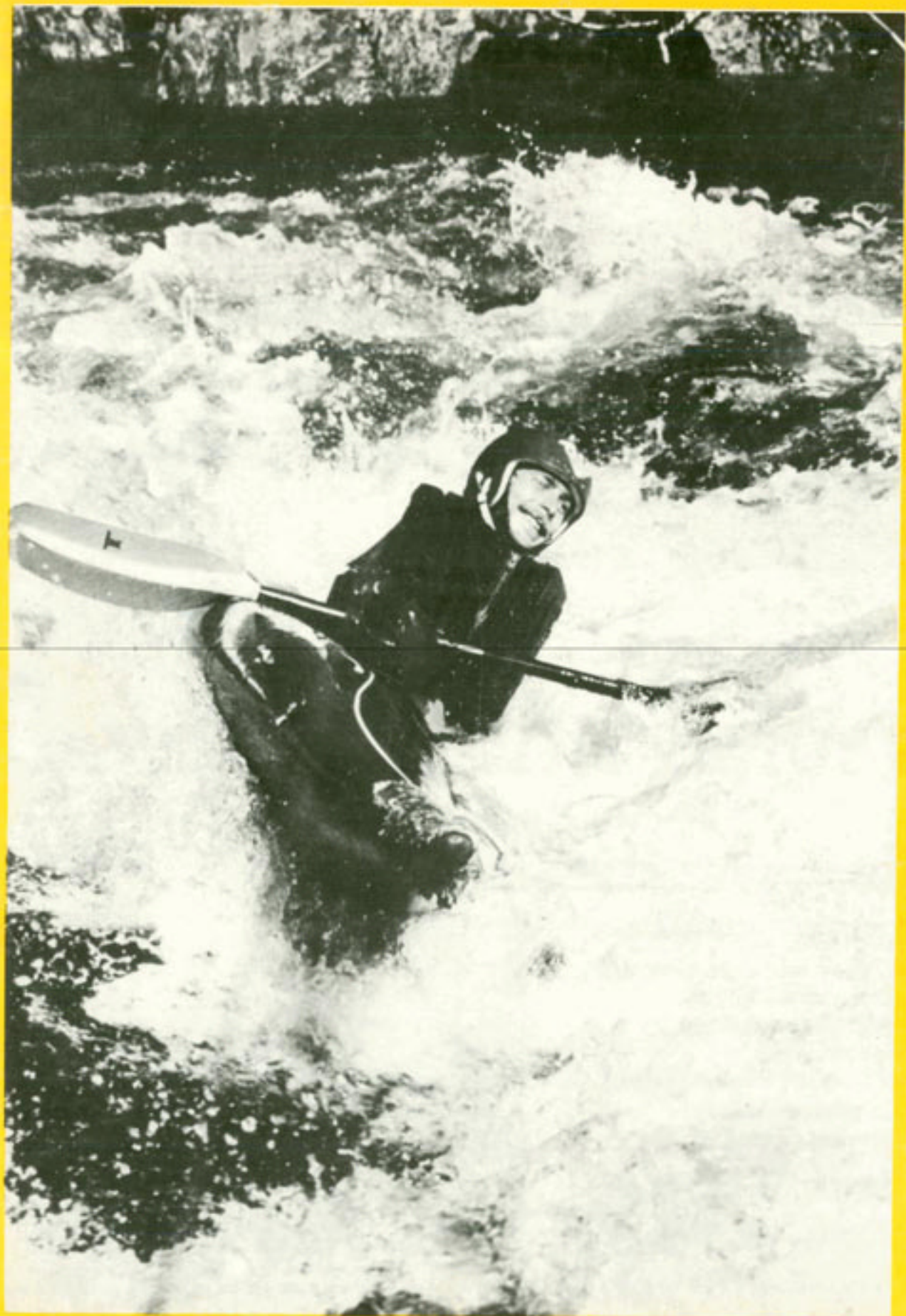


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AMERICAN WHITEWATER
AFFILIATION

July/August 1988

Volume XXXIII, No. 4

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editor's forum

An open boating confession:



During the past 10 years, I've set foot in an open canoe only once...

It was on a warm May evening a few years back when the Open canoe National Slalom Championships were held on the Indian River in northern New York. After the races, many of the contestants were camped beside the calm waters of Lake Abanakee along with the gaggle of rafters and decked boaters who converge upon the area during Hudson season.

Drawn by a rumor of cold beer, I found myself in a campsite of racers from Georgia and Alabama. Talk soon turned to whitewater, and in particular to the Otter Slide--a class 4 sluice that opens the run on the Indian.

My spirits bolstered by an ample quantity of Milwaukee's finest, I observed that the Slide was an easy drop to negotiate in a decked boat. In fact, I babbled on, I'd take any of their boats down the rapid.

"Son," countered one of the racers, "we've got a boat you couldn't even paddle across this here pond."

Well, the challenge was on. The racers produced a boat that looked to have a foot of rocker on either end, and chuckled knowingly as I teetered over to the bank and locked my knees under a thwart.

Sure enough, I hadn't taken four strokes before, on its own volition, the canoe overturned. I dangled upside-down in the still icy water. Without thinking, I swept the single blade out, hip-snapped, and the boat rolled upright.

I was spared the total humiliation of a swim--but I still sheepishly paddled back to shore with added respect for whitewater open boaters--particularly those with the ability to challenge Class IV and V water. But the episode also taught me a few things about open boats: they aren't all that hard to roll and if the boat's temperamental nature could be brought to heel, the craft would be truly responsive in whitewater.

Apparently, a lot of other boaters are coming to the same conclusions. Every year I see more open boats on rivers once thought to be the exclusive domain of decked boaters. And in this issue, we're finally giving the open boater his due--with articles detailing the descent of a pair of rivers and a feature on perhaps the best open boater of them all--Nolan Whitesell.

I think most decked boaters will enjoy reading about their open boat brethren. I know I do--even if I can't paddle one across 100 yards of flatwater.

I've had to temporarily discontinue the letters to american whitewater feature. I do so not because I'm afraid to air reader's opinions, either positive or negative, but because over the past two months I've received nary a letter. The primary purpose of american whitewater is to facilitate the exchange of information and opinions within the whitewater boating community. If you have something to say regarding articles appearing in the pages of the magazine or other issues that involve our sport, drop me a line!

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awa briefs

AWA elects directors

Always in the forefront of whitewater conservation and safety, with the election of the latest members to the AWA Board of Directors, the AWA leadership now also possesses the cutting edge of whitewater boating skills.

Newly elected for a two year-term are Bob Gedekoh, Elizabeth, Pa.; Bob Glanville, Buffalo, NY; Diana Holder, Roanoke, Va.; Eric Magnuson, Coloma, Ca.; John Porterfield, Manchester, NH; and Pete Skinner, West Sand Lake, NY.

Although the possession of class 5 boating skills is no prerequisite for board membership, and no guarantee of effective leadership, the unusual ability level of the new directors will enable the AWA to better represent whitewater sport as it continues to evolve.

The new Directors join current board members Pope Barrow, Marge Cline, Phyllis Horowitz and Keith Thompson.

AWA seeks to limit liability-- hopes to improve access

AWA's Director, Bob Glanville, has been pressing forward vigorously on introduction and passage of legislation in New York which would limit the liability of hydro facilities, both utilities and independent power producers alike, when they release water for recreational purposes.

This legislation is the result of discussions between AWA and hydro plant operators across the state who have been reluctant to create recreational opportunities because water releases might arguably contribute river sports or fishing accidents. AWA hopes that passage of this law would make it easier to convince facility owners to provide water releases when requested.

At the time of publication, legislative sponsors were being sought and language refinements considered. AWA's discussion document reads:

Title of Bill: AN ACT to amend Section 9-103 of the General Obligations Law to include a section holding harmless from liability under normal circumstances persons or entities who release impounded water for the purpose of facilitating the recreational use of such water.

Purpose or General Idea of Bill: This bill would exempt from civil/tort liability, except in cases of gross negligence and/or willful misconduct, those persons or

entities (e.g., hydro-power producers) who release impounded water for the purpose of facilitating recreational use of such water (e.g., whitewater canoeing, kayaking, rafting, tubing, etc.).

Justification: In enacting General Obligations Law, Section 9-103 (Section-370 of the Conservation Law, Chapter 842 of the Laws of 1956) the legislature hoped to encourage the public use of private lands by relieving landowners of the fear that persons using their land for various sporting purposes would hold the landowner liable for injuries sustained during the use of the land. Over the years, numerous amendments have been made to expand the scope of the recreational activities included within the statute.

The statute, in its present form, arguably only affords immunity from liability to the landowner on whose property the claimant is injured while engaging in one of the identified activities. The statute may not afford any protection, for example, to the owner of a hydro-power facility who releases water into a stream in order to facilitate downstream recreational use of the water, where the injury occurs downstream of the hydro-operators' facility on property owned by another.

Accordingly, owners and operators

briefs

of hydro-power and other water impoundment facilities throughout New York have displayed a growing reluctance to time the release of such water so as to facilitate recreational use of the streams into which such water flows. Such practices deprive the people of the State of New York of valuable recreational opportunities. Moreover, in some instances, fear of liability to downstream users has also resulted in water releases that are less than optimally timed from a hydro-power production perspective. Thus, because of liability concerns, water may be released, for example, during night-time hours when it cannot be used for recreational purposes and makes only a minimal contribution to electric power needs. This bill is designed to contribute to a more balanced and rational use of a valuable New York resource.

In order to avoid costly litigation concerning whether a particular water release is intended, among other things, to facilitate recreational use of a stream, the statute establishes a conclusive presumption that releases during daylight hours into streams that are used or useful for whitewater recreation are intended, among other things, to facilitate the recreational use of such water releases.

Open boat divisionals scheduled on Wisconsin rivers

The Midwest Divisional Open Boat Slalom and Downriver Championships will be held July 15 through 17 at separate sites on the Wisconsin River in Wausau and the Red River in Gresham, Wisconsin.

Hosted by the Midwest Division of the American Canoe Association in conjunction with local groups, the races will serve as a dress rehearsal for next year's Open Boat Whitewater National Championships to be conducted at the same sites.

Downriver events are scheduled to take place on the Red River while slalom heats will be contested on the

Wisconsin. Both rivers offer excellent opportunities for spectators to view the exciting action.

For more information, contact Race Chairman Ray McLain, 345 Bretcoe Drive, Green Bay, WI 54302 or Registrar Roman Szczesniak, 6913 Young Court, Woodridge, IL 60517.

Whitewater vets announce new open boat company

The newly formed Dagger Canoe Company of Harriman, TN, established by industry veterans Peter Jett, Joe Pulliam and Steve Scarborough, announces the release of its first three models. All of Dagger's canoes will be designed by Scarborough, many-time national canoeing champion, and professional canoe designer. Jett and Roy Guinn will direct the company's manufacturing operations.

"Each of Dagger's models represents a new standard of performance for its class," said Dagger president Joe Pulliam. "Steve Scarborough's design skills, coupled with our innovative manufacturing techniques, will result in the most exciting new canoes to hit the market in many years. And we'll be introducing totally new designs in Royalex, something no one else seems to be doing."

Dagger's first models include one solo whitewater playboat and two tandem designs. Each will be made from Royalex, the most durable canoe material available. Suggested retail prices range from \$795 to \$995. Lightweight, kevlar-reinforced models will be available in late summer.

Dagger will market its canoes through carefully selected outdoor and canoe specialty retailers.



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conservation currents

Bulls Bridge rapids saved!

Connecticut Light and Power has announced plans to drop its controversial project on the Housatonic River in Connecticut.

Until April of this year, CL&P had been pushing full speed ahead with a scheme to install an additional generation unit at the Bulls Bridge Project on the Housatonic. The project would have increased flows in the canal which bypasses the Bulls Bridge Gorge. This would have meant a drastic decrease in flows in the gorge.

Bulls Bridge Gorge is a beautiful stretch of exciting class III-V whitewater, a real rarity, especially in this part of New England where dams dot the landscape at almost every possible site. According to newly elected AWA director John Porterfield, this section of the Housatonic is the "New England equivalent of the Ottawa and the Gauley, all rolled into one. After you have run it once, expect your stomach to tighten involuntarily the next time the bull busts loose in south-central Connecticut."

Beginning 5 miles south of Kent near Henry Kissinger's house, and ending 2.25 miles downstream on route 7, the Bulls Bridge Gorge section starts with the congested and torturous Staircase rapid then heads downstream into a series of waves, holes, and boiling eddys called the



photo by Tom Provenchure

Jim Michaud enters The Funnel in the Bulls Bridge section of the Housatonic River.

