieved that Andy trusted my kayaking enough to let me scout ahead.

At the end of the first day's 400-foot vertical and two-mile-long descent, Andy ran the final 200 yards down steep and technical Class V water while I, with throw-bag in hand, took photos. He stopped

short of the beginning of the mile-long, 800-foot descent to Junction Meadow. From the portage trail above, this section of river appeared to be continuous Class V whitewater coursing over slabs of granite, down sheer cascades and through boulder-choked cataracts. Joining the Kern River here was the Kern-Kaweah River—an equally-sized tributary that took a tortuous path through a sinuous canyon and plunged over 100+ foot water falls just prior to the confluence. To our knowledge, neither section had been kayaked before. We weren't going to be the guinea pigs.

After a short search, we found Anita and Janna in Junction Meadow. The scenery was magnificent, yet Janna seemed oblivious as she was curled up on her fleece top, eyes closed. "How was the hiking?" I gently asked.

"I fought with that pack all the way. That was only three miles? Forty to go? I'll never make it. That pack must have weighed 100 pounds. It's made for a man's torso. The waist belt pops open all the time and the straps slip off of my shoulders," she said. Doubt edged her voice. I fixed the waist belt and strategized on how to squeeze more weight into my boat the next morning.

Day 4: Junction Meadow (8,000 feet) to Kern Hot Springs (6,900 feet)

The next day's paddle covered six miles of Class IVN whitewater with an average gradient of 180 feet per mile. With the addition of the Kern-Kaweah River and then Whitney Creek, we encountered nearly twice the volume of water in the river. We were pushed around more and the rapids felt much faster.

Janna and Anita departed camp before us in an attempt to cover as much distance as possible before the sun cleared the canyon rim, for they didn't have the river in which to conveniently cool off. Their trail paralleled the river, but was rarely in sight.

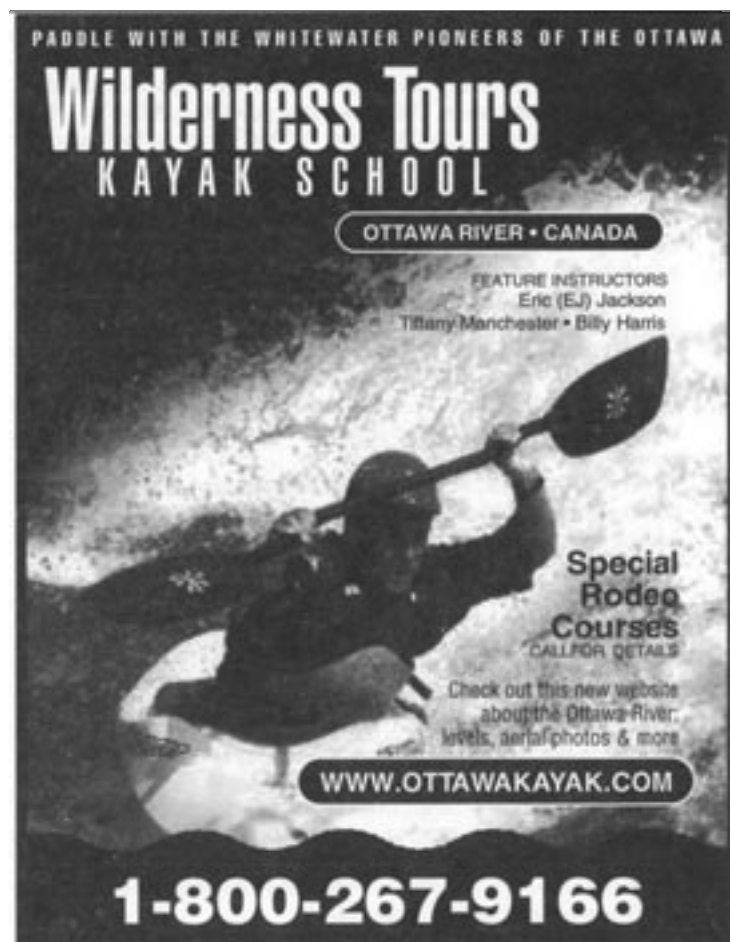


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After a few miles of kayaking, I yelled to Andy from an eddy in the midst of a continuous Class IV+ rapid, "I'm going to run the next section down to the corner." My confidence to maneuver my heavy boat in this river had grown.

"Did you scout it?" Andy called back.

"I think it looks OK," I said as I peeled out of the eddy.

I was engulfed immediately in maelstrom of frothing water, unable to see and desperately trying to stay in control and upright. Seconds later, I glanced off of a boulder and flipped upside down. My head and shoulders careened off of rocks as the current relentlessly tore me downstream. My worst fear in kayaking was still getting knocked unconscious while upside down. I cringed remembering a neck injury I suffered in Bald Rock Canyon. I tucked my head down to the deck of my boat trying to make a smaller target for the rocks. Skin was torn from my knuckles as I finally forced a roll. Now upright again, but severely winded and scared, I careened another 30 yards like a pinball and drove my boat to shore. Andy witnessed this reckless carnage and got out of his boat to scout ahead for himself.

Andy signaled back with an X over his head—our sign for "don't run it."

"There's a strainer," he yelled, his policy of never running any section of a river blind just proven correct. Had I continued, I could have been pinned. Taking such risks is never responsible. Nearer to civilization this behavior might have been tolerable, but here, over 30 miles from help, such risk was unacceptable. The look on Andy's face confirmed the lesson.

We found more Class V rapids below and, in our concentration, almost passed Kern Hot Springs, our intended camp.

Anita and Janna had been at camp for over an hour. "We saw a bear today!" Anita proudly reported to Andy. "This morning we saw dry poop, then it got fresher and fresher till finally I saw its leg as it crashed off into the woods—about a mile up the trail from here."

Janna said to me, "I couldn't believe we actually saw a bear. We were so scared after that we sang loudly from then on!"

That afternoon we took turns soaking in the bathtub-sized natural spring at the river's edge. Janna hauled out watercolor paints she had been carrying. Anita and Janna indulged this luxury while Andy and I separately cooked dinners. We shared cocktails of Catorade and whiskey and talked about things other than our trip.

I sensed that, for the first time, group dynamics had stabilized. I felt no awkwardness, despite my previous impulsiveness.

"We made good progress today. Tomorrow we have to go 10 miles to Soda Springs, and the gradient decreases to an average of 60 feet per mile," said Andy, studying the map and marking his calculations in his diary. "It looks like about 11 miles of hiking though. There are many side rivers coming in too."

Anita went over to study the map. "How far to the first stream crossing? One mile? Looks like soggy socks all day again!" she said.

Janna smiled and said, "Let's leave early so we can have another restful afternoon together in camp."

That night, we stored our food in bear-tight boxes provided by the forest service. At the close of our second river day, a comforting rhythm had emerged.

Day 5: Kern Hot Springs (6,900 feet) to Soda Springs (6,300 feet)

True to Andy's analysis, the river changed character substantially as soon as we left Kern Hot Springs. The trees recessed to the 2000-foot-high canyon walls and city-block-sized meadows encircled the meandering river. Every mile we encountered log jams the size of football fields. We would guess at the narrowest point and drag our boats over. After seven miles of this paddle/guess/portage exercise, the gradient increased and the logjams yielded to smooth-flowing and uninterrupted Class III water all the way to Soda Springs. Andy and I had a peaceful, uneventful day and arrived at camp before the women. We reveled in the scale of the canyon, its scenery and the relative ease of our passage.

Worried about our food situation, I borrowed a fishing rod and

unsuccessfully tried to augment our food supplies. Sensing that Janna had arrived, I stopped fishing and returned to camp area to find her curled up beside her pack, flushed and exhausted.

"My feet are burning. It was bone dry and sandy, like a beach toward the end, and that pack!" she reported. I jumped to my restoration job—feeding her dinner and naturally carbonated water from the nearby soda spring.

Later she said, "I told Anita that I might cry, but she wouldn't let me. We joked on the trail—she said I 'shot my wad' on Mt. Tyndall and was paying for it. 'No crybabies allowed.' I told her that there weren't many opportunities for more Tyndall's in my life, so I had to seize the moment."

She looked at me and smiled. I felt a flush of emotion. Here was a woman who told me just how she felt. There was no second-guessing involved in our relationship.

Janna recovered, but I remained privately concerned. There was a 14-mile day coming up. And, while the pack was getting lighter, with each day's movement down the canyon, the temperature increased and the forest became dustier and dryer.

Day 6: Soda Springs (6,300 feet) to Grasshopper Creek (5,840 feet)

"I'll meet you at the edge of the river," I called over to Andy, who was stuffing his tent into the back of his boat. We had seen the women off hours earlier, before the sun cleared the canyon wall. For the first time, I was ready before Andy and was anxious to get on the river.

As I lowered my boat down the 20-foot bank leading to the river, it became suddenly clear that if I held on for another instant, my boat was going to pull me over a pine needle-covered granite ledge right over a small cliff and into the river. Instinctively, I let the boat go. It bounced once, sliced into the river, scribed a perfect wake and started on without me. Half of Janna's and my gear and our meager rations were headed down river without me. Lose them and we would have to immediately walk out 30 miles and miss the rest of the river. I was seized with dread and I panicked. I yelled to Andy as I sprinted down



Andy Zimet, in a practiced posture, after freeing the author's boat from entrapment.
Photo by Bruce Genereaux.

California's Kern River

the right of the hole. I ran it successfully while Andy photographed and held the throw-bag. Trading places, Andy seemed to hit the line, but, suddenly complacent, found himself being drawn back into the hole. I watched as he paddled furiously to escape the upstream current, but it inevitably drew him into its recirculating maw of whitewater. My heart rose towards my throat as I saw my leader getting a rodeo ride. I prepared to throw him a line, but Andy fought and used every technique I had ever seen to escape the hole, ultimately solving the problem alone.

"I guess I relaxed my guard," he surmised. For the first time all trip, the tables had turned.

