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# american whitewater

May/June 1990



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Jeff Snyder blasting a hole

in the Cheat River.

Photo: Kevin O'Brien

Paddling Pullover

# american whitewater

JOURNAL OF THE  
AMERICAN WHITEWATER  
AFFILIATION

May/June 1990

Volume XXXV, No. 3

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## forum

### Driving force

First some good news. Then some bad news. Then some more good news.

Your river voice, the American Whitewater Affiliation, has never been in better shape. After 35 years, the AWA enters middle age with a vital and dedicated staff of volunteers...fighting for the rivers we all love...and we are meeting with success. The bureaucrats at the Corp, at FERC and in the hydropower industry now recognize the AWA as an organization to be reckoned with. Dams and hydro projects are being blocked; concessions are being made.

With our support the Park Service has initiated the Riverwatch Program and rivers all over the country are once again under active consideration for Wild and Scenic Status. The National Inventory of Whitewater, published by the AWA, has become a powerful weapon in the struggle to save America's rivers. This magazine, also an AWA publication, is doing a better job than ever in keeping boaters abreast with important safety and conservation news.

A network of 30 regional coordinators has been established to help the AWA focus on local issues of concern to whitewater boaters. The AWA now boasts ninety affiliated clubs. Our membership has increased by 50% over the past three years. The Gauley Festival and the Ocoee Rodeo have grown in popularity each year. And, to top things off, after some trying times, the AWA is in solid financial shape.

Now the bad news. Much of the credit for the progress this organization has made in the past several years belongs to Risa Shimoda Callaway. She has been our Driving Force. And Risa has decided to resign her position as Executive Director.

There isn't enough space in this entire magazine to give Risa the thanks she deserves. For more than three years she has been the focal point of the AWA, focusing the energy of the Board, normalizing our communications and finances and serving as a contact person who was always there when needed. Risa has graciously performed the tasks that no one else wanted to do. She has been instrumental in making the Gauley Festival and the Ocoee Rodeo first class events.

Well known to both the private and commercial whitewater boating communities, Risa's infectious enthusiasm has enhanced our credibility and visibility. Risa's self-effacing style endears her to everyone and she really knows how to motivate those around her. She has, in every way, exceeded the our expectations.

But Risa's legacy will live on, in part because she has taught us all a great deal about how to make the AWA an effective organization. But also because she has, at our unanimous request, graciously agreed to become the first Honorary Board Member of the AWA. And that's the good news.

Risa, like The Force, is still with us.



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## WHAT IS AMERICAN WHITEWATER?

The American Whitewater Affiliation (AWA) is a national organization with a membership of over 1300 whitewater boating enthusiasts and more than **50 local canoe club** affiliates. The AWA was organized in 1961 to protect and enhance the recreational enjoyment of whitewater sports in **America**.

**EDUCATION:** Through publication of a bi-monthly journal, the AWA provides information and education **about** whitewater rivers, boating safety, technique, and equipment

**CONSERVATION:** AWA maintains a national inventory of whitewater rivers, monitors potential threats to whitewater river resources through its **"River Watch"** system, publishes information on river conservation, works with government **agencies** to protect and **preserve free-flowing whitewater** rivers, and provides technical advice to local groups regarding river management and river conservation. AWA also gives annual awards to **individuals** to **recognize** exceptional contributions to river conservation and an annual "hydromania" award to recognize the proposed hydroelectric power project which **would be most destructive** of whitewater.

**EVENTS:** AWA organizes sporting events, contests and festivals to raise funds for river **conservation**. Since **1986**, AWA has been the principal sponsor of the annual Gauley River Festival in **Summersville**, West Virginia, the largest gathering of whitewater boaters in the nation, other than at international racing events.

**SAFETY:** AWA promotes paddling safety, publishes **reports** on whitewater accidents, and maintains both a uniform national ranking system for whitewater rivers (**the International Scale of Whitewater Difficulty**) and the internationally recognized AWA Safety Code.

**ORGANIZATION AND PURPOSES:** AWA was incorporated under Missouri non-profit corporation laws in 1961 and maintains its **principal** mailing address at 146 N. **Brockway**, Palatine **Illinois**, 60067. AWA has been granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service under **section 401(c)(3)** of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954. The charter **includes** the following purposes: **encourage** the exploration, enjoyment, and preservation of American **recreational waterways** or man-powered **craft**; protect the wilderness character of waterways through conservation of water, forests, parks, wildlife, and related resources; promote appreciation for the recreational value of wilderness cruising and of white-water **sports**.

**PROFESSIONAL STAFF:** Except for **membership** services and the Executive Director position, all AWA operations, **including** publication of the bi-monthly magazine, are handled by volunteers.

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# letters

## Leave La Loire alone

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Chadron, ten miles of class **II** and **III** water.

But you better come and paddle the Upper **Loire** soon because the French government is determined to build a dam below the bridge at Chadron.

The villages, with their three hundred year old farms, and the rivers will disappear. Every weekend people meet in **Serre la Fare** and protest the project. They do not want their water taken anymore, they do not want to sell the house that their great great grandfather built.

Help us save the **Loire**. Write to: **SOS Loire Vivante**, 8 rue **Crozatier**, 43000 Le Puy en Velay, France. Or contact the dam builder: **EPALA**, Avenue **de Buffon**, BP 6339, 45063 Orleans, Cedex 2.

Merci,  
Dominique Goninet  
Embrun, France

*Editors note: It is sad, but not surprising, to discover once again that the killing of rivers is not unique to our country. Recent communications from Canada, Ja-*

*pan and Chile suggest that dam builders are an ubiquitous menace to the world's environment. We can take some comfort, I suppose, in knowing that we are not alone in our struggle to save white-water rivers.--RHG*

## AWA--HOT!

Chris,

Love the magazine and organization--HOT1

Send me Information on how I can volunteer! (I know a lot about non-profit organizational management and continue to be amazed at the magazine and activism going on without staff.

Best,  
John **Corneuson**  
League of American **Wheelmen**  
Baltimore, MD

*Editor's note: We love to welcome eager semi-professionals into the fold, John. Contact a AWA director near you.--C.K.*



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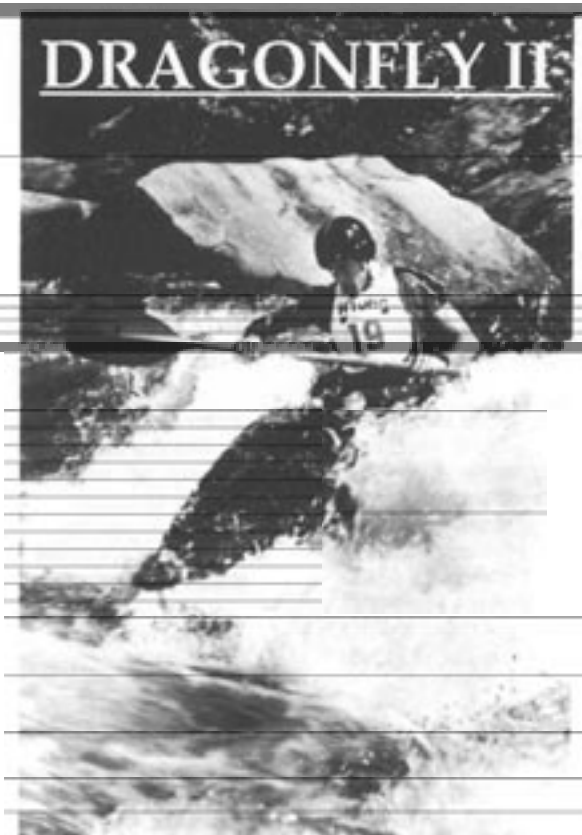
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## Recycle this magazine

Dear Risa,

I received a membership to the AWA as a Christmas present from my friend Steve Demetriou, probably cause he got sick of me swiping his journals all the time. Anyway, I'm delighted to be on board.

I'm writing because I thought the AWA might be sympathetic to the need for a public awareness campaign to inform people about the terrible environmental cost associated with highly bleached, highly treated white paper. After becoming totally frustrated with legislative efforts to reduce the amount of color, odor and foam in Maine rivers, I began to research alternative methods. Brainstorming with other boaters, chemists and environmental engineers led to the conclusion that a reduction in the use (and thus a reduction in the production) of highly bleached, highly treated white paper is necessary to substantially improve river

quality. This will be achieved by direct market pressure, over time.

If people knew that dioxin and other chlorinated organic compounds found in our rivers is a direct result of the bleach process in papermaking, they might opt to use unbleached paper products whenever possible. Unbleached paper is (not objectionably) light tan in color. Using it would be a small price to pay to regain our rivers.

Is this anything the AWA might want to address, on some level? There are many forms your involvement could take, and I'd love a chance to talk with you about them. Please write at your convenience. Thanks.

Sincerely,  
Peggy Dwyer  
P.O. Box 7  
Livermore Falls, ME 04254

*Editor's note: Here's a question to the American Whitewater readers--should AWA use recycled paper? Our quality--already semi-professional at best--would suffer, but is the cause worth the price?--C.K.*

## Get involved or get out

Dear Chris,

Your flattering portrayal of Oregon's whitewater resources is also somewhat of an illusion. The story reflects the typical newcomer's point of view: enamored with the rivers of Oregon and blissfully unaware of the dire political realities we face out here. Those realities are that every river that was so glowingly mentioned in the Goddard's travelogue faces some sort of serious threat. In fact, every river that one can name in this area faces a hugely uncertain future. We are fighting political firefights on so many fronts that I often can't decide which issue is the most pressing. A few examples: the Kiamath in southern Oregon is described by many groups as the nation's most endangered river. Permit systems and restricted access are likelihoods on the Deschutes. Newly installed gates prevent access on the North Molalla. Rapids have been removed (!) on the Hood River

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to facilitate fish migration. Every river inside national forest boundaries is jeopardized at once by emerging plans to put logs in the river so fish have more pools to spawn in. We lost a local gem: Fish Creek. The whole run was filled with logs, bank to bank, all in the name of fish habitat. Private landowners are limiting access on the White Salmon. The article failed to mention the cat-and-mouse shuttle game that has to be played on the upper sections of the White Salmon if hassles with locals are to be avoided. The list goes on and on and the point is clear: This is not some kind of whitewater nirvana. The rivers in your story face threats from residential development, private landowners, outfitters, grazing, logging, hydropower, and misguided fish enhancement efforts. We have more political battles to fight than we have people willing to fight them.

I wish to amend to open invitation that the Goddards Issued for everyone to come out here and boat. It's true that there is room for more boaters, but we do not need any more hedonistic whitewater fun-hounds. We already have too many of people around here who "just wanna boat." If you have no appetite for politics, stay away! We need river activists who are willing to take an issue, build some alliances, and engage the political opposition. We also need more media attention focussed on the issues, not the fluff. If we can't light a fire under more boaters, then you can kiss most of the rivers in your story goodbye. Most of them are being quietly threatened and very few boaters seem to know or care.

Sincerely,

Thom Powell

Safety Chairman, Oregon Kayak and Canoe Club

*Editor's note: It is my intention to maintain a balance of material in American Whitewater. Half the magazine is devoted to serious stuff: conservation and safety issues. The other half features entertaining topics. Gloom and doom doesn't attract new members—and the AWA needs numbers. But, I can sympathize with your feelings—after long nights working on American Whitewater, I often feel bitter toward boaters who put less back into the sport. But we don't help the cause by limiting our constituency because they aren't politically involved. -CK*



## Russian team tops Nantahala '90 competition

Nantahala '90, a good-natured international whitewater competition emphasizing **inflatable** skills, drew 240 participants from 13 countries to the Nantahala and Ocoee Rivers in mid March.

Forty teams composed of six persons entered the event which included slalom competitions for catarafts, rafts and kayaks; a kayak downriver sprint; a **triathlon** event of mountain bike, runner and raft; an orienteering exercise and river-rescue competition.

Topping the event for the second consecutive year was the team from the Russian city of Gorky. Gorky won last year's competition when the 10-year-old event was held on the Chuya River of Siberia.

Finishing second was an American all-women team named the Amazonskis. A strong New Zealand team was third, followed by three U.S. teams: California, South Central and Southeast.

The U.S. and Russia provided most of the competitors with 12 teams

originating from both countries. A strong team calling itself United Germany, with paddlers from both sides of what was the Berlin Wall, also drew much attention.

Other nations competing included Poland, Peru, Guatemala, Czechoslovakia, Costa Rica, Nepal, Canada, Austria and India.

The event was co-sponsored by Project RAFT (Russians and Americans For Teamwork) and the N.O.C. Donnie Dove, the American director of Project RAFT special events, announced next year's competition **will** be held on the tropical whitewaters of Costa Rica.