Funnel. Then comes S-Turn and Pencil Sharpener, Powerhouse and Georges Hole, a lot of action for less than 3 miles of river. In a normal year water flowing over the dam upstream allowed about 90 days of whitewater usage.

Until the company backed off, this tiny stretch of remarkable whitewater was all but doomed. The

company had proposed to more than double the volume of the flow in the bypass, reducing the number of boatable days on the river down from 90 to approximately 30.

After attempting unsuccessfully to negotiate with the utility for over a year, local paddlers, led by Dog Gordon of the HACKS (Housatonic Area Canoe

and Kayak Squad), became increasingly frustrated.

Finally they asked AWA for some help. AWA sought the advice of Washington Attorney, Paul Flynn, an expert on legal issues at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

Flynn quickly realized that unless boating organizations filed papers known as a Motion to Intervene, they would continue to be ignored by the company and by the FERC. Burning the midnight oil on his own time, Flynn drafted up a motion raising all the critical issues. The papers were immediately circulated to all the concerned groups and signed by AWA, the HACKS, and the American Canoe Association on February 4, 1988.

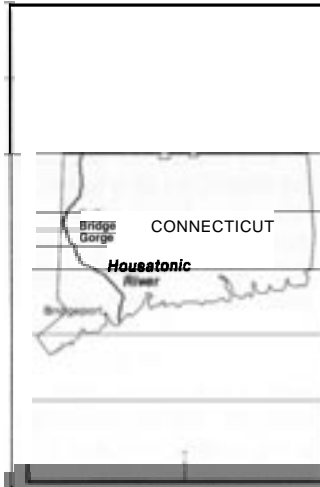
Initially prospects looked bleak because FERC requires motions of this kind to be filed within 60 days after the application is filed by the company to build the project. The application had been filed on July 9, 1985, over 2 and a half years before boaters became aware of what they needed to do.

Flynn's motion was a good one though. It raised important legal issues regarding recreation which had so far been completely ignored by the power company. The company immediately filed papers opposing the effort of boating organizations to participate in

the process.

According to the company, **CL&P** had no responsibility to inform boating organizations of their rights to participate in the FERC process and boaters had failed to file the motion on time without good cause. As is usually these cases, the company implied that the interests of whitewater boaters would be taken care of by others. The battle was joined.

To the surprise of almost everyone, on March 3, 1988, FERC issued an order allowing the AWA,



ACA, and HACKS to participate in the licensing

process

Faced with this additional opposition, and already embroiled in a difficult struggle with State and Federal environmental authorities over how to dispose of the dangerous PCBs which had been found in the power canal, **CL&P** announced in April that it was abandoning the project.

The reason given for abandoning the project was that, since the time of the original studies, the economics of the project had deteriorated. Whatever

the reasons really were, AWA observers are fairly sure that, without the opposition of whitewater groups, this unwise project might well have gone ahead.

For now, the Bulls Bridge Gorge will remain a whitewater specialty. But, as with all victories at FERC, nothing is permanent. Without Federal protection under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the Bulls Bridge Gorge will continue to be vulnerable to new and different hydro-electric power proposals.

Boaters sizzle

French-fry king pursues Payette hydro project

J.R. Simplot has big plans for Idaho's fabulous whitewater rivers — make the entire State an energy farm — generate electricity at every possible site and sell power to cities in the growing southwest.

The man is a true visionary, a zealot. Like other zealots he goes right to the heart of the matter. Naturally, he plans to take the best whitewater first—the North Fork of the Payette. The Smith's Ferry to Banks section of Idaho's famous Payette is known throughout the world as premier whitewater.

The North Fork has that rare quality of liquid excitement that makes your blood boil and your hair stand on end. And it goes for miles: Jacobs Ladder, Pinball, Cruncher, Juicer, the color-

ful names only hint at the exciting whitewater this river has to offer.

Dropping 260 feet per mile in some segments, this is whitewater at its best. One amazing rapid is referred to locally as the "Golf Course". Why? Because it has exactly 18 holes. You can count them from State Route 55 which runs along side the river.

There are not many rivers like this anywhere in the USA, or in the entire world for that matter, but when J.R. Simplot surveys all that H₂O rushing downhill, he sees just one thing, money, and plenty of it.

The **MacDonalds** Connection

Who is this Simplot? Is



he just another goofy prospector skulking around free flowing rivers with dreams of mining electric energy from their powerful turbulence? Or can he really

carry through on his grandiose schemes?

Only time will tell, but Simplot is definitely not to be taken lightly. In the first place he has enough

conservation

money to do pretty much what he wants. He is a millionaire many times over. He is reported to own nearly a third of the land in the Boise area.

No shrinking recluse, **Simplot** makes his home in an ostentatious mansion atop a hill near Boise. This is no modest shack. The flag out front is the size of city lot. Known as the potato king in Idaho, **Simplot** is one of the richest men in the nation. He sells 80 percent of the potatoes used for **MacDonalds** french fries.

At that rate, you would think he could leave wild rivers well enough alone, but like many other men with too much money, enough is never enough. And besides, he has a

vision: the rivers of Idaho will someday all be stilled by dams, linked together as gigantic energy farm.

Whitewater Wonderland

Today the Payette River system is a whitewater wonderland just north of Boise. (See map page insert) The system, which includes the North Fork and the South Fork, offers everything the whitewater enthusiast could ever want, from class II beginner sections on both forks right on up to the famous 18 miles of class IV-V whitewater on the North Fork.

In a 1979 issue of **american whitewater**, Pete Skinner and Rob Lesser described their exciting runs down the 18

miles of the Payette's most exciting whitewater. They popularized the Smith's Ferry to Banks section for an elite group of the best boaters in the nation.

The North Fork acquired the reputation as a hairy run—for experts **only**—those with a little too much testosterone. But in recent years river use has been growing steadily. Skills and equipment have also improved and more people now seek out the challenge of big continuous class V water.

Familiarity is also a factor. One local kayaker who has been around for years says that he has run the thing so much it becomes "almost boring at times", but not quite. The river can still exact a penalty from

even the most skilled and experienced boater.

Last year Nolan Whitesell and John **Dierdorf**, 2 top open boat experts, made the first open canoe descent of the Payette's class V section. They made the front page of the Boise newspaper and Whitesell took 13 stitches home as a souvenir.

One of the best things about the North Fork is the season. There are early spring runs at high water, and then the water comes again late in the year, usually August. Then, when the South Fork and everything else has dried up, the Bureau of Reclamation makes releases from Cascade Reservoir. This is warm water off the top of

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The project which now threatens the North Fork is an ugly one. It is a rehash of the old Idaho Power Company Project which died years ago of its own bad economics, only bigger and uglier. It has a number of nasty features, including a pumped storage lake which would use water from the popular Cabraton section to flood out Round Valley, a beautiful area now occupied by ranches.

Further downstream in the Smith's Ferry to Banks

section, flows would be reduced to a tiny trickle with almost the entire river diverted into a tunnel or dike. The 50 cfs which Simplot plans to leave in the river would barely wet the rocks. At least 1800 cfs is needed for a reasonably safe whitewater run in this section.

Simplot is only one of 3 developers who have jointly sought a preliminary permit from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to work out the details of the proposal. The other 2 villains in the picture are the Gem Irrigation District and Tacoma Power and Light.

Broad Coalition Takes Shape

A broad coalition of groups has begun to take shape in opposition to Simplot's scheme. Jet boaters, whitewater nuts, environmentalists, land owners, and even the local chamber of commerce have seen a common interest in opposing this ambitious plan to sell one of Idaho's treasured recreational resources in order to air condition the condos in some distant city.

In April of this year, 400 people showed up at a fund raiser where over \$4,000 was raised on one night to fight the project.

Hard Fight Ahead

Like many other battles involving whitewater and hydroelectricity, the battle

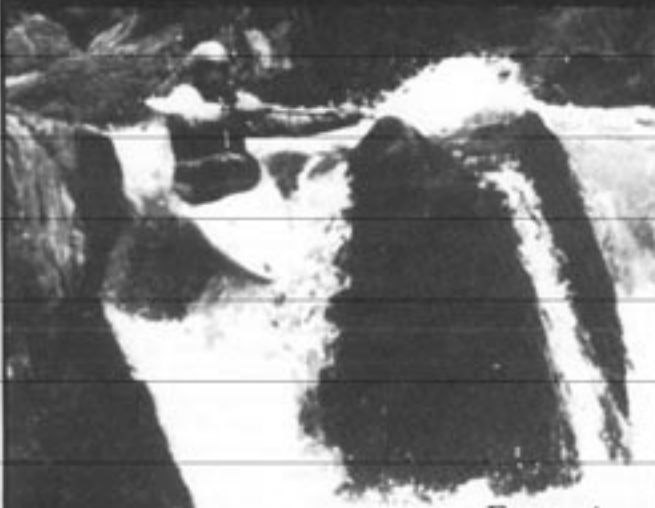
for the North Fork of the Payette will be fought in the local press, the county and State governments, and ultimately before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

The major work now ongoing involves efforts to get the State legislature to adopt legislation designating the Payette river as a protected recreational river. Interim protection has already been approved, but it is not yet clear just what "protection" means.

Local advocates will be asking the State Water Board to interpret "protection" as including protection from hydroelectric development.

Hopeful Signs at FERC

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Even if State legislation to "protect" the river is adopted, the battle will eventually move to FERC since State laws can be overridden by FERC.

FERC is not the most friendly place to duke it out with power developers, but fortunately there are some new and hopeful signs on the horizon. Last year, FERC broke new ground by refusing to issue a license for the proposed Kootenai Project in Montana. Adverse environmental effects were given as the reason.

Already this year the agency has followed up on that exciting precedent. In January FERC denied applications for 4 projects proposed by the notorious Joe Keating in the Owens

River Basin in California. In that one month FERC rejected more applications on environmental grounds than in all previous FERC history.

Who knows, at this rate FERC may send Simplot back to his potato patch with his tail between his legs.

What You Can Do --The local political efforts now being made require organization, commitment, money and a lot of work from the local volunteers. The fight to save this river may not be an easy one.

If you would like to join the Friends of the Payette, send a contribution, together with your name and address to FRIENDS OF THE PAYETTE, P.O. Box 633, Boise, Idaho,

Black River release procedures announced

The Black River near Watertown has become a favorite destination for paddlers from Philadelphia to Toronto and most places in between. Knowledge about the timing and size of releases will assure that you too can get your fair share of the recreational opportunities the AWA/Adirondack River Outfitters water releases agreement with Glen Park Associates has made a reality.

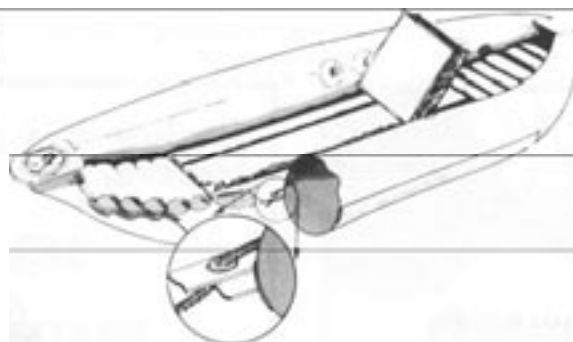
The agreement provides for an annual releases bank account of 1,921,000 kilowatt-hours. The methodology for translating this electrical value into cfs-

hours at both the releases turbine (at Glen Park Falls) and main turbines downstream has not yet been finalized, pending further discussion with the company. The quantity of flow during releases will be whatever is flowing in the river to a maximum of 2,000 cfs unless special arrangements are made for higher flow releases. Flow over Glen Park Falls will occur for 20 minutes of each hour of water releases to permit paddling over the falls.