When we came to the confluence with Dry Meadow Creek, two miles above our take-out, we had time to spare. We scrambled up the steep slabs to the seven stacked teacups that define the crux of this famous tributary to the Kern River. I told Andy of the rescue that I took part in here over a year before. We took photos and looked at the awesome drops. I smiled to myself. Andy willingly indulged in this detour. (Editor's note: Corran Addison also participated in the rescue that the author mentions here. That episode was widely discussed in hair boating circles at the time and it is detailed in another chapter in Bruce Genereaux's soon to published book.)

We reached the Johnsondale Bridge at 11:30 am. By noon, the women arrived, windows down, cool drinks in hand. We proudly stood together for a photo, all better friends after our experience, proof that group dynamics can work.

"That hill and the heat wasn't anything compared to the rest of the trail," Janna said, as we loaded boats on the car. I smiled, understanding her feeling of confidence after having achieved a major goal.

As we drove north through the Owens River Valley back to where our car waited at the trailhead, the Sierra Nevada mountains rose progressively higher and higher to our left, culminating at 14,495-foot Mt. Whitney. "If I saw where we were going before, I never would have gotten out of the car," Janna said. She took a sip of water, looked again and said, "But knowing what I know now, I would do it again if I get the chance."

That fall, Andy sent me an e-mail.

"Anita and I are headed to Nepal to do a first descent on the Langu Khola, care to join us?" he queried.

Editor's note: Bruce Genereaux is an independent project manager, resource economist and adventure sportsman living in Hanover, NH. This article is excerpted from his soon-to-be published book, *Beyond the Comfort Zone: Limits of Acceptable Risk*, in which the how and why of extreme sports is examined through tales of extreme skiing, rock climbing, whitewater kayaking and adventure racing. Dena Foltz of Freestyle Creative in Whitefish, Montana, professionally edited the book. Preview other chapters from the book at www.MysteryMove.com.

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KAYAKING YUKON'S FIRTH RIVER CONTINUED FROM PAGE 41

backwash. The right route is obstructed by a shelf of rock protruding into the river and the first long hole. Molly and I are in long touring boats from Jack's collection of hot 1970s fiberglass boats. We walk — the hole is too big a risk. In a Dagger RPM, Joe punches what he has to and makes the sharp right move to avoid the big hole. More Class III fun follows down to our next camp at Sheep Creek.

Before the trip, the Canadian park rangers in Inuvik told us we would have an excellent chance of seeing the main body of the Porcupine caribou herd — perhaps 100,000 animals — on their migration back to Canada from their calving grounds in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Viewing the whole herd on the move is said to be one of the grandest wildlife experiences this side of Tanzania. The rangers said the herd often crosses the Firth in the Sheep Creek area. So for a full day we hike to higher ground in T-shirt weather for grand views of the treeless landscape. We look in one valley, and the next, and the next. But not one caribou.

The following day we are back winding down the slot canyon for dozens of Class II+ and III drops, and spend an exhilarating hour at possibly the farthest northern surfing wave on the American mainland. We make camp at a jumble of huge rocks at Caribou Creek and Vicky prepares another round of hot soup and a delicious one-dish dinner concoction from scratch. As on most evenings, it is breezy and mostly sunny with temperatures in the sixties and seventies and only a few mosquitoes. With the consumption of ample wine, we begin to feel poetic. We read aloud the vivid Robert Service poems about the arduous life in the Yukon at the turn of the last century, poems with titles like, "The Cremation of Sam McGee," and "The Spell of the Yukon." The next morning we paddle a bit and then climb out of the canyon to the broad valley country above to see a "caribou fence." This fence is actually a line of rock cairn structures ("inuksuit") placed by Inuvialuit hunters many centuries before. They were designed to encourage caribou to move into depressions in the landscape where the hunters would lie in wait.

As the day proceeds, the canyon walls become lower and the river broadens and slows. We encounter another grizzly who scoots up the canyon side. Birds are becoming more numerous than ever. We have seen golden eagles, peregrine falcons, rough-legged hawks, loons, tundra swans, arctic terns, semi-palmated plovers, lesser yellowlegs, and futuristic-looking jaegers, among other species. We also notice a marked increase in mosquitoes. No longer do they come occasionally one by one. They come in blizzards.

This evening we camp at Last Mountain, the final hill before we emerge onto the coastal plain. Joe, Molly and I put on our full bug battle gear and head up. A bull caribou comes up very close to within 25 feet or so but scampers on across the river. They always

seem to be in a hurry to get to the southeast, now that the calving is done. As we hike awkwardly across the tussocks, huge swarms of mosquitoes produce a constant whine. If we stop walking, our bug jackets (a wonderful invention) are soon covered by hundreds of wandering mosquitoes. We occasionally scare up a pair of nesting ptarmigans, who go into their broken wing routine. After hiking back to camp, we quickly eat and dive behind mosquito netting.

On our next to last day, we head around the edge of Last Mountain and into the cold crosswinds of the coastal plain. The bugs disappear. After a few miles, Joe gets out in front and paddles over towards the big "dead" pile of fur. After the animal struggles to its feet, what emerges from the dust cloud is a rare musk ox. He ambles off awkwardly with his long, thick, shaggy fur swaying from side to side. He is not afraid of us.

Out on the spit on our last day, our float plane is very late and its getting towards 10 pm. But eventually we detect the engine drone, and shout, "Deplane, deplane." Packed up in the plane, we swoop up a couple of thousand feet and head east along the coast. We have a full view of the plain and the ocean, all the way out to the white glow of the polar ice cap, perhaps 50 miles offshore. Below is all wilderness except for an occasional native fish camp, until we come down on a lake near Inuvik.

It was a privilege to be in the Arctic with Jack Hession who, for over 30 years, has been one of the most outspoken wilderness advocates in Alaska. Just as rewarding participating in a wilderness trip with Vicky Hoover, editor of the Sierra Club's Alaska newsletter and cook/outfitter extraordinaire. These folks have been showing others great wilderness places for many years, and how, over time, the relentless forces of development are encroaching on the wilderness.

These forces and their shills in Washington should not be allowed to despoil the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Big oil already has access to most all of the north slope of Alaska, from west of the Refuge to the

Bering Sea, and has made a royal mess of it, with roads, oil drilling spoil piles, oil spills, etc. Big oil says it only wants the part of the refuge along the coastline, which happens to be exactly the prime birthing area for millions of migratory birds and mammals. Big oil says there are lots of caribou at Prudhoe Bay, but that is because the workers have shot away the predators. Can't there be just one area that they leave alone?

The Canadian Government is strongly opposed to opening up the coastal plain of the Arctic refuge for fear the Porcupine caribou herd could be lost or severely depleted, which would threaten the subsistence way of life of the Gwich'in of the Yukon Territory and east-central Alaska. By setting aside the magnificent Ivavik National Park our neighbors have protected key migratory habitat of the herd. Now it is up to Americans as owners of the herd's calving grounds to finish the job by adding the coastal plain to the Wilderness System.

Last August the House of Representatives narrowly voted to lease part of the coastal plain as part of a larger energy bill. In 2002, the Senate is expected to vote on a competing energy bill by the Senate majority that does not open the coastal plain to oil and gas development. It promises to be one of the key conservation tests of the decade.

Please contact your Senators and urge them to oppose any effort to open the coastal plain of the refuge to oil exploration or drilling. Write your Senators at Hon. _____, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510, or call the Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121 to be connected directly to your Senators' offices. For more information, contact Vicky Hoover at the Sierra Club Alaska Task Force at (415) 977-5527.

Editor's note: Mac Thornton was a member of American Whitewater's Board for many years and is one of the founding fathers of the West Virginia Rivers Coalition.

Vicky Hoover, Molly Carr, Mac Thornton, Jack Hession at the "Caribou Fence." Photo by Joe Bryson.



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My Adventures on the Arkansas River

By David Crockeft

"What do you think?" asks my dad.

"I'm walking," I reply.

"You haven't even seen it yet!"

"I'm still walking."

"Why?"

"It's Sunshine Rapid. I don't feel like running Class IV today."

"I'm running it," chips in Buck.

"You haven't even seen it yet!"

"I've been waiting to run this rapid all summer. It will be fun."

"This isn't about the rush," I reply.

"The rush is everything," Buck answers.

It's a warm late summer day in Colorado. I'm here kayaking the Arkansas River with my dad and younger brother Buck. We're scouting Sunshine Rapid, the toughest one of the day. My dad's friends Ron and Danny are with us. This is my second trip through the Royal Gorge. Earlier this spring my dad got thrashed in this same rapid, but at a lower level. We round a corner and the sickening hole in Sunshine comes into view. It's the trademark of the rapid. I feel like I've been punched in the stomach. A knife sits in my belly.

"I'm walking," I say again.

We scout the rapid looking for a line. My dad points out a slot where you can avoid the hole on river right. It's the only line. Class III+. Buck collects railroad spikes, not even looking at the rapid he's about to run. If I weren't so scared I'd see the slot. But all I see is a roaring white beast that would take me as an appetizer. I might as well be a buffalo wing. No way.

Buck, on the other hand, sees his chance at bragging rights and a chance at running one of the most notorious rapids on the

Arkansas River. The ultimate rush.

Ten minutes later I'm perched on a rock, camcorder in hand. Danny leads the pack. Buck follows him and my dad spots Buck from the behind.

Ron is on a rock, throw rope in hand, prepared for the worst. I focus in on Buck. He's going to be where the action is at and I know it. Buck misses his line at the top and washes over a rock. Not a care in the world. They navigate boulders and rocks and approach the hole.

My dad's specific instructions to Buck, "Follow Danny's line and run the hole to the right." Did I mention that both my dad and Buck are dyslexic? Buck stops paddling and drifts toward the hole. Not a care in the world. He's being swept into a Class IV hole and doesn't even know it, or care.

He needs to paddle instead of sitting there and staring at it. Ron shouts, "Paddle Buck, Paddle!" The knife pokes at my belly. The most horrifying thing is the innocent curiosity on Buck's face. Boom! Bam! He's swallowed. Trout food. Hole meat. A buffalo wing. Five feet under water and all I can see is his paddle poking out of the foamy water. By the sheer mercy of the river he's entered out of the

hole, untouched, but upside down.

