



AMERICAN WHITEWATER

Conservation • Access • Events • Adventure • Safety

BY BOATERS FOR BOATERS
March/April 2010

intro to **WHITEWATER**

Giving Back
Between Family and Fearless
The Mighty Miami
"Are You Trying to Kill Your Daughters?"
Youngsters Learning on the Salmon





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March/April 2010 - Volume #50 - Issue #2

- 3 The Journey Ahead *by Mark Singleton*
- 4 President's Message *by Don Kinser*
- 6 Call for Nominations
- 7 Letters to the Editor
- 32 Poetry

8 Updates by Kevin Colburn

10 Giving Back by Brent Davis

14 My Natural Element by Michael Goyin

20 Grateful for Whitewater by Leo Kaskel

22 The Best Days of Boating in My Life by Scott McKinstry

24 The Middle Road Between Family and Fearless: A Beginner's Journey by Stuart Miles

26 Keep Yer Head Above Yer Ass! by Devon Pearse

28 Taming the Great Miami River by Scott Puthoff

42 Are You Trying To Kill Your Daughters? by John Amtmann

34 Hard Decisions on the Pontax by Dan McDonnell

Click [here](#) on some classic West Riverbend Creek (WTR) whitewater

Photos by Steve Swadgen

[illegible]

River Voices

Photograph: © Tompkins Riverkeeper

Hard Questions for the Future

As the nation's largest environmental organization, the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) has been at the forefront of the fight to protect the environment. In the past few years, we have seen a number of significant victories, but we also face a number of hard questions for the future. How can we ensure that our children and grandchildren have a clean, healthy environment? How can we ensure that our economy is sustainable and that we are not depleting our natural resources? These are the questions that we must ask ourselves as we move forward.

One of the most important questions we face is how to protect our water. Water is a precious resource, and it is essential for life. But in many parts of the world, water is scarce and of poor quality. We need to take steps to protect our water resources and to ensure that we have enough clean water for everyone. This means protecting our watersheds, reducing pollution, and conserving water.

Another important question is how to protect our air. Air pollution is a major threat to human health and the environment. It causes respiratory problems, heart disease, and other health issues. It also contributes to global climate change. We need to take steps to reduce air pollution and to protect our air quality. This means regulating emissions from factories and cars, and promoting clean energy.

Finally, we need to ask how to protect our land. Land is a finite resource, and it is essential for our economy and our environment. We need to protect our forests, wetlands, and other natural areas. We also need to ensure that our land is used in a sustainable way. This means protecting our soil, conserving water, and promoting responsible land use.

As we move forward, we must ask these hard questions and find the answers. We must ensure that our children and grandchildren have a clean, healthy environment. We must ensure that our economy is sustainable and that we are not depleting our natural resources. These are the challenges that we face, and we must rise to the occasion. We must protect our environment for the future.

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Publication Title: American Whitewater
Issue Date: March/April 2010
Statement of Frequency: Published bimonthly
Authorized Organization's Name and Address:
American Whitewater
P.O. Box 1540
Cullowhee, NC 28723

Purpose American Whitewater

River Stewardship: An Integrated Approach

Our mission: "To conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely," is actively pursued through our conservation, access, safety and education efforts under the umbrella of River Stewardship. The only national organization representing the interest of all whitewater paddlers, American Whitewater is the national voice for thousands of individual whitewater enthusiasts, as well as over 100 local paddling club affiliates.

AW's River Stewardship program adheres to the four tenets of our mission statement:

CONSERVATION: AW's professional staff works closely with volunteers and partner organizations to protect the ecological and scenic values of all whitewater rivers. These goals are accomplished through direct

participation in public decision-making processes, grassroots advocacy, coalition building, empowerment of volunteers, public outreach and education, and, when necessary, legal action.

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, encourages equitable and responsible management of whitewater rivers on public lands, and works with government agencies and other river users to achieve these goals.

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 American Whitewater Safety Code.

EDUCATION: AW shares information with the general public and the paddling community regarding whitewater rivers, as well as river recreation, conservation, access, and safety. This is accomplished through our bi-monthly AW Journal, a monthly e-news, americanwhitewater.org, paddling events, educational events, and through direct communication with the press.

Together, AW staff, members, volunteers, and affiliate clubs can achieve our goals of conserving, protecting and restoring America's whitewater resources and enhancing opportunities to safely enjoy these wonderful rivers.

AW was incorporated under Missouri nonprofit corporation laws in 1961 and maintains its principal mailing address at PO Box 1540, Cullowhee, NC 28723; phone 1-866-BOAT-4-AW (1-866-262-8429). AW is tax exempt under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Service.



American Whitewater Journal Staff

Editor Ambrose Tuscano

P.O. Box 913, Soda Springs, California 95728
e-mail: editor@americanwhitewater.org

Graphic Design/Production/Photo Editor Christie Dobson

Contributing Writers

Don Kinser, Ambrose Tuscano, Mark Singleton,
Kevin Colburn, Norwood Scott, John Tansil, Brent Davis,
Michael Goyen, Leo Kaskel, Scott McKinstry, Stuart Miles, Devon
Pearse, Scott Puthoff, Luke Karasa, Michael Goyen, Craig Irwin

Photo Contributors

Duke Energy, Jake Zywickie, Steve Rodgers, Dawn Davis,
Sharoni Jacobs, David Stephano, Mark McKinstry, Leo Kaskel,
Mark McKinstry, Stuart Miles, Devon Pearse, Louise Pearse,
Scott Puthoff, Tom Sterling

Events / Advertising Coordinator Jeff Paine

P.O. Box 1540, Cullowhee, NC 28723
phone 860-331-8323
e-mail: jeff@amwhitewater.org

Safety Editor Charlie Walbridge

Route 1, Box 329F, Bruceton Mills, WV 26525
e-mail: ccwalbridge@cs.com

Stewardship Reports Editor

Kevin Colburn, kevin@americanwhitewater.org

American Whitewater Magazine Task Force

Jeff Espy, Dunbar Hardy, Dale-Marie Herring, John Mason,
Tanya Shuman, Ambrose Tuscano

Missing Copies and Address Changes

carla@americanwhitewater.org

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Board of Directors & Staff

**TOLL FREE NUMBER
866-BOAT4AW**

Chris Bell
chris@boatingbeta.com
Asheville, NC

Rich Bowers
rich@hydroreform.org
Bellingham, WA

Dave Cernicek
cernicek@cluemail.com
Jackson, WY

Adam Cramer
cramerica@gmail.com
Bethesda, MD

Leland Davis
leland@brushmountainpublishing.com
Swannanoa, NC

Jennie Goldberg
jennie@nwwhitewater.org
Seattle, WA

Kristine Jackson
kristine@jacksonkayak.com
Rock Island, TN

Don Kinser
dkinser@ediltd.com
Marietta, GA

Evie Locke
evelynlocke@verizon.net
Charlemont, MA

Eric Nies
nies@runbox.com
New Paltz, NY

Aaron Pruzan
aaron@jacksonholekayak.com
Jackson Hole, WY

Norwood Scott
wms111@sbccglobal.com
San Francisco, CA

Charlie Walbridge
ccwalbridge@cs.com
Bruceton Mills, WV

BOARD OFFICERS

President: Don Kinser
Vice President: Norwood Scott
Secretary: Jennie Goldberg
Treasurer: Chris Bell
At Large: Dave Cernicek

AW STAFF

Laura Blalock
Finance Manager
Cullowhee, NC
laura@americanwhitewater.org

Kevin Colburn
National Stewardship Director
Missoula, MT
kevin@americanwhitewater.org

Nathan Fey
Colorado Stewardship Director
Longmont, CO
nathan@americanwhitewater.org

Carla Miner
Membership Manager
West Valley City, UT
carla@americanwhitewater.org

Jeff Paine
Outreach Director
Asheville, NC
jeff@americanwhitewater.org

Thomas O'Keefe
Pacific NW Stewardship Director
Seattle, WA
okeefe@americanwhitewater.org

Mark Singleton
Executive Director
Cullowhee, NC
mark@americanwhitewater.org

Dave Steindorf
California Stewardship Director
Chico, CA
dave@americanwhitewater.org

The Journey Ahead

Welcome to spring! I know in some parts of the country the skiing is still very good. But, for many, this is the season of high water and runoff. As rivers surge with new energy they carry with them a sense of power and the capability to forge a new course.

Here at American Whitewater, we are forging a new course in river restoration. After a stellar 2009 in river stewardship project success, we received word in early January that our seven-year battle over the removal of Dillsboro Dam on the Tuckasegee River in North Carolina had come to a close and that the dam will finally come down.

The removal of Dillsboro Dam is the linchpin of a federal hydropower relicensing agreement on the Nantahala and Tuckasegee Rivers that includes:

- Dam and powerhouse removal at Dillsboro on the Tuckasegee River
- Eight new free flowing river miles that benefit both aquatic species and recreation
- Flows on the classic Class II Nantahala River and the Class II Tuck Gorge that are now included in the operating license
- New scheduled releases on the Class III/IV Upper Nantahala and Cascades
- Class IV West Fork Tuckasegee recreational releases starting when access trails and other logistics are completed

In a press release issued by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service the biologist involved with the project said, "It's not very often you get to see a dam demolished, especially a FERC-licensed hydroelectric project. We have a rare opportunity to see the return of a stretch of river that's been impaired for nearly 100 years. This means a lot for the fish and wildlife in that river, especially the rare Appalachian elktoe and the sicklefin darters."

Restoration projects, like the one on the Tuckasegee, demonstrate that what's good

for fish is also good for boating. The interests of habitat restoration and recreation work in tandem through the stewardship efforts of American Whitewater. These projects are important not only for recreational users but for fish and other organisms that depend on the connectivity rivers provide as natural corridors for movement across broad landscapes.

Around the country there are thousands of antiquated dams that no longer produce economic value (the Dillsboro Dam had not produced power for the last five-plus years). As we approach this tipping point in dam removal and river restoration, what we've learned is each one of these projects is unique. There is no "one size fits all" solution to dam removal; each project requires constant pressure evenly applied over time.

Taking the long view on dam removal projects is made possible through your continued membership support and the backing of our industry partners.

A few words about our Journal: Some of you may have noticed that the American Whitewater Journal is now all color. Like many organizations, in the face of declining advertisers, we have been forced to examine the costs of producing the magazine you are reading now. As part of that exercise we "shopped" the publication around and found a new service that could produce an all color publication at a lower cost. We also have a

large number of our members who elect to read American Whitewater online and do not receive a paper copy, thus saving AW both the expense of printing and mailing them their issue.

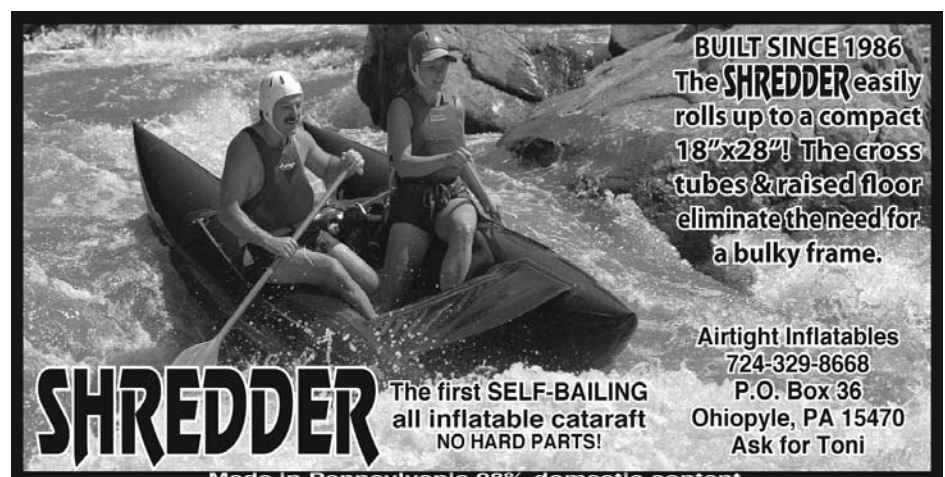
Members who read the Journal online get advance notice of its availability (usually before the Journal has even been mailed). To change your Journal option to 'online,' send an email to membership@americanwhitewater.org or call our toll free number 866-BOAT-4AW and request the online version. To those members who have already made the move to a paperless Journal experience, thank you. The printing and mailing cost savings for AW does add up!

Remember, our Journal is based entirely on volunteer submitted content and images. Please review the editorial calendar at the back of this issue and take the opportunity to tell your story.

See you on the river,



Mark Singleton
Executive Director, American Whitewater



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President's Message

Spring is here, rivers are running, and it is time to get the boats wet again (of course here in the SE we don't ever actually have to put up the boats for the winter). Spring is also a time of renewal and growth and that is what I want to talk to you about.

I have had the honor and the privilege to serve as part of AW's leadership since you elected me in 2003. These past 7 years have been quite a journey for AW and it has been awesome for me to have been a part of it. Serving as an AW Director is an exceptional opportunity to help foster the continued growth and development of one of, if not the most, highly respected nonprofit associations serving the outdoor community. It certainly requires a significant commitment of both time and energy but the fulfillment and reward that comes from giving something back to the paddling and environmental community makes it well worthwhile.

In recognition of the pressing need to address access and water rights issues in Colorado, AW's board decided to fund a Colorado River Stewardship staff position in 2006. As a result we hired Nathan Fey and he joined AW's River Stewardship staff in the summer of 2007. The response to Nathan's work has been outstanding and he is doing a terrific job bringing the interests of whitewater recreation to the table in the often-contentious water negotiations that are ongoing in Colorado. We have also made good progress on some thorny access issues including access to Wildcat Canyon on the South Platte. However much work is still to be done and it has become clear that a strong representative to our Board from Colorado is needed to support, complement, and help seek continued funding for Nathan's fine work there.

California is another state where there is much work to do. Dave Steindorf, AW's fulltime staff member there, is doing great work, especially in the Northern part of the state. Bob Center, an AW contractor, is also doing great work for us in the central part of the state on the Bear and the Yuba watersheds. Norwood Scott, current AW Vice President and soon to be President

also lives there. Norwood has been a great contributor to AW's efforts both in California and elsewhere and represents his home state well. However California is a vast place geographically with many river issues to address and a large number of FERC Relicensings coming up in the next few years. Because of this, we need additional representation on our Board from California to help us fulfill our mission there.

AW's strives to seek a geographic balance to our board that reflects and supports our work across the country. Clearly we have needs in both Colorado and California and we are particularly interested in Director Candidates from those two states.

While geographic balance is one goal, it is not our only goal. We also need the appropriate mix of professional skill sets to sustain the organization. For example, Chris Bell continues to do an outstanding job as AW's treasurer since taking the job in the fall of 2005. However five years is a long time as treasurer and looking ahead we will need to replace Chris with someone who has both the financial skills and willingness to serve AW in this role. This will also allow Chris to move into other leadership roles in the organization. American Whitewater's Directors are the trustees of the organization and act as fiduciaries for the members we serve. The Directors are responsible for all outcomes of the organization including:

- Strategic direction and initiatives
- Monitoring operational performance including the fiscal health of the organization and mission fulfillment
- Performance review and salary administration for the Executive Director
- Working with the Executive Director to make sure the organization has the necessary resources to fulfill its mission.

In this issue of American Whitewater you will find an open Call for Nominations for Director Candidates. We are seeking to fill two board seats to begin a three-year

term starting January 1, 2011. I urge you to heed this Call for Nominations and consider serving in this capacity. If you are not able to serve at this time, maybe you know someone who would be a good candidate. If so, I urge you to talk to them about the possibility and encourage them to put their hat in the ring.

Being an AW Director is not for everyone and not everyone is in a position to make the commitment of time and energy that is required. For those who can make the commitment it is a rewarding and fulfilling experience. If you or someone you know is interested I urge you to explore the possibility and submit a nomination.

See You on the River,



Don Kinser
President

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Call for Nominations

Dear AW Member,

American Whitewater is seeking nominations of interested and qualified candidates to serve as a Director beginning next January 1. We have two open board seats to fill during this nomination cycle.

A healthy, vibrant, participatory and functional board of Directors is critical to the long term stability and effective governance of American Whitewater. This requires Directors with a passion for our mission and a mix of appropriate skills to help guide AW to meet the challenges we face, both now and in the future.

While we will consider all qualified Candidates, the AW Board has specifically identified the following preferred

qualifications and attributes for this nomination cycle:

- Candidates who reside in Colorado or California and are well connected with the paddling community in those regions.
- Financial analysis skills and expertise including the ability to review and understand financial statements and effectively communicate financial information to peers on the Board. This includes a willingness to consider serving as AW's Treasurer in the future.

Due to the limited number of Board seats available, not all nominees will appear on the recommend slate of Candidates presented to the membership for vote this fall. If you are selected as a final candidate, the committee will notify you prior to the election.

Please carefully review the Board of Directors Recruitment Information Package. This package explains the role and responsibility of a Director, the required qualifications, the necessary commitment and the process by which Director's are nominated and elected to serve.

If you are interested in serving as an AW Director please complete the Board Nomination Form and Questionnaire. You can obtain an electronic copy of this form and the Board of Directors Recruitment Information Package on our website at: <http://www.americanwhitewater.org/content/Wiki/aw:board/jobdescription>. The completed Nomination Form and Questionnaire, two (2) letters of recommendation and a quality digital photo are due to the nominating committee by July 1. Please email the required information to mark@americanwhitewater.org with a subject heading of "BOD Response."

If you have any questions or wish to discuss any aspect of the nomination process please contact Mark Singleton, AW's Executive Director.