From this bank account, however, the electrical generation impacts in kilowatt-hours of prescheduled and



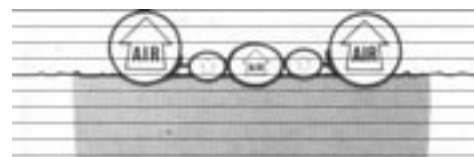
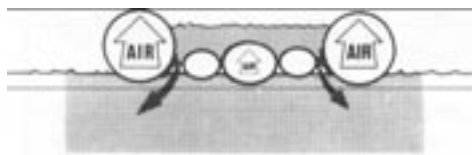
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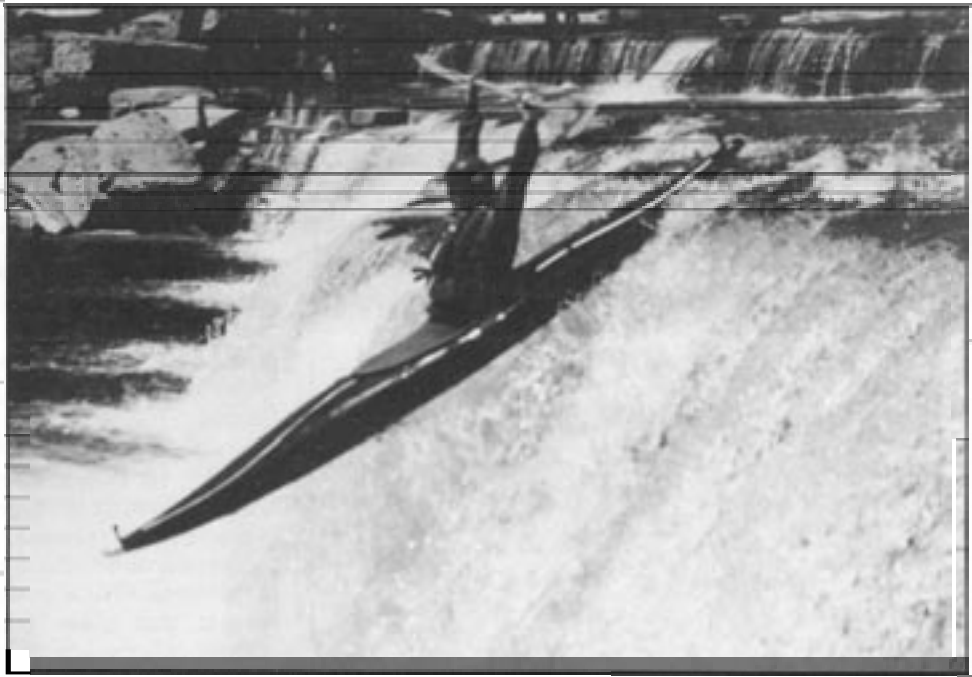
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conservation

on-demand flow releases. It is therefore important to utilize such release arrangements with care, conserving leftover release opportunities for times when they are most needed. AWA and ARO in consultation with other user groups are establishing a Black River Use Management Council to assure this allocation process is equitable and effectively used. AWA is exploring the feasibility of establishing an 800 telephone number to more effectively notify paddlers of upcoming releases and ambient river stages for the Black and nearby rivers. Dick Carlson of ARO will serve as the interim on-site coordinator.

The prescheduled release



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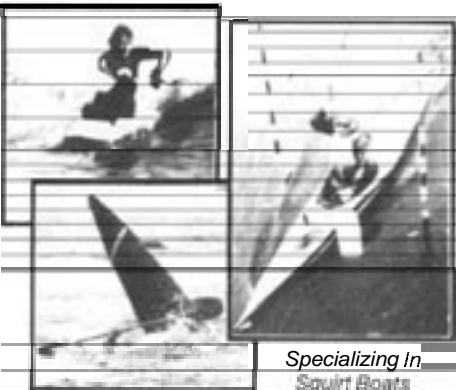
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conservation

arrangements for June, July and August of 1988 are set forth in the table below. The actual hours of the releases during the day are determined on the basis of need. Glen Park presently begins releases when rafts or parties of independent boaters approach the dam and continue for the prescribed

time or until paddlers exit the section of the gorge affected by the project, whichever period is shorter. Pre-notification of the Glen Park Project of expected arrival times will assure timely releases.

May:
Last 2 Saturdays - 9 hours
Last 2 Sundays - 3 hours

Holidays:
Memorial Day Holiday - 3 hours
July 4 Holiday - 7 hours
Labor Day Holiday - 5 hours

Evenings: One day per week in July and August - 2 hours

Note: "OD" indicates 'on-demand' releases made available through the auspices of the Black River Water Use Management Council.


Contact Dick Carlson 315-788-1311 for details. Several days warning is needed to procure such releases. If problems arise with these arrangements, AWA and ARO request that users bring complaints to the attention of the Council.

Landmark PERC decision may doom small hydro

In a sudden and surprising decision in April of this year, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission invalidated the subsidies offered to new private hydropower developments. The Commission (FERC) regulates the prices at which power is sold by hydropower

Day	Hours of Releases				
	June	July	August	Sept.	Oct
Monday	OD	OD	3	OD	OD
Tuesday	OD	OD	OD	OD	OD
Wednesday	OD	3	3	OD	OD
Thursday	OD	3	3	OD	OD
Friday	1.5	5	5	1.5	OD
Saturday	7	9	9	7	5
Sunday	5	7	7	5	3

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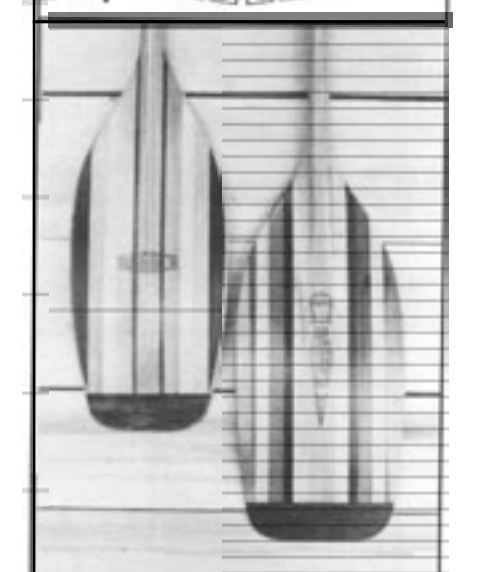
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generators. After years of charging full speed ahead to encourage small hydro-electric power production, solar energy, cogeneration and other so-called benign forms of power generation, FERC has suddenly reversed itself.

It all happened in an obscure case called the Orange and Rockland decision. This case, announced by FERC with no fanfare, will totally change the direction of the nation's energy policy.

Before Orange and Rockland, the States were free to make electric utilities buy power from small hydropower developers at any exorbitant price. And many States did just that. In order to encourage small hydropower develop-

ments some States required utilities and their customers (you and I) to pay through the nose for power from small hydro developments. The idea was to pay the developers whatever it took to make the projects profitable. Most of these projects were real ugly ducklings. They just made no economic sense. Big subsidies in the power sales contracts were necessary to get them off the ground.

Some States went to extremes to attract hydropower developers to every marginal site they could. New York won the booby prize when the State legislature enacted a law requiring utilities to pay double what the power was really worth (the NY 6 cent/

kilowatt hour law). The result was that a lot of free flowing streams in these States were permanently destroyed, and a lot of developers walked away with dumpster dumpsters full of cash—money that you and I coughed up on our electric bill. In effect, we were being forced to subsidize the destruction of our favorite whitewater rivers. This was a tough thing to swallow.

Paying developers to wreak havoc on whitewater rivers did not sit well with whitewater boaters. AWA began waging war against Federal subsidies for hydropower more than 5 years ago when developers targeted a number of highly popular whitewater rivers for power development.

The Penobscot, the Black, the Klamath, the Moose, the Savage, the Youghiogheny, the Payette, the Gauley, and other popular rivers were slated for extinction. At one point almost no whitewater river looked safe. Some battles were won, some were lost, and some are still going on.

The Orange and Rockland case will not apply to projects now in progress. But it will apply to new projects without signed contracts to sell power. In some of these cases it will make a big difference in the profitability of the project. And without profits, projects don't get built.

Unless you are a power lawyer, you have no hope

please turn to page 43

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safety lines

Paddling safely in groups

Basic safety considerations are too often forgotten... until it's too late



By Charlie Walbridge
AWA Safety Chairman

A funny thing happened to me on the way to **Kitzmill** the other day. Not funny, ha, ha; but the kind of funny that makes you feel sick afterwards. We had a near miss. We'd run the "high altitude" run from Mount Storm Dam on West Virginia's Stony River all the way to the North Branch of the Potomac. From there we'd been reveling in the high water. But 22 miles of hard class IV is a long trip, and after the last big drop those who could paddle strongly moved towards the takeout as fast as possible.

I was hanging back with a Mend who I'd been introducing to the joys of advanced boating. She was doing well, but was tired enough to want the run to be over. We caught a grubby eddy at the top of the last rapid on the run, a long class III drop. After commenting on how shallow the eddy was, I peeled out and headed down.

Halfway through the drop, I glanced over my shoulder. My friend wasn't there. I ran to the bottom and looked again. Still not in sight. Even though it's not uncommon to lose sight of someone for a minute or two, I had a bad feeling. I grabbed an eddy and climbed the railroad embankment. That made me realize how tired I was. I hustled upstream. I saw four people in thigh-deep water struggling with a boat.

Turned out my Mend had snagged her *Dancer* on a "funny little rock" along the eddyline. Her boat broached, turned upstream, and disrugged. Fortunately, she had the riversense to bail out before things got hairy. But her boat was unpaddleable and she was marooned in the current. Only a CCA group running the river behind us made it look easy by pulling her in

and freeing her boat. As I gratefully watched from the railroad embankment, I realized we had made a potentially serious error.

The role of the sweep boater

Keeping a group together is the key to fast mutual support in the event of a mishap. And bringing up the rear of a large trip is one of the most under-rated jobs in boating. This job should not be casually delegated. In the event of a pinning, help must come from above. So it follows that the sweep boater must not pin.

Unfortunately, on many trips, the weakest boaters congregate at the rear. While the best paddlers attack each drop, the less experienced ones hold back and watch them. They wait until no one else is ahead of them, and then they run. Unless efforts are made to keep a strong person in back, before long that slot will be held by the trip's most cautious or tired paddler. And that is asking for trouble.

It's important for groups to be aware of the range of strength among its members, even on common adventurer outings. This is especially true when "initiating" a less experienced boater to difficult water. I always lead such people "from behind." They read the water and make their own decisions, and I back them up. I don't approve of the common people of "leading" people from out front down drops, since the person you're helping can get out of sight and into trouble very quickly. Besides, they need to learn to read water for themselves!

Keeping a group together

One of the drawbacks of the

"common adventurer" style of trips is that trip discipline will break down if its members are inattentive. The basic rule is to keep the person behind in sight at **all** times. But often the person in the front will set an excessively fast pace. Those who follow are rushed and tire quickly, and lag behind. If no one takes the time to look back, you'll get spread out. **This** is a recipe for trouble.

It's important to realize that it's easy to move fast in the front, and harder to do so towards the **rear**. Any diddling is cumulative, and the collective time lag is passed backwards. Patience is vital for the person in the lead. You have to continually check on the progress of those behind you, and stop as needed to regroup. The bigger the group, the more you have to wait. If you can't do that, don't lead groups of over three paddlers.

Often, at the end of the day, paddlers get impatient and pick up the pace, spreading their group out over a considerable distance of easier water. Resist this temptation! Someone who is tired is likely to screw up even in class I-II at the end of a class IV-V run, and they may need everyone's help. Furthermore, you may be tired enough that getting back upstream will be a real chore. That's why it's important to maintain group discipline until the end.

If **you** are cold or for some reason need to travel fast, tell others where you are going. This will eliminate a frantic search in the event that the group 'discovers' that you are missing. And don't boat alone unless you're sure you can deal with the added risk.

Knowing when to bail out

What kept this incident from becoming an accident was the willingness of the pinned paddler to exit quickly before the pin turned to entrapment. I've often seen people hang in far too long, taking excessive punishment, before bailing out. This makes sense in big water, but is no way to respond to a pinning. Once the boat **turns** upstream and sets into an undercut or

strainer you have a few seconds to kick free. Don't be stubborn, especially in plastic boats, since recovery under these conditions is **almost impossible**. Bail out and swim aggressively for safety.

Significance of mental errors

Our group made a series of small mental errors by permitting themselves to get spread out, and by permitting one of the weaker members of the party to get **stuck in** the rear. When mistakes of this kind **are** made, few people know except the people involved. But they serve as a warning.

*As I prepared to peel out,
he said casually,
'You know, we usually take out
here.'*

*There were no eddies
between me and the falls
fifty yards downstream.*

Outward Bound accident investigators believe that near-misses serve to predict future accidents which involve serious injury or death. I believe that mental errors do the same thing. What if my Mend had been stuck in her kayak, and the **CCA group** had not been around to help? Imagine the accident report: "The group became spread out, with one of the weaker members in the rear...the boat wrapped, trapping her inside...it took the group nearly fifteen minutes to work their way back upstream, and by that time..." You can bet we'll be more careful in the future!

Warnings take many forms. I remember one time I was making a run on the North Shore of **Lake Superior**. I **knew we** were taking out above an **unrunnable** 60 foot falls. Darting down the river, I pulled into an eddy. Working my way up the shore, I wondered why a paddler was sitting on shore. As I prepared to peel out, he said casually, "You know, we usually take out here." There were no eddies between me and the falls fifty yards downstream.