## Perception/New Wave donate to AWA

The AWA is again the recipient of a \$500 donation as part of a program initiated by Perception, Inc. for the sale of the "Foxfire", the fiberglass version of the kayak company's new plastic slalom boat, the "Reflex".

**Perception** made the mold of the Foxfire available to selected custom kayak manufacturers under the agreement that a \$50 per boat/10 boat minimum contribution be made to a conservation-oriented organization of the manu-

facturer's choice.

New Wave Kayak Products of Middletown, PA selected the AWA as its beneficiary of the program and forwarded a check for use in **AWA's** conservation efforts.

New Wave is the second manufacturer to name the AWA as a beneficiary of the program. Watauga Laminates also contributes a design fee for production of the **Foxfire**.



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Matt Gaynes, 1959-1989

## ...a tragic reminder that the hazards of adventuring are never where you expect to find them.

By MICHAEL J. McRAE

Matt Gaynes, a gifted extraordinary **kayaker** well-known in boating circles for his daring and exuberant good humor, was killed last November in auto accident near Jaipur, in northern India. Gaynes was travelling with two other virtuosoboaters, Paul **Sharpe** and Kevin **Padden**, when the car they had hired collided with a truck on the crowded, free-for-all highway between **Delhi** and Jaipur. Thrown from the car, Gaynes sustained massive head injuries, and though he remained alive for 10 hours, never regained consciousness—a tragic reminder that the hazards of adventuring are never where you expect to find them.

The trio comprised the advance guard of an expedition of whitewater superstars who were to have run the tumultuous upper Chenab River for a television documentary. Sharpe and **Padden**, both film documentarians from Aspen, Colorado, were part of the film crew (Sharpe, you may recall, was part of the **U.S.-Sino Upper Yangtze Expedition**, which lost one member to acute mountain sickness); Gaynes had been brought in as leader of the river team, which would have included **world** champions Richard Fox and **Myriam Jerusalemi**. Gaynes's wife, Robin, whom he had **married** only last June, was to have helped paddle a support raft on the lower river.

An extraordinarily strong and gutsy kayaker—he was 6 feet 3 inches tall, 195 pounds and rock **hard**—Gaynes had an air of invincibility about him. He once paddled a class V section of Roaring Fork River near Aspen at night by headlamp, and was the first American to be asked to join the Alpine Kanoe Club, an exclusive fraternity of German "hair boaters" renowned for running big water in exotic places. His **favorite** runs were in Corsica, along rivers so steep and technical that they could only be negotiated in half-size kayaks, and in **Southern France**, through the "Grand Canyon of France" on the Verdon River. He had also **kayaked** in Scandinavia, Mexico, and the Soviet Union. Last May, at the Chuya

River Rally in Soviet Siberia, an international convocation of a thousand boaters, Gaynes placed fourth in the **Class V** slalom event, although boaters there probably will remember him more for his galvanic personality and joie de vivre than for his racing record. He was a perennial contender for the U.S. National Team, but his first love was expeditionary kayaking. "That was his forte," said Mark Ritchie, a member of the 1980 National Team and close friend. "He was better at it than anyone else in the U.S. to my mind."

**For anyone else who has traveled in the Third World, the circumstances of the auto accident are all too familiar: a driver trying to hold his own amid a pandemonium of passing trucks, overloaded vehicles, and farm animals on the road.**

For anyone else who has traveled in the **Third World**, the circumstances of the auto accident are all too familiar: a driver trying to hold his own amid a pandemonium of passing trucks, overloaded vehicles, and farm animals on the road. Heading upcountry to film a camel festival, the three passengers were unnerved by several near misses. "If we'd had that many dose calls on the **river**," said Sharpe from a Seattle hospital, "we would have gotten out and walked."

Near Jaipur, the driver pulled out to pass and, as a truck in the oncoming lane bore down on them, he seemed to fall into a trance. "At the last possible moment, I lunged for the steering wheel, tried to turn back into our lane, but he slammed on his brakes and we slid into the truck," said **Sharpe**, who sustained two badly broken arms and a dislocated hip. **Padden** was completely paralyzed for a few hours, but after treatment for

spinal cord trauma in Chicago has regained much of his mobility. The driver was also killed, but had the collision been head-on, Sharpe surmised, everyone would **likely** have died.

**"He lived for the river."**

Gaynes, 30, lived in Santa Barbara, but had many friends in the Aspen area, where he had attended college. He came from a theatrical family, perhaps explaining his skill as a campfire raconteur. His father, George Gaynes, played the doctor in "**Tootsie**" and Commander Lassard in the "Police Academy" series; his mother, **Allyn Ann McLerie**, appeared in "The Way We Were," "Jeremiah Johnson," and "**All the President's Men**."

Along with his wife, both of Gaynes's parents participated in a traditional funeral ceremony in Jaipur, which his father described as having "aspects of a black comedy." The jeep in the funeral cortege was too small to accommodate the body, the funeral shroud blew off in traffic, the jeep stalled. "It was all so strange that it prevented us from sinking **into** our grief," George Gaynes said. Added Robin Gaynes, "We thought that it Matt was looking on, he was having a good laugh."

Some of Gaynes's ashes were scattered in the Ganges, others in the ocean off of Santa Barbara, where he trained daily. Friends also plan ceremonies at the Barrel Springs rapid in **Glenwood Canyon**, Colorado, the first class V rapid he ran, and on the upper Kern River of **California**, where he could often be found when the **water** was high. "He was always more interested in the quality of his life than in getting rich," recalled **Cully**

**Michael McRae is a Contributing Editor for Outside Magazine.**

# Regional coordinator viewpoint

## River access: an issue deserving scrutiny

By RIC ALESCH

The American Whitewater Affiliation is a fine organization doing great work for whitewater sports. In fact, it is doing an amazing job given that most of the effort is done by volunteers. AWA spreads the word on good whitewater rivers, helps preserve these wild treasures and promotes safety for riversports.

The AWA safety program is an invaluable effort—the only national program of its kind to keep us informed about whitewater mishaps and ways to avoid them. The AWA conservation program is producing highly innovative and exciting projects, such as the national whitewater inventory and the proposal for a national registry for whitewater rivers.

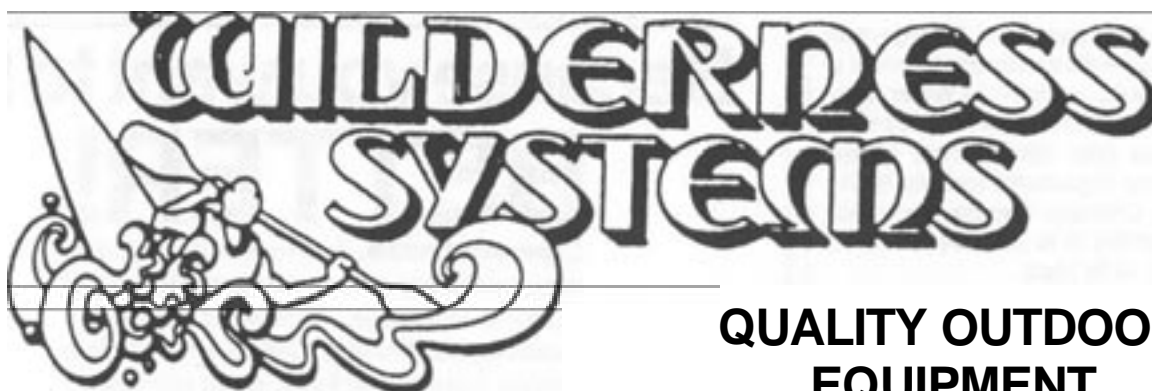
There is, however, one area in which the **AWA** could expand its horizons

to provide a greater service to the whitewater community: river access and management. Preserving river access means assuring that boaters have rights to continue to put in and take out on popular (and not so popular) whitewater streams. In the west it also means assuring boaters' rights to float through private lands. River "management" is a government term for plans and regulations that set use levels and control private and commercial boater allocations on popular whitewater rivers. This is especially important to western river runners who wish to paddle multi-day trips on the classic wilderness rivers where use levels are held below the demand for these trips.

The classic example of a river management plan of keen interest to private boaters is the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon, considered

by many to be the ultimate river trip in the United States. Unfortunately, commercial/private boater ratios were set in the early 1970s when private demand was far below current demand. Today, private boaters must wait for several years to get **permits** to run the Grand, while commercial trips (at great expense) can be **reserved** just weeks before launch dates. The Grand is certainly the best example, but it is **only** one of a growing number of federal and state controlled rivers being subjected to river management plans and use regulations. The Arkansas and Poudre Rivers in Colorado are two recent examples of previously **"unmanaged"** use rivers that now have river management plans and use **regulations**.

Government river recreation regulators around the country have even formed their own organization—the



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"American River Management Society." It is absolutely essential for private boaters to be well-organized and **well-represented** in these proceedings. You can be sure that commercial operators and others with financial interests are very well represented in river management planning issues.

This is not to say that AWA has done nothing in this area. Indeed, AWA members have worked hard to preserve river access in places like the Great Falls of the Potomac. What is needed is a greater recognition of this purpose, and the need to monitor **government** allocation of river use in AWA publications and other activities. For example, river access and management could be listed along with education, conservation, events and safety as major activities for the organization. It certainly serves the purposes described in the charter to "encourage the exploration, enjoyment, and preservation of American recreational waterways." We should encourage more members to get involved in river management representing AWA and private boaters in the **process**.

**Local whitewater organizations** have started to recognize the importance of this concern to its members. In 1988, after the Arkansas River Management Plan consumed a tremendous amount of energy, the Colorado White Water Association established a new board position to address river management issues. The National Organization for River Sports, based in Colorado Springs, has made this top priority in its purpose statement and much of its work.

AWA has in the past had a reputation of being an eastern paddling organization. It has made large strides in recent years to expand its horizons westward. A greater emphasis on river management would address a major national concern and serve river runners in the west and throughout the country. **AWA's** presence would be strengthened by preserving paddlers' rights to access rivers and seeking guarantees of fair allocations for private boaters on **government-controlled** whitewater runs.

*Ric Alesch is an AWA Coordinator in the Rocky Mountain Region and also River Management Director for the Colorado White Water Association. He can be contacted at 8718 W. Floyd Dr., Lakewood, CO 80227.*

## Whitewater Film Festival recognizes top slides, videos

World's '89, a slideshow produced during last summer's World Championships on the Savage, and A Commercial Announcement, a humorous slideshow described as a PG13 rated ad for new gear, shared Best of Show/Amateur honors at the Seventh Annual Whitewater Film Festival held February 23 and 24 in Lexington, Kentucky. Adventures of the Tsunami Rangers, a California Ocean Kayaking Video won Best of Show/Professional at the event.

More than 300 whitewater devotees attended this year according to Barry Grimes, Film Coordinator for the Festival, which is cosponsored by the Bluegrass Whitewater Association and Menasha Ridge Press. The Festival has achieved a well earned reputation as one of the nation's premiere whitewater events and serves as a fitting spring kickoff to the eastern whitewater boating season.

The Film Festival opened Friday night with a non competitive reception featuring popular winners from past Festivals. The competition ran throughout the day Saturday and featured eleven amateur and eight professional entries as well as a Best Slide competition. Judges for the professional class included representatives of **number** of boating clubs, while judges for the amateur classes included representatives of the AWA, the print and television media and from manufacturers of whitewater gear.

World's '89, produced by Paul Kammer, won the Racing Category as well as tying for Best of Show/Amateur. Kammer, President of Pittsburgh's Three Rivers Paddling Club, also won the Amateur/Club competition for another entry, Try a Youth Clinic, highlighting TRPC's 2 day program for boaters age 6-14. Kammer captured the prize for Best

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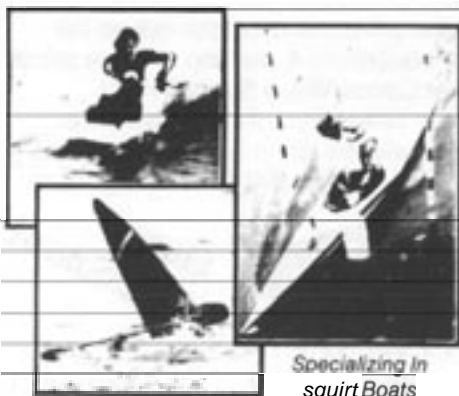
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Paul Kammer's dynamic shot of a C-2 team at the '89 Worlds won "Best Slide" at the 7th Annual Whitewater Film Festival.



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A Commercial Announcement, produced by BWA member Carole Bryant, captured the Humor Award as well as tying for Best of Show/Amateur.