Thank you,

Norwood Scott
Vice President
American Whitewater



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Letters to the Editor

Dear American Whitewater,

Thanks for the great article "Circus at Sunset" about Rob McKibben running Sunset Falls on the South Fork of the Skykomish (Sept/Oct 2009 issue, p. 13). Over the past several decades, thousands of paddlers have put in at the base of this spectacular waterfall to do the standard run on the "Sky" and I'm sure that quite a few of these paddlers have wondered when the first modern-day descent would be. That question has now been answered. (Note: Access to the put-in at the base of Sunset Falls is currently closed.)

The story of daredevil Al Faussett's run of Sunset Falls in 1926 in a homemade, dugout canoe is truly amazing ... forget modern-day plastic boats, extreme whitewater videos, etc ... Faussett was a brave man who believed in himself and his craft, and that's all it took. As you

pointed out in the sidebar, Whit Deschner introduced people to Al Faussett with his history "Daredevil Al Faussett" in the book *Liquid Locomotive* (edited by John Long and published in 1999). However, that history was published almost 20 years earlier, in 1981, in Whit Deschner's own book, *Does the Wet Suit You?*, a highly entertaining collection of whitewater tales that deserves to be read by every paddler.

Sincerely,

John Tansil
Cape Girardeau, MO

Editor's Note: Thanks John. You are, of course, right. We appreciate the correction, and apologize to Mr. Deschner for neglecting to note his story's original publication and date. And, yes, we agree that Al Faussett displayed some pretty incredible bravery in "logging" his first descents.



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By Kevin Colburn

USFS Seeks To Duck Out of the Chattooga Issue (NC/SC/GA)

It seems the upper Chattooga issue got too hot for the US Forest Service to handle, and in December they withdrew their August 2009 decision to continue their unique ban on paddling the river. They cited “inconsistencies” in their analysis, yet claimed that these so-called inconsistencies were not brought to their attention by any of the five appeals or the lawsuit that had challenged the decision. Naturally, while they seek to resolve these problems they will maintain their illegal ban on paddling. Immediately the USFS tossed out all appeals, interventions, and comments, and asked the Judge to dismiss our Federal Court case. In their court documents they

revealed the “inconsistencies,” which were trivial and will not change their decision (at least not in paddlers’ favor). It is clear the move was a strategic move designed only to avoid judicial scrutiny for another year. As of press time, there has been no response from the Court. All the paddlers involved in the court case remain more committed than ever to bringing responsible management to the Chattooga (and in turn to rivers across the country).

Demolition finally begins on Dillsboro Dam
Powerhouse, NC

Photo by Duke Energy

Dam on West River Unsafe? (VT)

The Army Corps of Engineers recently announced that Ball Mountain Dam on the West River has structural weaknesses that likely will require prompt action. The Corps will carefully study the issues this spring while keeping the reservoir levels low, which will likely prevent any scheduled releases. Ball Mountain Dam reportedly has prevented \$132 Million of flood damage in its 49 years of existence and provided a few scheduled boating releases each year. It has also significantly altered

the flow regime and likely contributed to the loss of Atlantic Salmon from the river. At the same time, the Army is trying to fix the ailing dam, a private company is proposing to install hydropower generators in it, the Nature Conservancy is studying options for improving flows from the dam, and paddling groups are advocating for continuation of the few recreational releases. No matter what happens, it appears likely that big changes are on the way for Ball Mountain Dam and the West River.

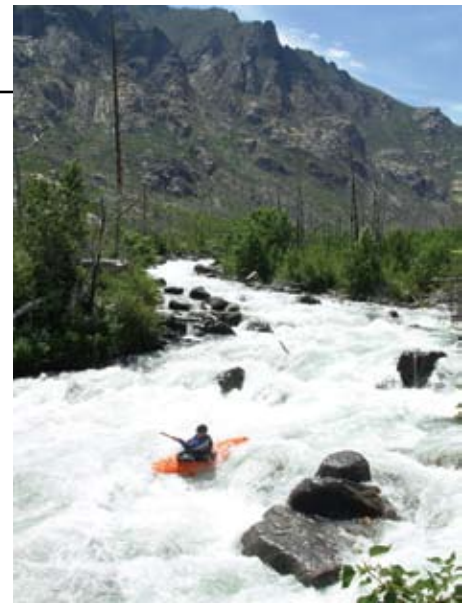
Dillsboro Dam Done For, Bring on the Releases

After over seven years of consistent support from paddlers, Duke Energy, and other interests, Dillsboro Dam on North Carolina's Tuckasegee River is finally coming out. In fact, by the time you read this, the dam should be totally gone. The removal itself restores a mile of the Tuckasegee River that has been impounded by the dam for the past century and restores connectivity for a large number of native species. It also breaks a six-year stalemate that has prevented the full implementation

of the Tuck and Nantahala dam relicensing settlement agreement that American Whitewater and Carolina Canoe Club (among many other stakeholders) signed in 2004. We expect state permits for the remaining dams to be issued promptly, followed by federal licenses for the dams, both of which could be challenged. In the settlement agreement are provisions calling for new releases on the West Fork of the Tuck and the Upper Nantahala, as well as new river access areas and significant riparian conservation efforts. If all goes well the new releases could start as early as the spring of 2011.

New Dams Proposed in Montana

American Whitewater and Beartooth Paddlers Society are working hard to oppose several new proposed hydropower dams and diversions on Montana whitewater rivers. On the Madison River there is a proposal to tap Quake Lake and divert water around the section of whitewater just downstream. On West Rosebud Creek there is a proposal to build a small dam right below the Mystic Lake



Pat Rogers on East Rosebud Creek (MT)

Photo by Jake Zywicke

hydropower project—where paddlers recently negotiated releases—and divert water around the popular whitewater section downstream. On East Rosebud Creek a similar proposal would dam and dewater the whitewater section just below a natural lake. Both the Madison and East Rosebud are protected from damming because they are eligible for Wild and Scenic designation. Still, FERC has accepted the preliminary permit for the Madison, and the USFS has failed to strongly argue against the projects at this stage. FERC routinely gives preliminary permits to projects that have little chance of ever getting built, and apply much stricter standards during an actual licensing process. AW and BPS will push hard to protect these rivers from being dammed, and to assure that all rivers that are eligible for Wild and Scenic designation are appropriately safe guarded.



Dick Lewan on some classic West Rosebud Creek (MT) whitewater

Photo by Steve Rodgers

Introduction to Whitewater

Giving Back

By Brent Davis

Try as I may, I have not been able to forget my introduction to whitewater kayaking seven years ago. I have not been able to forgive my wife either, although it started out innocently enough. In fact, it started out with a magnanimous gesture on my part, a gesture that is forever filed in my memory under the heading of “No good deed shall go unpunished.”

For years I tried to persuade my wife to agree to go out on a calm Sierra lake in a plastic sea kayak. I’m not sure what held her back, but it probably had something to do with a fear of dying. Eventually she acquiesced, and afterwards begrudgingly acknowledged that maybe it had been fun. In a shamelessly selfish attempt to maintain her interest in kayaking, I built

her a mahogany sea kayak. She was so enthralled with it that we made plans to go to Canada and kayak with the Orcas. We even had the car loaded, with the boats on top. On our way out of town we stopped so that she could take a quick lesson to learn how to make leaned turns. While out on a calm lake she attempted her first leaned turn and promptly fell out of the boat. That led to a pronouncement that she wanted to learn to roll her beautiful new kayak. We never did make it to Canada. Instead, we ended up spending our vacation taking lessons learning to roll our sea kayaks from the only person we could find in our area to teach us, a whitewater kayaker.

It took my wife quite a few months to master rolling in a pool. By this time, our instructor had invested a lot of time in this endeavor and offered to take us down a Class II section of a local river to see how we liked whitewater kayaking. My

wife was very excited about this. I was less than thrilled.

I could rationalize my reluctance easily: too many other activities and interests. But the bottom line was that as an avid cyclist I had a history of serious head injuries from accidents (most involving vehicles). And, oh yeah, I had to have a huge chunk of my collar bone removed after one cycling accident, rendering one shoulder less than optimal. Willingly getting in a little boat and going down a river with rocks that could cause yet another serious concussion, and rapids that could tear my shoulder apart just didn’t seem like something I really needed to be doing.

Nonetheless, good spouse that I am, I

The author leading some folks down the Merced, CA

Photos Dawn Davis



*Brent after a day of leading 6 women
down the SF of the American, CA*

Photos Sharoni Jacobs



relented and agreed to try this whitewater kayaking thing. It was all going well until the instructor suggested that we catch our first eddy. I remember clearly wondering why I should want to do this. I could easily see a way to get through the maelstrom (today it is a Class II riffle in my mind) without going near the eddy. Still, I dutifully went into the eddy, and much to my relief I was still upright. Staying in the eddy all afternoon was looking like a valid alternative to me, but our instructor insisted that wasn't acceptable. As soon as I crossed the eddy line on my way back into the current, I flipped, and missed my first combat roll. As I went back over I hit a submerged rock with my face, and upon exiting my boat, my bad shoulder bounced off a series of rocks. I surfaced with blood pouring from an inch long gash next to my eye, a sore shoulder, and a certainty that I really didn't need to be doing this sport. Then my wife left the eddy. She also flipped on the eddy line but unlike her panic stricken husband, she made her first ever attempted combat roll.

Understand that my wife is not a natural athlete. She has to work very hard for her accomplishments and she was rightfully very excited about making that first combat roll, especially since her athletically gifted husband was unable to do so. Now she had something that she was better at than me. Bloody and beaten, I was coherent enough to realize that the real trouble was yet to come.

The subsequent trip to the emergency room cut short our kayaking lesson that day. Several hours later, I left with a new scar on my face and a mild concussion that lasted a week (there's a reason why

the NFL is enforcing tougher rules on concussions). My wife offered the appropriate sympathies while we waited in the ER, though I knew from the smile on her face that she was feeling pretty darn good about her performance. And rightly so. Within a week, she purchased a kayak, and a full set of gear, including a drysuit. She came home from the store and with great compassion announced, "If you want to see me, I'll be on the river."

It took me nine months before I came to the conclusion that she was serious. So the following spring I took some more lessons and basically learned to stay alive on a river. My underlying strategy for all rapids was to hum a Norah Jones song as I paddled. Nothing bad can happen to you if you are humming a Norah Jones song. Right? That strategy kept me out of the hospital but it did not increase my confidence or comfort level on the river. Having learned to roll before I learned to paddle on a river, I did not swim frequently, but I did roll. A lot. Every day. Being upside down meant exposing myself to even more head injuries. Saying it was stressful would be a gross understatement.

The next boating season was upon us much quicker than I would have liked, and much to my chagrin, my wife had not lost interest in the sport. At that point I finally made a smart decision. I knew that if I kept being the good spouse by going paddling with her that I was going to get seriously hurt, or killed. So I went to a weeklong kayaking class at Otter Bar in Northern California with one goal: to see if I could learn to like this sport on my own. I went by myself so that there would be no peer pressure, and no one to measure myself against.



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Introduction to Whitewater

I returned a week later and much to everyone's amazement I had learned to paddle. More accurately, I got over my fear of kayaking. I had previously had some world-class instruction and good fundamental skills. What I did not have was the mental space to find my own place in this sport. Once I decided that I wanted to paddle for myself, and not just please someone else, a whole new world opened up for me.

At this point, irony enters the story. My wife changed jobs and suddenly had no vacation time. I had about 5 weeks of vacation that I had to use. I took advantage of the opportunity to repay my wife for her early compassion by saying, "Enjoy your new job! I'm going paddling." Off I went to Costa Rica and New Zealand. Much to my

wife's dismay, I returned a better paddler than her. And somewhere in there, I learned to love whitewater kayaking.

What exactly did I come to love about the sport? I had to work really hard, by my standards, to become proficient. Achieving that goal was extremely gratifying. Paddling on different rivers, in different countries also greatly improved my paddling skills. Even though I didn't realize it at the time, I was learning to read water and anticipate what was going to happen, and what I needed to do to adjust to it. That really accelerated my improvement, and became even more liberating. Now I was also able to enjoy my surroundings. But the sense of calm and quiet that gradually came over me when I paddled was what kept drawing me back.

These days I consider myself a solid Class IV-/IV paddler, using a definition that Peter Kettering gave me years ago. Peter once told me that there is a difference between someone who can run a Class III rapid, and someone who is a Class III paddler. A Class III paddler can not only get down a Class III rapid but they can make moves in a Class III rapid. And more importantly, a Class III paddler can lead other paddlers who are not quite there yet. In my mind, you're a Class III paddler when you are leading other people through Class III rapids. I believe that the same applies to all levels of kayaking - from flat water to Class V/VI paddling. So when I label myself a

Brent leading some folks down the Tuolumne, CA

Photos David Stefano



Class IV paddler, that means I can, and do, lead other people down Class IV rapids.

At this point in life I am content with paddling class IV-/IV. I have no aspirations or illusions about going much further. But what I can do is to give back. Without ever having it as a goal, I seem to have become someone that people seek out now and then when they are stepping it up to do harder runs. That has also dramatically changed my kayaking.

Leading other people took some getting used to, mostly because it does not seem that long ago that I was terrified by Class II riffles. Why on earth would people want to follow me? Eventually, I accepted the fact that my paddling career had taken yet another unanticipated detour. When people ask me if they can follow me, I recognize that a tremendous compliment goes with each request.

When I am leading someone down a river, I remember those early humbling years of my paddling career. When I agree to lead someone, the whole day changes for me. Success is measured not by how I do, but how the others following me do. If they have a good day, then I have a good day. I remember the things that I struggled with, which for me was pretty much everything. In some ways, I think that is why people seek me out. I had to struggle so hard with every aspect of the sport that I can still relate to people going through what I went through, because I went through it all. Nothing was easy for me.

Would I do it all over again? In a heartbeat. I've learned a lot about myself and what I am capable of as a person. I've found a certain calmness in my daily non-kayaking life. I've had good friends bleed all over me on the river, and I've been on the river in my boat looking for someone who was pinned and subsequently died. The things that used to seem stressful in my daily life now pale in comparison to my experiences on the river. And when I hear

non-kayakers (a.k.a. "Muggles") talk about things like trust, and leadership, I quietly smile. If only they knew what it is like to have good boating friends that you can (and do) trust your life to, and that in turn trust you with their life. And leadership? I've learned that you are not a leader until someone asks, "Can I follow you?"

These days my focus is more on who I boat with, rather than what rivers I run. I try to spend at least one day a month helping others on the river. A day on the river with good friends is hard to beat. And a day spent helping someone else run a river that is new to them, and seeing them have a great day, is a very special day indeed.

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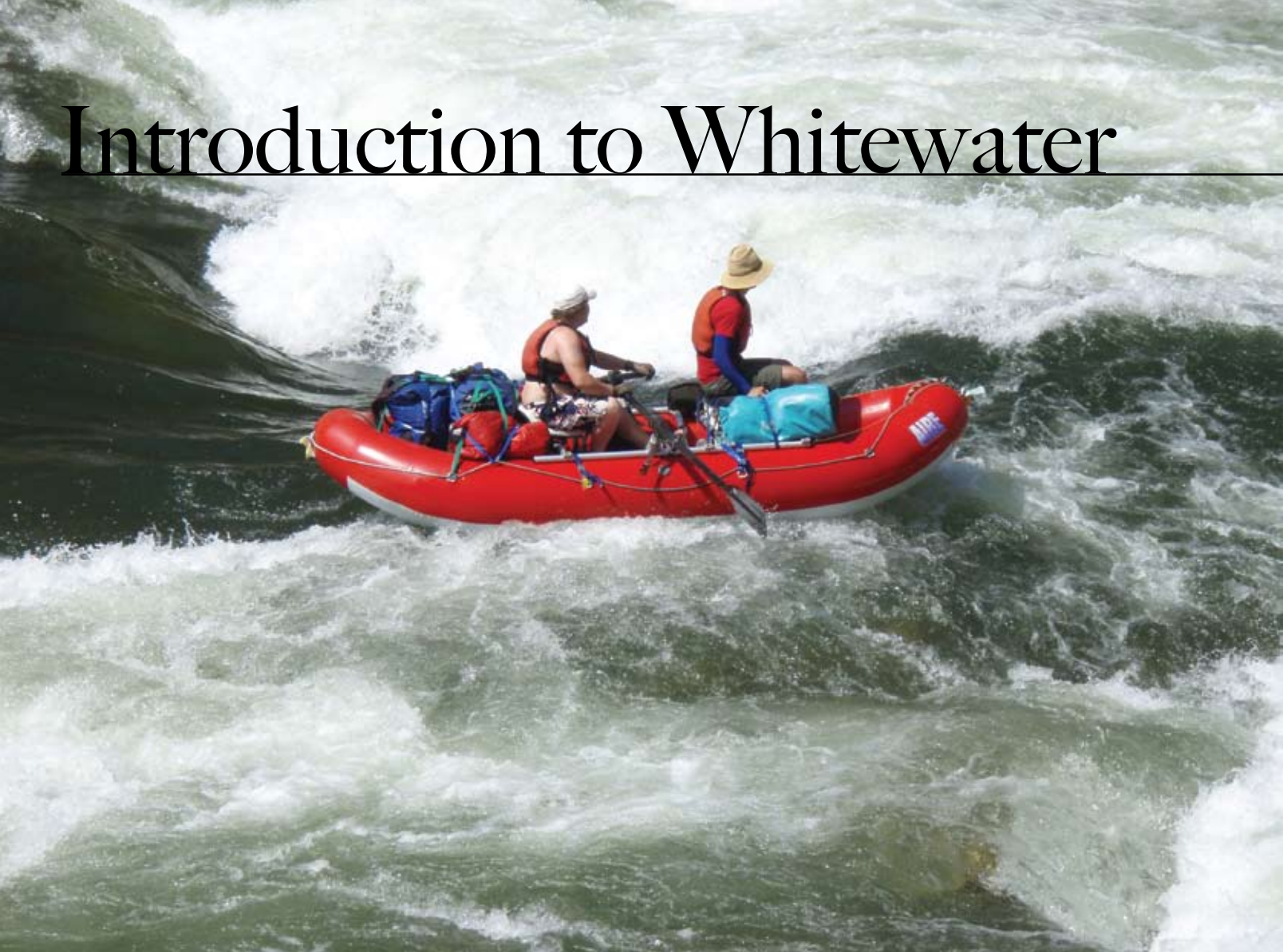
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Introduction to Whitewater



My Natural Element

By Michael Goyn
Laramie, Wyoming

As we drove down the winding dirt road along the Salmon River in northeast Idaho, we began to see the familiar truck through the trees. The rest of our group was already setting up our campsite at the Corn Creek put-in for the Main Salmon River. There was a pile of food on the table in anticipation of dinner. Debbie was helping Scott set up his tent and Mark was standing at the front of his truck, grinning his silly crooked grin. Before we had even greeted each other we felt like we'd been there for days. Mark had a way of making things comfortable and casual even though it had been a year since we'd seen him last. He and my dad immediately began talking about river flows and the weather, what my brother and I had come to call "old man

talk," something we would inevitably take part in when we were older. Scott tossed a little Nerf football towards my brother which immediately evolved into a game of five hundred. We all fell into our "vacation selves" so easily and quickly it was hard to believe we had just arrived and still had a whole nine days of rafting the Main Salmon ahead of us.