Most 13 year olds in this kind of situation would think exactly this, "Screw this I'm bailing!" Instead Buck tries a hand roll. But he shouldn't have

loaded his boat with railroad spikes. After three unsuccessful hand roll attempts he hits his head on a rock. My dad follows him helpless, but not worried. This stuff happens to Buck a lot.

Two more hand roll attempts and Buck finds a rock and pushes himself upright. He notices that his spray skirt was sucked off in the hole. Because his boat is full of water and the railroad spikes aren't helping, Buck has to swim. In a pool below a man asks Buck if he wants to sit



My Adventures on the Arkansas River



Buck gets munched

down and take a break. "What for?" Buck asks.

I decide its best to portage and continue down river. I look at the video that night in the safety and comfort of our home and think, "How many 15 year olds get to do this stuff every weekend?" Amazing.

At school the next Monday no one really cares. I'm known as the little sophomore with all the river stories. A few close friends take interest and actually believe me. Being named David Crockett doesn't help either.

All the other kids have different priorities, football, and homecoming, whatever. I think its all a big joke. The rest of the week my thoughts dwell on the upcoming Westwater trip.

Westwater was great. Things worked out nicely and I got to sit in the desert canyons alone by myself, drifting dreamily along the Colorado River. The solitude and beauty alone was madly addicting.

Buck got munched in Sock-It-To-Me. He hand rolled up in the trough of a huge wave. I've never seen such a grin. I flipped twice in Funnel Falls, but rolled up each time and held onto my paddle.

Skull rapid was nothing.

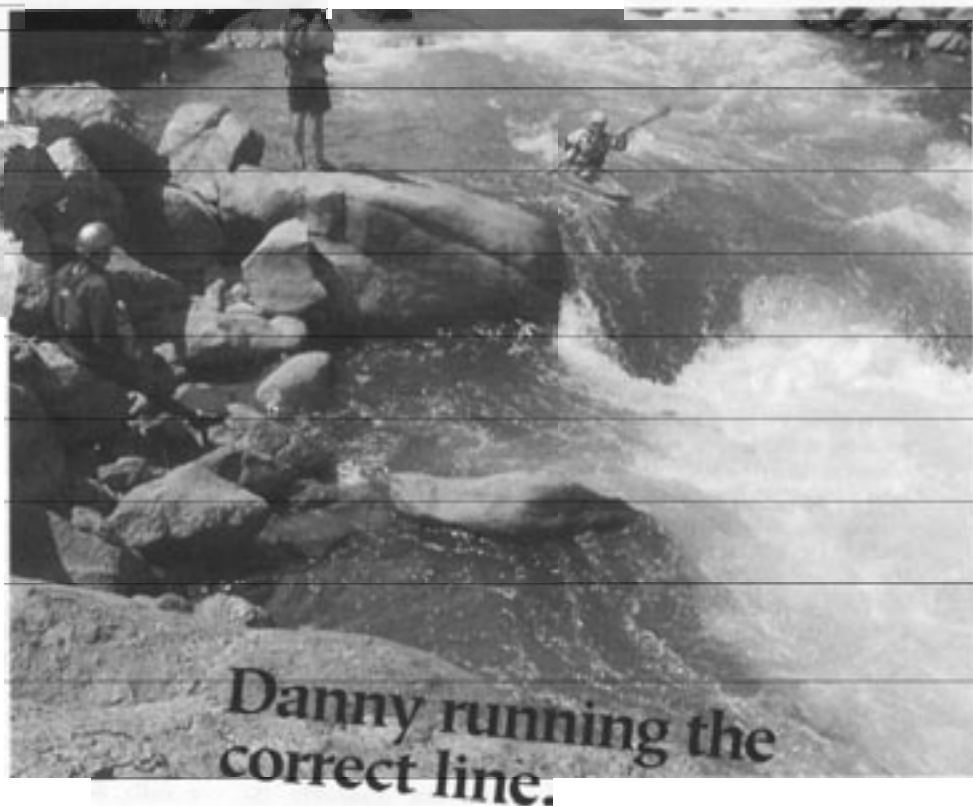
It's a wonderful life.

Editor's note: With a brother like Buck, and a name like Davey Crockett, how can you help but be the King of the Wild Frontier???



The aftermath.

Buck sitting in the raft, his boat being drained.



Freestyle

Daniel DeLaVergne in Chile
Photo by Josh Anthony

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Salvation

is at Hand

by Martin Radigan, Jay Drury, and Gree Herring
(an AW associate editor and works for National Geographic)

Egbert has Class 5 A.D.D. Sometimes he figures out shuttle, but rarely does the beer wind up at the take-out. Egbert whispers "skirt, helmet, paddle, skirt, helmet, paddle," under his breath just to keep things together. He wants to do more though. He wants to volunteer at a river festival, head up a new conservation project, jump from an airplane...hell, stop getting trashed in big holes. Egbert—he gets worked worse than The Zone Dogg, Grayson, and Corran at a feminist convention. Unfortunately, Egbert just can't find time in his busy paddling schedule to do anything else. If there were only something smaller that he could do... If he could only have better lines...

Luckily, Egbert is a member of American Whitewater, the organization that makes so much of his obsession possible. No one's really sure, but most experts agree that those who aren't AW members go to the bottom of hell, along with jet-skiers. And worse than eternal damnation, their karma is f#\$%*\$. Workings in holes, flat tires in east bumblef#\$%, skunked brews, getting violated by angry rednecks on bourbon, getting violated by yuppies on Prozac—yep, it's best not to take chances. If you're not a member, consider it. Egbert's a member; he even sports the AW sticker on his car to impress chicks. His karma's been good, but not great.

On his way to the local playspot he stops to satiate his fierce and expensive Starbucks addiction. The cutie behind the counter tells him to take his double latte, non-fat, light-on-the-whip, sprinkle-of-cinnamon, and a twist-of-lemon-on-the-house with a wink. Egbert attempts to ask her out but forgets

that he is wearing his capilene undershirt. This particular shirt has been worn under his drysuit 35+ times without so much as a decent wringing out. She wrinkles her nose and tells him she's got a boyfriend or husband or something. Unscathed, Egbert suits for solid session at S-turn on the Potomac. As he heads for the heated bathrooms at Great Falls Park in MD he stumbles across someone's improperly disposed of cheesy poof bag. "What the heck," he thinks to himself, and he picks it up and tosses it in the trash can. Suddenly, the Starbucks kicks in and he scampers for a stall. Now, as all drysuit owners know, the last thing you want is a big to-do on the commode when suited up. Wouldn't you know it! Egbert saunters out of the stall with a clean getaway—his first in years. Things they are

a lookin' up.

What Egbert didn't know, what you're going to learn here today, is that there is a proven way to improve your river karma, a way to appease the all-important River Gods. You see, the River Gods (and no, they are not team Wavesport) loath people leaving trash in and around their sacred waters. As for Egbert, he's seen all types of trash on rivers. Dead deer, dead bear, dead meat, dead ends, deadheads, floating coolers of beer (ok, so this isn't a bad thing), plastic barrels, blow up dolls, bottles, cans, etc.... Egbert didn't put that stuff there, but somewhere in his brain rang, "skirt, helmet, paddle, pick up trash." It's like some lady once said (Mother Theresa) "We cannot do great things on this earth. We can only do small things with great love." Or like some paddler

once said, "Dude, this trash is nasty, dude!"

Fact is, the River Gods appreciate it when you help clean their sacred waters. They are therefore are less likely to make a train wreck of your carefully planned-out line down a rapid. Let's face it, with today's low-volume, slicey designs, you can't fit a whole lot in your boat. The good news is that extensive studies find it only takes one or two pieces of trash to improve river karma dramatically. How does that saying go, "Take only memories, leave only linear shavings?" Well it should say, "Take memories and a can or two." Egbert has learned. Now he takes memories and an old bottle or two and leaves only...well, occasionally he leaves something at the Great Falls restroom, but mostly he just leaves footprints and good lines.

Egbert is now stylin' and you can be too. Try picking up a piece or two of trash and see if your karma doesn't get better. Think about it: if everyone took a piece of trash off the river every time they paddled, our playgrounds wouldn't look so much like the back of our cars. Urban rivers have more trash, and more paddlers (two different things, hopefully) and thus more potential trash-picker-uppers. And keep in mind, the more obnoxious the trash the more river karma for getting rid of it. See diagram one (with approximate karmic values). Paper isn't worth as much as Styrofoam because it biodegrades much faster. So, when you're standing above that big drop contemplating, consider looking around for a small piece of garbage to throw in your boat. Your karma and lines are sure to improve, and even if they don't, the river will.

Side note: these AW folks work hard! If you aren't already a member, consider joining. If you are a member and have extra time, consider volunteering (good karma).

Note: Years of research went into the following formula.

Chart / Diagram One

Dead deer, bears and chicken liver	
-remove at your own risk — not advisable =	0 points
Empty packs of Valtrex® =	1 point
Paper =	1 point
Glass =	2 point
Plastic =	3 point
Styrofoam =	4 point
Blowup dolls =	5 point
Red Bull Cans =	3.14 points.
(cause you know it ain't the fishermen dropping \$2+ on this crap!)	

The Open Boat Picasso

By Robert Martin

"Frozenhead is going to live up to its name tonight." I thought, as we sat around a smoldering campfire one March night a few years ago. We were camped at Frozenhead State Park on the Cumberland Plateau in Tennessee and it was wet and getting cold. Everything from my sleeping bag to the firewood was soaked and by morning all my paddling gear would be frozen. The campgrounds were almost empty. The large group of open boaters from Indiana had left for North Georgia that afternoon and there was just one other boater in the campground, a kayaker from Chicago. He had one of "them new fangled rodeo boats that's all the rage." He was sitting alone on a wet stump in a cold camp. Normally we would have asked him over to enjoy our fire, but we've been meeting some "queer folk" or should I say "odd birds," lately at Frozen Head and decided that if he wanted to sit shivering in a cold camp by himself, then that was his business.