My Hometown, a video by David Rego documenting pollution in waterways, won the Conservation prize.

East Tennessee Rivers, a video highlighting the Tellico, Citico and Little Rivers, by Rodney Rehder, was the winner in the Recreational/Scenic Category. The Safety/Instruction category was won by well-known open boater Bruce Penrod's video Canoeing Into the 90's.

The winner of the Best Professional Commercial Category was Canada's Madawaska Kanu Camp. The Madawaska Camp had also generously donated a five day Instructional trip to be given to the Best of Show/Amateur winner. Carole Bryant captured this prize in a drawing against cowinner Kammer, who took home an ample reward of whitewater gear instead.

But the prize winners were not the only ones taking new gear home from the Festival. A new Perception and a new Dagger kayak, donated by those respective companies and the BWA, were raffled at the Festival. \$500 raised by the raffle was donated to both the AWA and Ameri-

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## briefs

can Rivers for river conservation.

The Festival culminated with the tradiional **poolside** blowout Saturday night, where BWA members demonstrated, once again, that they are the ultimate whitewater party animals.

Next year's Festival has already been slated for February 22 and 23 and BWA Film Coordinator Grimes is anticipating an unprecedented number of entries. Those planning to enter presentations should contact the BWA early next year, since time slots at the Festival will be reserved on a first come, first serve basis.

### Paddle your canoa

"Canoe," may have been the first Indian word recorded in Admiral Columbus' log in October of 1492 and its use spread faster than tobacco in the old world. By 1493, the Caribbean word 'canoa' was included in the **Latin and Spanish Dictionary of Nebria**, edited and published in Saianmanca, Spain.—A **little known paddling fact submitted by Professor Alex Sela, Hispanic Studies, SUNY Albany.**

### Risa Shimoda Callaway resigns as AWA head

After two years at the helm of the AWA as its executive director, Risa Shimoda Callaway has resigned in order to devote more time to her professional pursuits.

During her tenure, Callaway provided an invaluable measure of order at a time when the AWA regained its position as the nation's leading whitewater organization. The highly successful whitewater marketplace at the Gauley Festival, the Ocoee Rodeo, retail distribution of American Whitewater and a new AWA products line were all conceived and instituted by Callaway.



Risa Shimoda Callaway pictured at last year's Ocoee Rodeo. Callaway helped organize the event, co-sponsored by the AWA.

Callaway also helped institute and improve several other programs developed by AWA directors including the regional coordinators roster, the Gauley Festival and American Whitewater as well as serving as an able ambassador improving the AWA's visibility.

A committee of AWA directors is currently searching for a successor.

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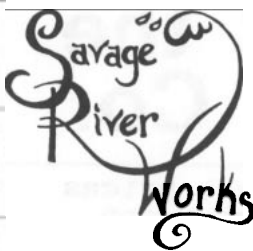


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# Something rotten in the Fruit Basket

By POPE BARROW

The Gauley River and its headwaters in the Monongahela National Forest are the heartland of Southern West Virginia whitewater. The area includes a fabulous collection of whitewater streams of almost every variety and classification. So many whitewater streams are congested in this single watershed that **AWA's** experts had to use a microscope to cram the river names along the rivers when they made **their** computerized maps of West Virginia's whitewater for the Nationwide **Whitewater Inventory!** The North and South Fork and main stem of the Cherry are there. So is the Williams, Laurel Creek, the Cranberry and the Upper Gauley. The most popular of these—the Cherry, the Williams, and the Cranberry can be paddled in a single **week-end—often** referred to as a "fruit basket" trip.

For the most part, the fruit basket trip is a journey down undeveloped pristine rivers, originating in wilderness and flowing for virtually their entire length through National Forest lands with small primitive campsites along the way. The fruit basket rivers have good fishing and even better camping—awelcome relief from some the more developed whitewater elsewhere in the Appalachians.

Sadly, however, some rotten apples

have turned up in the fruit basket—two large very rotten apples in fact. One of these distasteful items is an all too familiar meal for whitewater eaters: hydropower development. The other is West Virginia's worst environmental nemesis—strip mining.

Urban rivers and rivers that flow through private lands just naturally have all kinds of environmental problems. But how can we also be having environmental problems with remote rivers located within National Forest boundaries? Are they not safely stashed away in Federal ownership and carefully managed by friendly forest rangers and caretakers?

The answer to his puzzle comes in two parts. First, much of the land within National Forests is

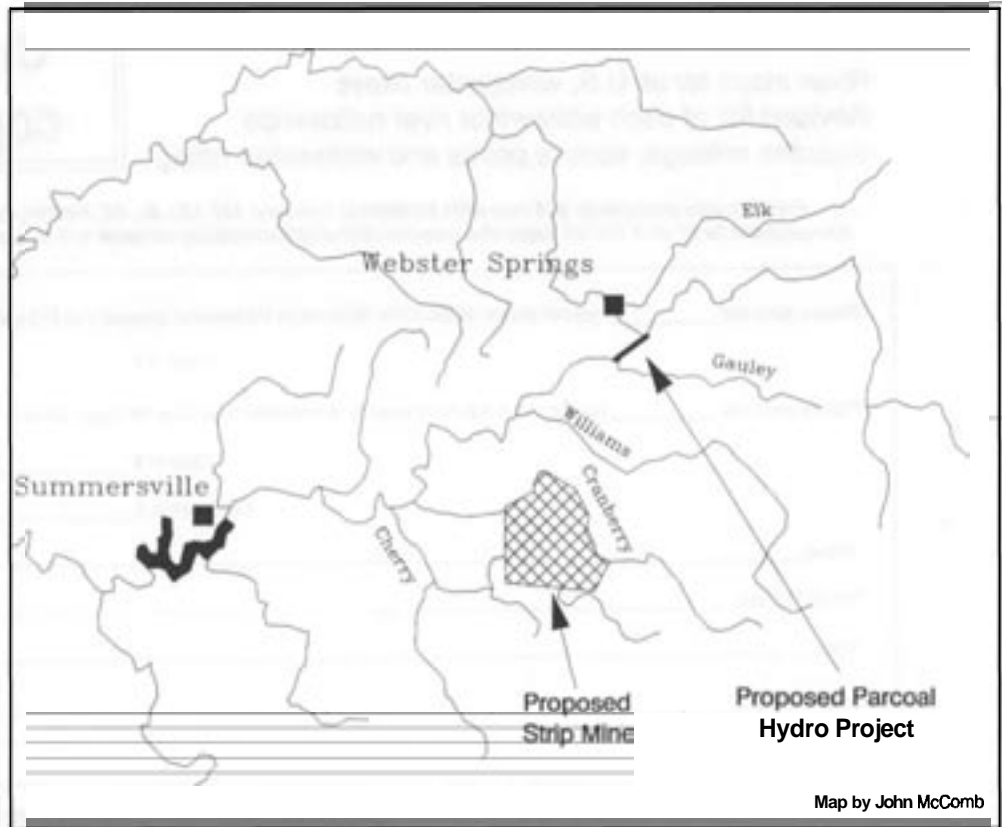
privately owned and not subject to any Forest Service control at all—even control over hydropower. Secondly, unlike National Parks, even Federally owned lands within National Forests are not sanctuaries from river abuse. Most government-owned lands and rivers in the National Forests are managed under a "multiple use" theory. The basic laws are the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 and the National Forest Management Act of 1976. Translated from legalese "multiple use" means timber farming and mining (also grazing out west). Whatever recreation and fish and wildlife can survive in the timbering and mining are thrown in as afterthoughts.

Of course, if an area within a National

Forest has been designated as a wilderness area or as a wild river, it does enjoy a large measure of protection from timbering, mining, and hydropower development. But to get forest areas officially designated as wilderness or as a wild river requires an Act of Congress. Only the uppermost reaches of the Cranberry are now protected as wilderness and no river in the fruit basket is yet protected under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

The mining issue: The mining problem in the fruit basket is generating the most political smoke. It started when Mike Hewitt, a Richwood, WV car dealer applied to the Federal Office of Surface Mining (OSM) for a determination that he has a valid legal right to mine coal in 16,000 acres of land along the Cranberry and

## FRUIT BASKET



**Trouble in whitewater paradise: Gauley headwaters are threatened by two energy projects.**



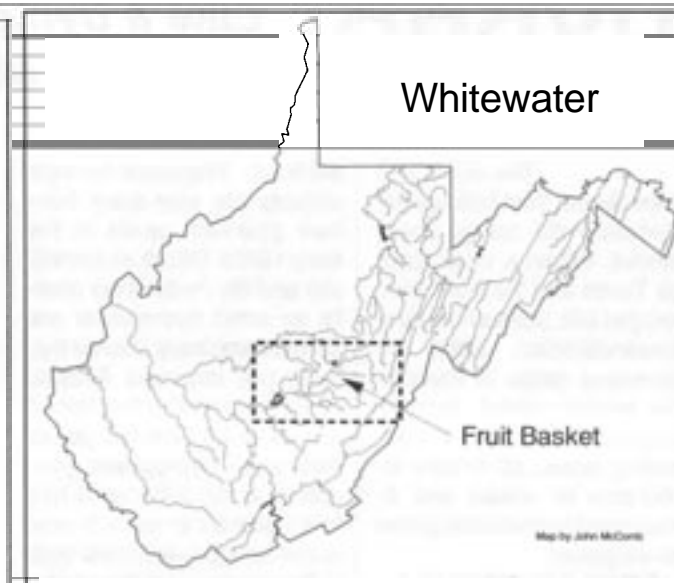
## WEST VIRGINIA

Cherry Rivers. In response the OSM has opened a public **comment** period to hear public views on whether surface mining should be allowed in this region.

Local environmentalists and river conservation groups are very alarmed about Hewitt's mining application. The area is a vast chunk of high country bordering the Cranberry river for miles and miles. The National Wildlife Federation is battling hard on **legal** grounds to have the OSM deny Mr. **Hewitt's** application. American **Whitewater**, through its Regional Coordinator Jane **Allinson**, has written to OSM in opposition to the application.

Meanwhile AWA, together with a **coalition** of 21 other groups with a total membership of over **600,000**, has been pressing the Forest Service to review 12 river segments in the Monongahela National Forest for possible wild and scenic designation, **including** the Cherry and Cranberry. The 12 segments were hand-picked by AWA Director Mac **Thornton** and other whitewater experts as having the best chance of being designated **wild** and scenic. The Forest Service Chief, **Dale** Robertson, enthusiastically agreed to get the work going on these 12 segments more than 6 months ago, but Jim Page, the **local** forest supervisor has yet to **follow** up. In fact, as of this writing, **local** forest service bureaucrats in **Elkins** have not even established their study priorities.

The slow pace of activity has already **led** to some frustration, especially now that a mining **application** has been **filed** for **lands** right next to one of the best rivers in West Virginia. In March of this year, West Vir-



**West Virginia's "Fruit Basket" area boasts one of the highest concentrations of whitewater in the country.**

ginia foremost river **advocate** in Congress, Nick **Rahall**, included an **amendment** in **bill** pending **before** the House of Representatives to provide interim **protection** for the Cherry and

well as ruin the scenery for boaters and hikers. Write to OSM, Room 246, Ten **Parkway** Center, Pittsburgh, PA, 15220.

The **Hydro-**power Issue: Not far north of

**...the entire upper Gauley could be diverted into the Elk!**

the Cranberry. If this passes **it will** give those rivers **another** 3 years of interim **protection**. Maybe that **will** **give** the slow-moving Forest **Service** enough time to **make** the right decision.

What you can **do**: AWA is asking its **all concerned** members and **affiliates** to write to OSM to **protest** the mining **application**. Strip mining **along** these rivers will jeopardize their chances of ever being designated as **wild** and **scenic** rivers. Not only are these great boating streams, **but** they are among West **Virginia's** finest trout **stream-acid** mine drainage **and** sediment from the **mining** operation would **wreak havoc** with the fishery as

the proposed strip mining operation in the fruit basket area, and just southeast of the town of Webster Springs, the Elk River takes a bend south and the Upper Gauley (upstream of **Summersville** Dam) takes a bend north. The two don't converge, but they get within 2 **miles** of each other. At the closest point the Gauley is 800 feet higher than the Elk. Taking note of this salient geological fact, another West Virginia entrepreneur (operating under the name **Parcoal** Energy) has applied to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for a permit to build a hydroelectric project on the Elk, using water from the Gauley.

The idea is to

dam the Gauley, **build** a 230 acre reservoir, and tunnel two miles through the mountain separating the two watersheds (or possibly pump water over the mountain if the tunneling becomes too expensive). The project would be a 6.5 Megawatt **deal**, generating approximately enough energy for 3,000 homes. The power would be **sold** the Monongahela Power Company which has transmission lines **only** a **mile** from the proposed powerhouse.