When Debbie finished setting up her tent, she yelled across the camp for Mark: "If you want to go to the hot springs you'd better go now. It's going to start getting dark soon!"

"I thought we were going after dinner," Mark responded.

She continued to yell despite being no more than ten feet from us now: "I don't want you on the roads after dark with the weather!" Rain had caused some washouts

Jack Goyn at the oars and Mike riding passenger as they run the entrance tongue and bypassing the big hole in Cramer Rapid on the Main Salmon River, ID

Photo by Mark McKinstry

recently and was becoming more severe as we ate dinner. After a few arguments about the location of the springs over a tattered old map, we hopped into our vehicles and started back up the same winding road. The trip back up the canyon was much less daunting knowing we had already reached our destination and we were no longer anxious to see our friends.

After a short drive the truck in front of us stopped and blocked the road. Impatient, Mark got out of the cab and walked up to the driver side door of the truck. Without even talking to the driver he immediately turned around and walked back to our

vehicle with an amazed look on his face. "You need to see this," he said flatly to my dad when he reached the open car window. My dad started after Mark and naturally we followed. When we reached the front of the truck we saw what all the commotion was about. We stood staring at the road, or rather, lack of road, and we all knew we were no longer going to the hot springs. Mudslide wasn't quite powerful enough to describe this situation. Avalanche of rock and debris was more suiting. One hundred feet of the road—the same road we had driven down less than an hour before—was gone. The local torrential rains had caused a mudslide in a side canyon that had been left devoid of vegetation from a fire less than a month earlier. This mudslide had traveled down the small gully and completely blocked the Main Salmon River just downstream of its confluence with the Middle Fork. Later we would find out that the road had blown out in two other places along its length, trapping people who were taking out from the Middle Fork or running shuttles for the Main Salmon.

We were silent on the drive back to Corn Creek put-in, knowing that, given the wrong timing, we all could have died in the massive river far below us, or at least been trapped on the road with no means to get back to the put-in. But we had other things to worry about when we got back to camp. We alerted the ranger at the station of the slide and went down to our rafts to drag them farther up the bank. The mudslide had dammed up one of the largest rivers in the west, and if the water put enough pressure against the dam to break through, the resulting swell could wash away anything close to the bank. Looking back on the mudslide I am glad I was there for such a major geologic occurrence. When the debris cleared from the river later that summer a new rapid had formed named Cramer, or alternatively "Derrick" for its habit of flipping rafts just above the Middle Fork take out. Cramer rapid is the largest rapid on the entire Salmon River. I have since run Cramer. It holds up to its reputation, and whenever I think of it I remember that mudslide that buried the road.

The next day was a jumble of preparations for our launch and the traditional visit and speech from the ranger about safety precautions; we all could have recited from memory. Since nobody else could make it down the road to the put-in, the ranger did not make us sign up for reserved camps—we had the whole river to ourselves other than the group launching with us and the folks already downstream.

When we finally pushed off the slanted cement platform it was a complete relief—finally time to relax. My dad cracked open a beer, and sitting in the captain's seat of our faded blue raft, holding the beer with two fingers, he repetitively pressed his palms against the handles of the long oars. He was calm and happy. I love seeing my father on the river. Like me, it is his natural element. At home he always seems stressed and a little fed up with the world, but on the river he is utterly happy. Only the occasional yell of annoyance at our little black lab, Pepper, issued from his own personal white foam throne.

The first day down the river was very short. We are hardly ever rushed for time and the campsite we wanted, Motor, was only a few miles from the put-in. We started unpacking our boats and hauling, or as Mark liked to call it "schlepping," things up the beach. My brother and I started setting up the kitchen and Scott was playing with the dogs. After our child-slave duties had been finished, I started walking down the beach to go to the bathroom. I hopped across the warm rocks towards the upstream side of the campsite. The warmth of the rocks reminded me of all the rattlesnake warnings the ranger had given us. The possibility of a rattlesnake crossed my mind, but I ignored it. No one actually ever saw rattlesnakes so why should I be worried? As that thought was crossing my mind a loud shaking noise caught my attention. I stumbled over myself mid-step and stopped dead. Right where my foot would have landed with my next step, moving just enough to expose its camouflage, was a fully grown rattlesnake. I jumped back a couple feet from the serpent just as it struck at me. A second later and I would have been stuck in one of

the largest wilderness areas in the country with deadly poison in my veins. The snake started slithering away, looking almost bitter that it didn't make contact with my leg. I ran back to camp to tell the others my life-threatening story.

When Mark picked up a big stick and walked down the beach I expected him to either kill the snake to keep the camp safe, or coerce it to head the other direction. But Mark just pinned the snake's head with the stick, grabbed it by the neck, and walked a ways up river and released the snake. With full stomachs we climbed into our sleeping bags, not bothering to set up tents, and fell asleep under the stars, although I did wonder if the stories of rattlesnakes joining sleepers in sleeping bags was true....

The next morning was a blur of packing and preparation. This was going to be one of the only long days we had on the river so we wanted to get an early start. Most of the day went off without a hitch. We ran a few rapids and started a few water fights with outfitting groups that never had a chance. When the river started swelling, turning into more of a lake than a river, and the only noise was the jet engine-like sound of a big rapid, we knew Salmon Falls was just downstream. Most parties get out and scout the rapid on river right, but Mark, leading the party in his orange kayak, turned to us at the top of the falls, flashed us his crooked grin, and dropped into the first hole of the rapid. We all followed suit and the guided trips probably thought us insane as we whooped and hollered all the way down the whitewater. As we hit the tongue at the bottom of the rapid I ran up the side tube and launched myself into the deep green water beyond. I lounged in the river at the bottom. As the rest of the boats came through the rapid unscathed I swam to our boat and pulled myself in. About half a mile down river from the falls we got out and ate lunch on a big flat rock. The falls were still in sight from the rock and I watched the big white waves churn and smash against the rocks. I looked away from the falls for a moment but when my gaze came back to the falls I saw a huge gray object make a splash at the bottom of the rapid. Someone behind me gasped.

Introduction to Whitewater

Obviously I hadn't been the only person to see the gray object. "What was that," Scott asked. "It must've been a sturgeon," my dad responded, "It's a big prehistoric bottom feeder. Sometimes you can find them in the deep water of major rivers." I was horrified. Half an hour previous I had been swimming in that exact spot. I never wanted to get in the water again. Some freshwater shark might swallow me whole. For the rest of the day I was jumpy. I was too scared to get back in the water, despite the scorching heat.

We got to our camp with plenty of sunlight left. We lounged in the shade for a while before collecting the initiative to set up camp. I headed towards the far end of the site looking for a place to lay out our sleeping tarp. By pure chance I looked behind a rock I was walking past. I lunged forward through the warm sand just in time to dodge the snake's strike. I stared

in disbelief at the second rattlesnake that had tried to bite me on this trip. That snake was also quickly relocated to a less-threatening location.

We declared it dinner time and a few of our party started collecting food from the coolers in the boats. Over the course of the day Jack and Scott had managed to catch a few fish. My dad helped them clean them and Mark was prepared to fry them for the group. Dinner was a big meal, but it had been a long day and everyone was starving so we needed BIG. When the fish was fried we all took some pieces and dug in. After a couple bites I noticed a strange flavor, almost a fruity taste. I asked Mark about the strange flavor. "Oh yeah," he responded nonchalantly, "I forgot the fish fry so I used blueberry pancake mix." Everyone was immediately laughing and Mark sat looking confused by our laughter.

We woke up early the next day. The camp we had that night was one we were all looking forward to. It was called Rhett Creek and we were excited because about a hundred yards from the camp was a giant blackberry patch. That meant blackberry cake that night and blackberry pancakes in the following mornings. But first we had to run Big Mallard, the biggest rapid of the trip. Some of the group went left and some went right, but everyone made it through just fine.

When we reached the campsite we unloaded the boats as quickly as possible and set off to start picking berries. We were in the patch for at least an hour before we saw the black bear. It must have wandered

Mike Goyn at the oars running a rapid at Tappan #3 on the MF of the Salmon River, ID

Photo by Mark McKinstry



in without noticing us. It was on the far side of the patch and no one noticed it until the dogs started barking. When we noticed the bear we collected the dogs and started back to camp to warn the others. Right as we set off the bear caught wind of us and ran. We sat and watched the big furry animal run up the hill.

We woke the next morning, packed up the boats and set off on the slowest, hottest, and most boring day of the entire trip. We lazed down the river, making little progress in the extreme heat. We all welcomed a stop when we reached the first open camp spot. The spot was called Swimming Hole and for good reason. The river bent at such an angle that it made a gigantic eddy next to a large cliff face. The eddy was a small lake, at least fifteen feet deep and about fifty feet across. To us, the site was perfect for the day; cool, deep water that we could use to escape the heat. To Debbie

and my mom, it was hell and they wanted to keep floating and get another campsite. The camp barely had any shade and they weren't about to jump into the stagnant water of the eddy. After an hour of arguing and convincing they caved and decided to let us stay. As they set up camp and started dinner, Mark, my dad, Jack, Scott, and I made our way to the top of the cliff above the swimming hole.

We scouted the water below and decided it was deep enough for us to jump. The cliff was about 35 feet tall—much higher than I had ever jumped from. All of us hesitated at first. The “launch pad” wasn't even flat. One had to run off the tapered cliff and at the last second launch forward to avoid the rocks below. Scott eventually worked up the courage, and was the first to fall into the dark water below. The courageous little ten-year old reported that it was plenty deep and he was fine. Mark went

next without hesitation (having to show up his son) and my dad followed suit. Not wanting to be left out, my brother Jack hesitantly jumped. I was the only one left. Without thinking I ran towards the down slant, launched off of the cliff and cleared the rocks below with a tremendous splash in the water. We all made countless leaps off of the cliff, soon realizing that it wasn't as hard as it originally looked.

Our last full day on the river was hot and windy. We spent the entire day in slow water, oaring to keep from going backwards. We only had a few miles to go and we got to camp early. The camp was called T-bone, a giant beach with no shade.

Mike Goyn (bandanna) relaxing in Sunflower Hotsprings on the Middle Fork of the Salmon River, ID

Photo by Mark McKinstry



Introduction to Whitewater

We spent the majority of the day sitting under a sun shade in the water, trying to keep from baking alive. The sun was going down at an angle that followed the ridge in front of it. It seemed like an eternity before the sun finally set and when it finally did we slept under the stars on the giant beach, dreading the end of our river trip.

We had a few miles to get to the take-out that next day. There were a few outfitter groups on the ramp when we got there and it took a long time to get the rafts broken down and everything put away. On rivers in the United States, rafters are required to haul all human waste off the river with them. That includes ashes, garbage, and feces. The system for this is a water/air tight bucket that is meant to contain the poop. Riggins, Idaho is a small town that most people would pass through and forget, but it's the nearest bucket-cleaning station to the take-out of the Salmon. Almost every rafter that comes off the river uses the facilities at this small gas station to clean out their waste buckets. We were standing in line behind a large group that had gotten there just before

us. They were having difficulties getting their set up cleaned. It turns out that they were using a large 25-gallon ammo box (as opposed to our five-gallon bucket) to store their waste. The apparatus designed to clean the buckets obviously wasn't going to hold their monster potty, so they decided to try and pour the poo down the three inch diameter drain hole leading to the storage tank. As Mark likes to describe the situation, "As soon as they cracked that thing open, everyone disappeared." The smell was horrible. It was the waste of 30 well fed rafters accumulated in a single box that had been stored in 100 degree heat for seven days. Needless to say it was quite the sight watching them attempt to empty such a large container into such a small hole and Mark didn't stop laughing for hours after that.

We drove through the night and well into the morning. The drive to our house in Laramie, WY takes almost 16 hours and we wanted to make as much ground back home as possible. We pulled into Boise, Idaho around two in the morning. Thinking our adventure was over for the

summer, we searched for a hotel. We must have checked ten hotels before one of the front desk people told us that every room in town was booked. The next town with even a chance of having an open room was over an hour away and everyone in our truck was on the verge of passing out. With no other options my dad found the nearest park, turned to us and said "night night." No one else really cared where they were sleeping so while they slept on the grass in the park, I stayed in the bed of our truck. I still remember waking up to them screaming and watching them try and gather their sleeping bags before the sprinklers soaked them. I just chuckled and went back to sleep. I woke up a few hours later, to the sound of my dad explaining our situation to a very kind Boise police officer. A few minutes later we were back on the road, another eight hours of driving ahead of us, looking forward to next summer when we'd do it all over again.

Mike Goyn at the oars with his mother, Mary Ann, running a rapid on the MF of the Salmon River, ID

Photo by Mark McKinstry



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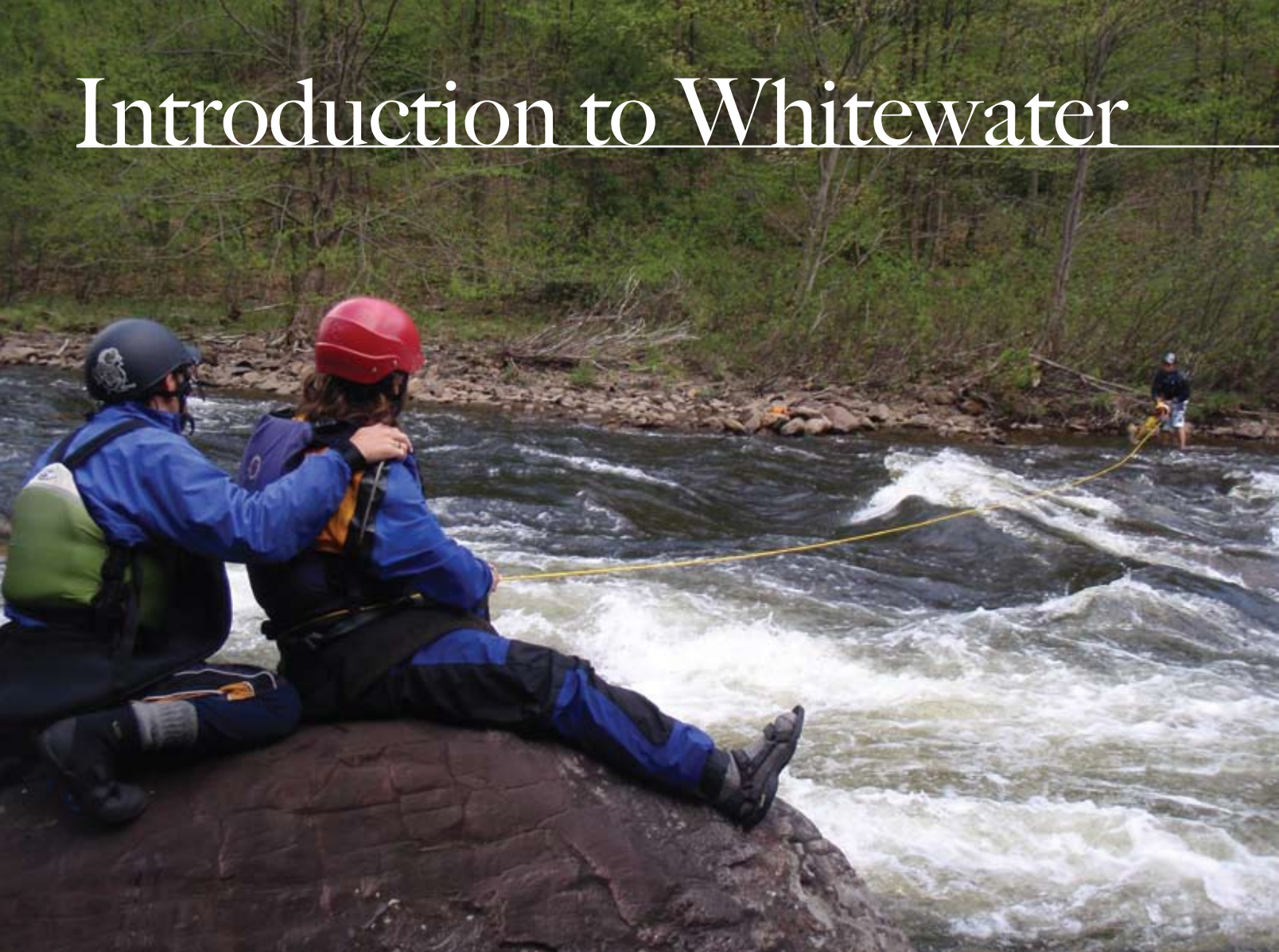
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Introduction to Whitewater



Grateful for Whitewater

By Leo Kaskel

What does being new to whitewater rivers mean to me? Simply put, it means everything. I am a proud novice of whitewater and my only regret is that I didn't discover rivers earlier in my life. But as I think and roll on the waves in my boat I think whitewater found me at the perfect time in my life.