Before long our efforts at building a fire paid off and flames began licking out from under the mound of wet firewood. As the warmth of the fire drove off the chill, our spirits rose and a great merriment began. I guess it was too much for the loner for he soon walked over, introduced himself as Dave Somebody, and asked if he could sit around the fire with us. We welcomed him to our camp, did the usual introductions and he sat down. He didn't talk much, mostly listened and chuckled at our jokes. We had run Island Creek that day for the first time and were vividly recounting the carnage. After a lull in the conversation Richard Mann looked over to the loner and asks, "What did you paddle today?" The Loner rubbed his face in his hands and stared at the fire for a few seconds as if he was trying to gain his composure. Then he told us this story.

"I just got out of medical school and am working as an intern at a downtown hospital in

Chicago. I'd been working 20 hour shifts in the ER when I suddenly found myself with a few days off. I just wanted to get away and spend some time paddling, but I only knew one other paddler in Chicago and he couldn't go. But he said, "Just drive down to Frozen Head State Park in Tennessee. It's raining torrents on the Cumberland Plateau right now. There'll be plenty of paddlers down there. Just find a group and hook up with them."

So after an umpteenth-hour drive through snow, then rain I finally pulled into Frozen Head and there wasn't a sole in the campground. I sat in my tent in the drizzle, wondering if I had made this trip in vain. Finally I heard the familiar rumble of hot engines and looked out my tent to see five vans, loaded down with boats pulling into the camping area. "My salvation!" I thought. "I'll give them a while to set camp, then go over and see if I can paddle with them tomorrow."

When I walked over to their camp I noticed they had Indiana Tags and some old tandem canoes on their vans. Upon further inspection they were ALL old canoes. They even had the old Styrofoam blocks for floatation. "Surely there's a kayak or two stuffed in between all those canoes," I prayed. But there was not a one. The group was on their way to the Chatoga when they heard of the rain on the Plateau and stopped off for a few days to paddle the Obed. The leader of

the group was a gray haired old fox who considered himself a bit of a "culture vulture" (don't ask....). When I told him my circumstances he reluctantly invited me to paddle with his group, "as long as you can handle Class

III whitewater and be ready leave camp by 9 am sharp." I said that would be fine and went back to my tent and went to sleep.

"I heard your group drive into camp around midnight. I saw your boats this morning and



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Daniel DeLaVergne in Chile
Photo By Allison Watson

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thought about trying to hook up with you guys but nobody was awake in your camp. At 8:30 am the Culture Vulture called me over for a meeting. They were concerned because the Emory@Oakdale was at 30,000cfs. "Everything is going to be too high today except maybe Crab Orchard Creek," said the Vulture. "But it's a rare treat to get on Crab Orchard. It's got 8 miles of continuous Class II-III whitewater!"

When we arrived at the put-in for Crab Orchard there was at least three feet of water going over the ford. Once again we had a meeting with the Vulture. "I've never seen this creek so high before," he said. "This is going to be pushy with few if any eddies. The upper section may be washed out but the lower section will have some huge reaction waves and monster holes." The Vulture's voice sounded grave and his apprehension spread to the rest of the group. Everybody seemed nervous as we put on.

The Culture Vulture and Mrs. Vulture took the lead and set a blistering pace. The rapids in the

first few miles were washed out but the scenery was beautiful. As the creek cut into the plateau the rapids began to get rambunctious and constant. We kept passing wonderful surfing waves but whenever I stopped to surf the group left me behind and I had to paddle hard to keep up. I suddenly came to the best surfing hole I've ever seen. This wave was long and smooth as glass with a dynamic eddy that would feed you back when you washed out. This was the wave I'd been longing for during those nightmare episodes in the ER.

I stopped and surfed this wave and the stress washed away with the water. I don't know how long I surfed but when I looked down stream there wasn't a boat in sight. I quickly snapped out of the trance and began paddling down stream as fast as I could. When I rounded a bend I spotted the group. They were packed almost bow to stern and still paddling hard. The rapids were more intense now, Class III-IV, narrow and pushy. As I began to catch up to the group there was a sharp bend to the left in the stream. Suddenly something

caught my eye. It seemed that just before the Culture Vulture passed out of sight there was some intense movement from his boat. As the next boat in line rounded the bend the paddler began flailing madly with his paddle before dropping out of sight. Every one else had seen this too and they began trying to ferry or catch an eddy, but the current was too fast and offered no eddies. I watched in horror as each of the canoes rounded the bend. Each time they reacted with sheer terror. The last boater actually jumped out of his canoe and tried to grab hold of the trees on the bank, but was inevitably swept around the bend. "Now I know what a lemming must feel like" I thought. As I too was swept around the bend.

What I saw was terrible yet dazzling and beautiful. There was a huge pine tree fallen across the stream and on it were piled these brilliantly colored canoes gleaming in the sunlight. The pile was writhing with arms, legs, heads and torsos. It looked like....a Picaso!

When Dave said that every-

body in the camp roared with laughter. I saw Dave's shoulders shaking as he too burst out laughing. Finally Gary Gurkin asked, "Well? What happened?"

"There were so many boats piled up on the tree that it dammed up the creek and created a calm spot along the banks. I was able to shore my boat, get out and start pulling people and boats off the tree. Remarkably, besides a few scratches and bruises, no one was hurt."

That moment was like an emotional dam bursting for Dave. He was a different man afterwards, talking and joking like we were old friends. The next day Dave joined us and we paddled Crooked Fork Creek at a respectable level of 3.7'.

When we got to the take-out Dave said, "Man, that was the hardest thing I've ever run!" Richard looked at him and said, "Well how long have you been paddling?"

Dave said "Six weeks."

"SIX WEEKS!" we all gasped in unison.

"Yeah, but I paddled a lot in those six weeks." Dave replied.

Nostalgia

By: David J. Kloberdanz

The day was perfect. The Oregon sun dropped rays of brilliance on the crystal clear river, which flowed in perfect unity with the surrounding redwoods. I sat at the mouth of the canyon listening to the distant rumble of the unknown. With a confident and inquisitive expression Ben asked me, "Are you ready to take the plunge?" It had already been a long day of paddling and the confidence of the group was quite different. The Tacilma section of the Rogue River was a simple challenge for Ben and Erik who were experienced boaters and locals in the area. Ben and Erik had moved to Ashland, Oregon to finish their college careers, but most importantly to indulge in their kayaking addiction. Bill and I were rookies to this new adrenaline sport.

"So how hard is it?" Bill asked in a solemn tone. "I'd say it's solid Class IV with some Class V

consequences," replied Ben. The skin around his eyes was wrinkled by overexposure to the sun. This would be a real test for us since we had only begun to pit our kayaking skills against the more challenging aspects of the river. It was spring break for us, and we were a long way from home. Just two days ago, we made the eighteen-hundred-mile trip to this pristine area, in hopes of paddling some of the most magnificent rivers in the west. While the four miles of paddling up to this point had been challenging in itself, the canyon below would be the true test. We were the only group on the river the entire day and that gave us a dreamlike feeling of uncertainty. The remaining mile of river consisted of six sharp turns that would have to be negotiated with great skill. Ben outlined the details of the gorge: six-foot tall waves, a number of recirculating hydraulics, and nu-

merous boulders and logs to maneuver around, in a canyon enclosed by matching fifty-foot walls. If we decided to enter the canyon, there would be no turning back. The canyon is impossible to exit once you're in it because the walls are so sheer and steep. Rescue is nearly impossible. Entering this canyon is a decision not to be taken lightly, not to be made in haste, and not to be made with reservations.

Just one night prior we had given in to alcoholic excess at the *Katwok*, a trendy bar in downtown Ashland. The loud blaring music had given way to the spontaneous lights of the smoky bar, as we let loose and laughed at Bill twirling a local girl around in circles on the dance floor. His fake ID worked and he made the most of the opportunity to experience the thrill of drunken madness in a public establishment. At the other end of the club, Erik and I stood like statues, occasionally glancing to the frail balcony above where 4 or 5 scantily dressed young ladies groped each other to everyone's approval. This was a culture shock for Bill and I

who weren't used to the generous ratio of 3 girls to every guy. At midnight, we were all drenched in sweat and reeking of alcohol dancing in tight clusters of people. Erik, standing six-foot-five was always visible to us as he danced with a dozen different girls, and he waved his giant arms in perfect rhythm with the hip-hop music. The pungent poison of rum and whiskey enriched our blood and fueled the freedom in our hearts.

It was two o'clock in the morning when we gathered on the sidewalk in front of the *Katwok*. The demanding day of boating ahead of us had become as blurry as our vision. My friends stood there on the sidewalk laughing as I ran up to a low-set Mustang and tapped on the window. A Hispanic man with a thick gold necklace greeted me with a toothless smile. In a drunken slur I asked, "Do you think we could catch a ride with you?" "Yea, no problem," replied the buzzed gangster without hesitation. All four of us crammed into the Mustang and we soon felt the neck-bending acceleration as he



stepped on the gas. As the car reached 70 miles an hour on the residential street we were too drunk to feel concerned. Before we knew it, we were being dropped off in front of the apartment. We fell out of his car and watched him burn rubber into the black night.

We all had hangovers that next morning. Bill seemed to be suffering the most. On his initial launch into the river he was automatically flipped, and moving fast under the water, he hit his head on a rock. This wasn't the kind of confidence booster Bill was looking for on the most challenging river he had ever attempted. After all, this was only the warm-up section; we weren't even to the gorge yet. Erik exited his boat at the mouth of the canyon to retrieve his water bottle and told Bill, "You gotta make a decision for yourself, but personally, I think you can do it. It's not that much harder than the stuff you've already done on the river, you just need to believe in

yourself." Bill's indecision was causing me to doubt myself and question whether I should take the plunge down this mysterious canyon. After 10 minutes of soul searching, Bill decided to walk the mile-long section because he had a funny feeling. After Bill's decision the focus in the group shifted to me, the other hesitant Colorado boy. Ben and Erik outlined once again the details of what lay ahead, and they glorified the aesthetic and enchanting qualities of the steep canyon. As the sun made it's slow retreat on the horizon Ben looked at me and asked, "Are you with us?" Glancing toward the horizon where the river disappeared, I took a deep breath and said, "Let's do it."