The **dam site** on the Gauley appears to be within Monongahela National Forest boundaries, but not on Federally owned lands. **Parcoal** however, claims that the area is not within the National Forest. With so much confusion about issues as basic as where the project **will** be situated, no one is yet sure what the effects of this grandiose idea would be on the rivers involved. To be on the safe side, AWA, along with American Rivers is intervening in the proceeding to insure that whitewater on the upper Gauley, as **well** as the **fall** releases from **Summersville** Dam, are not destroyed. If we are not successful the entire upper Gauley could be diverted into the **Elk!**

As usual with West Virginia river issues, Congressman Nick **Rahall** has been quick on the draw. He is currently trying to effect at least a temporary rescue. He included the Upper Gauley in the amendment he sponsored in March of this year dealing with the fruit basket rivers (see above). This would give **3-**years of protection to the river, possibly enough time for river conservationists to get their act together.

# SMALL HYDRO: *Like a dying rattlesnake, its bite is still poisonous*

by POPE BARROW

According to representatives of the hydroelectric power industry, the end is near. In December of 1989 letters to the editor appeared in both the New York Times and in the Washington Post in December of 1989 bemoaning the fact that the hydro industry was in shambles. Assaults from environmental groups, fishermen, and white-water boaters were blamed for the industry's current economic woes. Hydropower was portrayed, of course, by these writers as a "clean, renewable energy source" with none of the environmental problems of coal, nuclear, or oil-generated power.

The doom and gloom letters from hydropower advocates did not go unanswered. Within a week, both the Times and the Post were deluged with replies from river conservationists citing an enormous range of irreversible environmental damage suffered by America's free-flowing rivers... all directly attributable to unwise and ill-considered hydroelectric power development.

## HYDRO INDUSTRY IN A SLUMP

For whatever reasons, it does appear that the hydropower industry is currently in a slump. Applications filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for new projects have

declined. Proposals for new projects are way down from their gold-rush peaks in the early 1980s. Oil prices are still soft and the Federal tax credits for small hydropower are almost completely phased out. Even the infamous Federal PURPA legislation that forced utilities to buy electric power from small hydropower generators at top dollar rates has fallen on hard times. It is now under being questioned both in Congress and in the courts.

## WHITEWATER STILL UNDER SIEGE

So much for the good news. The bad news is that it is too early for river conservationists to declare victory.

Several nation-

ally significant whitewater rivers continue to be threatened by hydropower developers who refuse to concede defeat. Some of these projects are backed by groups with deep pockets. Drawing on these unlimited war chests, the promoters of these projects are entrenched and appear unlikely to retreat.

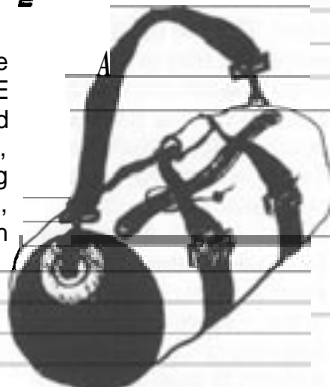
At the top of the endangered whitewater list are the North Fork of the Payette in Idaho and the Kiamath in Oregon. But they are not alone. Even West Virginia's famous Gauley River, thought to be protected under Federal law, is now threatened by a bizarre new project upstream of the Summerville reservoir.

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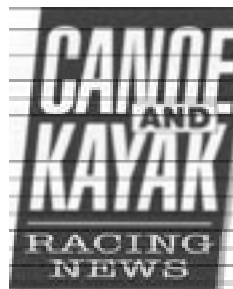
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## THE ROCK CREEK DISASTER

Another dark cloud looms ahead. Hydropower boosters recently won a big victory in the Federal courts. The case is the State of California v. FERC, known as the "Rock Creek" case. In that case the court ruled that the FERC can override State requirements regarding in-stream flows below new hydropower projects. The case shocked river conservationists across the nation. It is now on appeal to the Supreme Court.

American Whitewater joined with other environmental groups under the leadership of American's leading hydropower lawyer, John Echeverria, to file a brief in the Supreme Court on this case. The case is important because, in the past, some States have managed to mitigate damage to fisheries and

downstream recreation at new hydropower projects by requiring in-stream flows at new dams and diversions. The State-required flows were always higher than those required by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Hydro developers typically fought the States tooth and nail on the in-stream flow issue because each drop of water left in the river adversely impacts hydropower profits. The Supreme Court is expected to decide the case early this summer.

Meanwhile, here is a rundown on some of the key whitewater rivers still in danger.

### NORTH FORK OF THE PAYETTE, IDAHO

Winner of last year's hydromain award, the GEM Irrigation District Project on the Idaho's North Fork of the Payette is still alive and

kicking. New developments are expected soon. A press conference has been scheduled by the developers to make an important announcement regarding the project. Unfortunately, the text of this news was not available at the time this article was written. For the latest update, contact Wendy Wilson at the Northern Rockies Rivers Project in Boise, Idaho. (208-343-7481).

### THE KLAMATH, OREGON

A fierce battle is still in progress over Oregon's Klamath River, just near the California border. Just released are two new draft reports affecting the outcome of this battle, one by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the other by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

The FERC report proposes a "no dam" alternative which would be as damaging to whitewater-if not more damaging than the project proposed by city of Klamath Falls. The city's project proposed a new dam. The FERC proposal would substitute a tunnel from the existing J.C. Boyle powerhouse. Instead of burying the whitewater of the Klamath, the FERC would simply remove it to a tunnel, leaving only a trickle in the riverbed to keep fish alive.

The BLM report, on the other hand, recommends that the river be added to the national Wild and Scenic River System.

For more information, contact Save Our Klamath River, P.O. Box 1956, Klamath Falls, OR 97601.

### THE GAULEY, WEST VIRGINIA

Despite the 1988 legislation designating the Gauley River below Summersville Dam as a National Recreation Area, the river is again under threat, this time from a bizarre new project upstream of Summersville Dam. Few details are available about the new scheme, the bairdchild

of Parcoal Energy in Beckley, West Virginia. It is known, however, that Parcoal plans to build a 55' high diversion dam and a 10,000 acre foot reservoir at a location on the Gauley where it bends north near the Elk River. The Gauley would then be diverted by tunnel or pumping into the Elk, taking advantage of a 800' drop in elevation between the two rivers. This incredible scheme would serve a 6.5 MW powerhouse to be located at the mouth of Dyers Run on the Elk.

### NORTH FORK SNOQUALMIE, WA

According to a January 1990 report in Northwest River News, a magnificent but little-known whitewater stream in Washington State, the North Fork of the Snoqualmie, is now threatened by a proposed hydropower diversion plan. The project, known as the McCloud Ridge project, involves a dam, pipeline, access roads, generating facilities, and transmission lines, all of which would permanently damage the rugged natural character of Ernie's Gorge (locally known as "Black Canyon"), a class V section of the North Fork of the Snoqualmie.

For more information, contact Friends of the Snoqualmie Rivers (206-454-2442).

### THE JAMES, VIRGINIA

The City of Richmond appears to be moving full steam ahead on its proposal to build hydroelectric facilities at Belle Isle on the James River in Richmond. This project, as presently designed would wreak havoc with the whitewater now paddled by thousands of canoeists, rafters, and kayakers, right in downtown Richmond, Virginia. For the latest news on this one, contact Charles Ware at 804-231-0118.

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## RiverWatch is born

Beginning as an idle dream of desperate paddlers during the small hydro wars, the National Park Service's "RiverWatch Program" was born in the last federal budget, based on an allocation of \$200,000. Recognizing a serious expertise and advocacy vacuum at both the state and federal levels, Congress earmarked this money to create a new capability in the NPS to consult with FERC on recreational issues in much the same way the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service consults on fishing issues at every hydro project.

But six months have passed since the money became available to

NPS, and the faithful were beginning to wonder about results. But after the joint NPS/American Rivers training course at the Nantahala Outdoor Center March 12-14, the RiverWatch program is alive and toddling. Learning to walk none too soon, relicensing ail across America is beckoning their skills and commitment.

In a historic gathering at NOC, for the first time, veterans of the hydro wars from California to Maine gathered to compare wounds and vent their FERC frustrations. J. V. Henry, the maverick and extraordinary full-time unpaid litigator from California, lobbed salvos on the FERC folks with relish.

Skinner from AWA served up sanguine stories of government ghouls and hydro horrors. State government representatives politely howled about bureaucratic bungling and dreadful decisions. Representatives of the power industry also criticized the lack of clear criteria for decision making at FERC. FERC folks gamely fought back with tales of new sensitivity to boating recreation planning and better opportunities for paddler participation.

All in ail, everyone had a fine time venting their spleens and getting to know the real people who sign the letters and answer the phones so far away. The NOC raft/paddling trip on the Nantahala featuring friend and foe in the same craft created new personal ties

which will heal injured psyches and salve hurt feelings that strong words and adverse decisions have generated.

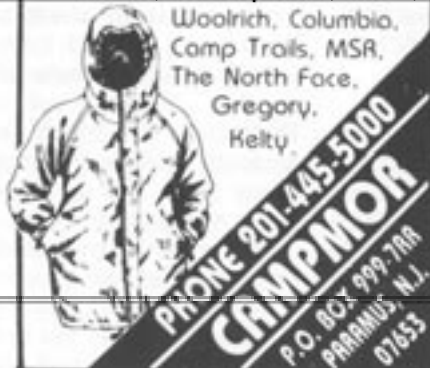
Most importantly, however, the dozen or so NPS folks who attended from Seattle to Philadelphia got an earful from hydro decision makers, technical experts and hydro fighting guerrillas about what is needed to create defensible arguments to balance power production, fishery enhancement and paddling paradise. Hopefully, they will be the cavalry reinforcements we've been begging for for so long.

Some real heroes emerged during the meeting. John Echeverria of American Rivers distinguished himself as the issue sparkplug and coordinator. Bern Collins of the NPS



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(who still paddles a big volume downriverboat) deserves credit for organizing and hosting the event. NOC has certainly become a comfortable river sports resort for all ages where good food, fast water, great accommodations and southern hospitality combine to make the visit just great.

Most importantly, the quality and quantity of the discussion were exceptional. The 50 or so attendants and presenters went at it with enthusiasm from 8:00 a.m. until bedtime with organized debates and brainstorming. Topics included recreation and power economic analyses, fishery impacts from paddling release flows, hydro power paddler liability, legal issues associated with relicensing, optimum flow choice protocols, resource

conflict management and even a power plant visit nearby. The training process was truly comprehensive and detailed and audience participation was extensive.

Stepping back a bit, the advent of the NPS RiverWatch program and this training course graphically illustrated how far the river advocacy process AWA began in 1984 has come. Once lone cries in the wilderness of hydro regulation, AWA's issues are now front and center in agency and FERC decision making.

So, if you have a project you care about, get NPS involved deeply and early. Call Bern Collins in Washington, D.C., at (202) 343-3761 for the name and address of the appropriate NPS person who works on recreation issues.

## Act now! Preserve RiverWatch

*The NPS RiverWatch program costs money...federal programs aren't cheap, especially considering our high aspirations for it. The program will cease at the end of this fiscal year (a few months from now) unless a new budget allocation is obtained. You must write your Congressperson right now and to Congressman Sidney Yates, 2234 Rayburn House Office Building, U.S. Capitol, Washington, D.C. 20515. Also, in the Senate: Senator Robert Byrd, 311 Hart Senate Office Building, U.S. Capitol, Washington, D.C. 20510, Attn: Charles Estes. We are shooting for a part of a \$6.06 million in the NPS in FY 91.*

*After Congress takes the Administration's zero for appropriations and restores the programs, the NPS could get at least \$500,000 for RiverWatch. That could pay for at least four professionals scattered across America. It might pay for some more regional citizen training meetings to increase our ability to defend recreational interests. It could also pay for some generic studies (like an analysis of what a paddling user day is worth and what the growth in demand for paddling has been over the last decade). We need these studies to bolster our arguments over the relative values of recreation and electricity.*



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## Convenience or monstrosity?

# River chairlift for the Ottawa?

"Bizarre development" some have called it. A new era in convenience paddling others coo. From the Ottawa River Runners club in Canada comes some **real news** - a **chair/gondola** lift proposed for the Lorne Rapids. A Mr. Dan Mahoney of Ottawa Valley Rafting Tours is proposing to **build** an mile long aerial cable lift to cart **rafters/tubers/kayakers** etc. back up to the head of the rapids over the river among the islands for another run. What's that, you say, a LIFT?