I will never forget my first trip down a river. It was through a local outfitter. At the time, I thought the weather was awful. It was raining for days on end (now love the rain!). I ran the Upper Lehigh on a dam release and I fell in love. As I rafted I saw the guide (Kathy) joyfully playing on waves. I thought to myself of my childhood dream of kayaking the rivers from old

documentaries, rivers with rapids like Lava and Lava South. I didn't know where to go, who to talk to or even where to begin. Most of my friends were either hanging out in bars or have moved away. Soon I inquired into whitewater kayaking at local outdoor shops. Many times the sales person would give me a name and a number and told me that lessons were very important and that the gear is not cheap. I often found myself hearing that I was looking over a thousand dollars plus lessons. The way I lived my life, I never thought I was going to live past 25, but here I was going on 29. Now what to do? Most of my friends were either busy having babies or busy talking to their probation officer. I never wanted either life for myself. The bars were getting

Left to right: Jason Redwinski, Ed Dery and Doug Sherry. Getting a rope across a river at Second Chance Rapid on the Lehigh River, PA

Photo by Leo Kaskel

old and the town I lived in was straight out of the lyrics of a Springsteen ballad. I was at a crossroads in my own life at the time, choosing between a life of independence or falling into a world of dependence.

So there I was wandering the halls of my full-time work discourage that I probably wouldn't be able to entertain the possibility of becoming a whitewater kayaker, when all of a sudden I saw a flyer in one of our attorney's office door with the head line: "Want to become a river guide?" And the rest is a history that many paddlers know.

I spent that spring learning strokes and learning to read whitewater. I was

learning all sorts of wonderful things. Each weekend I was learning to how to swim through rapids, unpin rafts and most of all, the basics of whitewater safety. I went from being in a raft, to R2ing, to a duckie, to a sit on top. What a rush, going down a Class III rapid all by myself safely, smiling, educated, and energized. I learned so much that first spring: some were very simple lessons that we all learn the hard way, like never approach a pinned raft from upstream, breath at the trough of the wave, and keep paddling! Man was I whitewater illiterate.

A year or two later I now find myself immersed in the world of whitewater. My new love was interrupted by donating a kidney to my father in July and a follow up surgery. However, I found my way to Gauleyfest and on the Upper Gauley. I cannot describe the euphoria I felt running those first big water rapids, but then again I don't need to, because most of those who are reading this know what I am talking about. I was so proud of myself when Pillow Rock threw everyone out of the raft except for me and the guide who instantly went to high side. That same fall I ran the Lower Yough in a sit-on-top; I couldn't believe that I didn't flip once. It was a good day. This year I had an opportunity to run Tohickon Creek, the Black River, and the Ottawa River with new whitewater friends. I found myself surfing waves on the Black in a raft—it had all been unthinkable two years ago.

I cannot thank the whitewaters of North America for what they have done to for me. They have made my mind sharper and my body stronger. I now watch my nutrient intake and workout regularly in order to become a more efficient paddler. By building my whitewater skills, it has given me courage in my career as well as the ability to manage crisis. The ability to communicate in such an environment effectively has improved my self-confidence. It has also helped my personal relationships; anything is now navigable.

Whitewater rivers have even challenged me to go for my master's degree so I can hopefully make more money in less time and have more time to enjoy more whitewater river experiences!

The wonderful friends and friendships I have gained from whitewater I will cherish forever. There are those who were so kind and patient teaching I will never be able in words describe how truly grateful I am for their teaching me (I am quite the slow learner). I cannot thank Ron, Brad, Aaron, JB, Bob, Kathy, Dave, Ed and Mark enough for all they have done. They all have many talents, however, perhaps their greatest characteristic, which they all share, is that they are very kind. They accept you for what you are, and what you are not. And, if you're willing to learn they are willing to teach. They would rescue me and then show me what I could have done better. It is a beautiful learning experience. It is reciprocal; the student becomes the teacher I guess. It seems those who are proficient, those who have learned it are simply and happily willing to pass it along to those who haven't yet. From their talks before a rapid, to the tips in the eddies, to their encouraging pats on the back, I am truly thankful to find such a great set of on-going teachers. They justly and easily could have given up on me. They encouraged and educated me but most of all allowed me to boat with them. I am also thankful for the many kind unknown boaters who have been helping me along the way; from the friendly tips during a pool session to unselfish acts of making sure I made it to shore safely. I also want to thank everyone in advance for the helping me the next time I swim. I am still learning, humbly and eagerly learning. Even just this fall when our raft dumped into Phil's hole, I remained pretty calm. I remembered to curl up into a ball and not let go of my paddle and to get into an eddie.

What I love most of being new to whitewater rivers is the beautiful remote gorges, the studying, the scouting, the discovery.

What is around the next bend? Whether it is observing undisturbed wildlife or marveling at the magnificent landscapes, it is always a joy. I have seen some of nature's greatest gems on rivers, from majestic bald eagles to a minks playing along the shore. I have seen beautiful waterfalls that are so remote that only boaters know of them. The rivers have put everything in perspective. Life, nature, Zen. It is not only a therapeutic place to get away but it is an adrenaline pumping adventure too. It brings peace and solace. It also brings excitement and euphoria. It all has a special meaning to me now. I love the whitewater rivers, for the gorges and the subculture of whitewater they have carved out. Not everyone gets it, but that is just the way I like it. You cannot explain it, and you don't have too either. Whitewater is perfect to some people and I am glad I found it, because it is perfect for me. It is such a powerful draw that at times it seems you don't choose it; whitewater chooses you.

Introduction to Whitewater

The Best Days of Boating in My Life

By Scott McKinstry

The greatest days of kayaking in my life were the days I kayaked the Middle Fork of the Salmon River in 2008. I was 14 years old and it was the biggest whitewater I had ever seen.

I had boated several rivers before the Middle Fork, including the Main Salmon, Desolation and Lodore Canyons on the Green River, and several shorter trips in Colorado and Wyoming, but nothing had prepared me for the Middle Fork. The first day was crazy for me; the water just kept pounding and pounding. I learned how to combat roll in the first 20 minutes and did my first hand roll about an hour later.

I was chilling behind a raft and couldn't see what was around the corner until it was too late. Right after I saw the small drop that made up Velvet Falls I tried to pull away from the boat as fast as I could, but the force from the boat spinning away caused me to flip and lose my paddle. I tried grabbing for my paddle a few times but had no luck. Knowing that the falls were only a couple yards in front of me, I threw down the only thing I could think of—I hand rolled as hard as I could and came up facing upstream just above the falls. I slid down backwards over the falls and was reunited with my paddle at the bottom. My dad's friend, Doug whooped and hollered as I came up with a big grin on my face. This experience got my adrenaline pumping a little bit more and also gave me a better idea about what I would be seeing in the days to follow.

The whole river was packed with great whitewater, campsites, hot springs, hiking, cliff jumping, scenery, and much more. I even managed to paddle within 20 yards of a black bear with two cubs. This was the beginning of the summer and coming straight from snowboarding in bluebird weather to kayaking in a beautiful canyon about six hours away was a great treat for me.

There were three other kayakers, including my dad, on the trip but they were all older and much more experienced than me. After a few days on the river, however, I started to become more comfortable with the big water and the size of the rapids. The level was 2.5 feet, so it was just about perfect for an intermediate boater like me. We ran both the Middle Fork and Main Salmon on this trip and the rapids just kept getting bigger and bigger as we floated downstream.

My family does a lot of outdoor activities so I started rafting and boating before I turned two. About ten years later I got my first kayak and started running rivers for real. I started off on small stuff here, near Salt Lake, and progressed to some easy rivers in Idaho, Wyoming, and Colorado. Later when I became more confident I took a trip with my dad and boated some more difficult rivers in California.

This summer I will get the opportunity to experience the Grand Canyon from a kayaker's point of view. My dad has a permit and we will spend 21 days floating the Colorado in August. I'm still young and I plan to get more involved in kayaking through the years. Kayaking is still just a hobby for me but maybe as I get more experienced it will become a bigger part of my life.

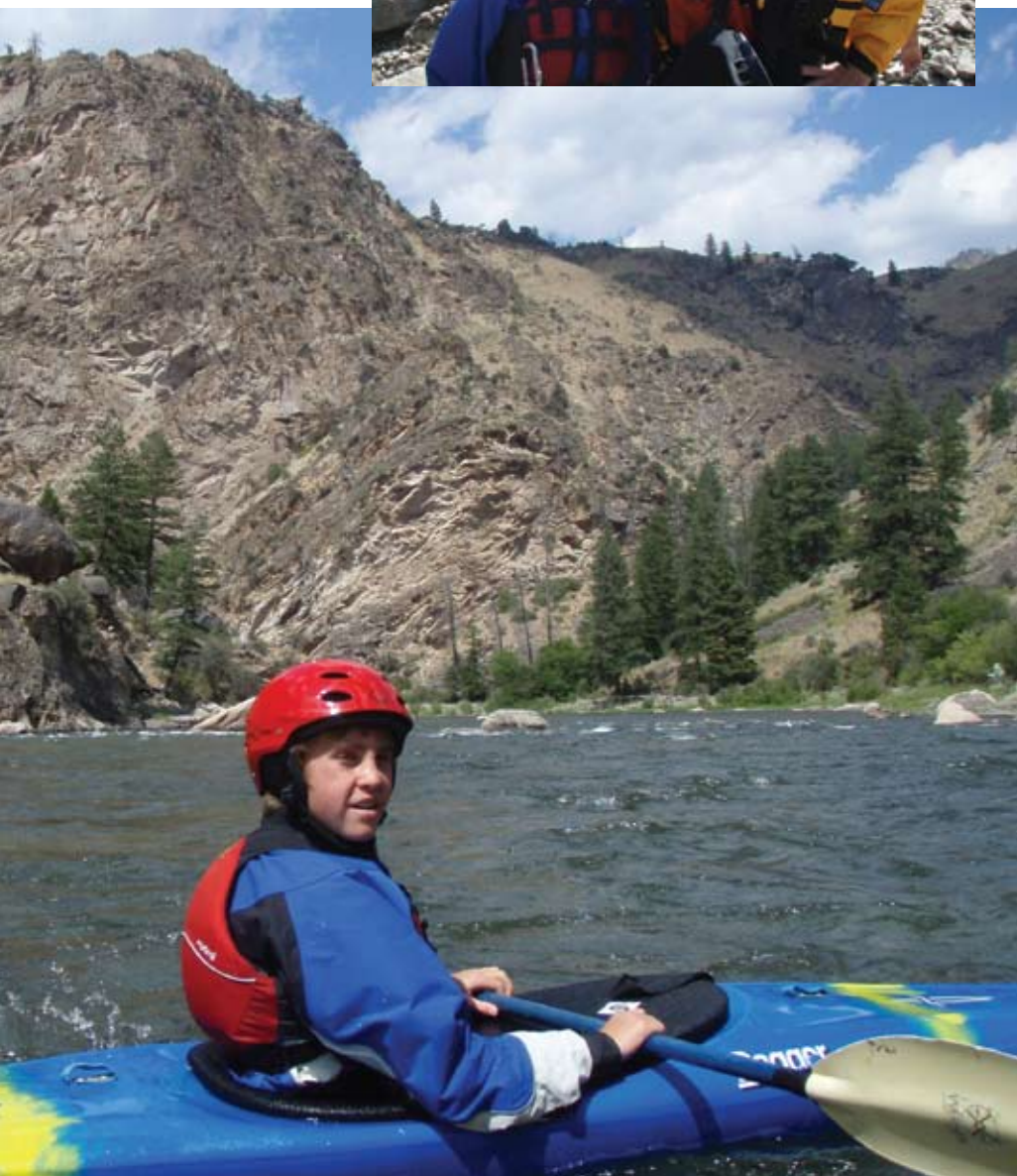
Below: Scott McKinstry enjoying some scenery of the Impassable Canyon on the MF of the Salmon River, ID

Photo by Mark McKinstry



Scott McKinstry and his dad, Mark, scouting a newly-formed rapid at Tappan Falls #3 on the MF of the Salmon

Photo by Mark McKinstry





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Introduction to Whitewater

The Middle Road Between Family and Fearless: A Beginner's Journey

By Stuart Miles

My first whitewater trip, complete with bone-jarring flips and bloody shins, was with my future mother and father-in-law. I have to say they balanced laughter and support admirably. My wife and I were married near the Nantahala, and our family Christmas stockings could be made of neoprene. Whitewater has, and continues to be, a family affair for me.

My introduction to paddling came through my wife's family. I was tired of missing weekends with her, as she headed on these mysterious "river trips," with kayaks, family members, and beer in tow. I liked both of the latter, and figured I could get to know the kayaking part. I finally jumped in headfirst (literally, in the case of my first swim,) and fell in love with my future wife and kayaking. Over the next year, I was introduced to the moments of calm and chaos, both on the river and off, as my wife and I became engaged and I paddled the creeks and rivers of North Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee.

Our partners in these trips were not the other twenty-something Asheville types, hucking themselves off the falls of the Ravens Fork, but instead a close-knit community of my wife's family members and their close friends. Beginning in the '80s, this small group had moved to western North Carolina and held whitewater as a base in raising their families. Their picture albums and scrapbooks showed decades of boating, camping, as well as confirmation that the bad fashion style of the 80s did indeed infect paddling gear as well as cat walks. Their children, now in their 20s, were now mostly living in the Asheville area and continued to boat regularly. A river trip down the Tuckasegee could include my wife, her parents, my wife's close childhood friends, and their parents. There might even be my wife's nephews, making for three generations in a single trip.

These trips were joyful, raucous, and eventful, filled with enough spills and swims to keep everyone entertained. The parents attempted to teach their children (and anyone who would listen) roll technique and strokes, while others gossiped. Tales of legendary runs, punctured boats, comical swims, and nighttime celebrations were passed around as heirlooms, with a shared sense of love that went beyond the river.

Yet I craved something more. On these trips, I observed the strokes of the more experienced paddlers, and learned my roll under the tutelage of my father-in-law. Soon the novelty of the combat roll turned into necessity, and as the Lower Green became the Nantahala, and the Nantahala the Big Laurel, the ranks on the expeditions thinned. As I moved on to more challenging runs, more and more of this tight-knit community was left behind on the shore, running shuttle or staying at home. I desired the challenge, and I found that my paddling buddies were now limited to my father-in-law, fun loving and confident, yet living several hours away, and my neighbor and family friend, whose open boat was guided with confidence, but whose professional schedule limited time on the river. It seemed that the laughter along the river, while still present, was concentrated immediately after rapids, before the mental preparation began for the next descent.

In the last six months, I have found myself in a new place as a paddler. The community in which I have been raised is still present in my life, and while the family trips continue, there is restlessness in my heart. Much like the teenager leaving the farm for the lure of the big city, I feel that there is a path for me, in another drainage, where a creek offers a challenge right on the edge of my comfort, yet I know that I may have to leave the embrace of my community to explore it. While still holding my roots dear, I want to push my limits—both as an athlete, but also as a person.

This drive for personal challenge came from many sources. I've always been a natural competitor, from the four-square court in elementary school, to the river,

and I will probably end up being kicked out of a few shuffleboard games in my older years. We have all felt the drive to the next route, where ability and challenge align. The adrenaline drive is still young in me, and living in Asheville, there is a community of young athletes who thrive on finding their limits and pushing them. While there is a community of paddlers of all skill levels, among the folks I see in town, the Narrows of the Green is the norm. I want to join the fun. This path will mean stepping out of the warmth and support of my community, into a smaller and more driven one, where my personal drive will define my peers.

This sense of personal achievement, balanced with community, seems to be the great dichotomy of the whitewater sport. For me, the essence of the paddling experience is the inner stillness as crucial decisions are made in the instantaneous chaos of a rapid. These moments are intimately personal and to me, transformative, bringing stillness to other aspects of my life. Yet whitewater paddling necessitates a community of support and companionship. From shuttling vehicles to setting safety on challenging descents, paddlers depend on the community surrounding them, and cannot go it alone. The community is strong, and as Eric Jackson forwarded in his essay in these pages last year, could be the hope for the future of the sport. As in all communities, there are the visionaries, intent on pushing boundaries, as seen in the feats of the Young Guns, as well as the elders, whose experience brings a sense of place and history to the sport. Then there are the wanderers such as me, valuing the tradition and history, yet searching for a way to make their own stamp on the tales being written.

I'm now a boater, newly married to a caring and generous wife who supports me in wherever the sport may take me. I have a community of paddlers who are like my family on and off the river. I live in an area emerging from a drought, and bursting with creeks and rivers. I am a lucky man and a lucky paddler. Yet the drive remains. While watching the 2009 Green River Race, a family friend asked "Would you ever do

this?" and I knew that I could, if I chose to. The path is there in front of me. I'm facing the conundrum of stepping away from the community of paddlers I have known, into a world of challenge and achievement, and the attendant danger and ego that comes along with it. I'm seeking a middle path, where every run from Class I to IV, is a joy. I'm a young man, new to the sport, and finding that path takes wisdom, which comes with time.