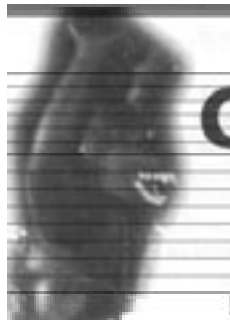
I had only been kayaking for one year, but during that time, whitewater had become an obsession for me—a way of life. As a rock climber I appreciated the feeling of adrenaline release, but most importantly I appreciated the opportunity to do something

different, something that many people will never have the opportunity to experience. Whether it was climbing mountains, sealing shear rock walls, skiing steep mountain chutes, or booming down flooding rivers, I loved the entire experience of adventure in nature. Pushing the limits of experience and risk made me feel alive, it made me understand my place on earth.

Finally the time had come to enter the canyon. Erik led the way into the mouth of the canyon followed closely by Ben and me. As we paddled closer to the entrance of the canyon I noticed the walls on either side growing higher and higher as the noise of smashing water seemed to grow exponentially. I felt like a gladiator entering the noisy coliseum. Suddenly the river made a ninety-degree turn to the right and *wham*, we were committed. I temporarily lost sight of Erik as he was swallowed up by a huge rolling wave only to reappear fifty-feet down stream, nestled in

a small cove on the right side of the river. I took several powerful paddle strokes and smashed through the waves, slicing into the eddy next to Erik. With a big fat smile on his face Erik looked at me and said, "Welcome to the jungle." Within a matter of seconds Ben zoomed into the eddy as well, and with a business like expression turned his boat and said, "Follow me guys." He peeled out of the eddy and back into the chaos of whitewater.

We continued down the tight canyon in a systematic line, each bracing against the violent waves and hydraulics. As we reached the third turn Ben screamed, "Eddy right now!" as he paddled violently against the current. We were almost halfway down the canyon already and we had to get out of our boats to scout the next rapid. As I pulled the spray skirt off my boat I noticed my erratic breathing, and felt my heart pounding through my life vest. I also noticed the severity of the moment. One hundred-foot walls

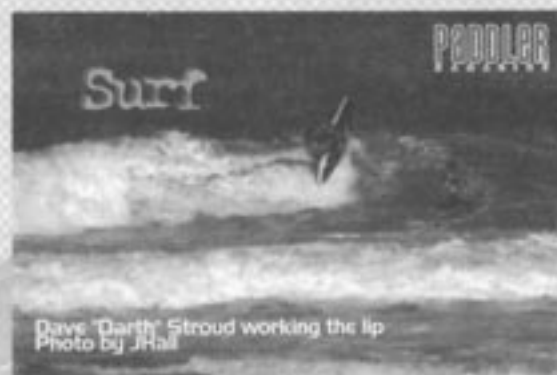


Gorilla*

By Josh Bethea

I love this place,
it scares me.
Breathe,
(okay) float
the notch, sucking me
into obligations.
Nothing to lose or gain,
except life
Stroke, glide
to boiling
pseudo-safety.
now, time to thrive
Yep, the big drop,
"spanking the monkey,"
slide...slide...
Stroke.
water fills my eyes,
I finally see...Life!
I'm alive!
Gorilla recreates me
every time.

* Gorilla is an infamous waterfall among kayakers worldwide. It lies in the "Narrows" of the Green River Gorge, North Carolina. "Spanking the Monkey," is common reference to running this particular rapid.



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surrounded us on either side, and the river in front of us looked extremely turbulent. This rapid required a forty-foot ferry to the river-left side in order to avoid a large undercut boulder that could pin a boat or person indefinitely. After a successful ferry the water slide continued before blasting off a ten-foot waterfall. After taking a few deep breaths I paddled into the river, made a strong ferry, and was instantly taken by the current around the corner and over the big drop. I gave a shout of relief upon landing in the deep calm pool.

For the first time since entering the canyon I sat by myself. I looked up from the water at the walls, which surrounded me, and I noticed the deep green moss clinging to the multi-colored intrusive rock walls. I noticed the birds clinging to the crag, and just then a light mist from the waterfall mixed with the wind, and dropped lightly on my face. The light blue river gently spun my boat around in tiny circles, as I sat in a peaceful trance staring up at the world. I felt an overwhelming feeling of peace, which was completely separate from the drunken escapade of the night before. Here in the gut of the canyon, with nothing but survival on my mind, I began to understand my place in nature. Just then Ben and Erik came bombing down the waterfall with five feet in between them. With a proud smile on his face Ben slapped me out of my trance saying, "What a ride, hey buddy?" With clear and sober eyes I replied saying, "I've never seen anything like it."

One more rapid remained, but it was the most challenging of the entire run. We continued to the next eddy where a sharp horizon line dominated our view downriver. Again we exited our boats to scout our next challenge. From the cliff overlook we could see three giant holes placed in perfect succession one after another, after another, reaching to the exit of the canyon. At this point adrenaline was pumping through my body like a powerful drug. I stood there looking down the narrow canyon, and I could barely see the calm pool at the end of the rapids. Erik and Ben

explained the decent, and Hen was quick to get into his boat to show us the line. Ben started straight down the rapid but when he smashed into the first hydraulic. The water flipped him instantly, and he was spit from the hole vertically, falling uncontrollably down the river on the bow of his boat. He went flying into the second hole sideways, and somehow cartwheeled out before the hole had a chance to abuse him. Ben somehow managed to pull it together, and he finished the last hydraulic in style raising his fists in celebration. After this demonstration, Erik must have noticed my nervousness. With confidence Erik said, "Ben screwed that up, but I know you won't." I said, "That looks really hard, I hope I can do it." Erik smiled and said, "No problem brother, just follow me."

We crammed in our tiny boats, made eye contact one last time, and peeled out into the swiftly moving water. I followed behind Erik and we both launched perfectly off the first drop and plowed through the first hole like it was nothing. The section was non-stop and before we knew it we were flying through the air again and off the second drop. The noise of the river was so loud that I lost all understanding of place, and I slipped into a hypnotic zone where the mind slows down, giving way to natural instinct. On the last drop I hit the hole sideways and was instantly flipped. Underwater everything was quiet. Instantly I was in a new dimension. The power of the water squashed my ribs together, attempting to squeeze the life out of me. In one powerful moment I set up for a roll, tried to roll up, but I felt no resistance. I knew exactly what was happening to me. My boat and I were stuck upside-down in the last big hole. Running out of air and beginning to panic, I calmed my mind, took my time on the setup and just barely rolled up. Like coming out of a dream I could hear the sudden return of noise rushing around me like a train. I was still in the middle of the gigantic hole. I could feel the hydraulic pulling me back into its maw. I fought with all my remaining strength against the power of the

river and slowly pulled myself forward, out of the grip of this massive hole. Completely wasted, and out of breath I realized that it was finally over.

As I looked up at the rapid I had just paddled, my thoughts drifted to the previous night. In youth we find satisfaction in adventure. As young men we define ourselves by our accomplishments, whether it is partying late into the night, or dropping over waterfalls in kayaks. Last night, as I guzzled beer with my friends and danced with beautiful women, I contemplated my existence. "What is it that we are searching for," I thought. "What are we trying to prove? Will we ever be content?" The sound of Erik's voice brought me back to the river, back to the base of the gorge. "What are you looking at?" he asked with a smile. Snapping out of my daydream I replied, "Nothing. Nothing, man, I'm just taking another look." As I looked deeper into Erik's eyes I saw that the smile on his face was different from any he had worn the previous night. This smile was a better reflection of his soul. This smile glowed with the innocent bliss of a child. And that's when I knew: we are young men, and we search for glory and adventure in everything we do; it's our nature. What we had accomplished that day was better than what happened the night before. What we did was pure and healthy, satisfying us at the root of our being. We had an amazing adventure in the canyon and we were completely content.

We found Bill fifty yards from exit of the canyon waiting on the sandy beach. To our surprise Bill told us that his funny feeling had not been in vain. As he had picked up his boat to begin the portage, his helmet fell off his head. With closer inspection he noticed that the strap on his helmet was broken. It was a miracle that Bill's helmet did not break in the middle of the gorge. The Oregon sun slowly slipped away beneath the horizon, as we laughed alone on the river. We floated the remaining 3 miles together, weightless and free, as we talked about that day's adventure, and adventures to come.

Reminders

By Andy Messer

Remember what it feels like when a big wave washes over you.

When you stop, suspended, for a long second until a hole lets you go.

Remember, in your muscles and bones, the way you raise your upstream knee,

The way the current catches your hull, your paddle, your attention,

As you peel out of the eddy.

Remember the blue heron, Playing tag on a February afternoon.

Remember the songs you sing to the river, And the songs the river sings to you.

Remember the smell of clean water, Clean air, Clean sand, Clean mud.

Remember your friends. Remember following them down a rapid Or stopping to bask on a sandstone boulder in the sun, The talk and the quiet, The sounds of human voices And others.

Remember the wind.

Remember being out of control, Out of the boat, Being swept over the edge of the world.

Remember the indifferent ease With which the river carried you, Lifted you, Buried you.

Remember the abundance of flood, The clarity of drought.

Remember sunlight surrendering to moonlight, The call of the whippoorwill, Persistent as the sliding rush Of dark water over cobbles From either side of the island In the night.

Andrew Messer, 2001



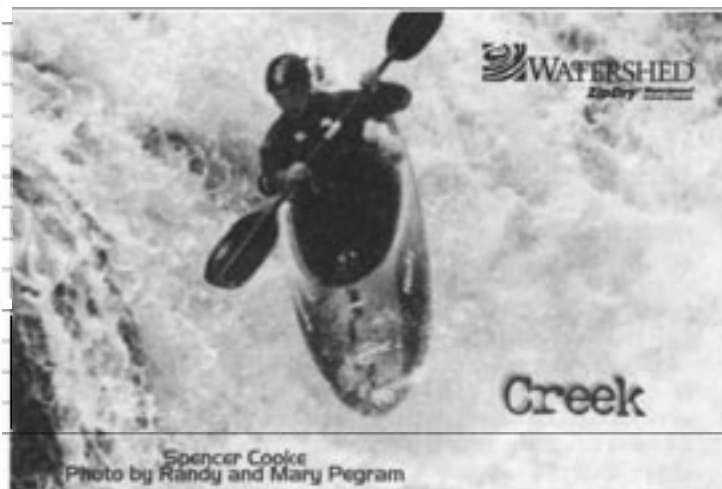
Why Join a Paddling Club?