It was bad enough that someone put up a giant viewing deck perched on the rocks above Coliseum. That platform stands as a crass human disfigurement of a spectacular natural resource so that whomever can get to the site can watch stupid whitewater tricks and cheap rafter thrills. Just like the boardwalk along the Canadian side of the Niagara Gorge and its nearby friend, the **cablecar** over the Whirlpool. But a paddler lift above a whitewater rapid? Come on now.

The lift will have a number of impacts to be sure. The vision of paddlers and their respective boats, tubes, rafts etc. suspended over the river in chairs on a big cable will be quite a sight - visible for great distances in both directions on the river. Evacuation of passengers in case of a mechanical failure would be really interesting. And crowding. Already, over 100,000 visitors **clog** this waterway, making river play the

ultimate in raft and swimmer dodging. Add many more taking multiple trips and private paddlers can write off this river on weekends.

The Ottawa River Runners recommend that you express your views by writing letters to Honorable Lucien Bouchard, House of Commons, Parliament Hill, Ottawa, Ontario, **K1A-0A6**, Canada and Mr. R. Middledmiss, **MNA Pontiac**, 302-115 rue Principale, Aylmer, Quebec **J9H-3M2**, Canada. At the very least, an environmental impact statement is in order.



James Sandberg photo

**Mike Miner surfs below the Lorens on the Ottawa. Is that a lift ticket on his PFD?**

## Proposed dam may aid Russell Fork releases

A flood control dam on the Russell Fork that may actually enhance whitewater recreational opportunities has moved several steps closer to becoming a reality. The dam, which would be located several miles upstream of the famous class **V+** Russell Fork Gorge, near the town of Haysi, was originally approved by Congress in 1938, but remained a paper fantasy until the federal **government** appropriated six million **dollars** in 1983 to complete a planning study by the Army Corp of Engineers.

The **Corp** study is now complete and the Haysi project has received maximal federal funding, which amounts to 95% of the 114 million dollars it will take to **build** the dam. The other six million dollars must come from the states of Kentucky and Virginia. According to Virginia's

Congressional representative in the area, Rick Boucher, Kentucky's governor is willing to share in the local costs. The governor of Virginia has not yet addressed the issue.

Once an agreement is reached **between the two state** governments, ~~the project~~ must be approved by the Secretary of the Army. That **approval would** clear the way for the acquisition of **land** that could begin as early as 1992. Actual construction is expected to take about seven years. Boucher said at a Dickenson County Chamber of Commerce meeting that he would do his best to see the project completed during the 1990s.

The dam has reportedly been designed to serve two purposes; to provide **flood** control and to enhance the potential for whitewater recreation

downstream. (The fall releases that make the Russell Fork **runnable** now do not come from a dam on the Russell Fork itself, but rather on a tributary, the Pound River.)

## Bye-bye Bio-Bio?

Although **preliminary** excavations started in January, there may still be time to save the Bio Bio from the Chilean dam builders. The dam project was conceived and initiated by the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, who ruled that South American nation for the past 16 years. But in March, **Patricio Aylwin**, known for his concern for human rights and **social** progress, became the new democratically elected

president of Chile.

Aylwin's **govern-**ment is reassessing all government programs in Chile. With sufficient public protest from Chileans and other concerned people around the world, the damming of the Bio Bio could be stopped.

The Bio Bio, considered one of premiere **whitewater** rivers in the world, features some of the most difficult commercially navigated whitewater anywhere. The river passes through spectacular forested canyons, past hot springs, Indian villages and a smoking volcano.

But the river will be lost if the Pangué Dam builders have their way. The 370 foot dam will extend from the river to the rim of the canyon at the site of the One Eyed Jack rapid, in the

middle of the Royal Flush Canyon. This is the very heart of the river. All of the Bio Bio canyons from the dam site to the **Avellano** Hot Springs would be flooded.

ENDESA, the Chilean quasi-governmental agency responsible for the dam, plans to place additional dams on the river that will eliminate all the remaining whitewater and wilderness sections of the Bio Bio.

The dams would also destroy the last refuge of the Mapuche Indians, who once lived throughout southern Chile and Argentina, but whose traditional culture now **survives** only along the Upper Bio Bio. Interestingly, the rights of these people is said to be a particular concern to the newly elected Aylwin.

It is believed that the dams will also result in

the extinction of several species of animals and plants. The Andean Condor, already an endangered species, would be further jeopardized by the project.

Write to the newly elected government in Chile and tell them how important the Bio Bio is to the world. Letters written in English are acceptable. Address letters to: President **Patricio** Aylwin, Palacio de la Moneda, Santiago, Chile, SA

Mention the following: The first dam will cost \$300-\$600 million dollars and more than half of the money will go to companies outside Chile thus increasing their foreign debt and depriving domestic programs of much needed funds. The poor people of Chile need schools, sanitation and roads, not big dams.

Foreign visitors come to Chile to see rivers and mountains. The Bio Bio is one of that country's biggest attractions and tourists will be much less likely to come if the Bio Bio is dammed.

The location of the dam is dangerously close to two active volcanoes and is in an area where major earthquakes have occurred within this century. The dams could fail during an earthquake resulting in tremendous devastation and loss of life.

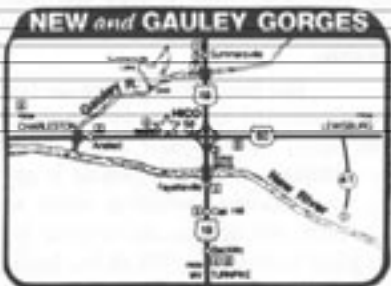
The Bio Bio **damsite** is too far from major population centers in Chile to be an efficient source of electricity.

For additional Information contact the International Rivers Network at 415 986-4694 or the NORS at 719 473-2466.

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# Study of whitewater fatalities reveals relative safety of sport

Despite all you read about death and **doom** in my **columns**, paddling is a pretty safe activity when compared to many other things we do. We tend to get intensely involved with individual incidents, but lets take a moment now to take a moment to look at the entire accident picture.



By **CHARLIE WALBRIDGE**  
AWA Safety Chairman

I have always been amazed at the unusually strong media reaction which follows recreational canoe, kayak, and rafting accidents. Considering the daily carnage on the public highways and inner city streets, paddling mishaps **are** rare. While each accident is certainly tragic, paddling has a huge base of participation. Surveys commissioned by Canoe Magazine show that almost 19 million people participating in paddlesport activities each year. The sport ranks between Tennis and Downhill **Skiing** in popularity. Although river rats are a definite minority, that's still a lot of people floating around. With so many people of all ages and abilities out on the water, someone is bound to get hurt. The sport

grew 33% from **1983-1987**, again according to Canoe magazine surveys, but the number of fatalities remained stable. Knowing this, the approximately 130 fatalities which occur each year in canoes, **kayaks**, and rafts seems pretty reasonable.

Under the Boating Safety Act of 1971 all **boating** accidents **are** reported by the state Boating Law Administrator to the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) on a form (The Boating Accident Report, or BAR) designed primarily for gathering the details of powerboat mishaps. This form is extremely awkward for reporting facts of interest to **non-powered** boaters. To get useful information everything depends on having trained investigators. The quality of these reports varies from excellent to horrible; in states like Pennsylvania, Maryland, California, or Ohio with **strong** watercraft departments you get good descriptions; in states **where** **investigations** are done by local law enforcement officers without much boating experience it's often difficult to **find** out what happened. The information from the reports is fed into USCG **computers** to get the boating statistics which are published annually. The actual **forms**, interviews, and other materials in their files are protected by the Privacy Act, and it is very difficult to gain access to them for study.

In late 1978 experts from the American Canoe Association, American Whitewater Affiliation, and the **U.S.** Canoe Association conducted a review of 1977 accidents and fatalities for the Coast Guard as a part of an ongoing evaluation of flotation distribution in open canoes. The study, the **first** of its kind, convinced the USCG to **concentrate** their efforts on education rather than design standards, saving hundreds of lives as well as mil-

lions of dollars for canoe buyers. I had wanted to return and study the records for succeeding years, but money and time were not forthcoming.

A little over ten years later, in 1988, I assisted Joan **Maybee**, a master's candidate at Ohio University recently hired as an Ohio Watercraft Officer, in her efforts to gain access to these **reports** for study. Her efforts became sanctioned officially by both the Coast Guard and the American Canoe Association as a prerequisite for examining the files. She and several assistants spent a week in Washington studying the **reports** involving canoes, kayaks, and rafts. As part of her agreement with the Coast Guard, steps were taken to protect the names and addresses of individual victims and survivors. She was able to get through the years 1984 (Canoes only), 1985, and 1986. Like us, she was **frus**trated by the poor overall quality of the reports which prevented her from using the data in the way she planned. But her numbers are nonetheless interesting enough to share with the canoeing public.

The accompanying table **con**trasts the 1977 study with Joan's **find**ings. She had discussed our procedures before going to D.C., so her methodology was quite close to ours and making comparisons between the studies reasonable.

The first thing that jumps out at you is that most accidents do not occur in whitewater, but on calm lakes and rivers. Although use of life jackets is growing, most victims, including many **non-swimmers**, still choose not to wear them. My guess is that over 50% of the fatalities could have been prevented if the victim had been wearing a life preserver. Other major factors include alcohol involvement, and wld water, both of which **are** probably significantly under-reported. My guess is that at least 70% of all accidents **could** be prevented by **eliminating** these three factors. Other factors **like** dams, strainers, and high water, important to whitewater enthusiasts, are less



## CANOEING ACCIDENTS

	1977	1984	1985	1986
CANOE ACCIDENTS	95	68	74	75
CANOE FATALITIES	131	83	80	84
<b>SIGNIFICANT FACTORS</b>				
WHITewater INVOLVED	24%	22%	27%	32%
COLD WATER (UNDER 50)	48%	40%	23%	21%
INVOLVING DAMS	8%	12%	5%	4%
INVOLVING STRAINERS	3%	6%	9%	6%
PFD NOT WORN/USED	85%	75%	58%	63%
LACK OF SWIM ABILITY	60%	21%	15%	9%
ALCOHOL INVOLVED	26%	22%	19%	15%
OVERLOADING	3%	2%	1%	9%
UNABLE TO DETERMINE	5%	9%	3%	11%
<b>TIME OF ACCIDENT</b>				
DEC - JAN - FEB	5%	6%	8%	11%
MAR - APR - MAY	45%	35%	35%	35%
JUNE - JULY - AUG	39%	44%	34%	35%
SEPT - OCT - NOV	11%	15%	23%	19%

## KAYAKING ACCIDENTS

	1977	1984	1985	1986
KAYAK ACCIDENTS	NA	NA	9	8
KAYAK FATALITIES	NA	NA	11	8
<b>SIGNIFICANT FACTORS</b>				
WHITewater	NA	NA	44%	50%
COLD WATER	NA	NA	33%	25%
PFD NOT USED	NA	NA	33%	13%
<b>TIME OF ACCIDENT</b>				
DEC - JAN - FEB	NA	NA	0%	0%
MAR - APR - MAY	NA	NA	33%	75%
JUNE - JULY - AUG	NA	NA	44%	13%
SEPT - OCT - NOV	NA	NA	23%	13%

Information on other causes limited because of low numbers of accidents available.

## INFLATABLE BOAT ACCIDENTS

	1977	1984	1985	1986
INFLATABLE ACCIDENTS	NA	NA	26	34
INFLATABLE FATALITIES	NA	NA	35	41
<b>SIGNIFICANT FACTORS</b>				
WHITewater	NA	NA	38%*	41%
COLD WATER (UNDER 50)	NA	NA	30%	26%
INVOLVING DAMS	NA	NA	8%	15%
INVOLVING STRAINERS	NA	NA	12%	9%
PFD NOT WORN OR USED	NA	NA	50%	47%
LACK OF SWIM ABILITY	NA	NA	12%	9%
ALCOHOL INVOLVED	NA	NA	15%	9%
OVERLOADING	NA	NA	4%	3%
UNABLE TO DETERMINE	NA	NA	0%	9%
<b>TIME OF ACCIDENT</b>				
JAN - FEB - MAR	NA	NA	0%	13%
APRIL - MAY - MAY	NA	NA	17%	31%
JUNE - JULY - AUG	NA	NA	60%	47%
SEPT - OCT - NOV	NA	NA	23%	9%

\* Approximate figure; plus or minus 2%

important in this context. Spring and summer are the peak periods, but the off-season is probably more risky, with more fatalities per participant.