Maybe I should take a hint from the river. A misty morning run on section nine of the French Broad with my father-in-law and two family members, new to paddling, doing jumping jacks at the put-in to warm up as the temperature sits on freezing. This section of the French Broad has become familiar to me, but as we paddle with numb hands, the mist burns off, and poplar trees burst from the mist like the phoenix from the fire. The rapids flow with calm approaches and runs, but the river is

offering a new face, and a new challenge. I am guiding and offering advice and routes, and my place in the community has suddenly changed. The route through Pillow Rock, once daunting, is clear in mind and body, and as I eddy right to watch the newcomer run, excitement rises. This adrenaline comes not from my own accomplishment, but from seeing my guidance put into action. My guidance obviously didn't lead far, and as I watch the hole consume his kayak, followed by a flailing swim, the river has taught me once again that we both have a lot to learn.

*Top: Author on Stairstep,
Big Laurel River, NC at 9 inches*

*Below: The author's paddling family at the put-in for
the Nantahala River, NC*

Photos by Stuart Miles



Introduction to Whitewater

"Keep Yer Head Above Yer Ass!"

by Devon Pearse

With those words hollered by the shuttle driver as he drove away from the put-in on the Cartecay River in North Georgia, I began my whitewater kayaking career. Usually not considered an ideal beginner run, I and three other newbie kayakers nonetheless floated down this the Class II-III stretch for our first taste of whitewater under the watchful eye of Alex 'Sensei' Harvey. Having never been in a kayak before, the easy rapids on that run felt as challenging then as any of the Class V drops I've run since, and my strongest memory is of complete disbelief that Alex expected us to run the huge Class III cataract at the end. This shock was immediately followed by the thrill of actually running it and then by the terror of struggling to push my way out of the tiny, round, cockpit hole of the

old Perception Dancer after I flipped at the bottom.

I was hooked.

As a displaced Californian who had been missing the ocean and surf in the year since my move to the Southeast, whitewater became my newfound obsession. My subsequent years in graduate school faded into a blur of whitewater. Early on, Alex and his crew of Class V boaters completely ignored me as I worked my way through running rivers of ever-increasing difficulty with a group of equally-novice paddling buddies; Broad River, Nantahala, Sections II and III of the Chattooga, Amicalola. Those were great days—nothing is better than the feeling of being on a steep learning curve, be it paddling whitewater, practicing science, playing a musical instrument, or anything else that requires skill and the investment of time. Although my companions and I were

sometimes shepherded downriver by more knowledgeable and advanced boaters, the best runs were always those we ran blind, forcing us to figure out a line and probe it ourselves. It wasn't always pretty, but the rush at the take-out after such runs lasted for days.

Before long the time came to step up and begin running the classic Southeastern runs: the Ocoee, Section IV of the Chattooga, as well as the big Fall dam releases— Gauley, Russell Fork, and Tallulah. Alex was there for me on all of them, showing me lines, teaching me new skills, and introducing me to paddling people and culture. For my first run of the Ocoee he refused any concession to my

Left to right: The author with Alex Harvey and John McRae, after portaging Sunshine on the Green River, North Carolina

Photos by Devon Pearse





*The author testing the low water limits on Bull Sluice
- Chattooga River, Georgia*

Photos by Louise Pearse

first-timer status, insisting on paddling the Upper, Olympic, and Lower sections as a single long run, with a portage over the normal put-in dam. He also paddled his squirt boat, encouraging self-rescue; my swim out of Double Suck was the last I would take for almost seven years. After that day, runs on the other Southeastern classics followed quickly, culminating in several runs on the Narrows of the Green, all with Alex's careful guidance.

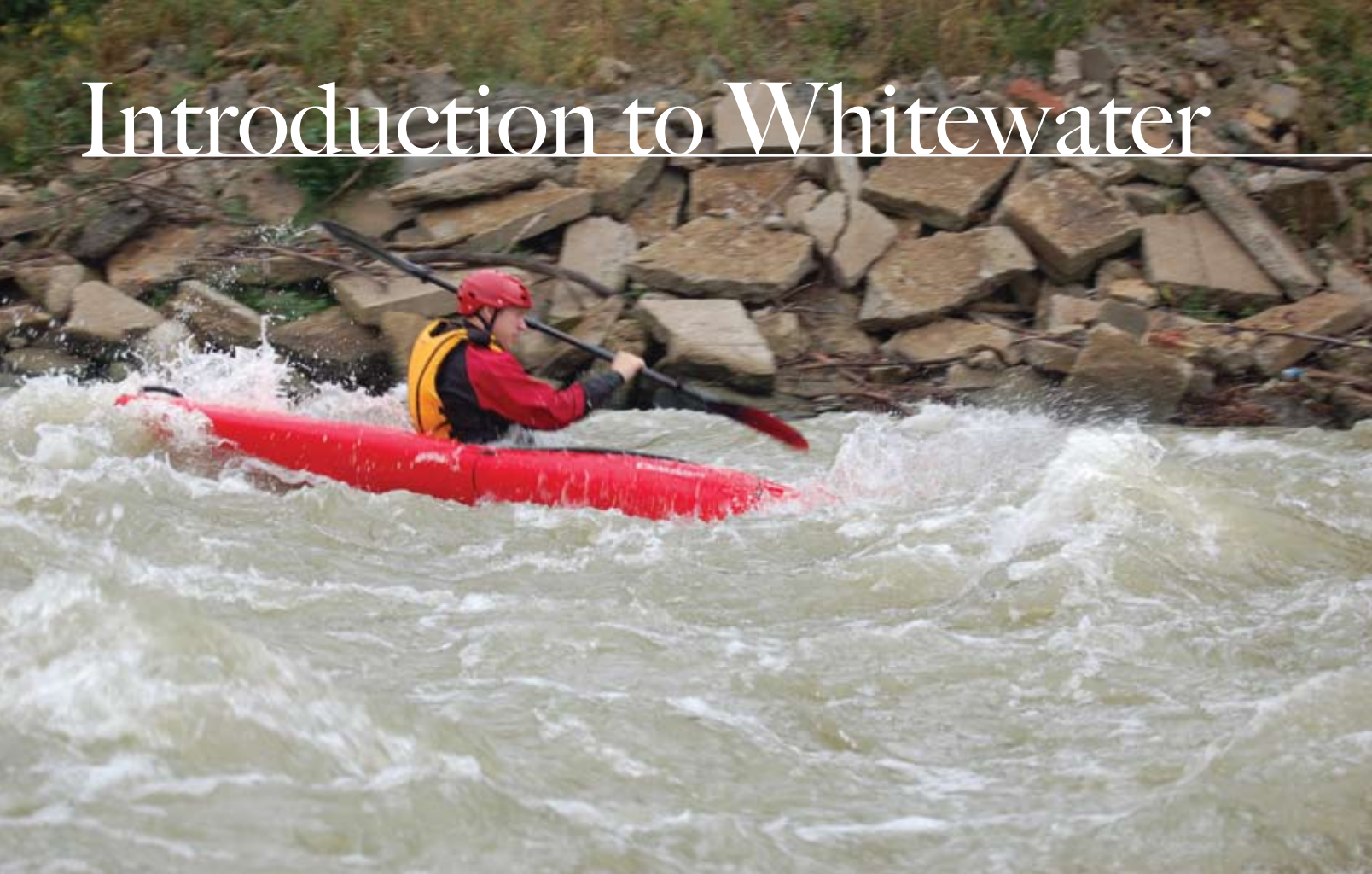
About the same time that I was stepping up into more difficult whitewater, my wife, Louise, also shifted her game from shuttle bunny extraordinaire (hot KFC at the take-out anyone?) to kayaker in need of shuttle as well. Navigating whitewater as a couple is a learning experience in and of itself, so this added a whole new set of challenges both on and off the river. But it also took us together through some amazing landscapes and experiences, and became the focus of most of our travels for the next several years.

Eventually it was time to pack up and move back West, taking with us a whole new approach to life, one in which paddling whitewater became a vehicle to explore the outdoors and meet great people. Since leaving Georgia I have had the opportunity to run whitewater in California, Oregon, Utah, Wyoming, Idaho, and Colorado (as well as a quick trip back East to bomb down the Green), but in many ways it was

the experiences that happened 'on the way to the put-in' that really stick with me. Running difficult rivers with people you hardly know is an interesting thing, and leads to fast friendships that last. The feeling of a 'band of brothers (and sisters!)' seems much stronger in whitewater paddling than in most other sports, and in my mind is one of the best aspects of whitewater kayaking. Paddling together immediately puts you in a position of trust with your companions, and the adventures and mishaps on the river lead to great stories as well.

Since settling back in California, life has changed and priorities have shifted. Kayaking the local surf breaks has replaced the long drives to the rivers as a source of Class V thrills when the waves get big. But I still jump at the chance to paddle whitewater rivers, and always remember that feeling on my first river trip, learning how the water flows and how to flow with it. Recently, we put life and work on hold for a 21-day raft trip on through the Grand Canyon. Being at the oars put me right back where I started, staring in disbelief at rapids and then reveling in the thrill of running them. Except this time I had my wife and my father in the boat, and we all kept our heads above our asses!

Introduction to Whitewater



Tom running the wave train at the bottom of the third big rapid on the Great Miami River (OH)

Photos by Scott Puthoff

Taming the Great Miami River

By Scott Puthoff

I feel a bit awkward writing an article about “Introduction to Whitewater” when I have only been whitewater kayaking for a year and half. On the flip side, it’s all fresh in my mind. My introduction into whitewater has been a multi-year journey that culminated on a warm, sunny day in August 2008.

The first time I ever ran any whitewater was around 10 years ago. My friend Nathan and I went fishing on the Little Miami River in Ohio. Instead of doing our normal bank fishing and wading out into the river, we decided to take out my 12-foot johnboat with a trolling motor. While the hike to the put-in is not all that bad, we were not enthused about carrying the boat, battery, gear, and motor up the shore and to the truck after our fishing trip. Instead, I

had an idea: Nathan would drive the truck down the road about a half a mile to a spot we routinely fished, which had a much easier take-out, and I would paddle down to meet him. Little did I know that a Class I rapid lay just downstream. With some serious luck, I successfully ran Boathouse Rapid that day, but not before I busted a hole in the bottom of the boat (thank God my father works in the steel business and knows how to weld).

Fast forward about seven or eight years. I was in West Virginia about to go whitewater rafting on the Lower New River with my wife. I hate rollercoasters, and didn’t know how the up-and-down motion of whitewater would feel. The only comfort I had was the fact that I spent a good deal of time fishing with my dad in

choppy waters and never felt sick. Still, I was pretty nervous. Once we got onto the water however, it all changed. I figured out pretty quickly that while I hated coasters, I loved wave trains. It seemed as though when the rapids got more difficult, I had more fun.

After rafting, I wanted to get that excitement on a more frequent basis. A co-worker, Tom, had purchased a couple of recreation kayaks and asked if I’d be interested in going out in them sometime. Having been canoeing before, I said “Heck yeah, let’s do it.” We decided to run the Little Miami River. It was late May, the river was up, and it wasn’t exactly warm. We got into the boats and took off. I immediately noticed the kayak was much more wobbly than a canoe. I got the hang of it pretty quickly

and was doing great until...you guessed it...Boathouse Rapid. The river had to be close to 7 feet, because the piece of old dam that is at the top of Boathouse Rapid was completely submerged. Now, this isn't some big keeper wave, but it is something to be avoided. As we entered the rapid, Tom was going straight for this thing. All of the sudden he looks back and yells "Don't follow me!" Too late. It was a pretty small drop, but I hit it a little sideways and I tipped. Being that I didn't have a spray skirt, my boat took water, and I went for my first swim. I got to a little island mid-rapid with my boat and paddle. Tom was

The author going through the big wave on the right side of the third big rapid on the Great Miami River (OH)

freakin' out at the bottom of the rapid. I gave him a signal that I was okay, got back into the boat, and ran down the right side of the island and again bit it mid-wave train. Again, more freak out...but I was laughing and I was hooked enough to want to go again.

Three months later I purchased my first kayak. It was a recreation-whitewater hybrid boat. I went with it because it was pretty small for a rec boat (10 feet), it had thigh braces, and it had a dry hatch. The boat was very stable and maneuverable in the water. My paddling partner, Tom, actually purchased the same model. We went out several times on the Little Miami without incident and decided to try a more difficult river, the Great Miami River.

While both rivers are considered Class I-II by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, the Great Miami (as the name would imply) is quite a bit larger than the Little Miami. And while at certain levels the Little Miami River can live up to its Class I-II rating, the Great Miami always lives up to its rating (and sometimes exceeds it). There are roughly four major rapids on the stretch of the Great Miami River we paddled; one is probably a Class II right now because of a giant strainer in the middle of the wave train at the bottom of the drop. In order to avoid this tree, you have to catch an eddy at the bottom of the drop, which can easily flip the novice paddler. Depending on where you flip, you may get pushed into the strainer. In 2009 alone, there have been two river

Photo by Tom Sterling



Introduction to Whitewater



rescues at this rapid because people have underestimated its power or overestimated their abilities (more likely a little bit of both).

Our jobs put us close to this river, so we met up after work at the take-out, loaded up my truck, and headed to the put-in on a sunny August day in the summer of 2008. We got into our boats, put on helmets and spray skirts, and dropped into the current. Within a minute, we hit our first rapid of the day. It was a little slide into about a 2-3 foot standing wave, followed by a decent little wave train. We were both so nervous about hitting the wave the first time, we totally avoided it. We dropped into the river right eddy at the end of the wave train and decided to run it again to hit the wave. Tom grabbed the digital camera and I headed back up for the run. I was pretty nervous, but found the courage to head right at that bad boy. I punched it without incident and was smiling from ear-to-ear.

Tom did the same, and down the river we went.

The next rapid was at Blue Rock Bridge. Blue Rock Rapid was just as exciting as the first rapid. We went down the right side chute and ensuing wave train. At the end of the rapid, there is a small “V-Ledge”. The “V” shape has the bottom (or point) of the “V” facing downstream. If you run right at the point, there are some fun waves to punch through. Tom and I punched the waves head on and let the river’s flow move us downstream. As we floated along, we chatted about how much more fun this river was in comparison to the Little Miami River.

At this point in our run, we were feeling pretty confident. The river was definitely bigger, but did not seem unreasonably hard. There were a couple bigger waves, but nothing crazy. A couple minutes went by and we started to hear “it.” Having been

The author setting up at the top of the third big rapid on the Great Miami River (OH)

Photo by Tom Sterling

whitewater rafting, I knew what the noise was: it was the river, more specifically, a much bigger rapid than the others.

Tom looked at me and asked, “What is that noise? Is it a train or something?”

I smiled and said, “That’s the river.”

“No, it’s not, is it?” he replied. I just smiled.

Just then, the tops of waves became visible as the river went hard to the left. The closer we got, the more of the rapid came into view. Almost all of the flow of the river goes to the left as the river constricts down. The river drops down over 40 yards, with a wave train extending out another 40-50 yards after that. There are several lines, all of which have three-foot waves,

a river-wide wave at the bottom, followed by a wave train (the strainer as mentioned above was not there at this point). It was like nothing we had seen in our kayaks.

Tom looked at me and asked, “Are we going to go down that?”

“You bet we are!”

I angled my boat for the left-center set of waves and started to paddle. I paddled as hard as I could to hit those waves. Water was hitting me in the chest and face. I burst through the river-wide wave and

ride the wave train until it ends. Tom does the same thing and we meet at the bottom to talk about how freakin’ awesome it was. Additional runs are had and pictures are taken to show our friends.

We ran the final rapid of the day, another slide to a standing wave and paddled to the take-out, relishing the best day on the water that I’d had up to that point.

Since then, I’ve learned to roll, bought a playboat, and have run up to Class III rapids in a kayak. Regardless of how big the waves get or difficult the rapids become in the future, I will forever remember that run on the Great Miami River, not as the moment that introduced me into whitewater, but the moment that kept me in it.

Tom trying to catch the eddy at the bottom of the third big rapid on the Great Miami River (OH)

Photo by Scott Puthoff



Asleep Under A Full Moon Boating

By Luke Karasa

viewing into reflections of the water
seeing itself being the enchantress
dropping into a tongue, one tongue
exploring the next
tongue to tongue as if it was beckoning
to lick
exploring each hollow of your knees,
clavicles, intentions
skin of smoothness, skin of splash

a copulating rhythm to a Costa Rican
breeze
water falling in on itself
the curl of a wave's lips kissing your entry
into a river's hole
surrounding you with pressure, a touch
around your face and neck
to respect the river, knowing its changing
power, its permissions
a biting, rocks to make you respect her
depth
a love of adjusting, paddles pulling
through pools of reason
feeding the wave with a paddle carefully
chosen to stroke her
with firmness yet without directives
a paddle chosen for its show or as nature's
own
ladling in her inebriating nectar
sharing her intoxicating syrup

entering into the mouth of the water as
the beginning
to a continuation to better know your kiss
mesmerizing me to know your edges,
your hips, legs, eddies and pools
being the dance of my boat's continuation
through the shower of your water, the
sparkle of the light across your eyes and
breasts, clinging and hugging against my
boat
timeless pulsing rhythm of your desire for
me to love you more working over and
over me
can't sleep without my hips, my muscles,
memorizing in my sleep your every
movement

Costa Rica Stamps

By Luke Karasa

ball sunsets disappearing into burning
skies
rivers with bubble necklaces hanging
them onto your eyelashes
full overlaying green valleys with
shoulders too steep to fall into
sun eating away the leaf edges, leaving
cracks of sunshine
smooth skin in love with humidity and
fresh sheets
the peacefulness of hearing your own
thoughts

the fork tender mouth memorizing ahi
steaks
venting volcanoes, panoramically stacked
aerial bouquets of clouds
clouds recounting their consciousness
sunlight buttons on lacy white water hems
unrequited splashes of color love
the screaming silence of secluded hanging
slot canyons

burgeoning structured billowing sentients
cascading boils piqued on a morning
glow
engaging form fractals creating their own
erasures
rose apple light flattened across bubbling
fountains of cream
jumbling yellow boats mushrooming out
of pillow water

Walking With Giants

By Michael Goyn

We follow sounds of thunder
And slip past falling rock
We breathe the forest fire's smoke
See flames scorch the mountain top
We sleep outside to see the stars
Awake when daylight breaks anew
We would run the river everyday
To see the epic swell ensue
Where guts more than girth
Determines who's a man
When we could walk with giants
And still look tall where we stand.