The river can be an exacting teacher, with a forgiving disposition and an unpredictable temper. When you get hung up exiting your boat, you've been warned. Fix the problem; you may not get a second chance. When you miss eddies or get trashed **in** a drop, the river is trying to tell you something about your skills. Listen closely, and use this information when you're scouting the next drop. Always try to imagine what could happen if you weren't lucky, and take precautions consistent with your philosophy of risk. I'm not trying to make you paranoid, just aware.

The function of scare stories

A number of people have commented to me about the tendency of some people to tell **horror** stories about various rivers. These tales are sometimes worse than the run! Aside from entertainment, they serve a function which most paddlers instinctively appreciate. They fulfill the 'duty to warn' newcomers. Many liability suits in adventure sport activities turn on the question of whether the injured party understood the risks. By telling someone all the bad things that have happened on a run, that person becomes fully appraised of the risks. They can make a better informed decision.

It is possible to "freak out" someone with an over-active imagination by telling horror stories before a run. You have to gauge their state of mind and use your own judgement here. But for most people, these stories should provoke thoughtful questions about the real risks of the run and allow those who know the river to answer them to the best of their ability.

Risk is a big part of what makes our sport enjoyable because it requires us to focus our energies on staying clear of trouble. **Learn** as much as you can from your experiences and you'll become a better paddler.

Hidden Canyonlands

The Rio Grande winds through a protected world

By *Howard Pitts*

Photos by Winston Padgett

The world abounds with legends of lost lands, filled with geological curiosities, exotic flora and fauna, protected by its inaccessibility from civilization.

You might not believe there's a Shangri-La, hidden in the depths of the Himalayas--or that there ever was an Atlantis, the jeweled isle off the coast of Europe. But if you're willing to bounce through 22 miles of dirt road through the heart of the south Texas desert--a lost land of a different nature awaits you.

The section of the Rio Grande canoeists refer to as the Lower Canyons is an 83-mile totally remote stretch of river starting at the Eastern edge of the Big Bend National Park in Texas and winding east to the takeout at Johns Marina. The key word is **remote**. Johns Marina is a 60-square-foot tin-roofed shelter sitting on the river's edge just 22 miles of bad jeep road from the **nearest highway** at **Dryden**, Texas. It consists almost totally of desert except for the Bermuda grass and river cane growing along the banks. Sheep graze all around the takeout, which frequently serves as a last-day campsite as gear, canoes, and rafts are loaded for the trip home. There are no toilet facilities and no running water.

Go up the 22-mile jeep road to **Dryden** and you'll



Howard and Bob inspect San Francisco Canyon

find several good-sized buildings there, at least three of which are still standing. The largest of those is **Dryden Mercantile**, a national historical site. It used to be the meeting place for people getting together for a Lower Canyons trip, before it closed down in June of 1987. I believe those of us in Don Greene's trip that month were there the last day it was open. There is a certain amount of nostalgia associated with the store because people would collect there, often in the middle of the night, sleeping in cars in the parking lot while waiting for others in their group to arrive. It truly was an old-fashioned ranch store--the tales you could hear there from the locals were as sought after and as appreciated as any of the refreshments.

With the store closed down, you are still 104 miles from **Del Rio**, Texas, the nearest location of a Whataburger or whatever else will satisfy the junk food craving that people come off the river with. After the June, 1987 trip with Don's Whitewater Experience group from Houston--a hot trip with water running at 11 feet--I ate **five** banana popsicles at **Dryden Mercantile**. My craving got so bad on the April, 1988 trip that we paddled the last 28 miles in one day just to get an early start for **Del Rio**--**this** time for a Whatta-chicken sandwich.



Howard negotiates the muddy waters of Rodeo Rapid at a level of 11 feet.

Marathon, Texas, the gateway to Big Bend, lies 74 miles west of Dryden at the intersection of Highways 90 and 385. This is where we begin the 70-mile drive south to enter the park, bypass it, and reach the put-in site in Mexico.

The put-in is just upstream of the Gerstacker Bridge, a one lane, one-way-at-a-time bridge crossing the Rio Grande into Mexico. Take the first right turn into the bushes at the end of the bridge, wave to the Mexican guards if they appear at the station window, and drive down the muddy gravel bar that forms the beach. Try not to get stuck in the mud. The nearest telephone is 20 miles away and no one has ever spoken to the guards in any language. In fact, as far as I know, no one has ever been **stopped** for the guards. Just wave.

At the put-in, you may be approached by one or more Mexican teenagers who work at the nearby

factory. They want to practice their English and, of course, this gives you a chance to practice your Spanish. This March we were each approached in turn, starting with the very same phrase: 'Hello. Where are you from?'

The trip itself runs through 83 miles of deep, scenic gorges and canyons which, with the river, form a **narrow** greenbelt through otherwise uninterrupted high desert. The various rapids are Class II-IV depending on the water level, which can vary normally from 2 to 11 feet. The National Park Service considers 6 feet to be flood stage. We consider 6 feet to be absolutely the greatest **fun**, without getting too dangerous.

At strategic spots throughout the trip are fresh water springs, providing excellent drinking water if they haven't been covered up by high water. Any level above 6 feet starts to wash out some springs, so

other arrangements must then be made for drinking water. Zero impact camping procedures are in effect. Fires are not built along the way because the scant sources of wood can not renew themselves fast enough to support such luxuries. Besides, at 110 degrees--who wants a fire?

The Lower Canyons offer one of the most beautiful scenic **whitewater** trips available in any country. The banks **are** covered with 20-foot high river cane and cliffs rise as much as 1,800 feet from the river level.

Depending on what is blooming, the fragrances encountered along the river and in the side canyons are incredible. In **JUNE** 1987, I thought there was one section that smelled just like bananas--although, now that I think about it, I may have been paddling too close to the kitchen raft. The many available side canyon hikes allow people to

sniff their way from flower to flower or bush to bush.

A rich insect life goes along with the flora--but not mosquitos. There are big, friendly tarantulas, **kuta-**mundis, javelina, wild turkey, bobcats, cougars, beaver, and so on. Also, lots of catfish and gar. Especially notable **are** the yellow wasps that come to drink **from your** cup or walk on your shoulder. They go away if you ignore them. If you swipe at them, they sting.

The centerpiece of the trip is Hot Springs Rapid, about 41 miles down river in Mexico. Dagger Hill towers over it on the Texas side, rising 1,300 feet above the river. The Hot Tubs are on the Mexican side, formed by strongly flowing hot springs dammed up by circles of river rock. **As** each flood passes, the following groups of canoeists restore, rebuild, and dredge out the Hot Tubs so that access to them is not permanently lost. These tubs are especially attractive to winter trips and offer the first (and last) hot bath of the trip. Our group likes to mix up a gallon jug of Tequila and lemon-lime Crystal Light and circulate it as we soak our weary bones in the tubs. This spot is pure Heaven at any time of the year!

There is plenty of room at the springs to camp large groups. The cattle grazing through the area often expect you to cut down the river cane they cannot reach. One young white bull is liable to join you in the



Canyonlands side benefits: Howard and Bob explore a pour-off in Palmas Canyon while below, Bob and Winston pass the canteen while relaxing in the Hot Tubs at Hot Springs.

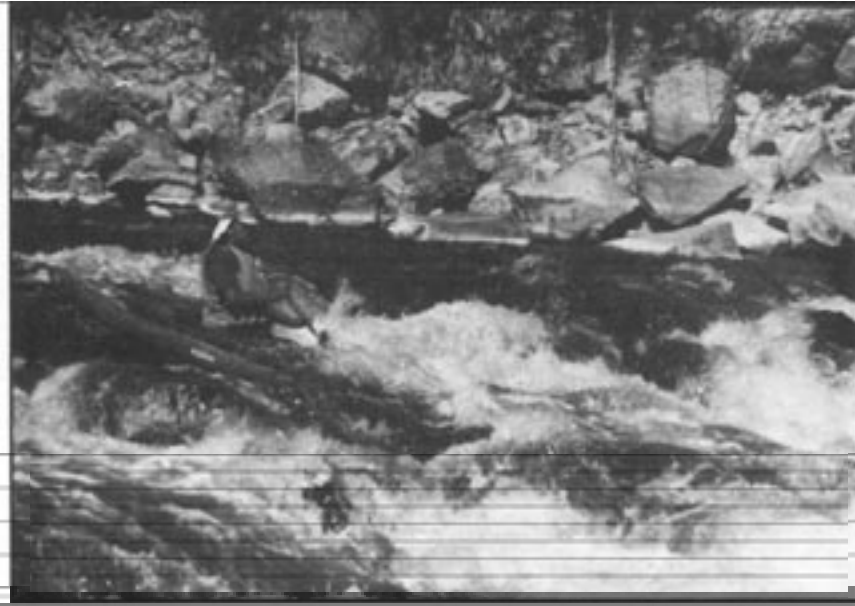
tubs, in fact, if he is not fed. However, once fed, he goes away.

Hot Springs rapid, by the way, is Class III rock at normal water levels (2 to 6 feet) and gets even more challenging as the river rises. In June 1987, it was a very impressive 11 feet. At that level, it still did not reach the main, upper tubs. Such high-water trips, of course, are much safer for experienced paddlers or with a commercial trip.

Just one and a half miles downstream is a mammoth, **chimney-**shaped cave on the Mexican side called Chiminea Grande. In April, 1988, Winston Padgett and I paddled one canoe down tandem to try to reach this cave from the river. After trying two different spots and being stopped by overhanging rock, we gave up and paddled back upstream without ever reaching the cave. We do plan to try again--sometime.

On this trip we spent four nights at Hot Springs just loafing, soaking, getting some sun, and wishing we had brought a book. San Recindo Canyon, the broad canyon coming in to Hot Springs from Mexico, is





On the right, Winston descends through Hat Springs Rapid at a 2.5 level while below, a pair of tandem boaters eddy out at the Upper Madison portage on a considerably more muddy river running at 11 feet.

very much worth hiking. The dry wash forming the canyon's floor is good walking and the scenery is worth the effort.

Finally, there is a small cave just about 600 feet above Hot Springs, on the trail to the adobe house (vacant) that overlooks the springs. This small, cool cave is particularly attractive during the hot summer months and offers a spectacular overview of the rapid. We entered it, hot and sweaty, in June, 1987, and ate lunch as we shivered and dried off. Pure Heaven when the temperature is 110!

Just 14 miles downstream from Hot Springs, you reach Upper Madison Falls, with Burro Bluff overshadowing it from the U.S. side. Upper Madison has a long, rock strewn approach with many mid-stream eddies in which to pause. However, as with Hot Springs Rapid, it is safest to scout it first from shore. Upper Madison has long had an excellent portage path around it on the Mexican side, although (as of April, 1988) it has had the beach severely eroded by high water. If that erosion continues, access to the path may be obliterated or the path itself may be destroyed. It is usually possible to scout the Falls from either side.

There is a small, sunny camping area (called "The Patio") just below the Falls on the Mexican side and a larger, shaded campsite under



Burro Bluff on the U.S. side. As is customary throughout the trip, we should note that Burro Bluff is a favorite and regularly used access route for illegals crossing into the U.S. from Mexico and elsewhere in South America. Be careful if approached for assistance, but feel free to help them cross if you want to. If you **are** travelling in very small groups, as Winston and I were doing, then be even more careful of strangers coming across the desert.

The channel at Upper Madison narrows between two large rocks at the top of the portage path and then immediately splits into two chan-

nels around an island. The right channel can sometimes, but rarely, be run by a kayak because of the intense collection of rocks there. The left channel is the usual route, but **check it out visually first**--it also is very rocky with severe holes at higher water levels. When it can be run, it is one of the best and possibly the most technical runs of the trip. There are no springs at Upper Madison so the nearest source of drinking water will be two miles downstream at Lower Madison Rapid.

please turn to page 37



By A. Howard Kirkland
from The Coastal Canoeist

West Virginia's Lower Meadow

Open boating on the edge

"How far to the first big rapids?" I asked, trying not to let the fear I was feeling show in my voice.

"Just around the bend. You can still see the bridge from there," Ron replied. "This is the one we call 'Bruce's Eye.' You can carry on the right."

At this point I was close to abandoning this foolish venture for the relative pleasure of a long uphill trek back to my truck. Ron's morbid recounting of the perils of the forthcoming rapids was doing nothing to quell the trembling, which, radiating from my stomach, now threatened to engulf my entire body. He continued to describe how, on previous expeditions, this rapids had completely destroyed Pete Shaw's kayak; how it folded Roger Scott's boat nearly double with Roger inside; how it had sent Bruce Berman to the hospital for stitches to close a wound which only nearly missed his eyeball.