Separating the facts out in this way requires the judgments of an experienced paddlers, and the facts could not always be determined from the reports. In some cases there was not enough information to determine the cause; no witnesses; just an overturned boat and a body. These are listed as "unable to determine", averaging roughly 9%.

The canoe fatality records are the most complete. The number of kayaking fatalities each year is quite small, making it difficult to draw conclusions. Both include rented or guided craft. Inflatable statistics are significant both for what they include and what they do not include. They include a significant number of dingy tenders and powered craft which were not under power at the time of the accident. They do NOT include air mattresses, tubes, or commercial rafting fatalities. Outfitting fatalities are reported on a commercial form, which is even more awkward for our purposes. At this time the Coast Guard can't tell us how many commercial whitewater rafting fatalities there are, and the industry has only an informal reporting system similar to ours.

What can we learn from this? First, that the overall safety record of paddlesport is good. Whitewater accidents are a more significant problem for inflatables and kayaks than canoes; but the average "paddler" is not a river runner. Education about the need for life vests and the dangers of cold water and alcohol abuse will give the greatest benefit for the boating law administrator's dollar, while specific skill training, while important, will have less of an impact. There is a desperate need for the Coast Guard to upgrade their BAR to collect more information of use to non-powered boaters, and for that information to be regularly reviewed.

*My thanks to Joan Maybee, her corps of assistants, and the U.S. Coast Guard for working with the ACA to make this information available to the paddling public.*

# Account of fatal pinning sparks controversy

By CHRIS KOLL  
Managing Editor

An account of a fatal whitewater accident presented in Charlie Walbridge's Jan/Feb safety column has provoked more controversy than any topic covered in American Whitewater during my three-year tenure as managing editor.

Whitney Shields, a well-liked and highly-skilled boater from the Washington, D.C. area, died after bow-pinning during a run down the class V lower Meadow in West Virginia.

Walbridge's description of the incident follows:

*The next group was composed of a group of experts from Washington, D.C. and one California paddler touring in the area. The Meadow was running at a near-optimum level of 915 cfs. The victim, Whitney Shieldr, had made the run four or five times; he was considered one of the f i s t boaters in the D.C. area with dozens of runs over the Great Falls under his belt. Eric Lundburg, who pulled him out, had a similar background; the other two were new to the river.*

*They were on the lower part of the run when they came to a steep rapid with a trashy line. After scouting, they decided to run another slot over a medium-sized ledge on river left. Two members of the party made the run without incident; Shieldr pitoned and pinned vertically beneath the water. Rescue was immediately set up; using a tag line for support, Lindburg worked his way down to try to release the boat. Initially unsuccessful, he slipped and fell, landing on the bow of the boat which was not where he expected it to be. He quickly clipped the rope into the bow, allowing the kayak to be dislodged. CPR was begun immediately, twelve minutes by the clock after the pin. An impressive time, but not fast enough. The body was evacuated by local rescue workers who took hours to reach the site.*

*The accident, like the one described above, had no clear cause other than the risks of running high-level whitewater. One thing may have contributed to it. Whitney Shieldr was paddling a "Screamin' Meanie", a high-performance creek boat supposedly designed*

*to resist vertical pins. It is about half the size of a Dancer, however, and I question whether a boat this small is a good choice for steep creeks. Certainly, this choice may have posed an added risk. Beyond that, I am left with the observation that repeated runs of Class V-VI rapids may eventually catch up to you regardless of your skill.*

Reactions to Charlie's observations are as follows:

## Eric Johnson--friend

Dear Chris,

My sadness renewed upon reading the account of the death of my friend Whimey Shields. In life and death, Whimey had a profound effect on all who knew him - he'll be sorely missed. Though it hurt to read, I appreciate the service Charlie Walbridge provides by informing the paddling community of accidents in our ranks so that we might avoid a similar fate ourselves. But being AWA Safety Chairman is not a licence to editorialize. Statements such as "...one of the most incredible cases of poor paddling judgement..." regarding the Pequannock River accident lack objectivity and reveal the writer's poor judgement. Charlie should let the facts speak for themselves and not interject his opinions on the events.

It is for that reason that I am upset by conclusions drawn from Whitney's accident. There are several issues I could discuss, but I'll restrict myself to one. The article mentions that Whimey was in a "Screaming Meanie", implies that it is a poor design and questions "...whether a boat this small is a good choice for steep creeks". It goes on to say "Certainly this choice may have posed an added risk". These statements beg for rebuttal.

Smaller boats possess certain advantages over larger boats, a fact not mentioned in the article. A big boat is more likely to stop in holes, and be too buoyant to leave, like a tennis ball at the

base of a low-head dam. A small boat is more likely to punch through holes, and if stopped, more likely to sink out the bottom or grab onto downstream flow at the sides of the hole. I had two scary swims occur after unplanned pour-over surfiing in a full volume boat (more volume than a Dancer). One of these swims ended in a body splat against a log, the other involved spelunking in an undercut. If I had been paddling a lower volume boat, the higher density might have allowed me to ride the outflow from the hole without swimmiig (swimming, along with filling the boat with water, are the traditional ways to increase density and sink out of a hole). I consider myself lucky; the paddler who surfed and swam on the Meadow above "Home to Sweet Jesus" fared much worse.

But whether his boat was too big is not for me to presume. The point is, large boats are not intrinsically safe. To imply that more volume is less risky is simply not true - more volume changes the risks, and the boater weighs that fact at the put in. Boat selection is a very difficult and intensely personal matter. I've paddled all sizes of boats, from wildwater boats to the smallest squirt boats, and lots of sizes in between. I'm familiar with the effects of volume. I too own a Meanie, and it doesn't deserve to be maligned by Charlie. It's smaller than full size boats, (but not "half the volume of a Dancer"), so it punches and escapes holes better. It's much larger than the current generation of squirt boats, so it stays on the surface better. The design is excellent for all-around boating, including "steep creeks". I've run rivers in quite a few boats, and on serious water the Meanie works best for me.

Whitney, like any boater, decided what boat to use based on his experience and skills, his understanding of the boat, and the particulars of the run at hand. To second guess him is a cheap shot at Whimey, the Meanie, and anyone who paddles a boat smaller than a Hahn. There were several accidents reported, but only Whitney's boat was mentioned. Were the other victim's boats irrelevant

to their fate? Why weren't their boats named? Is it the Safety Chairman's purview to pass judgement on which boats are safe and which are dangerous? I can see Charlie now, policing the **put-in**, prohibiting access to those with boats **too** small or too radical for his standards.

*Sincerely,  
Eric Johnson  
Silver Spring, MD*

## John Schreiner--builder

Dear Editor,

As the manufacturer of the Screamin' Meanie, I took umbrage with the remarks concerning Whitney Shield's death, made by the AWA safety chairman, Charlie **Walbridge**, in the **Jan/Feb** issue of the AWA Journal. I was unhappy that the boat used in this particular fatality was mentioned. Why weren't the other six boats involved in fatalities also mentioned? It seems that if any one boat design is discussed then they all should be.

Every boat has its advantages and disadvantages, **as** paddlers we recognize this, and make our individual boat selections. High volume boats are known for getting stick in holes more frequently. The added buoyancy of the boats make them harder to escape from a hydraulic. The previous drowning (before Whitney Shield's death) on the Lower Meadow occurred when the boater would not escape from the hole, became fatigued, and finally had to swim out. It is possible that the higher volume of his boat contributed to the death, since he was held for a considerable period of time in the hole. Lower volume **kayaks** tend to slice through holes. Also lower volume sterns can be aggressively backed into a hydraulic, causing an ender and exit. The boat Charlie referred to, the Screamin' Meanie, is definitely **NOT** a squirt boat. It does have a pivotable stern capable of **doing** shallow pivot turns.

I realize that Charlie's job **as** a safety chairman is not an easy one. He tries to make judgments so others can learn from previous mistakes or situations. However, these "judgments" can be used by litigious parties, so opinions

should be submitted in letters to the editor and not under the auspices of the Safety Chairman of organizations like AWA and ACA.

I am a manufacturer, **as** well as a paddler, and I want to stress to fellow boaters the importance of taking the time to learn to paddle well, stay on waters within your capabilities, travel with strong groups, and learn rescue and safety techniques. There is no need to jump onto harder and harder rivers quickly. Master the ones you know well. When you are ready for them the more difficult creeks and rivers will still be there and you will paddle them with more control and enjoyment. This sport is meant to be fun, so please stay safe.

*John Schreiner  
Owner, New Wave Kayak Products*

## Jim Snyder--designer

Dear Chris,

As designer of the "Screamin' Meanie" kayak mentioned in Charlie **Walbridge's** safety article in the January issue. I would like to address his questioning whether Whitney Shields was in an appropriate craft for the situation. I would like to point out that this boat was designed for this type of **run** and that only one person ran this untried **line** before Whit and he also was in a Meanie. **Whitney** had not got out to swut the drop and was unaware of the potential for **pitoning** on the rocks hidden in the foam at the base of the drop. I'm not sure where Charlie got the impression that the Meanie is supposed to resist vertical pins other than the fact that it is the best available boof boat and this technique can reduce the chance of pitoning. Whit had also made several previous **runs** at this level with no complaints about his Meanie.

I do feel Charlie has raised some valid points, however. It seems to be Charlie's opinion that smaller boats have an inherent added risk factor, both in pinning and **pitoning** and I think it would be unwise to disagree. But I would like to point out that:

1. most pins and pitons, **like** this one, are **quirkish** and unique in nature,

and it's possibly inaccurate to generalize about their causes

2. drops that can piton a kayak often will not **discriminate** between a few gallons difference in the kayak they are stopping

3. no amount of technology or design will ever cover for everyone's indiscretions on a river.

Still, Charlie's point can be seen from the fact that some boats, **like duckies** specifically, and other cruising boats that simulate **duckies'** bows are **obviously** more resistant to diving off of **drops** and therefore safer in this format.

I consider pinning and **pitoning** to be major concerns in this type of steep **creeking** and have long endorsed the use of **duckies** for this extreme format. The Meanie was designed for steep **creeking** in an effort to increase the perimeters of **safe** performance through speed, maneuverability, and boofability. It was not designed **as** a safety net for people who have made mistakes but as a performance potential enhancer. Just because Charlie has misinterpreted the facts in **Whitney's** case does not detract from his point that the average buyer should look carefully at the wide array of **"creek"** boats available and should not assume that any are a cure all. I continue to boof in my Meanie but see how it would be an inappropriate craft for some one who had never heard nor conceived of boofing. I **frequently** use a ducky to ply dangerous creeks, (over 200 **fpm**) because of its inherent safety factor. I would like to have fun **creekin'** and also have a good chance of coming home to my wife and **kid(s)** and I also **like** to boof bodacious drops. I use my discretion to decide what to **run** and what craft to use and I think that everyone should think for themselves on this subject. That way there is at least a chance of trusting ourselves enough to leave out troubles on shore and let the river remain as always--a challenge that is **fun** to accept in a wmpotent manner.

Missing my friend,  
Jim Snyder  
Albright, WV

## Walbridge's response

Dear Chris,

Thanks for letting me answer

the letters critical of my recent accident analysis. As Jim Snyder points out, I am not a practicing **squirtist**. I am nonetheless concerned because these smaller kayaks, have, for their numbers, been involved in a surprising number of fatalities over the past four years. My feeling is that, like many other types of whitewater gear, squirt boats can pose added risks in certain circumstances. Initially, I felt that Whitney Shields' death might have been one of these. I had seen several (**Meanies**) which were extremely small. After consulting with John **Schreiner** and Jim Snyder, I learned that, like most high-performance fiberglass kayaks, the Meanie has been made in different "cuts", some of which are a lot bigger than others.

According to information provided by Snyder and New Wave, the volume of the bow of Shields' Meanie was about 22 gallons. My own measurement of a Dancer puts its bow at about 24 gallons. At 175 pounds, Whitney would probably have been pushing the limit of what most Dancer paddlers consider to be the limits of the design. But the differ-

ence was not so radical as I had initially thought, so in retrospect my observations about the volume of his boat contributing to the accident were almost certainly mistaken.

The **high-performance** hulls on low-volume kayaks have tremendous advantages, particularly in big water. For those with the skills to use them, their ability to blast through large holes and surf huge waves with precise control are a real plus. But tight, steep drops demands the inherent stability and **user-friendliness** offered by more conventional high-volume designs. Low-volume, **high-performance** kayaks are harder to control and thus leave the user more exposed to danger. Vertical pinning is a capricious event; as happened here, it is not uncommon for several people to run a drop safely before someone is caught. Dancer-sized boats may not always be enough for paddlers weighing in excess of Perception's listed "optimum weight" of 160 pounds. In Europe, where **running** rocky, obstructed streams has risen to a fine art, preferred models are similar to the Perception Corsica or the Noah

AQ. The main reason for this choice is that higher volume minimizes plunging and bow pinning.