October Westwater Canyon

By Craig Irwin

Put-in looked gloomy, rain, cold,
and grey.
but the party scene was rolling,
Halloween costumes, masks and robes.

We waited and pondered observing
golden Cottonwoods, eagles and more,
tossed frisbee disk, loaded the boats and
rigged our gear to the floors.

Donned sunglasses, smiles, and thoughts
of good and warm will.
When the shuttle drivers returned we
pushed off and the sun broke through
the chill.

The day slowly warmed and soon ends
were thrown.
Autumn sun sliced the overcast, make
mellow, and the day warmed on...

Camped at Hades, with a hot driftwood
fire
Kebabs, whisky and chilly wind danced
with shadows thrown on Precambrian
walls.

Rain staggered in during night, pitter
splatter in the cold desert sands
Slept in, and awoke, drenched in
morning sun.

Kind sun, dried frozen stinky river gear to
my throw bag clothesline.
Coffeed up, packed up, and floated down
the dark-walled canyon.

Marble Canyon, Staircase, Funnel,
Surprise, then low water Skull
Oops! I nailed the hole half way down the
ramp, wasn't there before!
Above the ledge, stopped by its force, and
stalled out, front surfing yellow cataract.

Typewriter right, shipped oars, dropped
in straight, left tube dove deep.
Where did the it go?

Left tube underwater, time to make a

move or flip it gear, girl and all.
Climbed to the high-side, left hand
grabbed dog, right hand on the
canyon wall.

I found the boats balance point where
gravity does tugs and pull,
and gave 'er just enough to keep the boat
upright,
kept her from flipping in the hole right
above Skull.

Hopped back in my captain's chair,
grabbed oars and caught a river left eddie,
slightly damp with smiles of delight.

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River Voices



Hard Decisions on the Pontax

*By Dan McDonnell, Associate Director
St. Lawrence University Outdoor Program*

Any individual filling a leadership role needs the ability to make decisions. Most often these decisions are mundane or trivial decisions that have very little relevance other than personal comfort or convenience. At other times, however, decisions made by a leader will have far reaching impacts and consequences. When discussing leadership in an outdoor context, whether it be experiential education or the guiding industry, the line between important and unimportant decisions is at times blurred. A few bad, seemingly trivial decisions can quickly, and unknowingly, exacerbate a much larger problem. To add to the weightiness of decision-making in the backcountry is the propensity for incomplete and/or hazy information that

directly or indirectly affects the problem and associated decision. Where decisions in other disciplines are made after the careful gathering of information in the form of spreadsheets, predictable trends, and consultation, the backcountry leader is often forced to make crucial decisions on his or her own based on circumstantial evidence, prior experience, the ever-changing environment, and gut feeling. Rarely, too, is he or she given a warm, dry, quiet place to contemplate this “gut” feeling. It is important to recognize and discuss the unique decision-making challenges of outdoor leadership.

Although I started building my backcountry leadership experience over a decade ago, the importance of critical decision-making in the face of incomplete information

blossomed recently on an attempted descent of the Pontax River in the James Bay region of northern Quebec. Despite excellent planning and preparedness, and years of experience, the expedition was deemed overly hazardous to our group and we were forced to abandon the river. Reflecting on one’s actions and reactions to a given situation has been mentioned by many outdoor leadership authors as a critical aspect of leadership development (Clement 47, Boud 8, Prince 2). Let me begin by describing the situation as it unfolded last spring.

The university program I work for has been taking students to the Hudson Bay region of Ontario and Quebec for canoe trip expeditions since its first trip to the

Missinaibi River in 1997. Since then, our program has returned 14 times to run rivers of varying difficulty from the Wekwayokastic and North French, to the Lawagamau and Kesagami. Mid-summer programs have gone to the Little Whale and Nastapoka in Quebec. All of these rivers are classic whitewater canoe-tripping rivers, given their remoteness and gradient. In pool-drop fashion the snow-fed rivers cascade off the Canadian Shield before flowing into James Bay en route to the Atlantic. Accessing the rivers at the top is either by remote logging road, or via bush plane. Governed by the university calendar, we leave campus the last week of May.

The 600-mile trip north took 12 hours. As we drove, leafy trees turned to budding trees turned to stark leafless branches; the river near campus was running at a medium-low level, but by the time we were eight hours into our drive, the rivers were bank-full and turning muddier and more turbulent with each bridge passed. We saw a number of canoe-topped vehicles driving south. The weather wasn't comforting either as we pulled into our first night's lodging; the air was cold and damp, promising rain. A Quebecois gentleman, after hearing me describe our mission, said in heavily-accented English, "I hope you guys have some thick sweaters." In the morning, we drove the final 140 kilometers to the put-in: a 200-meter wide bridge spanning the Pontax. My co-leader, Phil, dropped the group and gear and me at the put-in and started the four-hour, 250 kilometer shuttle run to Waskaganish. With skies threatening rain and temperatures in the high 30s, I had the students move all the gear and boats under the bridge in hopes of finding a dry place to pass the time. Within an hour, the wind picked up and it began to rain; the bridge became a sort of Arctic wind tunnel, but was dry at least.

According to some local people we had spoken with, the rain had been unrelenting for the past three days and our struggles

starting a warming fire confirmed that report. Every scrap of dead wood was saturated. One of the students caught her rain pants on a snag and ripped them from the thigh to knee; another person commented that they had only been out of the van for two hours and already had all of her clothes on.

After the shuttle had been set, we loaded up the boats and paddled the quick five kilometers to a bush site indicated on trip notes we had found from earlier groups that had canoed the river. As the sky darkened, we pitched camp and made dinner for the group. The river was very high, and the air smelled of imminent snow. Nonetheless, group spirits were high: we were out of the van, away from the bridge wind-tunnel, and at the moment, it wasn't raining. Phil and I both knew the stakes were rising though as the temperature dropped. Having literally thousands of kilometers of river travel under our belts, we knew the weather and resulting water levels were not going to make this descent an easy one. Speaking for myself, I crawled into my tent feeling a little uneasy with the circumstances.

The next morning dawned with bad news. One of our participants had crawled out of her sleeping bag a few times to vomit; she also reported diarrhea and a fever. We sent her back to her tent to rest. It was intermittently snowing, with a cold breeze out of the west. We noticed a glaze of ice forming on branches along the water's edge. With almost all of our clothes on, Phil and I huddled up to take a look at the maps once again.

The Pontax is one of the few watersheds in the region that has escaped the embrace of Hydro-Quebec. With the Rupert complex to its south and the massive La Grande project to the north, the Pontax is a diamond-in-the-rough for canoe trippers. The Pontax is characterized by the continuous nature of the rapids along the 125-kilometer stretch to the ocean.

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Some rapids on the map are close to three kilometers in length. In medium to low water, this creates complex, but manageable rapids broken by occasional islands and bays to slow down. Our concern, based on the rapid we were camped on was that rapids described as “a CII ledge into two kilometers of CII ending in a 30 meter portage” would appear at flood stage as an unmanageable river-wide Class IV that required a half-day, two- to three-kilometer portage. These long, continuous rapids appeared numerous on the river. In many cases, long whitewater sections can be traveled safely by breaking the features and characteristics down incrementally, dealing with each mini-rapid individually,

The author's brother Mike at the ocean after a successful descent of the Nastapoka River in 2007, Quebec

Photo by Phil Royce

sometime in the boats, sometimes working the group down the river edge. With care and patience, most rapids can be managed successfully, but not always in a timely fashion. The fact that the river was very, very high added to the unlikelihood we could manage many of these long, twisting sections. Long portages were inevitable. We had a number of students that expected to be returning home in six days to start summer jobs, etc. Being late would be inconvenient for Phil and me, but much more so for our participants.

The river flows into the ocean about 12 kilometers north of the coastal town of Waskaganish, where my co-leader had left our vehicle. Past ocean paddles such as this one had caused us to break from our typical nine-to-five river schedule to paddle in the early morning, even through the night, to avoid the characteristic high

winds and tidal flow that make progress almost impossible. We were apprehensive about possible ice flows and bergs that might be still floating or trapped along the mouth of the river. Ice poses a problem in that it makes reaching shore hard, dangerous, and sometimes impossible.

After pouring over the maps, we decided to stretch our legs and look at the rapid we were camped on. The river was white as far as we could see as it raced around the bend and we wanted to see what was around the corner. The rocky ledge we were camped on was part of an island, separated by a narrow, swiftly moving channel to the north, and the wider channel to the south. Almost the entire group went along as we bushwhacked through alders and spruce looking at the rapid we would most likely run the next day.



Back in camp, our sick student was still sick. She had come out of her tent once all day, and was clearly not any better. That evening Phil and I knew we needed to make a tough decision. The next morning dawned with new-fallen snow, just a dusting, but the proverbial “icing-on-the-cake.” We decided to pull the group off the river by way of an arduous up-river paddle to the road.

The study of decision-making in the outdoors largely revolves around a process known as heuristics. Heuristics, derived from the Greek *heuriskein* meaning “to discover,” describes an approach to learning and decision-making that draws from experience and intuition rather than cut-and-dried formulas and quantitative data. It is used to denote the human ability to process incomplete information for the purpose of gaining knowledge or some desired result by intelligent guesswork rather than by following a pre-established formula.

In the 1940s the concept of heuristic decision-making was explored in-depth by Nobel laureate Herbert Simon, an American psychologist whose research ranged across the fields of cognitive psychology, computer science, public administration, economics, management, philosophy of science and sociology. He believed that people solve problems by unconsciously searching through enormous amounts of data gained from prior experiences, then selectively pulling situations from memory. These situations are used informally in a sort of means-ends analysis. From those memories of positive outcomes, prior decisions are repeated to gain a decision for a present problem (Simon 3).

The mental process of heuristic decision-making is outlined by Robert J. Sternberg and Jacqueline P. Leighton in their combined work *The Nature of Reasoning*. Paraphrased, it is as follows:


1. People make subconscious note of paths leading to stable (i.e. safe, or non-stressful) situations.
2. These stable situations are constructed over lengthy periods of time and experience.
3. Unstable situations are thought to be stabilized by following parallel actions, or paths, taken in previous experiences. (275)

The process surrounding the concept of heuristics is most commonly considered a positive, effective strategy for making decision with incomplete information. However, since the 1970s much research attention has focused on ways that heuristics can lead to errors in judgment. These errors are commonly attributed to bias held by successful leaders (Sternberg 274).

Leaders are in leadership roles because they’ve run successful campaigns, in whatever discipline it might be, in the past. They have demonstrated the ability to prepare, plan, and bring other team members together to accomplish a goal. As a leader matures, and goals are set and accomplished, he or she tends to expect it.

In my case, I had been a part of, and led, many river trips. The Pontax River was another river to be run. To be sure, I expected the river to have the occasional tough spot, the long portage, the intimidating rapid, etc. Likewise, every group has its weakest link; as the saying goes, a group can only travel as fast as the slowest member. These aspects are always things to confront and adapt to, not run from. When I worked as a guide in Yellowstone National Park, I would guide clients through the Park on days that never warmed up past twenty-five below zero. I’ve led trips that never enjoyed a single ray of sunlight, going days on end in pouring rain and snow. In the past decade, I’ve experienced evacuations involving

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head trauma, lacerations, and internal injuries. These evacuations have included the use of helicopters, horses, ambulances, etc. I'm trained to respond to medical emergencies in the backcountry, and I'm certified in river rescue. My resume as an outdoor leader is very strong because my success rate in guiding clients and students in harsh environments is excellent.

With this success rate, however, came an increasingly strong personal bias in my ability to mitigate problems that reared in the field. Kent Clement wrote, in *The Psychology of Judgment for Outdoor Leaders*, that as the experience level of a leader increases, "the more the decision maker relies upon his or her recollection of the decision's success or failure. Within one's memory, the actual success or failure

of a decision tends to become clouded and may change ... Memory is considered to be reconstructive and, therefore, susceptible to bias" (46).

My interest in heuristics, and my recognition of my own bias, stemmed from a study presented at the 2002 International Snow Science Workshop by Ian McCammon of the National Outdoor Leadership School titled Evidence of heuristic traps in recreational avalanche accidents. The author outlined ways in which heuristic decision-making can be detrimental when the strategy produces biases that can negatively affect future decisions. McCammon, as well as other authors, refer to these biases as "pitfalls," or "traps."

In consideration of the situation described above, a critical look at the circumstances reveals certain heuristic traps "set" for the leadership on the Pontax River. The very

nature of heuristic decision-making (or not-making, as the case may be) is based on very personal life-experience. For that reason, my opinions and perceptions of the situation to follow are mine only and may differ slightly with my co-leader who may have seen some angles of the situation differently.

Weather

The weather in the James Bay region in early spring is unpredictable. Being so close to the ocean, weather patterns come and go quickly. In the same ten days in successive years we have experienced ninety-degree days/eighty-degree nights, thirty-five degree days/ twenty-degree nights, dead-calm, 45 mile-an-hour winds, non-stop rain, and ten day drought. Sometimes the wind blows out of the north and is cold, sometimes it comes from the south and is warm. The perfect weather, for comfort

The author running a ledge on the Wekwayokastic, Ontario

Photo by Phil Royce



sake, is somewhere in between all of these, but for safety sake, the warmer the better. On the Pontax, the river was estimated at 36 degrees, the air temperature at 32 degrees. The rainy snow and the wind were not helpful. Hypothermia was a real concern.

Cold temperatures are detrimental to any activity outdoors, but more so in a river environment. Over time, I have honed my personal clothing system. A wilderness canoe tripper needs waterproof clothing that can be layered to accommodate the range of temperatures described above. It also needs to be tough enough to withstand the abuse of portaging around unnavigable rapids, through black spruce and knee-deep mud. My clothing system, made up of Gore-tex, neoprene, rubber and flotation, if purchased new, rings up to around \$2,000. This is an unrealistic sum for us to expect students to shell out; consequently, their apparel in times of extreme weather like that described is at times inadequate. The participant I mentioned who ripped her pants found the incident unfortunate; the others thought it was funny. I saw the

tear in her pants, however, as a serious problem. One doesn't need to capsize their boat in a rapid to get hypothermia if she is paddling in freezing rain in un-insulated, torn rain pants.

River Conditions

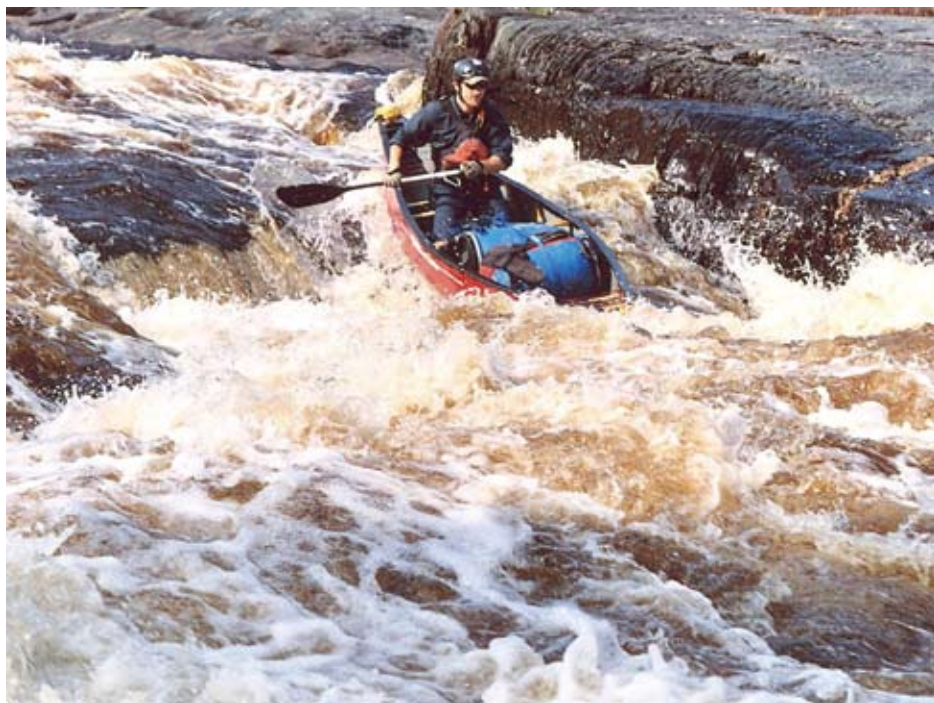
We had gotten misleading reports of normal flows on the Pontax. These northern Canadian rivers have no gauges and are often described over the phone as "lower than last year," or "I've seen it higher." In this case, the River was "bank-full," leaving very few equipment-recovery spots in the event of a capsized canoe. The alders overhung much of the river, making emergency landings fairly impossible; without prominent eddies, and with the water flowing waist deep along the river's edge, a canoe would have no room for error, and no exit strategy. Rule number one in downriver travel is to have an exit strategy.