By: Sam Johnson

In the summer of 1998 I had basically paddled only two rivers: the Genesee and the Lower Yough. I made a phone call to The Zoar Valley Paddling Club and talked with Don Shelters (also known as Lumpy). Don invited me to attend a river clean up the next weekend, which I did with Donny Hushon. On the shuttle ride Don and others were talking about paddling the Cheat, New, Moose, and even the Upper Yough and Upper Gauley. I was thinking these guys were either good liars or they had a death wish. I didn't talk with club members again until January of 1999. Shane Hushon, Donny, and I were sitting around trying to figure out where to paddle on a 60 degree January day when I decided to give Don a call. Don invited us to the Cattaraugus to paddle with the club. Don was a little hesitant about our skills but was still willing to take us along. The river was running about 8 feet and was full of ice chunks. When we hit the main branch, the big surf waves sounded like a percussion session, with ice chunks clanging on the bottom of the boats. We held our own that day on the river, and only had one mishap when an experienced member of the club took a swim in the slushy water. After the run we shared stories at a local tavern and my friends and I vowed to join the club. We were hooked.

That spring Donny, Shane, and Tim Hushon and I went to paddle the Stony Creek in Johnstown, PA. Donny and Shane had paddled it before at three feet, which is a great level. That day it was over eight feet on the gauge and was looking a little crazy. Just around the first corner we encountered a river-wide hole. Some people went far left while I went far right. Alady that put-on with us hit the hole dead on. Needless to say she had to swim out but we got her to shore very quickly on river right. She said that would be enough for her and she wanted to get out. We decided the best thing to do was to have her ferry across to river left to take-out on the railroad tracks. She was pretty shaken up, so we surrounded her as she started out. It was a good thing we did. She flipped right away and we were moving toward some big waves and holes and had no idea what was coming up. Donny took her to shore as Shane, Tim, and I went for the equipment. It was a slow process and we were moving downstream real fast. The river that day felt like the New at about 5 feet. Shane finally hooked up his leash to the boat and brought it to shore. Tim and I were able to scramble out of our boats and hold onto Shane so he would not wash downstream as we unhooked the boat. This was all happening about twenty feet above a huge hole. I don't mean

Donny Hushon running Crystal on the Bottom Moose. Photo by Sam Johnson



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your average huge hole, I mean a monster hole that even the big boys would avoid. After the woman began to hike out, the rest of our party regrouped and started off down river.

At this point, four other paddlers joined our group (they must have thought we really knew the river, or else they figured we would make good probes). At one point about a mile from the take-out I saw Donny come up to a horizon line with his head on aswivel. He finally dropped out of sight and reappeared in a huge tail stand. Shane was next and he did the same move with the tail stand and a roll. I followed and did the exact same thing—as did the next five guys. There was no good line. At the take-out we watched paddles and boats float by with no boaters. This was a great confidence booster for me and I was looking forward to paddling some other great rivers that spring.

That spring Don finally told us that we were ready for the Upper Yough. At the put-in that day it was Don, Donny, Trevor Heberlein, Andy Czernick, Dan Gore, Tim Hushon, and I. We went through the first few miles of Class III stuff and as we neared Bastard my stomach

Sam Johnson cartwheeling at Railroad Rapid on the Lower Yough. Photo by Lisa Johnson.

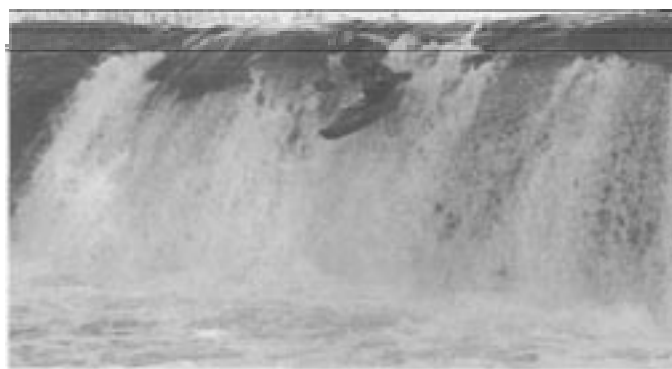


was in knots. I knew I had the skills, but this was THE UPPERYOUGH. As it turned out, several of us first-timers had some adventures and some swims. The result was that I ended up walking the last big rapids, Meat Cleaver and Lost and Found. But, by the end of the day my frazzled nerves were already feeling better. That night we all told stories around the campfire and had many laughs. It is amazing how people who are so different are so alike when it comes to paddling. This club is made up of a great group of people.

Later that summer I went back to the Upper Yough with Don, Donny, George, Dan Gore, and his two sons Ryan and Chris. They were also second timers on the Upper, but they didn't show it. Look for these two in the future. They both rip. My second trip down the Upper Yough was a totally different experience because I was really relaxed. Lumpy was up to his tricks again when we got to Charlie's Choice. He was going to take me on the left side sneak. The next thing I knew we were launching off the boof at the birdcage. I said to Don "That was the sneak?" and Don turned around with that shit-eating grin and said, "See, you didn't need to run the sneak after all." The rest of the day went great. Dan Gore ran the boof move at National Falls without a paddle, making for a great picture. After running the last big drop, Lost and Found, Lumpy turned around and gave me a big high five. This is now my favorite river, which I try to get to at least twice a year.

In the fall it was time for Gauley Season and Gauley Fest. Donny, Tim, and I hooked up with Dan, Ryan, and Chris Gore, Jeff Brennan and George again. I was again a little freaked about the Upper Gauley because of all the horror stories, but Dan said it would be no problem. At the put-in we saw all kinds of heroes: Eric Southwick, EJ, Jeff Snyder in his strider, Shannon Carroll, and others. (Oh and Dave Gore.) Insignificant went well, and we moved

Sam Johnson at Agler's Falls on the Bottom Moose. Photo by Lisa Johnson.



on to Pillow. During my run I unintentionally splatted pillow rock, flipped, rolled up, hit Volkswagen, flipped again, and rolled at the bottom. What a rush. Next was Lost Paddle, which is scary. We had one swimmer there that Dan and Jeff rescued. We scouted Iron Ring and although it looked easy it had consequences. I walked it and figured it would be there next year. That night it was on to the festival where my wife and I spent a little money and had a few beers while checking out all the new gear and the sales on old gear.

Next was the Moose Festival. There was a large crowd there from the club, and it was like a family reunion. This club accepts anyone; member or not you feel like you belong. On Friday night we went to Hole Brothers and played for a while. Later that night at dinner I had a few drinks at a table with Dave Gore, Donny, Tim, Shane, Brian, and Ken Whiting and Shannon Carroll. WOW! They were really cool. It was amazing to see the big name paddlers there: B.J. and Katie, Dinver, Ken, Shannon, Willie Kern, and others. The next day we did the Lower Moose. It was fun and we got to see some carnage as Trevor's raft flipped in Mixmaster. Next was elevator shaft and we got to see two crazy mystery moves in the hole at the bottom. Donny, Andy, Shane, Brian and Gore continued down and met the rest of us at Agar's Falls. After seeing the others run this I had to go get back in my boat. What a blast.

The next day Gore, Andy, and Donny ran the bottom while I ran Agars about ten times. We then went to Crystal to watch them run it. They all had great lines, and Gore even showed a little cheese. They even went down and ran Magilla after looking at it for a half hour. They again had clean lines and had their adrenaline fix for the day so we packed up and headed home.

So why join a club? This was just a short list of my memories from this year. I could have done this with the club or paddled the same two rivers this year and been without about 20 new friends. You can join the club for many reasons: to paddle harder rivers with experienced paddlers, to travel, to learn to paddle, or just to hang out with a great group of people. I can't wait for the first spring thaw this year because that means another exciting boating year is just beginning.

Sam Johnson cartwheeling at Railroad Rapid on the Lower Yough. Photo by Lisa Johnson. Donny Hushon (L) and Ryan Gore (R) splatting a rock just below National Falls on the Upper Yough. Photo by Sam Johnson.





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Whitewater

Accident Summary

July- December 2001

By Charlie Walbridge AW Board Member and Safety Editor



After an alarming number of accidents in the first half of the 2001 season, the period from July to December was relatively quiet. "Only" 3 kayak, 4 canoe, and 10 rafting (including 2 inflatable kayaking) fatalities were reported to the American Whitewater Safety Committee, and most of these involved inexperienced people. The low water conditions found throughout the country during the summer and fall were probably responsible for this lull. The yearly total is now 20 kayakers, 9 canoeists, and 16 rafters (3 in inflatable kayaks). There were also some tubing and wading deaths that are worthy of note, and these, along with several interesting near-misses, will also be discussed here.

On July 14th three inexperienced river runners who chose not to wear their life vests drowned in separate incidents. According to news reports forwarded by Robin Saylor, the first man was 49 year-old David Christoferson. He was padding with his 21 year-old son when his canoe became pinned on the Wenatchee River near Cashmere, Washington. Mr. Christoferson's leg was trapped in the canoe. His son, who was, fortunately, wearing a PFD, swam to shore and went for help. A short time later he and sheriff's deputies waded out to and managed to free his father's leg. But the older man, injured and weakened by the cold water, was swept away and disappeared. If you needed a good example of why rescuers need to put ill-equipped victims in life vests prior to extrication, this is it!

Gary Marsh reported that Carlos Gonzales, 24, died on the John Day River near Mitchell, Oregon on the afternoon of July 14th. Witnesses said that the man and his friends were running Burnt Ranch Rapid (Classification unknown) repeatedly in a small raft. Mr. Gonzales had just finished a run and was wading the raft to shore when he slipped beneath the surface and did not reappear. A dive team responded and quickly recovered the body. The BLM, which manages the area,

does not require adults to use life jackets. A river ranger who tried to educate Mr. Gonzales' group ran into a language barrier and was probably not understood. River managers might consider providing their staff with an English/Spanish phrase book to cover situations like this.