In my present state of mind, I took his implied suggestion to heart and paddled close to the right shore to make sure I didn't miss the portage point. My judgement was reaffirmed when I saw Harvey and Bob followed my lead.

At the top of this rapid, the full

flow of the river was diverted to the left by a cobble strewn ledge. It then plunged down and sharply left over a steep eight foot drop, in such a manner as to sweep the unlucky paddler directly under a deeply undercut boulder just left of the drop. Even a successful run would require the paddler to lean hard right to miss striking his head upon this rock.

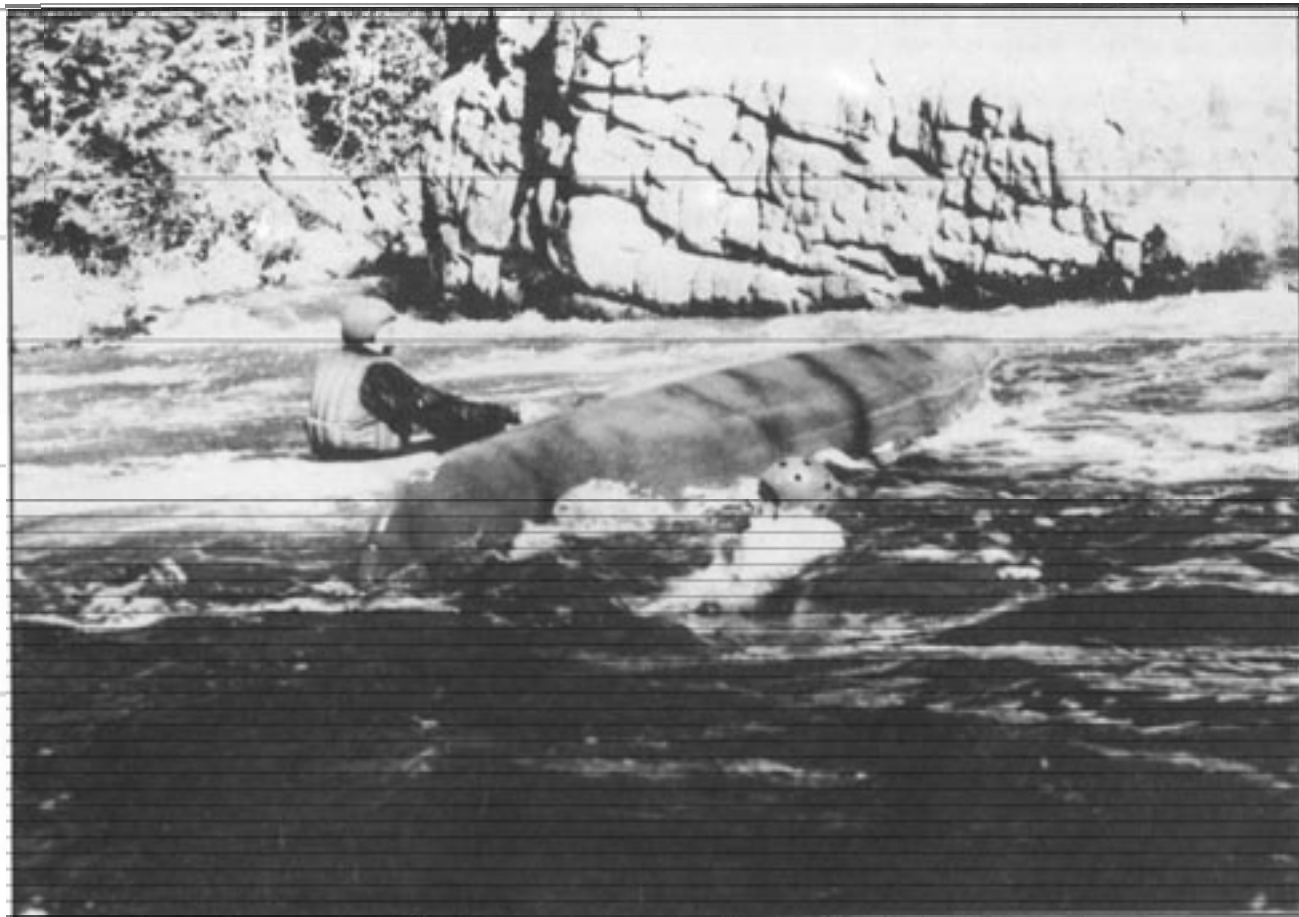
Ron, Dean and Rusty all chose to run the rapid, and with a brilliant display of skill and finesse managed to come through without mishap. Meanwhile, Bob, Harvey and I chose the safer, albeit unglorious, route across the cobble bar on the right.

Perhaps it should be explained that I often find myself in situations that 'sensible' people would avoid like the plague. The problem is that I am cursed with an over-developed ego; I am constantly having to prove to myself that I am something other than a left-footed feeble incompetent nerd. The result is that I often tend to exhibit a degree of left-footed-feeble-nerdiness far beyond what I expect of myself in the depths of my deepest depression and self-loathing. As a consequence, I feel

even more strongly compelled to achieve yet greater deeds of der-ring-do. And so the cycle repeats.

Thus it is not surprising that when I heard it said that the lower section of the Meadow River had never been paddled in an open canoe, I immediately decided that I wanted to be the first to do so. My resolve was further bolstered when I asked Bob Taylor and Ron Mullet, both of whom had previously kayaked this stream, whether they thought I could expect any reasonable degree of success if I undertook the venture. They replied, "If anyone can, you can." Not exactly encouraging, but I chose to take their assessment at its most positive interpretation: "You Can." I am also an accomplished selective listener; i.e. I hear only what I want to hear.

The foregoing serves only to explain how I found myself, in the company of Ron Mullet, Bob Taylor and Rusty Dunbar, all renowned kayakists; and the inimitable Dean Tomko and his friend Harvey Shapfro, decked canoeists; sitting on the rip-rap strewn banks of the Meadow River, beneath the looming structure of the U.S. Route 19 bridge.



Bob Taylor gives Howard a hand pulling his open canoe to shore below one of the Meadow's nasty drops.

It was the morning of October 31st, the eve of *All Saints' Day*, Halloween. I had just finished reading for the hundredth time, Burrell and Davidson's **Wild Water West Virginia** description of this stream with the bucolic name, in order to prepare myself for what lay ahead; and in hopes of finding there some cause for feeling optimistic about our imminent journey. But it only served to turn the sausage I had eaten for breakfast into a hard, unyielding and totally undigestible lump in the center of my intestines. Upon previous readings, I had treated their dire pronouncements that "every rapids has a death trap" and that "undercut rocks abound" as deliberate overstatements designed to frighten away the turkeys bent on getting a cheap thrill. This morning such musings only tended to tighten the iron band of fear that was encircling my trembling gut. My sense of impending doom was

only heightened when Rusty discovered he'd forgotten to bring along his spray skirt and had to return to Summersville Dam to find one. I was convinced that his forgetfulness was of a Freudian nature, although he denied this vehemently.

While we were awaiting his return, some of the others began the traditional pre-trip rehash of the "Death on the River" scenario. Then the normally imperturbable Dean Tomko began expressing doubts as to his being able to "handle this river." The 400-yard-long, arduous, slippery climb up the 60 degree slope back to where the vehicles were parked was beginning to look infinitely more welcoming than did this stream running beneath our feet and disappearing into--what? Catastrophe?? **Tragedy?** Death? Nothing seemed too far-fetched at that moment. Conversation was becoming more mor-

bid by the second. Unable to bear the strain, I said, "Let's talk about something else. Let's talk about sex!"

This was met by a few short, nervous **haha's** and then an uncomfortable silence. For Harvey Shapiro to fail to rise to the bait at the mention of "sex" indicated that he, too, had reached his emotional nadir.

Our meditations were interrupted by the returning Rusty, and, having exhausted our supply of excuses, we put into the water and paddled slowly downstream to meet our destinies.

Perhaps I should pause momentarily to inject some objective data into this narrative to help you, my patient reader, to bring my hysterical ravings into proper perspective.

The Meadow River, in the final five miles of its descent into the Gauley, has an average gradient of 94 feet per mile, with some

stretches exceeding 150 feet per mile. It is characterized by steep ledges, one after another, with no pools and only tiny microeddies and violent hydraulics in between. Huge boulders choke the chutes and block treacherous rapids from view of the paddler. The scenery, whenever the paddler can force his attention away from the rapids, is stunning. The Meadow Gorge winds through steep, rugged laurel-and-evergreen coated hills, often overshadowed by megalithic sandstone bluffs. The only evidence of civilization was the polyethylene and styrofoam flotsam washed into the eddies by recent rains and an occasional glimpse through the forest of the railroad above the left shoreline. This morning, the Corps of Engineers at Summersville Dam had reported the Meadow's flow at 980 cubic feet per second; having dropped from 6,000 C.F.S. three days previously. This level proved to be slightly more than what we considered to be minimum for canoeing. It is my belief that this level is also only slightly less than maximum (for open canoes, at any rate).

Even with the first, and by Ron's account one of the worst, rapids behind me, my fear had not even begun to abate; portaging does little to inspire confidence in oneself.

The next rapids (Class 6) begins with a long tortuous Class 3-4 rock garden-ledge type rapid which carries the paddler to a small eddy immediately above a very steep and powerful drop into a complex jumble of boulders. Ron had warned us that we must stop in this eddy to scout before running the drop.

When Dean heard this, he asked, "What happens if you miss the eddy? Sometimes Harvey don't catch eddies too good."

"You GOTTA catch this one," was Ron's instant reply, which triggered a fresh set of spasms in my stomach.

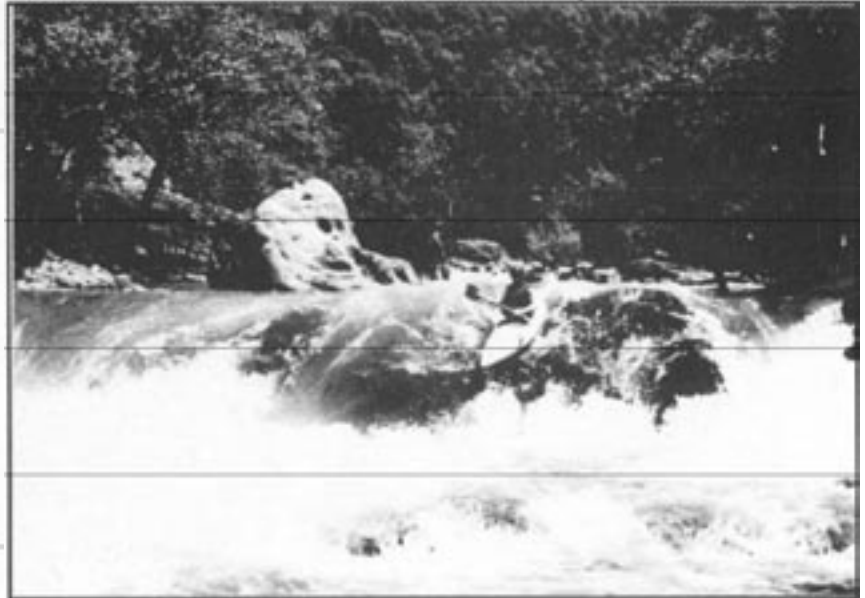
So Dean and Rusty ran the two-hundred-yard entrance rapids, successfully caught the eddy, and got out to look, just in time to see Harvey paddle frantically toward

them, hit the eddy at too great an angle, spin around, and drop over the ledge backwards.

This rapids is characterized by a nearly vertical drop over an eight foot ledge, with a narrow chute at its left end just to the right of its juncture with a towering boulder, which is undercut at its bottom. In the middle of this chute, about two feet

himself from his boat and his paddle.

When Dean first realized Harvey wasn't going to make the eddy, he quickly jumped into his boat and went to Harvey's rescue, which he accomplished only a short way downstream. After a quick survey, it was determined that Harvey had suffered a painful (but not severe)



Kayaker threads his way between two holes while accompanying Kirkland on his first descent of the Meadow in an open canoe.

below the crest, a sharp-cornered boulder splits the chute like a cleaver, diverting the flow to the right into a pile of boulders, which would probably trap the unwary paddler in a vertical position; and to the left and under the undercut boulder, with only a tiny margin for error. The rapids continues immediately over a series of smaller drops before slowing down.

So having missed the eddy, Harvey found himself dropping backwards over the ledge, totally out of control. Suddenly, in the middle of the drop, he turned completely upside-down, with only the bottom of his boat partially visible in the churning, foaming waters.

It is not too clear what happened then; we only know that Harvey managed narrowly to miss the cleaver, and wash down the "clean" chute. Somehow in the midst of the chaos, he managed to separate

bruise on his thigh and lost his paddle (luckily, he had a spare).