The river was in a very remote area. We had just paddled away from the only road

within hundreds of kilometers. When making decisions, one always needs to consider the results of an accident. In our case, the difficulty of an evacuation in an emergency rose exponentially with every kilometer we traveled downriver

Participant Health

Before leaving for any lengthy trip, we speak with each participant individually, in addition to them filling out a medical form about potential health problems. Food and drug allergies, recent fractures and sprains, chronic health problems, and other ailments, both physical and mental are reviewed privately by my co-leader and me to determine how any of these aforementioned issues can be dealt with and managed. We manage the risk of bacterial and viral infection by carrying a number of antibiotics in our first aid kits. In this case, one of our strongest team members had somehow contracted what was assumed to be a viral infection. Phil has been certified an EMT over ten years, I have been a First Responder for nine. In the backcountry a leader uses a series of clues to guess a diagnosis. In this case the symptoms and the duration seemed to indicate a viral infection. We had no way of knowing when or where she had contracted the virus, who else on the trip may have been exposed to it, or what other symptoms she might contract over time. Her symptoms included, most importantly, a total lack of energy and enthusiasm. Speaking from experience, a person can still be valuable to a team while vomiting and having intermittent diarrhea, however, if a participant is completely sapped of energy, the situation is dire. The sick woman had just traveled 600 miles in a vehicle with all the other



The author, Dan McDonnell, on the North French River (Ontario)

Photo by John Angus

River Voices



trip participants, including the leadership. There was no way of predicting the health of the group in three or four days, when we were scheduled to be in the meat of the descent.

Selective Perceptions

As noted earlier, the leadership on the Pontax River had literally thousands of miles of river experience to draw from in assessing the situation. Over the course of that experience we had made decisions that closely paralleled the decisions that needed to be made on this river. These past decisions, and their outcome, had created a knowledge base that we as leaders increasingly drew upon to make further decisions. Each successful or positive outcome of a decision made within parallel circumstances strengthened this knowledge base and became the primary tool for making decisions (Sternberg et al. 276). But this is not always good.

In our case, all of the factors outlined above: weather, river conditions, and participant health had been encountered before. Phil and I, individually and in working together, had experienced all of these dilemmas on previous trips. In fact, within each situation, we had experienced much worse. In the past, I had made decisions that had had positive outcomes based on similar circumstances. Why then were we not able to rely on our experiential knowledge base to formulate a plan to safely continue down river? Our recognition of the danger was from experience, and the experience my co-leader and I shared gave us the skills and knowledge to negotiate these dangers. Our dilemma, and what ultimately caused us to abandon the river, was the compound nature of the unknowns.

The air temperature was at the threshold of our management and there was no promise given earlier forecasts of a warming trend. Cold precipitation with no

The author on an unnamed rapid on the North French River, Ontario

Photo by Phil Royce

end on the horizon made quick life-saving fires difficult, to impossible, to muster. The water temperature, a concern in the event of a capsized canoe, had no likelihood of warming in the next week. We had no way of knowing if the river flow was increasing, or decreasing. Given the recent rain, it was unlikely to recede. Our participants were unprepared for the current weather, and would likely be in danger if conditions worsened. We had scattered knowledge of the river's nature below, but knew it was similar to the dangerously long rapid we were camped on. Conflicting accounts made us ignorant of the condition of the river's mouth, where it met the ocean, and whether those conditions would allow us to paddle through with acceptable risk. Finally, the greatest concern was the nature of the virus being suffered by one of the participants. It was a mystery. We had

no way of knowing how long she would be ill, who else would contract it, and how it would impede our progress.

McCammon believes that “in order for heuristic decision making to work in high-risk situations, the cues we rely on must be relevant to the actual hazard. If, out of unconscious habit, we choose the wrong cues our decisions can be catastrophically wrong” (1). As I perceived it then, as I do now nearly eight months after the experience, there were many cues and unknown variables that didn’t forecast a safe expedition. If we consider the cues aforementioned, and look at each one individually as some decision-makers suggest, each of the factors could be mitigated and we would have loaded our boats and headed downstream to an uncertain end.

In our circumstance, the key to our decision was the compound nature of the cues. Although each segment of our situation was manageable, taken as a whole it was not. Despite the quiet embarrassment and initial feelings of defeat I had as we drove south, now, eight months later, I am confident the right decision was made.

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Introduction to Whitewater



Are You Trying To Kill Your Daughters?

By: John Amtmann

No kidding, this is what one guy asked me. He's a professor at Montana Tech, proving that even really smart people, well people with letters after their names anyway, can ask really dumb questions. I actually like the guy though, so instead of an insulting sarcastic response or a punch in the mouth, which would've demonstrated a lack of self-control and gotten me in big trouble on campus, I gave Professor Stupido an honest answer....

When my wife and I started having children I asked myself, what are the most valuable gifts I can share with my children? Several things came to mind, including sharing with them the non-mainstream sports and outdoor activities that have enriched

my life. Mainstream sports are great if that's where they want to concentrate their efforts, but I get as much or more enjoyment out of alternative sports and outdoor activities, and I wanted them to have that option too.

Our culture tends to give kids many more opportunities to participate in mainstream sports than in alternative sports such as kayaking, so running rivers is something most Americans really don't know much about. It seems to me that these alternative activities can be enjoyed for a lifetime by the participants, unlike most mainstream sports, and it's fellow river people who recognize the value in teaching children how to kayak. Our local river is the Big Hole, about 20 miles south of Butte, Montana. There have been several deaths over the years on the Big Hole, and there is a dangerous low-head dam on the river that causes a nasty hydraulic. We usually

Left to right: Kelly, Devin, John, Aidan, Hannah Amtmann at the Blackfoot River Challenge 2008

Photo by Jeff Lonn

don't float that section of river because of that hydraulic and, if we do, it's an easy portage around it.

The misunderstanding of this hydraulic has grown so that non-river people believe there are actually ghost-like hydraulics on our river that will stealthily hunt anyone on the river and hold them under...forever. Seriously, my father-in-law says to my wife, "That John shouldn't take those girls on that river! The Big Hole has nasty undertows that can reach up and grab you from out of nowhere." (There's a remote possibility That John is a term of endearment.) My father-in-law's experience in such matters comes from the fact that he has driven by the Big Hole approximately five times over

the last 70 years, and from the fact that his buddies at the local bar have also driven by the river.

An older neighbor this past June walked by the house as I was loading up our river vehicle, and was horrified to learn that the tiny boats I was loading up belonged to “those dear lovely Amtmann girls.”

The local news channel gives reports on the river level during spring run-off, so it was no surprise when she asked, “Do you realize how high the water is right now?”

“Yes, yes Mrs. Armstrong, I know and believe me we will be very careful, I promise,” I said patiently. I guess you have to look at it from their perspective—non-river folks don’t really know any better.

We don’t have a local boating store, so it wasn’t until I purchased my first Jackson Kayaks online from Colorado Kayak Supply (CKS) though that I saw that children aren’t limited to paddling the smallest, yet still oversized, adult kayaks in lakes, which is how I started my kids in their first season of whitewater kayaking, seven years ago. For their next season I had spent my entire savings on two more kid-sized boats. I couldn’t believe it when I saw them; they were perfectly sized for the kids.

The staff support I received from CKS combined with positive comments from my fellow river rats was exactly what I needed when I first started to balance out the non-river folks telling me how crazy I was. I have some very experienced and trustworthy river friends who gave me the encouragement to continue showing the kids the river life, and they happily joined us on our more adventurous outings.

What the non-river folks don’t know is that I’m actually a little smarter than I look. I listen and learn from experienced river-folks. I consulted with the CKS staff and river friends, and took a conservative approach to teaching the girls to kayak. I was told, and believed, that one bad experience could turn a kid off. So, slowly

we progressed, keeping each outing fun, with some kayaking and barbecues thrown in the mix. The fact that I teach at a college, and my office is located in the HPER complex—where the pool is—was a huge help.

I also hooked up with the Mike Johnston and Cody Harris at Montana River Guides (MRG) and the Whitewater Rescue Institute (WRI) just outside of Missoula, Montana. It had been about 20 years since I guided with the infamous Jerry McAward on the Lehigh River in Pennsylvania while I was in grad school, but they welcomed me, my wife and my kids, with open arms. I wanted to spend time with these professional river-men because of their wealth of knowledge; around these guys I felt like a sponge absorbing river safety information. I attended WRI’s Swiftwater Rescue Technician course, and started camping for a few days at a time on Mike’s land near the Clark Fork’s Alberton Gorge. We spent much of this past summer there with the MRG folks. Though I felt like a “squatter,” Mike assured me that my guide services were appreciated and that my daughters were not getting in the way (see sidebar).

On the river, I’ve always practiced rolls and basic strokes along with the basic river navigation skills: eddy turns, peel outs, and ferries, and encouraged the girls to do the same. We’d play tag or follow the leader to add a little spice to it. We also practiced our rescue scenarios and technical river-swimming so that their first unintentional swims didn’t surprise them and so that each kid knew what to do if necessary. Still today we practice these things—and it’s worked out well.

As the girls progressed the two older ones were able to take on bigger water. We’ve gone to the Blackfoot River Challenge the last two years in a row and had a wonderful time thanks to Alan Burgmuller, Brandon Salayi, Jon Anderson and the good sponsors in Missoula who put the event on. In larger volume water such as the Alberton Gorge, I’ve observed two different approaches emerge with the boating of the two older girls.

Hannah, the middle daughter, though only 62 pounds likes to stay in her playboat, even though I bought a higher volume river runner that I thought she would like better in bigger water.

“No Dad, I like staying in my Fun. It’s not as stable as the Sidekick and I get munched up a bit in the bigger water of The Gorge, but I can maneuver it a little better, it surfs better, and I know I can roll it up in anything,” she told me. “I just accept it as fate that I’ll get knocked over in Tumbleweed. I enjoy the ride upside down for a while, and then I roll up.”

On the other hand, Aidan, the oldest daughter likes the Sidekick in bigger water. “My Fun is a better surfer, but the Sidekick is more stable and it’s easier for me to roll,” said Aidan.

Go figure.

With my daughters now aged 9, 11 and 13, I can look back with the clarity of seven river seasons worth of hind-sight and answer the original question with confidence. No Professor Stupido, I am not trying to kill my daughters. Quite the contrary, we are teaching them how to live!

John Amtmann is in his 19th year on the faculty for the Applied Health Science program at Montana Tech and believes children should be exposed to healthy life-long activities whether they are considered “normal” mainstream activities or not.

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Join **AMERICAN WHITEWATER** Today!

American Whitewater has been extraordinarily fortunate in our ability to leverage a strong grassroots base—members and other volunteers—to assist our limited staff with many whitewater river conservation and restoration efforts.

Over the years, American Whitewater volunteers have participated in numerous hydropower meetings as well as instream and recreational flow studies; filed comments and assisted with an uncountable number of filings; appeared as expert witnesses; lobbied; worked to fight new dams, remove existing dams, deny licenses, and improve public access to rivers and streams. In nearly every river stewardship issue AW has been involved with, the outcome has been favorable to paddlers. Not only has AW secured favorable decisions for the paddling community, but we are the only national organization representing paddlers as these decisions are being made.

A growing membership base is crucial to our ability to continue with our work. Some studies show that there are currently over 100,000 whitewater paddlers in the U.S. American Whitewater currently has 6,300 active members. When considering the amount of whitewater river miles that AW has had a direct impact on, this membership number is unimpressive. We need all paddlers to join American Whitewater. If you are a member, please be sure that everyone you paddle with understands the work AW does, and how you, as an AW member, value that work.

Membership support is what will determine our ability to continue our river stewardship work in the years to come. Individual Annual Memberships are only \$35. If you are a member of your local paddling club and your club is an Affiliate Club member of AW, join as a Club Affiliate Individual for \$25. This is less than a tank of gas or an inexpensive night out. This is certainly not too much to pay to have a national organization representing your paddling interests all across the country.

Join on-line today at <http://americanwhitewater.org/content/Membership/join-AW/>, call 1-866-BOAT4AW (866-262-8429), or fill out the form on the back of this page and mail it to:

Membership
P.O. Box 1540
Cullowhee, NC 28723

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

CONTACT INFORMATION

☐ New Member ☐ Renewing Member

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone () _____ Email _____

*Note: American Whitewater will never share your information with others

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

☐ \$35 Standard

☐ \$25 Affiliate Club Member

Club: _____

☐ \$25 Student

School: _____

☐ \$50 Family

☐ \$100 Ender Club

Shirt Size: _____

☐ \$250 Platinum Paddler

☐ \$500 Explorer

☐ \$750 Lifetime

☐ \$1,000 Legacy

☐ \$2,500 Steward

DONATE

☐ Donation of \$ _____

DISCOUNT SUBSCRIPTIONS

☐ \$30.00 Kayak Session Magazine (Save \$5)

☐ \$40.00 Lunch Video Magazine (Quarterly DVD) (Save \$8)

JOURNAL OPTIONS

☐ Do NOT mail me the AW Journal, email it to me <- Saves AW money, and trees! :)

PAYMENT INFORMATION

☐ Cash

☐ Check # _____

☐ Credit Card

☐ MC

☐ Visa

☐ Disc

☐ AMEX

Card Number: _____ Exp Date: _____

Name on card: _____

Signature: _____

July 2009

SAVING RIVERS SINCE 1954



Affiliate Clubs

It's Easy to Support AW!

American Whitewater is proud of the work we have accomplished in our stewardship program but we need your help to sustain our success. Your support through membership and donations enables our staff to be active and engaged in the process of river stewardship. Donations don't have to be large; each person doing a small part makes a noticeable difference. Many donors fail to take full advantage of federal tax incentives specifically intended to encourage charitable contributions. Such incentives often enable a donor to make a larger gift to AW at little or no additional cost. For more information about maximizing your gift visit the IRS website dedicated to charitable organizations.

American Whitewater is a national non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, EIN# 23-7083760. To learn more about the Giving Options below, contact us at 866-BOAT4AW or visit the "Donate" link under "Support AW" on our website at www.americanwhitewater.org.

- **Donate online today!**
- **Monthly Giving:** Contribute a minimum of \$10 via credit card or electronic transfer from your bank account.
- **Bequests:** Include AW in your will or living trust. Bequests to AW are generally exempt from federal or state inheritance taxes, and subject to an unlimited deduction.
- **Combined Federal Campaign:** Federal employees including federal civilians, military personnel and U.S. Postal Workers can donate to AW through the CFC a once a year charitable fund raising program. Look for AW (Agency #11351) in the official CFC listing of eligible donors.
- **Charitable Remainder Trusts:** Convert a highly appreciated asset (such as real estate or stocks) into a lifetime income while minimizing income and estate taxes.
- **Employer Matching:** Many employers will match your donations to non-profit organizations. This includes membership payments, as well as additional contributions. Check to see if your employer has a matching program.
- **MissionFish:** Sell your items through the MissionFish program on eBay and the proceeds come directly to AW.
- **Other Assets:** A gift of real estate to AW qualifies you for a tax deduction based on the property's fair market value. If it is not a river access point, AW will sell the property and use the proceeds to protect access and restore rivers. Acceptance of property is subject to certain conditions. You may also be eligible to receive tax benefits for gifts of real property. Art and jewelry are examples of personal property items that may be eligible. Interested donors should check with your financial and tax advisors and AW on the feasibility and tax considerations of such gifts.
- **Securities:** Donating appreciated stock to AW benefits both the donor and whitewater rivers. The donor receives two tax-related benefits. First, the gain on the stock is not subject to capital gains taxes. Second, the donor can deduct the value of the stock as a charitable contribution.
- **United Way:** All federal campaigns, and a few of the local campaigns will allow you to donate to AW. AW's UNITED WAY member # is 2302.
- **Vehicle Donations:** Turn that extra car, truck, or RV into a tax deductible donation benefiting AW.

River Voices

Father's Day the Way it Should Be

By Joe Marks

I thought I'd briefly share the Father's Day experience I had with my son Eric this year.

We had not planned on getting on the river that weekend but late Saturday evening we decided to throw the gear in the car and get out for Sunday (Father's Day) and Monday. We got into the Tall Oaks campground around midnight during a driving rain storm. Eric quickly pitched his tent and I crawled into the van to go to sleep.

While looking for places to paddle the next morning we overheard some guys talking about Indian Creek (PA). Being one of the creeks on our 'to do' list, we introduced ourselves and proceeded to find out more. Well, after one incredible multi-hour shuttle ordeal we were on Indian Creek with the 3 guys we met that morning. We didn't know any details about the run but of course that made it all the more interesting. We were treated to a number

of four- to eight-foot ledges with a variety of boof options. After being on the water a short time we started hearing the other guys talk about Terminator. Even though they had been on Indian many times, they told us that they had always portaged Terminator. Hmm ... Eric and I looked at each other and smiled. "That sounds interesting," he said.

When we came up to Terminator, we all got out and took a short, easy walk to scout it. What we found was a rather intimidating looking rapid, fairly long with one of the nastier looking undercuts I've seen sitting down at the bottom right. I won't get into describing the details of the rapid but I will say that we spent a fair amount of time discussing possible lines. Eric and I decided on our line and were just getting ready to hike back up to our boats when I saw a Kingfisher land in the water right at the top of the rapid. Eric was already up on the trail so he missed it, but I watched that Kingfisher run/float the exact line through the rapid that Eric and I had decided on. I thought, "Well, that must be the right one."