That same afternoon H.J. Pratt, 27, drowned on the Class II Potomac River just below Harper's Ferry, West Virginia. The Frederick (MD) News-Post reported that the man had been tubing and partying with a group of friends. He'd been drinking, and worse, had removed his PFD and tied it to his inner tube. He fell out of his tube near the Route 340 Bridge and did not resurface. When his group reached the take-out they reported Pratt's disappearance. A air/land search was started, called for darkness, and resumed at first light the next day. A local man found the body the next morning.

The Poudre River near Fort Collins, Colorado was the site of a rafting fatality on the afternoon of July 21st. According to the Fort Collins Coloradoan, Jason Powell, 30, flipped his two-man raft in the "Bridges" section (III-IV) at low water. His partner swam ashore, but Mr. Powell caught his foot while wading. He could stand for a while, but after a lengthy struggle he was pushed underwater. Kayakers and commercial raft guides tried to set up a stabilization line, but they were unsuccessful.

We have a sketchy report that Bennie Hicks, 56, died after being pulled from the river at White Rock Rapids on the Colorado River in Grand County, Utah on July 22nd. He was apparently paddling with his wife when he flipped, swam, and was pulled ashore by rafters. He may have collapsed after his swim. We have no further information and anyone who knows what happened is urged to contact the Safety Committee.

The Mad River in Ohio isn't exactly whitewater, but on July 29th it was rushing by at

near-flood stage. The Dayton, Ohio Daily News reported that a family was floating a section near Fairborn when they got pinned on a log jam. Their boat was a discount-store vinyl inflatable, and no one was wearing a PFD. The mishap was spotted by motorists who used their cell phone to call for help. Firefighters rescued a man and two children, but his wife, Angela Smith, 27, disappeared. A search for her body continued for several days without success.

On August 5th the Wisconsin River saw three incidents of drowning at low-head dams. None of them involved whitewater paddlers, however. The Baraboo, Wisconsin News Republic reported that Erin Swieringa, 35, was being ferried across the river upstream of the Glenville Dam on the back of someone's kayak. She fell off, washed into the hydraulic, and drowned. Later that day Lisa Hohl, 36, was fishing at the same location when her boat came too close to the backwash and was pulled in. Her brother escaped with minor injuries. The dam is obsolete, and is scheduled for removal by the Wisconsin DNR this year. But not far away Ning Zhu, 39, was fishing and wading below the Sauk City Dam when he got too close to the hydraulic and was sucked into the backwash. This tragic string points out the need for warning signs around these structures nationwide.

On August 6th Colorado's Arkansas River was the scene of a tragic double drowning. The river was running a low 700 cfs when Bernd Knorr, 39, and his wife Jennifer, 36 rafted the Class III Frog Rock Section with a commercial outfitter. The Rocky Mountain News reported that their guide veered to the right to avoid a raft ahead of them that got stuck on a rock. Their boat flipped after hitting a badly undercut rock downstream. The pair fell out of the raft, were carried deep, and pinned beneath it. Their bodies were recovered later that day. There was a reference in the article to four other private rafting fatali-

ties on the same river, but we have no information on them. Anyone who can help is urged to contact us.

Jonathan McKnight, 30, died on August 12th on Tennessee's Class I-II Hiwassee River. A Chattanooga, TN newspaper reported that his "fishing tube" flipped below Appalachia Powerhouse. McKnight then floated head-down despite his PFD and drowned. His brother also flipped his tube, but was pulled upright by a friend. Fishing tubes have been implicated in several other deaths on the Hiwassee, and local outfitters warn that they are not suitable for moving water. There is no possibility of a quick release if the tube flips or becomes snagged.

A six-year old girl was killed on August 25th after her father, her brother and his friend rafted past warning signs on the Yakima River below Ellensburg, WA. The Seattle Times reported that the group then ran the Bristol Flats Spillway, an irrigation structure that was responsible for three other deaths this year alone. Dam management recommends a 50 yard portage, and their personnel spend hours each day warning people not to run the dam. Both men had run the dam without incident previously. They swam ashore safely when their boat flipped. The water tore the life vest off Madison Gail, 6, and pulled her under water. Her body was recovered several miles downstream. A brother, 4, was pulled ashore

by his father. Revived with CPR, he was taken to the hospital in critical condition.

West Virginia's Class IV New River Gorge was the scene of a low water drowning on August 30th. Howard Dickerson, a 29 year-old raft guide, was paddling a high performance inflatable kayak alongside two friends in a small raft. At Old 99 Hook (Class III+) he ran a narrow side-slot. His kayak pinned against an undercut rock, and he was held underwater. His buddies saw the IK go under, climbed on top of the rock, and attempted a rescue. When their efforts failed, they paddled to the take-out and notified authorities. National Park Service river rangers located the trapped boat but darkness prevented a rescue. The next morning river rangers pulled the boat from the rock, allowing the body to float free.

There was a commercial fatality on Northern California's Cashe Creek on September 9th. Apparently a woman's life jacket was torn off after she fell out of a raft on a guide-assisted trip. We have yet to get a good account of this tragedy, and anyone with good information is urged to write us.

Ecuador's Papallacta River is a small (300 cfs), steep (175 fpm) Class IV+ creek run. Jay Kenney reported that on November 1st a three-person group encountered a narrow Class III+ drop located 2/3 of the way down the run. Stephen Korinchak, 28, ran first and

pinned his kayak on a hidden log that spanned the drop. Initially his head was above the water. His boat never folded, but the log passed across his cockpit and made escape impossible. His two companions struggled heroically for several minutes before Korinchak's boat shifted and pulled him under water. His friends persisted, freeing the boat about five minutes later. They grabbed Mr. Korinchak, and swam him to shore. The pair then performed CPR for 75 minutes without success.

In Texas you either get lots of water or almost none. The former condition prevailed on November 24th, when heavy rains brought the Guadalupe River near New Braunfels to over 5000 cfs. This made the entire river a pushy Class II-III run.

David Price's e-mail, forwarded by Patti Corothers, describes what happened: Juliette Garcia, 33, was padding an ocean kayak with her husband below Ingram Ranch. Ms. Garcia capsized upstream of a low bridge (only 18" clearance), hit the bridge pier hard, and pinned well below the surface. A swiftwater rescue team found her body pinned beneath the kayak the next day.

In an effort to minimize stress on the structure, bridge piers are designed to throw up very small pillows. A boat can pin on one even in mild current. On Sept. 3rd the Philadelphia Daily News reported that a profes-



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sional couple traveling on the Schuylkill River (Class I) with their infant daughter wrapped a canoe on the Route 82 bridge abutment just downstream of Reading, PA. The man, pinned between the boat and the bridge, shouted that his wife and baby had gone under. Bystanders attempted to save the family, and were able to help the man. But his wife, Vidu Anand, 29, was pulled under water and disappeared. Tara Anand, 3, caught her life vest buckle on the canoe and was held under water for too long.

It's a little known fact that hikers and picnickers, not paddlers, are the most likely accident victims at riverside parks. Thus, the two wading deaths occurring on well-known whitewater rivers this past summer are worthy of note. The Class III Saluda River in Columbia, SC rises quickly when the SCE&G power dam upstream releases, and people often become stranded. On July 22nd a woman was trapped on a midstream rock by rising water. The Columbia, SC State reported that 21 year-old Brian Shealy entered the river with two other men to assist her. The woman got ashore fine, but Mr. Shealy wedged his foot in a crack, lost his balance, and was pushed under water. In another incident, the National Park Service Morning Report for August 4th stated that Babu Gurusbrami, 27, lost his footing and was swept away while


wading in the Class 1-11 Chattahoochee River near Atlanta, Georgia. Search teams found his body several days later. Both events received considerable coverage in the media.

Nancy Howells forwarded additional information on the drowning of David Golley on Chittanango Creek this past April 11th. He and a friend attempted a section of Class III below Chittanango Falls in an old wood-and-canvas canoe. Water levels were high, and they wore no helmets, PFD's, or protective gear. They set their boat in the water and had one foot inside when the current grabbed the upstream end and dumped them. One made it to shore and flagged a motorist who dialed 911. A helicopter was in the area and spotted Mr. Golley, and followed him until turbulence forced it to pull away. Mr. Golley's father found the body a month later, after the water receded, caught in a river-wide strainer

There were also a number of interesting near-misses during the past six months. The Washington Post reported that a hiker who fell into the Potomac River near Great Falls, Virginia on August 4th was rescued by Peter Weina, an army doctor who was kayaking the river. This hapless hiker swam through the lower Fishladder (gnarly Class V), S-Turn, and Wet Bottom (both big water Class III) before he was picked up. Weina offered the man his grab loop, pulled him to shore, and



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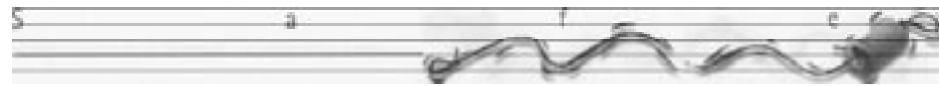
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checked him for injuries. Then, because the walls of Mather Gorge are too steep to climb, he told the hiker to grab hold of his grab loop and towed him downstream. At Sandy Landing they were met by a Park Service rescue boat.

Veteran Ocoee River guide Buddi Davis reported a harrowing incident that he was involved in this past summer. On August 8th a group of guides was running the Nolichucky River below Poplar, NC. The flow was a moderate 990 cfs. Rachel Sarchet, 19, flipped her IK below Murphy's Ledge and swam. She was picked up by a kayaker, but let go prematurely and was swept into a rather ordinary looking rock. She was pulled deep under this rock and pinned. The current was strong enough to pull her life vest off! Her group responded beautifully. Several people swam out to the rock, reached down, grabbed hold of her arms, and tried to pull her free. Others set up a stabilization line and managed to snag a carabiner attached to Ms. Sarchet's guide belt. As a team of guides hauled on the ropes and reworked their angle of pull for maximum effectiveness, the guys on the rock's downstream side found Ms. Sarchet's feet sticking out through a void in the rock, and actually pushed them back through! The group had Ms. Sarchet ashore in less than ten min-

utes, truly a remarkable feat. They pulled her to a flat rock, began CPR, and continued to the river right shore.