Bob and Harvey had followed Harvey, but had successfully caught the eddy and had gotten out to scout, when I came paddling down, only to find that the eddy was already full of boats. I tried to squeeze in below the boats, but only found myself on the verge of duplicating Harvey's debacle; my stem was slowly being drawn toward the edge of the drop, despite my frantic efforts to paddle back into the eddy.

At that moment, I would have gladly given up canoeing forever just to be walking back to my truck. This thought was instantly replaced by a feeling which I can only compare to what the children of Israel probably felt as the waters of the Red Sea parted before them; when, like the hand of God, Ron grabbed my bow painter and pulled me back into the eddy. Somehow, I

got my **quaking** limbs to support me, and climbed out onto the shore. Only my pride (read ego) prevented me from striking out for the railroad track and thence home.

Upon scouting the rapid from atop the undercut boulder, I decided that carrying around the **first** ledge, while being unheroic, was far more desirable than the consequences of making an error while negotiating the drop. Apparently Bob and Rusty concurred in my

only peripherally aware that there were others on the river besides myself; the only part they played in my scheme of things was whether I could rely on them to be on hand when (notif) I needed to be rescued.

My memory of my physical surroundings from here on is quite sketchy and out-of-sequence. Boulders, ledges, holes, hydraulics, slide rapids, undercuts; they came so rapidly that my mind was unable to record them; I was **receiv-**



Ron Mullet plunges through a Lower Meadow hydraulic.

assessment, for they, too, chose to **carry** even though Ron and Dean had made successful runs. After re-entering the river below the undercut boulder, I managed to plunge and plough my way through the rest of the ledges and holes.

Maneuvering was becoming increasingly difficult; I was taking on gallons of water at every drop and as a consequence of the **ever-growing** knot of fear inside me, was becoming weak and very shaky. I cannot fully recall how the others were doing, because my every thought, all of my senses, were turned inward and toward the river immediately in front of me. I was

ing images, reacting to them, and rejecting them to make way for the next. This was pure "reaction paddling." The thinking part of me was totally engrossed with one thought: "What the hell am I doing here?"

One more boulder garden and one more carry-around, and then another boulder garden. Not one mile into our trip, and we found ourselves confronted with a series of Class 4 and 5 rapids, culminating in a Class 6 horror which some paddler (probably in his cups) had christened 'Home of Sweet Jesus.' Here, the river widened and swirled around house-sized megaliths and plunged over countless ledges and

spewed through narrow, **funnel-**like openings over a seven or eight foot ledge. Needless to say, no one chose to run this one, although several of the braver souls did run the rapids immediately above. Harvey and I took boats out above the first of these rapids on the right bank and made our way to a path which parallels the river and pushed, pulled, and carried our boats about one-fourth mile to a point just below "Sweet Jesus." The path we were following appeared to be the remains of a late nineteenth century narrow-gauge railroad; the tracks and all but the rotting remnants of a few crossties were gone as were several sections of grade, which had succumbed to landslides. These slides, along with the closely-spaced pines growing along the path made portaging quite difficult. Never before had I undertaken such a **carry** so willingly, even gladly.

Up to this point, no one had encountered serious difficulty. Harvey had taken a spill and collected some bruises, and was experiencing pain in his thigh and one of his knees, which suffers from torn cartilage (an old wound). This made it difficult for him to climb with his boat on his shoulder.

We re-grouped immediately downstream of "Sweet Jesus" and paddled another Class 4-5 series of ledges to a point just above a complex rapid known as "Gateway." Ron instructed me to follow him, turned, and disappeared over a ten foot ledge. So I followed and landed upright, but with a canoe full of water only feet away from another drop. Somehow, I managed to bulldoze my way into a relatively quiet eddy (Class 3), climb out onto the rock and dump the water out of my canoe. By this time, Ron and all the others had vanished, leaving me in the middle of this boiling, plunging nightmare with no idea which way was out. Here again, I swallowed my pride and chose to portage the remainder of this rapid.

Below this rapid, the river took a turn to the left and immediately to the right again while dividing itself
please turn to page 39

Land o' Goshen!

With easily accessible class *III* water, Virginia's *Goshen* Pass of the Maury River offers some of the best whitewater east of the *Appalachians*

by Ed Grove
Bill Kirby

Since the days of Daniel Boone, the rugged ridges of the Appalachian Mountains that line the western edge of the Shenandoah Valley have separated the men from the boys--the adventurers from the stay-at homes.

To the east lay the fertile valleys suitable for farming while to the west loomed the virtually **unpenetrable** frontier--full of wild mountains and rivers.

For whitewater boaters, the times haven't changed all that much--the land of wild boating still lies beyond the western rim of the Appalachians, whether it be in the mountains of West Virginia, Tennessee or North Carolina. And unfortunately, like the days of **yester-**



Virginia's Goshen Pass of the Maury River provides readily accessible whitewater through the fall, winter and spring. Above, a jumble of boulders forms Devils Kitchen rapid.

year, staging a trip back into the mountains is still something of an expedition.

But for paddlers in central Virginia, there remains an **alternative**--the Maury River through **Goshen** Pass.

Just a few miles off I-64 near **Lexington**, the Maury tumbles out of the mountains and into the **Shenandoah** Valley through a narrow cleft called **Goshen** Pass. A few miles downriver, Glenn Rose operates a canoe livery, and although Glenn makes his living renting boats to folks who wish to paddle a more sedate section of the Maury, he knows the attractions of the Pass as well as anyone.

"As far as rivers east of the Appalachians, other than maybe the Chattooga, it's the best," Rose said. "It's a good solid Class III--smaller than the **Yough**--and more continuous than the **Yough**'s Loop section."

With a gauge at his shop, Rose constantly monitors the river level and often serves as a source of **information** for paddlers.

"**Goshen** Pass is runnable 1.0 above 0, but a lot of people won't run unless it's over 1.5," Rose said. "I've run it as high as 5.0 and at higher levels it has the characteristics of a flooded **river**...a long continuous flush with pulsing curlers. Once it's over 5.0 there are some nasty pour-overs, some damn-ass big holes. Self rescue is necessary.

"There's generally dependable water levels," Rose said. "It's **runnable** during a wet fall, through winter and spring and maybe into middle May.

"But one of the best things about the Maury is that it's easily accessible," Rose said. "On other rivers, you normally have to drive hours to get there and then there's a lot more driving just to set your shuttle. On

the Maury, once you're there, you're there. There's no arduous shuttle."

Regardless of its accessibility, the **Goshen** Pass section of the Maury is the quintessential Virginia whitewater stream. Indeed, if one forced to choose the finest among the ten best streams of Virginia for mortal paddlers, this section of the

stands, steep rock cliffs lining the river and cascading tributary streams create a superb area for the enjoyment of the sport.

One aspect of the Maury which is a mixed blessing is the presence of a paved road closely **paralleling** the river throughout the length of **Goshen** Pass. The road, State Route 39, is usually dozens of feet above



The Devil's Kitchen at a higher level...an ominous pour-over in the background **typifies** the hazards of the Kitchen

Maurey would be the odds-on favorite.

The Maurey River is formed not far from Lexington, Virginia--just above **Goshen** Pass where the Calfpasture and Little Calfpasture Rivers join. The two streams flow on **parallel** courses in a southwesterly direction along opposite sides of Great North Mountain until, near the small town of **Goshen**, the Calfpasture **turns** southeast. Just as the streams merge, the now sizable Maury cuts across the spine of Little North Mountain and drops precipitately into the Valley of Virginia.

This happy circumstance of a reasonably large amount of water flowing through a steep mountain pass provides whitewater paddlers with excellent scenery, easy access via good roads, splendid rapids and sparkling water quality in a combination unsurpassed anywhere in the East. Luxuriant rhododendron

the stream, however, and so it does not detract from the wild character of the scenery to a great degree. The presence of this artery will be appreciated by many who may require assistance on the trip. In addition, the fortunate location of the road provides the Maury with scouting opportunities and a delightfully short shuttle, allowing multiple runs of the river in a single day, if so desired.

"The shuttle is nothing," Rose said. "You can make a run then jog back to your car--or hitch. And new boaters **can** walk out easy, if they have to."

The put-in is shortly below the confluence of the Calfpasture and Little Calfpasture Rivers, where the river runs up against the road and turns left into **Goshen** Pass. There is a dirt road here and parking is limited.

Below the put-in, the Maury flows swiftly over some entertaining

riverwide low ledges for a few **hundred** yards, a few short rapids and quick ledges, and another 100 **yard** rapid to the first named **rap**-ds, one-half mile below the put-in.

This rapids is Undercut Rock. It is a three foot ledge, broken on the **right** and more abrupt on the left. **Either** side may be run but beware **of** the boulder on the bottom right **which** gives this rapid its name.

Shortly below Undercut Rock is Roadside Rapids, recognizable by a tumble of low boulders on the left **forcing** the river to the right against the roadside bank. The left route is best through the drop which is a long wave field with a nice surfing **wave** three-quarters of the way **down**. Excellent surfing waves are at the bottom of this drop.

Below Roadside is a long and pleasant Class II-III boulder garden. This is an example of the good nature of the Maury, for the rapids is a morale builder for the nervous paddler in preparation for the **serious** business that lies below.

At the bottom of the boulder garden is a pool known as the Blue Mole. Running out of the Blue Hole the river disappears to the left, the road retreats high up on the right bank, and an unusually basso **profundo** roar may be heard from the stream ahead. These clues and the sight of various numbers of people scrambling all over the riverbanks should indicate that something unusual lies ahead. Rest assured that this indeed is the case.

Devil's Kitchen is the object of **all** these grave portents. This drop is a 100 yard solid Class IV with a wide variety of river hazards packed into a short distance. The river drops about 20 feet in this span, with steep drops, limited visibility, strong holes, undercut rocks, tiny eddies and occasional fallen tree strainers making this by far the most serious rapids on the **trip**.

The complexity of this rapids makes a detailed description of the route impractical, but the general path is to start left of a quasi-island of bus-sized boulders on the right and be working right to end up on river right at the end of this long

please turn to page 42



Joe Damboise ending at Smooth Ledge on Maine's Rapid River.

photo by Scott Underhill

*It's difficult to get to...
The shuttle's undependable...
The woods are full of bugs...
So why do boaters yearn for Maine's*

Rapid River

By *John Porterfield*

There are still a few "wilderness experiences" to be had in New England....

The Rapid River experience often begins with pull on the starter cord of an outboard motor, the motor's vibration ringing across a quiet stretch of the **Androscoggin** River in northern New Hampshire. The intrusive sound travels far ahead of the two canoes strapped together like catamarans; peepers create a dissonant chorus, nearly drowning out the seminal grunts of the bullfrogs. Reeds and milfoil brush by the sides of the atypical catamaran as it winds through a broadening marshland; the running lights of an occasional bass boat help mark the way towards the opening into Lake Umbagog where the first of many tacts of the nocturnal excursion await.

Half the fun of paddling the

Rapid River along the Maine-New Hampshire border is getting there. In years past, energetic Mends loaded their **wildwater** boats to the waterline with gear, towing their slalom boats across the nine miles of open water and meandering estuary. Energy-spent by the time they reached camp, they vowed never to make the crossing that way again.

Others tried the canoe-catamaran route au natural, without the **benefit** of internal combustion. They too arrived exhausted.

Those that are in a hurry and can afford it, arrange for an air service out of Errol to fly them in and out of Richardson Lake (weatherpermitting) the same day. Others search for a secret logging road (as legend has it) that places you near the top of the whitewater stretch. Being paupers, we chose convenience over esthetics, put in our earplugs, and saved our muscles for the whitewater.

The closest town, Errol, New Hampshire lies downstream of the launch site (on Route 26), along a stretch of **Androscoggin** rapids. Errol is one of those quaint New England towns with a gas pump, general store and a hotel. Travelers up Route 16 from Berlin have to look hard to catch the center of town, marked where Route 26 emerges from the evergreens and into the **narrow** Androscoggin Valley. The town hasn't changed much over the years, with most of the population (except the old-timers) slowly sliding away to the south looking for opportunity in the **mills** of Berlin and beyond. Elephant Mountain and other nearby aged peaks strain towards the 4000 foot level, members of the Mahoosuc Range that play second fiddle to the White Mountain range to the south. Perhaps they too look to the south for something...

At the turn of the century, Lake Umbagog was a prime destination resort for the affluent seeking to fish, hunt and boat on the glacial waters of the lake. Bear, moose and deer were abundant, and record trout and pickerel were pulled from the deeper holes now known only by



local fishermen. Great hunting lodges were built on the many islands near the Magalloway and **Androscoggin** ends of the lake: mahogany, teak and chestnut panels along with ornate brass furnishings were pulled across the ice in horse-drawn skids during the dead of winter. The **remaining** structures

of the lodges were built from native timber which supported a booming logging business that drove the north country's economy until the 30's.