So Eric and I put in at the top, gave each other a high five and said "See ya' at the

bottom." Now, to any of you who have boated with the both of us in the past it will come as no surprise that Eric's line was just a little cleaner than mine. Nevertheless, we both arrived at the bottom with a smile and another high five. Eric and I were sitting down in the eddy below while we were waiting for the other guys to finish their portage. We were having a great time discussing the details of our lines with each other and reliving the excitement of the run. All of a sudden I remembered that it was Father's Day! I've got to admit that I started to get a little misty while thinking about that. What lucky Dad I was to spend Father's Day doing something like this with one of my kids.

One of the things I've always loved about this sport is its potential as a family activity—from toddlers in rafts to teens guiding their old man down Class V's!

Eric Marks keeping an eye on Dad's boof

Photo by Robert Stevens



Affiliate Clubs

by Carla Miner

AW's Original Purpose

The Affiliate Club Program lies at the very heart of AW's existence. AW's original purpose since 1954 has been to distribute information among its Affiliate Clubs. AW's relationships with local clubs have provided the backbone for the river conservation and access work it accomplishes. We have 100 current AW Club Affiliates and they are all doing great work on your behalf. If you don't belong to a club, consider joining one.

Our Affiliate Club Spotlight this issue is on the Beartooth Paddlers Society located in Billings, Montana. The Beartooth Paddlers Society is an outstanding Affiliate Club and long time supporter of our mission to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely.

The Beartooth Paddlers Society is a non-profit all volunteer organization serving the paddling community along the Beartooth Mountains of Montana and Wyoming. The Club's purposes and activities include programs aimed at helping entry level paddlers get started. These programs include developing good technique, paddling safety, equipment knowledge, race sponsorship, river conservation support, boating courtesy toward fellow paddlers, landowners and fishermen, used equipment availability and information on area rivers, access, routes and degree of difficulty.

The Beartooth Paddlers Society maintains membership and support to selected national paddling organizations dedicated to similar goals, programs and activities. Whether your interest is in canoeing, kayaking or rafting aimed at whitewater play, triathlon or other racing events, flat-water river or lake touring, camping, fishing, wilderness expeditions or just a quiet Sunday afternoon paddling, there's something of value for you at the Beartooth Paddlers Society.

The cost to join the Beartooth Paddlers Society is an affordable \$20 per year with the annual membership due the 1st of January. To learn more about the Beartooth Paddlers Society or to join, check out their website at <http://www.sunshine-sports.com/bps/>. And remember, current members of the BPS receive a \$10 discount off their AW membership.

Thanks BPS for your continued support of American Whitewater!

The AW Journal Club Affiliates by state:

Alaska

Fairbanks Paddlers, Fairbanks
Nova Riverrunners Inc., Chickaloon

Alabama

Birmingham Canoe Club, Birmingham
Huntsville Canoe Club, Huntsville

Arkansas

Arkansas Canoe Club, Little Rock

California

California Floaters Society, Cameron Park
Chico Paddleheads, Chico
Gold Country Paddlers, Lotus
Sequoia Paddling Club, Forestville
Sierra Club Loma Prieta, San Jose
Sierra Club SF Chapter, Livermore

Colorado

Avid4 Adventure Inc., Boulder
Colorado Whitewater Assn, Englewood
Grand Canyon Priv. Boat. Assn., Colorado Springs
Pikes Peak Whitewater Club, Colorado Springs
San Miguel Whitewater Asso, Telluride

Connecticut

AMC - Connecticut Chapter, Colchester

Delaware

Wilmington Trail Club Paddlers, Wilmington

Georgia

Atlanta Whitewater Club, Atlanta
Georgia Canoeing Assoc, Atlanta
Georgia Tech Outdoor Recreation, Atlanta

Iowa

Iowa Whitewater Coalition, W Des Moines

Idaho

Idaho Whitewater Assoc., Boise

Illinois

Chicago Whitewater Assoc., Chicago
Team SICK, Carbondale

Indiana

Hoosier Canoe Club, Indianapolis
Ohio Valley Paddlers, Evansville

Kentucky

Bardstown Boaters, Frankfort
Bluegrass Wildwater Association, Lexington
Elkhorn Paddlers, Lexington
Viking Canoe Club, Louisville

Maine

Penobscot Paddle & Chowder Society, Topsham

Massachusetts

AMC - New Hampshire Paddlers, Hanover

Maryland

Greater Baltimore Canoe Club, Cockeysville
Mason Dixon Canoe Cruisers, Smithsburg

Michigan

Club Sport: University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Minnesota

SCSU Outdoor Endeavors, Saint Cloud
Minnesota Canoe Asso, Minneapolis

Mississippi

Mississippi Outdoor Club, Clinton

Missouri

Ozark Mountain Paddlers, Springfield
Ozark Wilderness Waterways, Kansas City

Montana

Beartooth Paddlers Society, Billings

Nevada

Sierra Nevada Whitewater Club, Reno

New Hampshire

Mt. Washington Valley Paddlers, Intervale
Merrimack Valley Paddlers, Merrimack

New Jersey

KCCNY, Flanders

New Mexico

Adobe Whitewater Club, Albuquerque

New York

ADK Schenectady, Schenectady
AMC NY-NJ Chapter, New York
Colgate University, Hamilton
Genesee Waterways Center Inc., Rochester
Flow Paddlers' Club, Ontario
Hamilton College, Clinton
Housatonic Canoe & Kayak Squad, Ossining
St Lawrence University, Canton
Town Tinker Tube Rentals, Phoenicia
USA Paddling, West Falls
Zoar Valley Paddling Club, Buffalo

North Carolina

Base Camp Cullowhee, Cullowhee
Carolina Canoe Club, Raleigh
Dixie Division, Tuxedo
Mecklenburg Regional Paddlers, Charlotte
Triad River Runners, Winston, Salem
Watauga Paddlers, Boone

Ohio

Columbus Outdoor Pursuits, Columbus
Keel Haulers Canoe Club, Westlake
Outdoor Adventure Club, Dayton
Toledo River Gang, Waterville

Oregon

Eugene Kayaker, Eugene
Face Level Industries LLC, Portland
Lower Columbia Canoe Club, Portland
Northwest Rafters Assoc, Portland
Oregon Kayak and Canoe Club, Portland
Oregon Whitewater Association, Beaverton
Willamette Kayak & Canoe Club, Corvallis

Pennsylvania

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Sugarloaf
Benscreek Canoe Club, Johnstown
Blue Mountain Outfitters, Marysville
Bradford County Canoe and Kayak Club, Sayre
Canoe Club of Greater Harrisburg, Harrisburg
Conewago Canoe Club, York
Holtwood Hooligans, Lancaster
Lehigh Valley Canoe Club, Lehigh Valley
Lehigh Valley Whitewater Inc., Lehigh Valley
Philadelphia Canoe Club, Philadelphia
Three Rivers Paddling Club, Pittsburgh

S. Carolina

Foothills Paddling Club, Greenville
Palmetto Paddlers, Columbia

Tennessee

Appalachian Paddling Enthusiasts, Kingsport
Chota Canoe Club, Knoxville
East Tennessee Whitewater Club, Oak Ridge
Memphis Whitewater, Memphis
Tennessee Scenic River Assoc., Nashville
Tennessee Valley Canoe Club, Chattanooga
University of Tennessee Knoxville, Knoxville
Tennessee Eastman Hiking & Canoeing, Kingsport

Texas

Houston Canoe Club, Houston

Utah

Utah Whitewater Club, Salt Lake City

Vermont

Vermont Paddlers Club, Essex Junction

Virginia

Blue Ridge River Runners, Lynch Station
Canoe Cruisers Assn, Arlington
Coastal Canoeists, Blacksburg
Creek Freak Paddlers, Rocky Mount
Float Fishermen of Virginia, Richmond
Dbl Z! Whitewater Club, Martinsville
Float Fishermen of Virginia, Richmond
FORVA, Roanoke
Hollins Outdoor Program, Roanoke
James River Float Co, Madison Heights
Paddlers for Conservation, Vienna

Washington

BEWET, Bellevue
Paddle Trails Canoe Clube, Seattle
Spokane Canoe & Kayak Club, Spokane
University Kayak Club, Seattle
Venturing Crew 360, Snohomish
Washington Kayak Club, Seattle
Washington Recreational River Runners, Renton
Whitman College Whiteater Club, Walla Walla

Wisconsin

Hoofers Outing Club, Madison
Sierra Club / John Muir Chapter, Madison

CANADA - British Columbia

Thompson Rivers Univ Adventure Studies,
Kamloops

www.americanwhitewater.org

Discounted AW Membership for Affiliate Club Members

By Carla Miner, Membership Manager

AW offers a discounted Affiliate Club membership of \$25, a \$10 savings. If you are renewing your AW membership or joining as a new member, select the Affiliate Club Discounted Personal Membership online at <http://americanwhitewater.org/content/Membership/join-AW/>. Or, if you are renewing or joining by mail or telephone just mention the name of the Affiliate Club you belong to and you can take advantage of the \$25 membership.

A list of AW Affiliate Clubs can be found on our website at <http://americanwhitewater.org/content/Membership/join-AW/>. If you do not see your Club listed here please encourage them to renew their Club membership or to join AW as a new Affiliate Club. Your Club's membership and your personal membership enable our staff to be active and engaged in the process of river stewardship. When you join or renew your membership your support is helping to meet the many challenges whitewater rivers face.

If you have any questions about the Affiliate Club membership, please contact me. I can be reached at 866_BOAT-4AW or membership@americanwhitewater.org.

Join American Whitewater as a Club Affiliate!

10 Reasons to Join AW as an Affiliate Club

1. Receive the *American Whitewater Journal*, the oldest continually published whitewater magazine.
2. Join the list of Affiliate Clubs noted in each bi-monthly *AW Journal*.
3. List club events in the *AW Journal*.
4. Your Club's members can become AW members for \$25. A \$10 savings!
5. Have technical expertise for your Club conservation and access committees 'on tap'.
6. Have access to technical and onsite assistance for your Club's event planning.
7. Enjoy VIP benefits for "Joint Members" at AW events.
8. Participate in exclusive AW Affiliate Club promotions.
9. Post Club information on the AW Website to help paddlers find you.
10. Eligible to apply for the 2009 Clif Bar Flowing Rivers grant

For more information,
contact Carla Miner at
membership@americanwhitewater.org
or sign-up on-line at:
www.americanwhitewater.org/membership

Guidelines for Contributors



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

If possible, articles should be submitted on a 3-1/2-inch computer disk. (Microsoft Word if possible – others accepted.) Please do not alter the margins or spacing parameters; use the standard default settings. Send a printed copy of the article as well.

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

Photos may be submitted as slides, black or white prints, or color prints or electronic, digital photos, 300 dpi tiffs, Photoshop 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.

American Whitewater feature articles should relate to some aspect of whitewater boating. Please do not submit articles pertaining to sea kayaking or flat water.

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 II, III & 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, please don't send it in! Because of our deadlines you will not be able to review the editorial changes made prior to publication.

American Whitewater is a 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.



PO Box 1540 Cullowhee, NC 28723

www.americanwhitewater.org

Release for publication

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

- I understand that my work may be edited or cropped at the editors' discretion.
- I understand that I will not be paid for my work.
- I accept responsibility for the accuracy of the information included in my submission. I have not libeled or slandered any individual, corporation, or agency in this work.
- I understand that all or some of my work may be reprinted at some future date in an American Whitewater publication
- I promise that this material has not been and will not soon be published by another magazine or publication and the rights to this material are clear and unrestricted.
- I understand that once this material is printed in American Whitewater it may be reprinted or reproduced in other publications if I wish, providing I notify them that it has already appeared in American Whitewater.
- I understand that the contents of American Whitewater Magazine, including my contribution will be archived on the American Whitewater website.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

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

Send your material to:

American Whitewater Journal PO Box 1540 Cullowhee, NC 28723 or via email to editor@americanwhitewater.org

Send your material to:

Journal Editor
P.O. Box 1540

Cullowhee, NC 28723

E-mail: editor@americanwhitewater.org

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a river canyon with steep, rocky walls and a river flowing through it. The American Whitewater logo, consisting of the letters 'AW' in a stylized green and white font, is positioned in the top left corner. To the right of the logo, the words 'AMERICAN WHITewater' are written in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

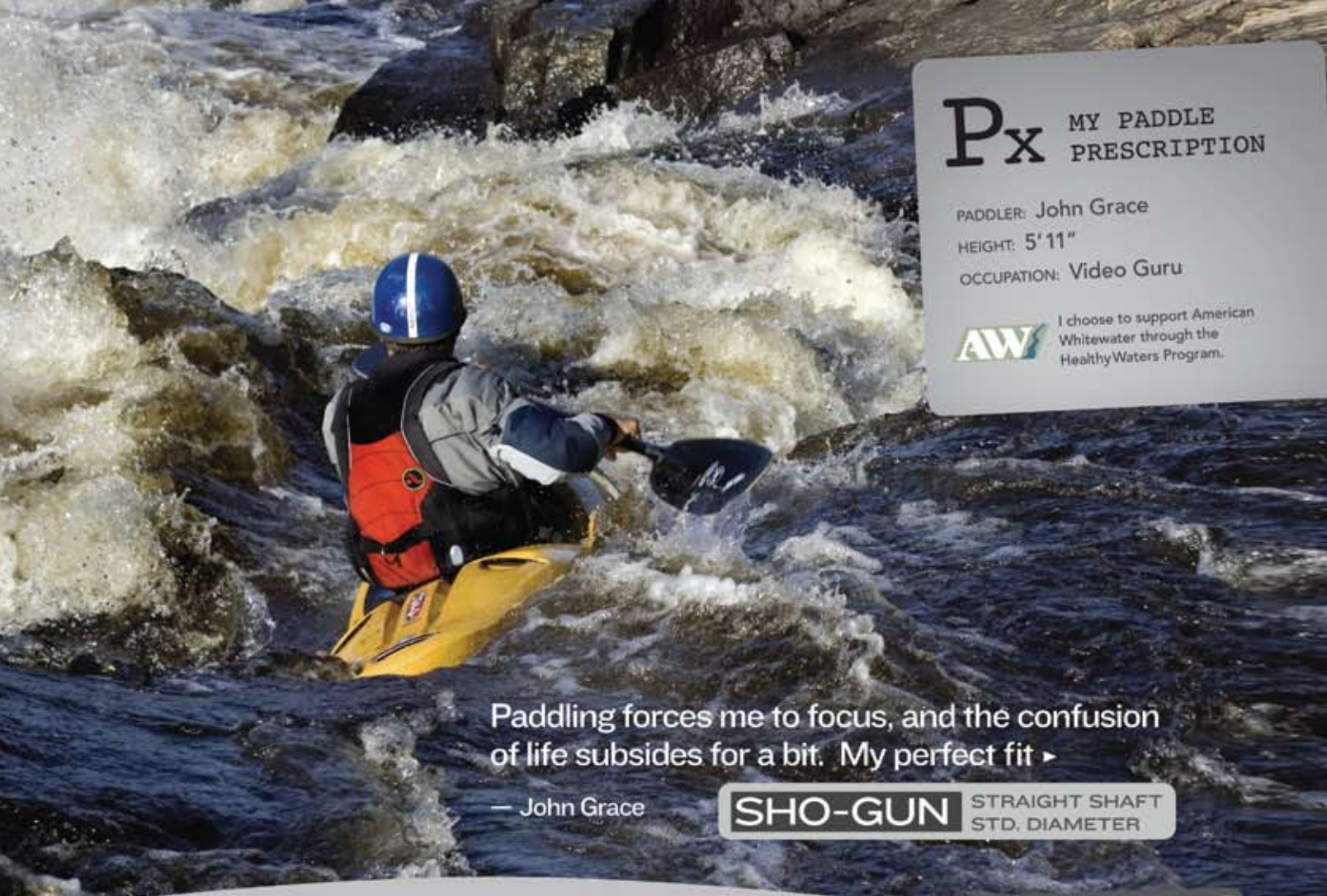
AMERICAN WHITewater

**Contribute your text and photos
to American Whitewater**

Issue	Deadline	General Theme
Jan-Feb 2010	October 26, 2009	Creeking
Mar-Apr 2010	December 21, 2009	Intro to Whitewater
May-June 2010	February 25, 2010	Boating Beyond Your Youth
July-Aug 2010	April 26, 2010	International Paddling
Sep-Oct 2010	June 25, 2010	Wilderness Boating
Nov-Dec 2010	August 11, 2010	Story and Photo Contest

americanwhitewater.org > Library > AW Journal, for details





Px MY PADDLE PRESCRIPTION

PADDLER: John Grace

HEIGHT: 5'11"

OCCUPATION: Video Guru



I choose to support American Whitewater through the Healthy Waters Program.

Paddling forces me to focus, and the confusion of life subsides for a bit. My perfect fit ►

— John Grace

SHO-GUN

STRAIGHT SHAFT
STD. DIAMETER

WHAT'S YOUR PADDLE PRESCRIPTION?

Discover your custom fit paddle

- ◀ increase your performance
- ◀ reduce your fatigue
- ◀ and have more fun on the water

Werner offers advanced design features with a variety of fit options to help you choose a truly custom fit paddle. Your custom fit paddle is waiting for you.

Our web site has more for you.



Fit Guide: Answer a few questions and discover your custom fit Werner paddle.



WERNERTV: Hear what real people are saying about their love for Werner paddles.



HealthyWaters:

Buy a Werner paddle and you choose which of our non-profit partners you would like to support. We'll will make a donation in your name.



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