While this was going on, the group working the snag line on the river left side heard a train coming. They ran to the tracks and managed to flag it down. Still performing good CPR, the remaining guides used a raft to ferry Ms. Sarchet over to the tracks. The engineer doesn't usually stop for anyone, but something told him that this time was different. When they arrived at the put-in Ms. Sarchet was breathing on her own. Because the engineer had radioed ahead, an ambulance was waiting. Ms. Sarchet was driven to a church parking lot, transferred to a helicopter, and flown to a hospital in Johnson City, TN. As of this writing she has not fully regained consciousness, but she's now at home and showing signs of improvement. A fund has been set up to pay for her care at home, which is not insured. You can send donations to the Rachel Sarchet Recovery Fund at the 5th/3rd Bank, 1212 West Kemper Street, Cincinnati, OH 45240.

In early to mid-July whitewater rafting guides from the New River Gorge provided vital rescue assistance to local firefighters during the worst floods to hit Fayette County, West Virginia in decades. Rivers, a local

outfitter, had to blow up rafts to evacuate their campground at midnight when tiny Wolf Creek turned into a raging torrent carrying 8,000 cfs! Attention quickly turned to helping local residents. Intense swiftwater rescues and evacuations occurred in the Minden area, along Routes 16 and 61, and in Kincaid. Steve Cruikshank, Director of Fayette County Emergency Services, said that the County was fortunate to have so many trained people at hand. He singled out the owners of Wildwater Unlimited, Songer Whitewater, and Class VI River Runners for special praise.

Eric Jackson, in his posting to BoaterTalk.com, recounted the scary consequences of getting off line at Great Falls of the Potomac. In addition to his very impressive skills, Eric has more runs of Great Falls than anyone. On October 8th he missed a boof and became stuck in Charlie's Hole. Knowing of a previous fatality and several harrowing near misses, Eric used all of his playboating skills to hang on until Scott Shipley and Nec Poberj could grab his bow and pull him out. Just shows that you can miss a move and get into trouble no matter how good you are, or how well you know the river. And good friends can really make a difference!

We've all bitten off more than we can chew, and some of us have been hurt, but few

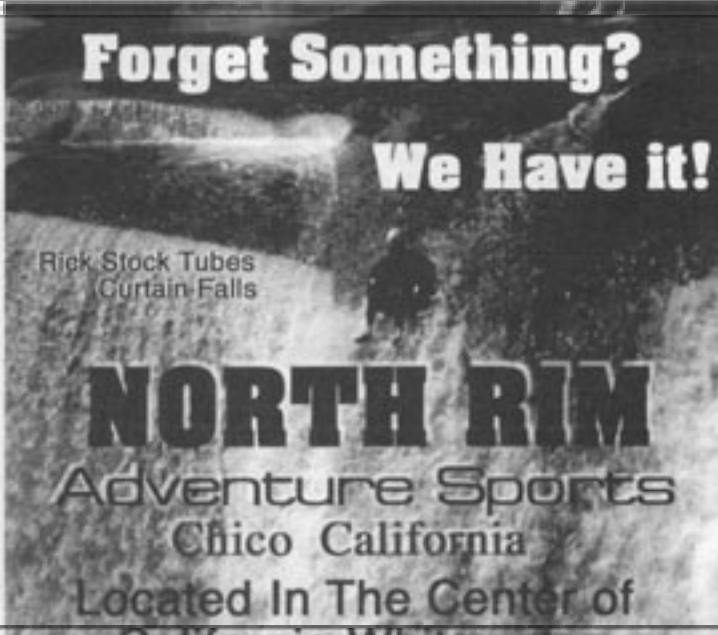


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have done it in such an unforgiving place! On October 16th four local kayakers with less than a year's boating experience each decided to try a low water run on a steep walled, Class IV-V section of the Elwha River on Washington's Olympic peninsula. On the third drop one of them broached their boat in a narrow chute. He was held against an undercut rock face for 30 seconds and sustained painful hip and abdominal injuries. Members of his party climbed to higher ground and called for help with a cell phone. Aranger and a volunteer doctor scrambled down to the victim and could not rule out a fractured pelvis. A Coast Guard rescue helicopter arrived and hovered above the site. The pilot had no margin for error: blade clearance in the narrow canyon was a mere 75 feet on each side and he was bucking heavy upstream winds. He lowered a rescue swimmer 150 feet, followed by a Stokes Litter. The kayaker was then packaged and hauled to safety.

And on December 17th two fellows decided to try out their new kayaks on Arkansas' North Cadron Creek, which was flooding (12,000 cfs.) According to The Log Cabin, John and Eric Buckner (both in their 20's) launched from the Highway 65 bridge at 1:00 p.m. The pair got caught on a river wide log jam and spent the night out. After several

hours their concerned families called authorities. Emergency squad members arrived, but said that the water was too fast to safely launch a boat. A State Police helicopter flew over the river after dark, but their infra-red detection device didn't work in the icy mist. Fortunately, the pair's wetsuits kept them from freezing. By dawn the river had dropped considerably, and they were able to walk out.

American Whitewater depends on our members and friends to produce this accident summary. The information we acquire is added to our Safety Database, the largest collection of its kind in the world. Created by Safety Chair Lee Belknap and accessible at www.americanwhitewater.org, it provides a basis for our safety policies. I'm indebted to my many correspondents: including Slim Ray, Lee Belknap, Jay Kenney, Jason Robertson, Joe Greiner, Aida Parkinson, Robin Saylor, Kathy Streletzky, Bud Chavez, Rebecca Schumacher, Doug Sauer, Peter Turkaly, and Bill Pearlstein. If you sent in some information and I lost track of your name, my apologies. Everything I get is read and appreciated regardless! Please forward accident descriptions, newspaper articles, personal accounts, and any other material of note to ccwalbridge@cs.com or write: Rt. 1, Box A43B, Bruceton Mills, WV 26525.

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Cotahuasi *continued from page 49*

time to paddle. The water is pushy and I miss an eddy and nearly tip over, but my confidence returns and I brace hard and catch another small eddy at the brink of a solid Class V+ drop. A short portage gets my heart rate back down, and the paddling starts to flow. Scott has a great run, and Randy portages. We scout and portage our way through about two miles of Class IV to IV+, punctuated by a few intermittent Class Vs and one or two Class V+ to VI drops. Scott runs everything, including one very big drop with a huge hole that nearly holds him.

The river eases up for a bit and we reach Velinga in the early afternoon. There is a hot spring here, but it isn't very hot, so we paddle on and camp on an abandoned farm on river right. This farm is fed by springs and is an oasis of exotic plants.

The next day is pure fun. The rapids ease a bit and we are able to eddy-scout everything. Incan ruins are everywhere and we stop in one of them for lunch. It is hard to imagine that a great civilization once inhabited this canyon that is now so empty. We paddle on down some great Class III to IV and find an abandoned village on river left.

We think that we are in Marpa and set off to explore the village. There are a bunch of cabins and a large stone vat that is used for stomping the grapes. It is strange to walk through this ghost village and imagine the scene during the harvest. My mind pictures a large group of busy, happy people. The wine from the last harvest flows freely as they sing and dance and stomp on the grapes. But today the town is empty, and there are only the spirits of the past harvests to watch us as we wander the streets. We camp across the river at another Inca ruin and enjoy another perfect evening.

The next day is solid Class IV all day long, but we eddy-scout everything and set a pretty good pace. We believe that we are entering the last gorge, until we see four men working beside the river. They inform us that we have just now reached Marpa. They are eager to chat and trade a bottle of wine for a bunch of kayak stickers. Marpa is about six miles further downstream than we thought, and the whitewater that we have just paddled was barely mentioned in my friend's notes. If the canyon we traversed today was "insignificant," what will the "significant" one be like? There is only one way to find out.

We decide to stop for lunch and explore the large Inca ruin below Marpa. My friends had found mummies here on the first descent, but they have all since been taken away by archeologists. The old Inca city provides an awesome vista with ruins on both sides of the river and big rapids that lead into another gorge.

We paddle through the first difficult rapid and camp in the ruins on river right. A short hike downstream through the old city doubles as a scouting trip for the next morning's rapid. This rapid doesn't look too bad, and the tension eases. It has been another perfect day with clear skies and dry air. Early in the trip there were a few clouds, but for the last five days, there have been none. This desert is very desolate and lonely. Outside of the bottom of the canyon, there are no plants. There are a few birds and a few insects, but that is all. We leave food out at night, and nothing touches it. There are no sounds and no tracks in the sand. The stars are brilliant in a sky unmarked by any sign of civilization. The half dozen or so people that live in this canyon are the only inhabitants in a few thousand square miles of desert.

We awake energized after a good sleep and are eager to meet our last challenge. The first rapid is great Class IV with shear walls and fast current. It is great to be alive as we paddle down to Centimeter Canyon. This rapid can easily be boofed on the left, but the approach rapid is challenging. We all have good runs and head into the last gorge.

Here, the geology changes to a dramatic inner gorge with delicately cawed rocks and lots of basalt flows on the upper walls. There are five or six Class V- drops with great character and a lot of Class IV in between. Some of the drops are pretty big, but we are able to eddy-scout most of them with Scott's brave leads. He paddles boldly down a big drop and we see a tail stand at the bottom, but he waves us on and points to the right. The right side is cleaner, but it is still a very exciting drop.

We are all flying high. The Cotahuasi has given me one of the best days ever on a river that provides one of the best days of boating I have ever had. After a couple more drops, the river eases, and a big tributary comes in from the right. We have reached the Miran, and all our fears and apprehensions are over! We celebrate with jerky and the last of our chocolate, then paddle onward into a strong wind.

The wind is nasty, but we manage to find a cave and celebrate our success with a bottle of local wine.

Another long day of windy, flat water brings us to Ikipi where we receive a hero's welcome at the local restaurant. The great Cotahuasi is now a cherished memory.

Editor's note: John Mattson's "Gruisin' Cal at Fifty" appeared in our November issue.



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