Not much is left of the great hunting lodges, the logging camps that fed hundreds of men, or the fur trapping business that brought traders down the Magalloway and

into the Androscoggin on their way to Berlin, Portland and the sea. Double-ended bateaus are rarely seen on these waters, gone with the peavey, the walking bosses, and the spiked boots. Now, pleasure boaters, fishermen and the summer tourist season account for much of the lake's trade, and for a few week-

Getting to the Rapid...

(above) Boaters depart on the Androscoggin River enroute for the Rapid.

(below) Camped at the Cedar Stumps at the head of the Rapid. photos by Scott Underhill



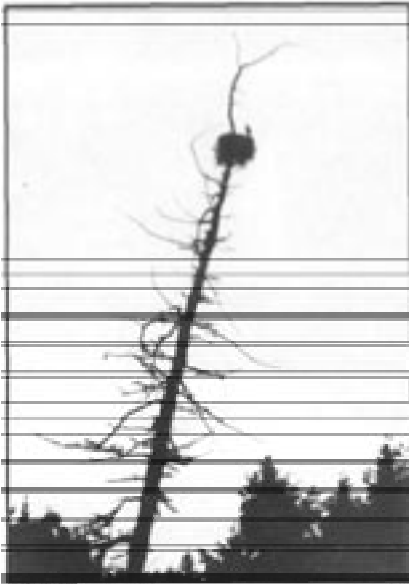


photo by Scott Underhill

An osprey perches in 'nest' above the Rapid.

ends a year, whitewater enthusiasts venture across to spend a long weekend on the Rapid River.

Fresh crosswinds and gusts greet us at the mouth of Lake Umbagog. The lake is wide and open to the elements, with many a flotilla of travelers blown off-course, forced to spend the night on the front porch of a summer cabin or among the scrub that lines the lake's banks. Bird sanctuaries, blind coves and rock studded passages add to our nocturnal excitement: the night engulfs the motor sound, the caravan of boats, and the forest - it's late, the Friday nite drive to northern New Hampshire only the first leg of our trip into the Rapid River. Beams of flashlight skim the water and arc towards distant shores, looking for flag poles, islands, fishing boats or other landmarks to gauge our pseudo-wetback dash across the state border.

The weekend's gear is stowed around, under and beside us; our wake surfs a string of surface kayaks and squirt boats, unmanned but obedient to the tug of the rope which links them together. Few if any other lights are seen on or around the lake; the silence absolute except for the drone of the outboard.

Luckily, the black flies, no

secums, and mosquitos have the night off, saving up their energy for a mammalian assault the next day. An ideal breeding ground for the winged warriors from Hell, the Rangle chain of lakes found upstream include such unpronounceable names as Mooselookmeguntic, Cupsuptic, and Azischohos.

Pairs of eyes shine briefly into the wandering flashlight's beam; maybe it's a raccoon, a porcupine or a possum, washing the rewards of its inky prowl.

After a few wrong turns into driftwood coves, past beaver dams, the occasional summer camp, and on this trip a partially submerged and ambivalent moose, the progress falters as the motor begins to strain

waters separating New Hampshire from Maine.

While the bane of most white-water boaters who aspire to preserve free flowing rivers, dams actually create the limited summer boating season on the Rapid River. The Union Water Power Company schedules releases a few weekends a year from Lower Richardson Lake through local clubs, such as the Appalachian Mountain Club and the Canoe and Kayak Club of Boston. These releases average 1100 to 1400 cfs, providing four miles of Class III - IV near-wilderness whitewater. There are usually releases on Labor Day weekend, and on a couple of other sporadic week-



photo by Scott Underhill

Jack Fuller surveys the Middle Dam on the Rapid

against the current of the Rapid River. Within minutes the pace slows down to a crawl, as boulders are dodged or bounced off of. Sunday Cove is left behind to the right, and the rumbling of the last whitewater stretch is now faintly heard even above the drone of the outboard.

Other canoes, kayaks and rafts congregate among the cedar roots and gravel wash that lines the banks of Cedar Stump, a camping area maintained by Saco Bound Northern Whitewater in Errol. Tired to the bones, a camp pad and sleeping bag beckon after a couple of hours of hide and seek on the dark lake and back-

ends, depending on who arranges the release and how wet the season has been. Word on releases travels fast through local whitewater hotlines, but so far crowds have been infrequent: the logistics of getting into the Rapid weed out all but the most persistent.

A wilderness river by New England standards, occasional amenities introduce an element of safety and rustic comfort. Pit toilets, cleared tent sites and fire rings are found at the Cedar Stump camp. An old logging road runs nearby the whitewater section, unseen through conifer-rich



photo by Scott Underhill

The Big Drops offers a long, continuous section of whitewater for Rapid River boaters.

slopes. Carry Road is an unimproved private road used by Saco Bound to haul rafts, by Lakeland Camps to provide an arranged high adventure shuttle, and by the majority of boaters who prefer to hoof it up to the top of the run.

The shuttle is an experience unto itself. An old rusted out vehicle, usually without brakes, careens up and down the twisting, overgrown path with a bouncing trailer full of boats lurching behind, shrouded in a cloud of exhaust. Last season, the shuttle was the only way out for an unfortunate Outward Bound canoe camper, who fell during the portage around the rapids and broke his neck.

Despite the optional, infrequent shuttle and the occasional commercial presence of rafters, the Rapid River experience is unparalleled. In the eddies, the water is so clean and clear that your boat creates shadows on the boulders three feet below. In the heavier section known as The Drops, froth and foam disguise huge boulders and pourovers, and rim the tops of six foot waves prominent at the top of the rapids. A short hike through open conifer forests brings the smell of balsams, cedar and pungent moss to heightened senses,

the sunlight filtering through open boughs. A sunny outcropping known as Smooth Ledge creates the perfect place for lunch, suntanning and an afternoon of enders, squirts and hole surfing. Another mile of continuous Class IV threads down to the campsite, where the sunset is greeted by loon calls, the departure of the black flies, and dinner around the campfire.

The Rapid is one of the few river experiences in the Northeast that can bring a level of total relaxation after only a weekend. After the bugs call it a day, the campfire solicits stories of past experiences on the Rapid; the day the shuttle caught fire, when levels of 2200 cfs and above were common, and the time when a couple of Connecticut kayakers smuggled in live lobsters and tricked everyone into thinking there were giant crayfish along the bank of the campsite.

Unfortunately, a hydroelectric dam proposal (including a diversion tube that could run the length of the river) threatens to extinguish that campfire and further whitewater use of the Rapid. The proposal calls for the generating station to be built alongside the Cedar Stump campsite, impacting wildlife and recreational use of this pristine wilderness area.

Presently, the project is in the study phase, with an intervention filed by AWA with FERC. Protect your whitewater interests by helping the AWA fight to keep the rapids in the Rapid.

John Porterfield is the Northeast Regional editor for *American Whitewater*. He is the author of *Appalachian Whitewater, Volume III, the Northern Mountains*.



photo by: • M. Chaud

Infamous shuttle vehicle hauls boats back up logging road to the start of the Rapid River run.

For years, Nolan Whitesell was stuck paddling canoes that never felt right. So he switched careers and started a company dedicated to...

Building an open boat to perform

by Chris Koll

Two weeks after Nolan Whitesell effortlessly recorded the first descent by an open canoe of the horrific Niagara Gorge rapids, I ran into Bob Glanville--the Buffalo lawyer/kayaker whose legal efforts opened the river for three sanctioned weekends during the fall of 1987.

Glanville filled me in on the details of the run:

"Well, I picked Nolan up at the airport and we spent a long time Saturday looking at the river..." Glanville said.

"Wait a minute," I interjected. "He flew up? He came by air? How'd he get his boat up?"

"He didn't," Glanville said. "We went out and rented him an old, beat-up Grum-



photo by Steve Lowe

Whitesell drops over 'The Spout' --the left chute at the Great Falls of the Potomac River.

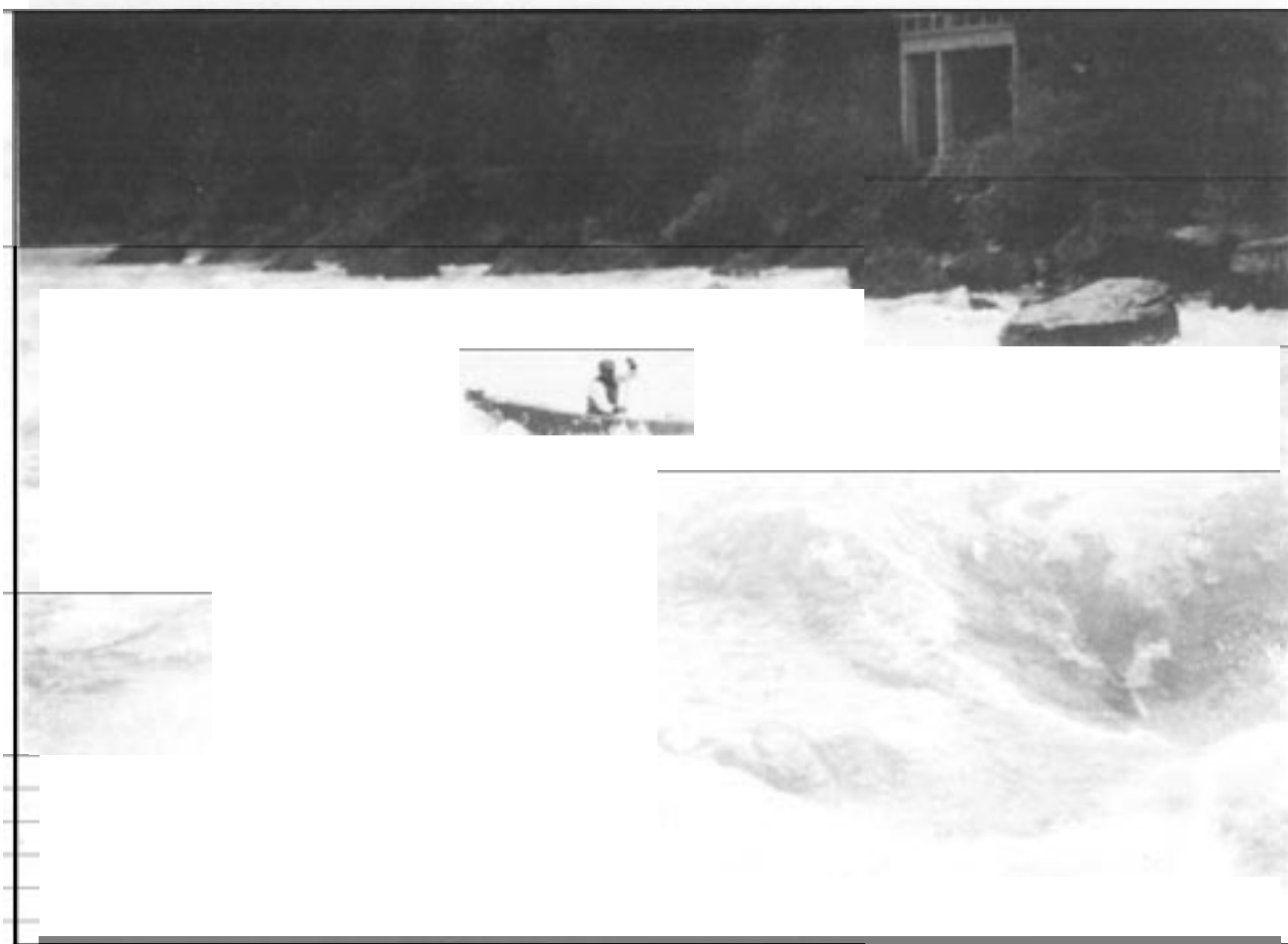
man. The guy at the boat livery asked us, 'You aren't doing any whitewater with this, are you?' We told him...nah."

I've gotta confess: Bob had me going for a while. For a moment, I actually envisioned Nolan jury-rigging thigh straps in some rental boat, its sides covered with pop-riveted patches, then sliding its ribbed keel into the turbulent waters of the Niagara.

I should have known better. Even though I still believe Nolan could paddle a barrel down most whitewater rivers,

you're not going to find him in any craft other than a distinctive red boat with "Canoes by Whitesell" emblazoned on the side.

It wasn't always that way. From the time Nolan built his first boat--a wood framed craft covered with fiberglass--until the time he established his boat-building business in 1982, Whitesell was plagued with the inability to find an open canoe that felt quite right in whitewater.