The AWA has always supported the right of informed paddlers to choose whatever gear they feel is appropriate for the river and to run any rapid they feel up to trying. Whitney Shields bore the responsibility for his choices, just as I do when I set aside my **C-1** for an open canoe. The Nealy-esque concept of "design police" for river put-ins, while humorous, has never been considered. The almost **infinite** array of design characteristics, hull **displacements**, and outfitting available demand good judgment from the paddler making the purchase. I still have serious personal reservations about the use of squirt kayaks in **expert-level** whitewater by paddlers of less than elite **skills**, especially steep, obstructed rivers. As a 42-year old river runner no longer anywhere near the "cutting edge". I make my choice of boat based on **skills**, physical condition, and preference. I hope that these considerations, rather than a desire to look fashionable or radical, will influence the choices of others.

*Mark your calendars. plan to attend!*

## 1990 AWA River Festivals scheduled

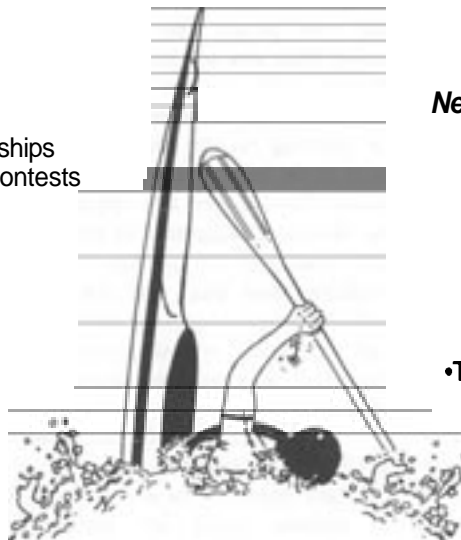
### Ocoee Rodeo

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- Class 6 party at Sunburst Adventures

**Contact: Diana Holleran,**  
Rt. 1, Box 90  
Reliance, TN 37369



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**Contact: Anita Adams**  
Route 2, Box 614  
Princeton, WV 24740

My column is editorial in nature, based on my own observations, and may not represent the views of the AWA, its editors, or directors. One of the strengths of **American Whitewater** is that it has served as a forum to air controversial issues that the main-line "canoeing" press is afraid to tackle. What I found most upsetting about this entire matter was the frenzied reaction of a small group of kayakers. Dozens of letters and phone calls were made by this group to AWA's directors and editors, yet no one contacted me. It took a lengthy exchange of letters and several meetings initiated by me to find out what could have been handled in a single ten-minute phone call. I have always been open to discussion, and I found this refusal to deal openly and directly with me frustrating and disappointing. I hope that future disagreements will be handled differently.

### Editor's summary

As letters, faxes and phone calls flew back and forth, I found myself in an

uncomfortable position: serving as a referee for what was at time a heated debate between people I have known and liked for years.

On one hand, I support absolutely Charlie's right to make a judgment call on matters of whitewater safety. For nearly two decades, Charlie has monitored and analyzed paddling incidents, promoted river safety techniques and conducted whitewater safety clinics.

Charlie's inability to squirt does not lessen his credibility as one of the sport's leading authorities in river safety. I am damned glad to print his opinions.

On the other hand, as a paddler who favors low-volume kayaks, and whose boats of choice are designed by Snyder and built by Schreiner, I'm very sympathetic to their concerns.

The issue is obscured by labels. The **Meanie** is not a squirt boat. It is, however, of a lower volume than kayaks typically considered as creek boats.

And so the debate here is not whether squirt boats are safe, but rather are lower-volume designs inappropriate for certain runs?

No...and yes.

No--if the boat is paddled by an individual skilled enough to make its superior performance characteristics offset the high-strung nature of the craft.

Yes--if the paddler is too preoccupied with catching edges, **back-endering**, or **pearling** the nose to make the boat perform to its capacity.

The real danger of low-volume boats is their efficiency diminishes once that fine line is reached. High volume boats can't offer the same performance, but don't provide a penalty if a paddler overextends his abilities.

## Novice boater drowns on NY's Salmon

report drawn from news accounts

A 24-year-old Rochester-area man drowned in early March after his kayak overturned in the Salmon River near the upstate New York village of Pulaski and he became trapped under a tree while trying to swim ashore.

A team of about 50 rescuers and state troopers worked for four hours along the shores of the river to reach Dean Middleditch of Webster.

The man and three other Rochester-area residents had been on their second kayaking run down the river when the victim's boat overturned. The Salmon, considered to be an easy class II/III run, was running bankfull due to an early snowmelt.

Second-year kayaker Scott Griffen said Middleditch was a novice at whitewater. Griffen said Middleditch flipped his boat while attempting to push off from the southern shore of the river.

Griffen said he paddled over to Middleditch and told him to get out of the water as quickly as he could.

Middleditch, who was wearing a wet suit, let go of his kayak and paddle, and started swimming toward a long wooded island in the middle of the river, Griffen said.

"He hit this log that was hanging into the water," Griffen said. "Instead of pushing against it (with his feet), he grabbed for it and was pinned. He slipped right under."

Another novice kayaker, Helen Chemiack, also overturned her boat in the same area--at almost the same moment--but managed to float to an eddy. After several attempts of her own to reach shore, a state police helicopter called to the scene airlifted Chemiack from the water, Griffen said.

Griffen and the fourth kayaker, Dennis VanKerkhove, managed to reach shore safely with their kayaks.

The body was recovered after an upstream dam was shut down to lower the water by more than a foot.

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# TEACH YOUR CHILDREN...WELL?



Paul E. Kammer photo

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*The joys of whitewater are often not obvious to children: American Whitewater reveals techniques to demonstrate to your kids that paddling a tippy craft through fearful rapids in miserable weather can be one of life's rewarding experiences.*

---

by TOM McEWAN

Last time you took your **kids** on the river it was a rainy 45 degrees. While everyone froze, you searched for the takeout for twenty minutes. Once off the river, your offspring rushed to the car and remained shivering under covers, while you had to carry all the dripping equipment yourself. You yelled at them for **abandoning** their gear...arguing that it wasn't really that cold.

Everyone was miserable. All the while a nagging little voice was telling you that this was not the way it was supposed to be.

Now it's 60 degrees, the sun is high, the ground saturated from days of rain, the birds are singing, and you suggest to your household that it would be a great day to get out on the river.

"No thanks" is the instant reply from all sides. "We didn't have **fun** the last time. I don't want to go. I don't want to get wet. It's too cold. I don't lie it any more." The litany continues.

How can you convince your **kids** that **paddling** isn't only work and discomfort? That it can be **fun**.

I've had both success and failure in getting **kids** out on the river. One time I bet my six year old son and eight year old daughter a dollar each that they wouldn't jump in the Sacandaga River in New York...in April. They both went in, but I had to **first**.

Once they paddled down the Ottawa River with me, **carrying** the short class IV and V rapids, watching their more experienced elders surf gigantic waves and holes from the safety of the shore, but running the **IIs** and **IIIs**.

Another time I went down a river in Mexico with my son, then nine, that we thought would be suitable for his abilities. Halfway down the river we discovered it was **too** hard and we had to walk out over the hills, reaching the nearest

village at 2 o'clock in the am.

As the director of a summer program for kids, as a leader of river trips, and as a parent, I know that there are different perspectives about **taking kids** out **on** the rivers.

As a director, you wonder what you might have to be explaining to **parents**, insurance companies, and even to a judge, regarding incidents on the water.

As a trip leader, your main **concern** is making sure that everyone has the best possible experience while getting **down** the river, while minimizing the risk of an incident...goals that obviously may sometimes be conflicting.

As a parent, you want to share with your **kids** something that you love about the outdoors and outdoor adventure. Certainly it is in my role as a parent that I have taken the most liberties.

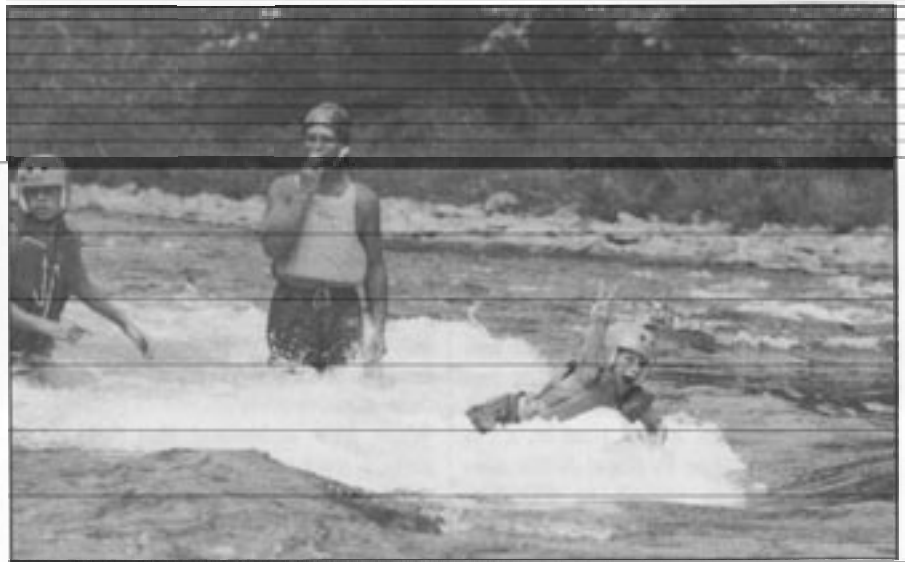
If you want to get your children out with you on the river the best thing you can do, rather than shoving them into a boat, is to go ahead and enjoy your interest yourself, making sure they see how much **fun** it is for you. Even if you can't figure out how to get them **on** the water with you, just having them around rivers, skipping stones, hiking, **building dams** and listening to war stories in the van, will give them a good idea what paddling's about. If you're lucky your shuttledriver will watch them while you're **on** the river.

Of course, having friends their age who paddle is the best encouragement you can find. Foster this by having them join a formal or informal youth group within your **paddling** club. You might not be able to motivate them in paddling, but their peers certainly will.

With kids it's best to be goal oriented and save the theory for later, after they are exhausted. Let an attainable, **fun** goal do the talking and teach just enough technique to help them succeed. The hardest thing about paddling whitewater boats when you are just beginning (remember?) is making the darn things go straight.

Remembering that novice jet plane pilots are taught in **simulators**, where there is freedom of movement, instant feedback and a minimum of risk. **Kayaking** is best learned in a safe, **controlled** environment too.

At camp we start four and five year-olds out in a little thirty foot cove in our two acre lake. Sometimes we tie a string to their grabloops so we can pull



*Teaching kids the dynamics of a hydraulic at a Riversport kids' clinic.*

them back to shore when they get stuck in the middle. At **first** we give them **unfeathered** paddles.

Aspiring C-1ers need lots of practice on their stroke at the water's edge before experiencing that quintessence of frustration, the maiden **C-1** voyage.

If children are comfortable in the water and aren't afraid, they can start learning early **on** how to jump out of and capsize their craft. Learning the "**eskimo** rescue" and to roll will follow.

A difficult milestone is getting them out onto open, moving water. This is really scary for most children (and some adults), so I have found that the best approach is to do it without their boats. Yes...assuming they are **strong swimmers**...rapid swimming, **wading** and

river hiking are great for gaining dence and a realistic feel for the forces of the river. This is, by the way, a good time to teach them about self rescue, how to swim in rapids with rocks, and not to wade or stand in deeper currents where foot entrapments may occur.

I have often seen **children** afraid to tackle a rapid in their boats that they feel perfectly comfortable in swimming. Of course, when swimming rapids kids must be wearing safety gear and be closely **lifeguarded**. Make sure you pick a safe rapid for these exercises, not one that contains sizable holes or undercut **rocks**. Look for subtle dangers as well. You want to avoid unpleasant experiences, because you are trying to teach them to respect, but not be afraid of, the water.

Many river maneuvers such as

peel outs, eddy turns and ferries can be done by swimmers. Just ask Jeff Snyder. This teaches kids how to truly use river forces. When they go back into their boats they can put this new found knowledge to work.

Once kids become comfortable in their boats and know the eskimo rescue technique, we encourage our campers to try the Stein Cooler, invented by one of our former counselors. Have them flip at the top of a wide, deep rapid and float through upside down. If they can roll at the bottom, great, otherwise offer a bow rescue. This is best tried on a hot day with nose clips in place. Make sure the rapid is deep enough so that they won't hit their heads.

Now they are dealing with that final hurdle to becoming a whitewater boater...being able to roll in whitewater after an unexpected flip. This is, of course, a big obstacle for novice adult boaters as well.

Rolling in whitewater takes a

lot of fortitude as well as skill, and this is where all the things like paying them to jump into cold water, Stein Coolers and war stories overheard in the van pay off. Kids need to know just how gutsy it is to stay in your boat upside down underwater in the middle of a rapid.

Not that many people in the whole world are that gutsy...or even want to be.

Just ask anyone on the street if they would like to be hung upside down from boat in a river rapid and see what they say.

When kids understand that hanging in there is truly an awesome, heroic achievement, they will usually be highly motivated to pull it off and roll.

Of course kids don't earn the highest recognition until you witness that telltale lurch of an overturned boat that comes from an unexpected encounter with a underwater rock, followed, not by a swim, but by a successful (Hallelujah!) roll.

At about this time you may have come to the end of your teaching experience. Now you will have to concentrate on self preservation and trying to keep up. If you are lucky, and if you don't complain too much about the music, and if you don't slow the group down too much, you might still get invited to go on your kids' boating trips.

And, even if the time comes when they're paddling something a bit too tough for old mom or dad, don't despair. They'll always need a shuttle driver who knows the way to the take-outs.

*Editors note: Tom McEwan is one of the nation's foremost expeditionary paddlers and runs the Valley Mill Camp for children in the Washington, D.C. area. He has helped launch the careers of some of the best boaters in the country, and his own children are well on their way to kayaking fame and fortune. Still, it's hard to imagine Tom as anyone's shuttle driver!*

## A kid's perspective on learning to boat

by AMBROSE TOSCANO

Hello. I am Ambrose Toscano and I am eleven years old. I was first in a kayak five years ago. My dad tried to teach me to roll. For four years I went to a roll practice. At first it wasn't that bad, I mostly just swam in the pool. It was about three years ago I pretty much had to stay in the boat. I was terrified every Saturday night when I had to go and flop around in a tippy plastic kayak. The worst part was when I had to do wet exits. That was when I had to flip myself over and pull my spray skirt off and pull myself out of the boat and up to the surface. These and rolls when my dad would roll me around were what I had to do for the first two years. At the end of the third year I actually rolled by myself. This was great because I had reached my (or my dad's) goal. After that I never went back.

I spent the rest of my paddling life doing rivers. At first I just did rivers near my house. This was no problem for me. I could actually



*Ambrose Toscano--kayaking just doesn't turn me on as much as hockey or baseball.*

enjoy this creek and when I relaxed I could enjoy how beautiful it was. Every time the water was up I would be on the creek with my dad. After that I tried another river. This was also near my house.

In that same year I ran the Middle Yough. This was easier as far as rapids go but all the flat water was hard to paddle. The next year after doing it in a raft I kayaked the Lower Yough. I only kayaked the Lower a few times. This may have something to do with the fact that I went into the hole at Double Hydraulics and came out with a different point of view on kayaking.

The experience of doing the Stoney three feet higher than I had expected and flipping twice was more than I could handle. I walked some of the river then put on again just below the dam. I paddled the rest of the river successfully then went home.

I did the little creek near my house a couple more times but kayaking just doesn't turn me on as much as hockey or baseball.



Riversport School of Paddling photo

## Practical tips on teaching kids to boat

by BOB RUPPEL and BOB GEDEKOH

1. Children learn best when they are having **fun**. Use games to break the monotony and to make them comfortable with their gear. Try aquatic variations of water tag and follow the leader. Games that require the child to perform underwater tasks will make the child more comfortable in this inevitable situation.

2. The younger the child the shorter her attention span. Children get tired and **bored** quickly. Keep sessions and river trips brief and take plenty of breaks.

3. If a child is fearful...back off. Let the child set the pace...don't use undue pressure to force him to do maneuvers that frighten him. Try to avoid scary situations. When a student has a bad experience, reassure him, don't berate **hi**. When a child overcomes one of his fears, no matter how silly it seems to you, praise him.

4. Make certain that the child's gear fits appropriately. Don't wedge the child into the boat so tightly that a wet exit will be difficult. Make sure her life preserver is not too big or small and that the paddle fits her hands.

5. There is nothing more frightening than feeling trapped with your head under water. Teach the child how to do a wet exit and make sure she is comfortable with the technique before she needs to use it. Don't **try** to teach a child to roll until she is very comfortable performing wet exits.

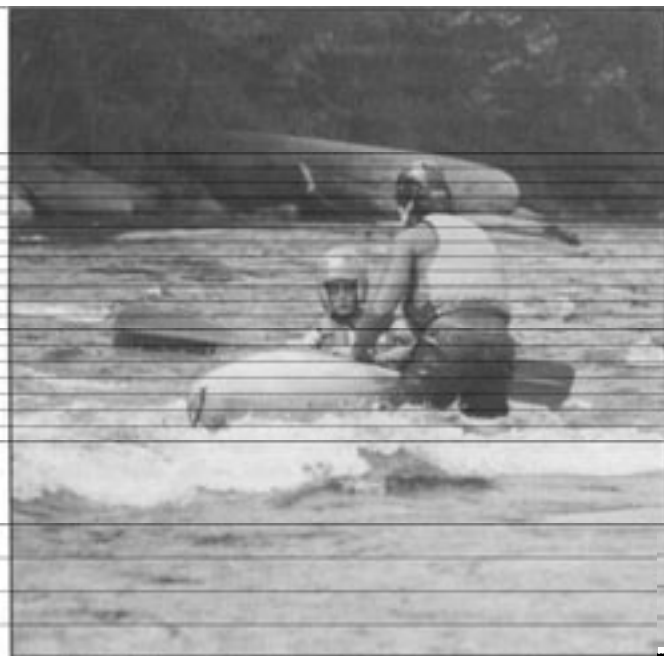
6. Teaching your own child to boat is a loaded situation. Your child may desperately want to please you, and that may work to your advantage. On the other hand, for any number of reasons, your child may resent and resist your efforts. Make sure that your reasons for wanting your child to boat are good ones. Are you **feeding** your child's ego or your own? Avoid the temptation to pressure your child with comparisons to other children. Let your child know that your love and approval are not merely a function of her boating accomplishments.

7. Remember that kids get cold easily. They have a much higher surface **area/body** mass ratio than adults so they lose heat faster. Much of that heat loss occurs through the scalp so keep their heads covered on cold days. Watch for signs of **hypoth-**



Riversport School of Paddling photo

*Keep things in perspective...  
Maybe your child isn't destined to be the  
next Jon **Lugbill**. Just so he doesn't turn  
out to be the next James Watt.*



Riversport School of Paddling photo

**ermia**. A cold, shivering, miserable child is not going to learn much and probably won't look forward to boating again.

8. Not many kids learn to roll before the age of twelve; emotional maturity seems to be as much a factor as strength and ability. Actually, **kids** can enjoy paddling without learning to roll since they tend to have a low center of gravity and **are** less likely to flip. Lots of **kids** love to paddle but are very afraid of flipping. Don't make an issue of this.

9. Learning to roll is easy for some, hard for others. It is very frustrating to teach. Choose warm days with warm water or start at a pool session. Clear water is a plus so that the student can see what she is doing. Noseplugs and goggles may help. Teach rolling slowly and in steps. Don't **try** to do it in one day. First work on the hip snap. This may be difficult since the child will be relatively loose in the boat. Add the paddle later. If a diving paddle is a problem, a block of foam taped to the surface blade may help.

10. A few words about outfitting... Small children do best in tandem open boats with adults. On the other hand, most **kids** are too small to solo in open boats. Most kids start out in kayaks rather than CIs. Although some would argue this, most instructors feel that **kayaks** **are** more stable and easier to learn to roll and paddle.

A Dancer XS is a good choice for **kids** less than 100#. Dancers and **Jetis** **are** good for larger **kids**. Various **kid** kayak molds **are** available but very low volume boats **are** not desirable since they **are** less stable and the child may feel trapped in the boat. As the child progresses he may want to **try** a slalom boat.

Many paddles **are** too heavy and thick shafted for kids. RIM paddles by Perception are durable and seem to work well. Some instructors **like** to start out with blades that **are** not feathered though most **kids** adapt to feathered blades quickly.

**Extrasport** produces floatation devices in small sizes for children. Protec makes an extra-small helmet which fits most **kids**.

11. Kids **like** to paddle with other kids, not just with adults. They usually learn better if there are other **kids** around and they are less likely to get bored. Sometimes a bit of competitive rivalry within the peer group helps.

12. Keep things in perspective. For most people boating is just a hobby. Every kid has strengths and **weaknesses**. Maybe your child isn't destined to be the next Jon **Lugbill**. Just so he doesn't **turn** out to be the next James Watt.

*Editor's note-Bob Ruppel offers a special summer camp for kids at Riversport, his whitewater school on the Youghioghny River at Confluence. His oldest daughter, Kara, is a nationally ranked slalom racer; his youngest daughter, Erica, seems destined to be a hair boater.*

*Bob Gedekoh delivers kids for a living and thinks everyone should have lots of them.*



## Teaching "Little Engines"

# Explaining strokes in kid's terms

by MARY BETH ZOLLARS

*In the spring of 1989 the members of Pittsburgh's Three Rivers Paddling Club sponsored their first weekend clinic to introduce kids to the joys (and tribulations) of whitewater boating. What follows is one instructor's recollection of the event, dedicated to her favorite little engine, Jonathan Carson.*

Once upon a time, not so very long ago, on a dismal, dreary day by the banks of the **Connoquenessing** River, deep in the middle of the woods, a little tiny engine sat on a moss covered rock surrounded by a poison ivy jungle. The little engine was staring at the swirling, chocolate brown waters of the Connie and pondering his fate. One by one, other little engines joined him, finding their own rocky pedestals, where they sat mesmerized by the mighty river.

Not so long before all the little engines had been sure that they wanted to be fitted into boats so that they could paddle about on the river. But now, **looking** at the cold, dark water, they were not so sure. The heavy spring rains had resulted in more than just the lush poison ivy and the Connie was very, very full. All the little engines had spring butterflies in their tummies and, after looking at the river, some of the big engines, who were there to help, had butterflies too.

The little engines ranged in age from 6 to 14. As they huddled together to fuel up on chocolate chip **cookies** and to be outfitted for their adventure, the big engines unloaded all the equipment that they had gathered together that might possibly accommodate little tiny engines. There were little canoes and Dancers and Microslips and Apples.

Even so, outfitting the boats for the little engines proved to be quite a task. It took gobs of foam padding and duct tape in every boat before each little engine fit just right.

Finally it was time to challenge the river. One bold little engine thought he was ready to explore the big chocolate **milkshake** rushing by, but when the current got a hold of him he was quickly



Riversport School of Paddling photo

swept downstream. He had no idea the river **could** be so powerful! Fear crept through every cylinder! One of the big engines rescued him quickly and brought him back into the safety of a quiet pool.

The big engines decided to keep the little engines in the pool and to teach them **stroking** and follow the leader. When the littlest engines got to the bottom of the pool the big engines towed them upstream again.

The big engines soon **discovered** that words like "perpendicular" and "degree" and even "left or right" had little meaning to the little engines. Techniques had to be explained in simple, concrete terms. "Slap-slide-grasp" became the chant for holding the paddle correctly, while the chant for each **stroke** became "punch-punch-punch".

At lunch the little engines watched themselves on video and marveled at how good they looked **on** the river. Each one said, "Maybe, just maybe...I can."

Back into the boats they went for an afternoon session in the protected pool. One of the little engines got so confident that he announced that he was tired of the games and he wanted to try The Big Stuff. But the big engines kept them all in the pool, working **on** technique and building **confidence**.

The next day the little engines woke up to sunny skies and they knew it was time for The Big Stuff. Soon they were paddling down a class I section of the Slippery Rock Creek. The big engines led them through a series of games including **zig-zag** and hide behind the **rocks**. A swing along the river offered some respite from the boats for a while.

The very littlest engines were towed when bridges came in sight or when things got tough...but after lunch the real tow lines were replaced with imaginary tow lines and the little engines still did **fine**. Sometimes the big engines even followed the more confident little engines.

That afternoon A Real Rapid sent all the little engines **scurrying** behind the big engines, but one by one, using imaginary tow lines, the big engines led them over the drop and down the mini-wave train.

At the bottom the little engines proclaimed, "That was the Big Stuff. I thought I **could**...I knew I wuld! Let's do it again." And so they did.

Afterwards all the little engines were very tired but the big engines were even tired. The big engines all agreed that they would need to do a lot of resting before they tackled the Kid's Clinic for 1990.