Whitesell in the 20-foot Himalayas of the Niagara Gorge rapids.

"I was a paddler for many years before I started the canoe business," Whitesell said, "and I was getting fed up with the limitations of designs that were available."

Back then Nolan ran a successful business as a "head-hunter"--finding engineers and chemists for the pulp wood and **petro-chemical** industries. Not surprisingly, Nolan was very good at it from a financial standpoint, but there was little personal fulfillment in his success.

"I was going bonkers," Whitesell admits.

So in '82 Whitesell founded the custom canoe company that bears his name, designing and building open boats to be "playful" in **white-water**. And like practically every small business starting on the ground floor, Nolan struggles as his product gains acceptance and popularity.

"I realized money didn't mean

shit, which is a good thing, because when you first start a company, you don't make a lot of money," Whitesell said. "Some friends of mine, an accountant and a lawyer, both told me I was absolutely *crazy*. They said it wouldn't work. But I was convinced there was a niche that wasn't filled. There were only limited designs out there--there was nothing different."

Now that sounds like a good motive for changing your career and starting a canoe company...you could probably sell the story to your banker and your wife. But sometimes you have to wonder: was the real reason Nolan formed Canoes by Whitesell to sell boats to the whitewater public, or to finally find a canoe that filled his own exacting demands?

Of course, that's a fatuous question. Nolan is completely serious

when he claims "there's a specific niche for my designs."

"No other manufacturer has a serious paddler on staff," Whitesell said. "I'm a paddler--a serious whitewater paddler--and my whole direction, my goal is to produce a boat that's playful."

The boat that Whitesell has come up with--and the model that dominates his sales--is the **14'3" Piranha** made in **Royalex**. Easily recognized by its blunt bow, Whitesell asserts "there is not as good a solo boat anywhere else" as the Piranha.

"My boats are designed to utilize water," Whitesell said. "They go up and around rather than through waves. They take on any wave or curler and put the boat on top or use it to slide **around**."

"Some people say that my boats aren't as fast as other designs, but that characteristic allowed me to



Whitesell negotiates The Falls on North Carolina's Watauga River.

win the open canoe whitewater downriver nationals last year on the Ocoee. The other boats stayed out of the main current in order to stay dry, but I was able to let the water work out in the current. I stayed dry because of the design.

"Our boats are also designed to roll. They have solid final stability...you can lean it way over on its side. That helps the paddler in two ways: you can lean the boat over and bail with your paddle, and while rolling, you only have to get the boat 3/4 of the way up before you achieve a solid platform."

But while Nolan offers a solid basic design, the most attractive feature is his ability to customize the boat to the paddler's individual needs. Whitesell works with the client, listens to his or her requirements, then "custom builds the boat anyway you want it."

"There are a lot of things that can be done," Whitesell said. "They tell me, 'I would like the boat to track a little better,' and we can do that. Of course, there's always a trade-off, but my boats turn so well that we can improve the tracking and hardly notice the difference."

"We can also cut the canoe down for a lighter paddler," Whitesell said. A 110 pound female needs less freeboard than a 200 pound paddler, so we can cut an extra inch

off because she's not putting the boat down in the water as far. We can also make the boat narrower."

The final characteristic of the niche Whitesell is attempting to fill is that of outfitting. For serious whitewater performance, a canoe must first be outfitted with thigh straps, a saddle and floatation. Whitesell offers that service so that a canoe can be taken from his shop directly to a river.

"Most boaters have to spend several weekends putting the outfitting all together after they buy a boat," Whitesell said. "And when you figure that most paddlers only outfit a boat four or five times in their lives...people are really amateurs in setting up a boat."

Because of the additional equipment and labor included in a Whitesell boat, sometimes a direct comparison of a Whitesell canoe with other Royalex models is misleading. Nolan claims you can't compare apples to oranges.

"It's like buying a car...you can't just look at the base sticker price," Whitesell said. "By the time you add tilt steering, radio and tinted windows, you end up 30 percent higher."

"People say my ads are too honest, that I should keep the base price low and sell the accessories afterwards. But I want a paddler to

be able to take a boat out of the shop straight to the river."

There may be a niche for a Whitesell canoe--but even Nolan admits--the niche ain't very big.

"There's no doubt, the market is limited," Whitesell said. "More boats are made for general recreation than any other area. Mohawk, Old Town, Mad River...recreational boats are where they make their money. But I'm not interested in designing flatwater canoes for fisherman-type boaters."

That being the case, Nolan is faced with two options: either increase the number of whitewater enthusiasts who choose open canoes as their preferred craft, or capture as large a share of the current whitewater open canoe market as possible.

Whitesell, of course, would like to do both.

As an advocate for the choice of the open canoe over decked boats or inflatables, Whitesell enjoys an enviable position. A decked boater's argument that their craft enables them to paddle water unnavigable by open canoe carries no credence when talking with Whitesell. Quite simply, he can put his Piranha anywhere a kayak or C-1 would dare.

"The limits of open canoes are nowhere near what they are perceived to be," Whitesell said. "And they are much safer than kayaks in terms of their ability to avoid entrapment. There's always going to be situations where decked boats may have an advantage or canoes have an advantage, but I believe canoes are more versatile."

"As an all-around craft, canoes prove to be the superior boat. There's not nearly the chance of entrapment and if you have a roll, there isn't any water you cannot do."

And as for capturing a larger share of the whitewater open canoe market--there isn't much Nolan can do except get out on rivers across the country and show paddlers what the boat can do...not that he's complaining about the task.

"It's my only marketing tool,"

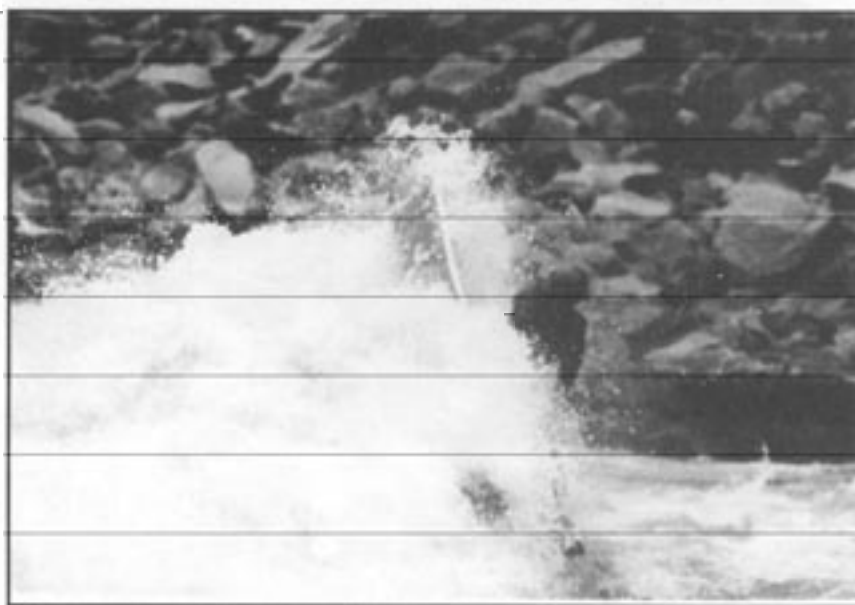
Whitesell said. "The ads I run in magazines are only there for credibility, so a person will put a \$600 check in the mail. Realistically, a 1/12 page ad won't make much of an impression. You need something that's big and impressive. If I wasn't out paddling, I wouldn't have a business."

Nolan needn't worry about actually **paying** for exposure in the media. Exposure just naturally seeks him out--and it's the kind that money can't buy.

Come to think of it, you see him quite often...in spreads featured by national whitewater publications of Nolan on the **Niagara** or the Grand Canyon, on the cover of a whitewater equipment catalog catching Nolan plunging over the Big Sandy's nastiest waterfall, as the star of a whitewater video shot on the Gauley or in his own advertisement superimposed over a photo of Nolan challenging the Potomac's Great Falls.

Each exposure bears a **striking** similarity to the others: here's Nolan, piloting his Whitesell Piranha through the midst of some **Gawd-awful** drop, head up, back straight and his eyes gazing **downstream** with a look of serene anticipation.

Now don't get the impression that I'm implying that Nolan is some kind of media hound. What he is happens to be the premier whitewater open-canoeist in the world today. His exploits are quite real, and



the resulting publicity is well-**served**. In fact, it's great **exposure** for the sport.

But when Nolan says, "I challenge anyone in a competitor's boat to do the things that I have in **my** boat..." well, that doesn't cut **much** ice with me. I don't think there are very many, if any, open boaters **who** could perform the same feats in a Whitesell boat.

It means more when Whitesell says, "I wouldn't be able to do the kinds of rivers I do in any other boat." Hey, everyday I buy product: because some celebrity **yah-hoo** endorses it on television when in reality I know damn well they never use it. If Whitesell has **achieved**

some sort of whitewater celebrity status--you know his endorsement is more than just lip service. He puts his butt on the line with the quality of his product.

I've got a confession to make: I'm something of a closet tech-head. I like to have the best equipment I can buy.

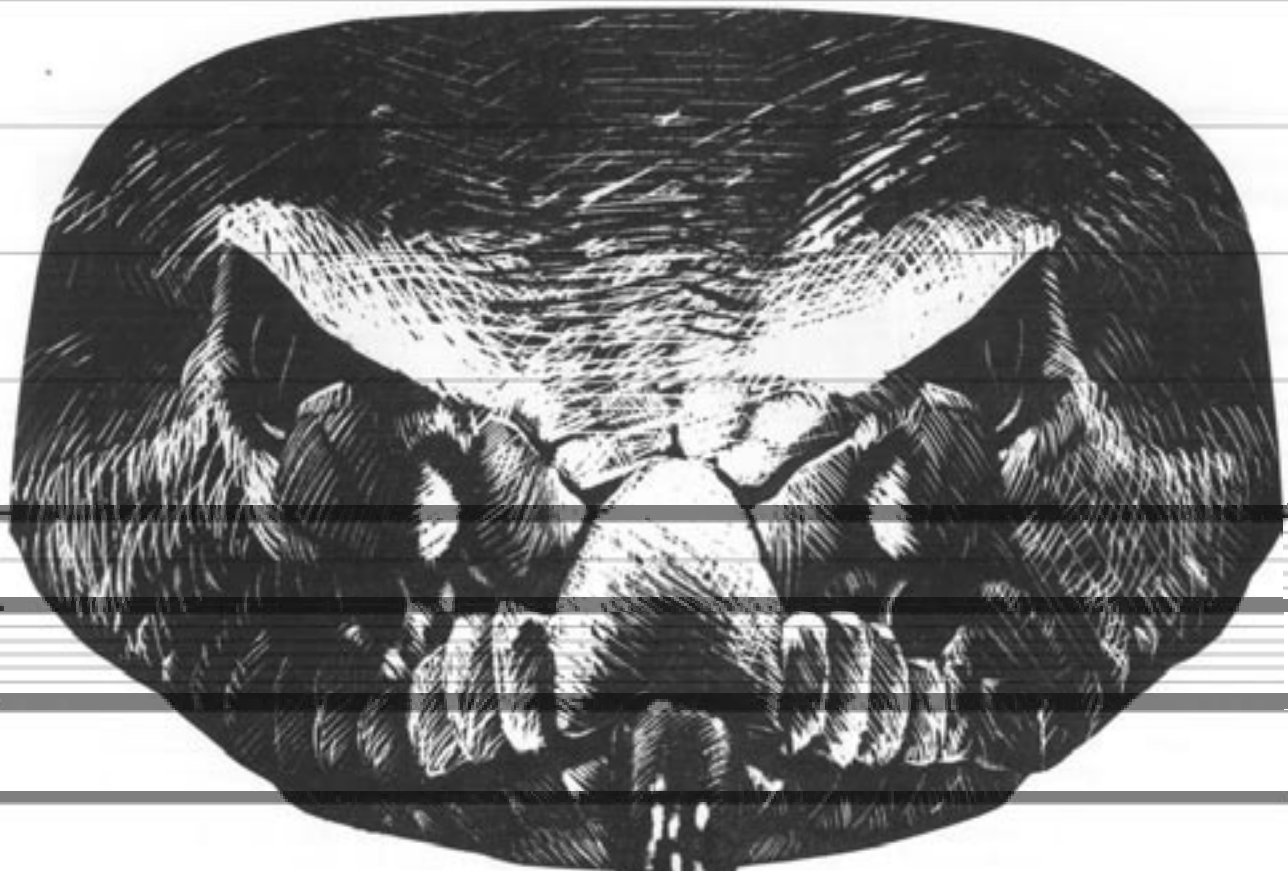
Take alpine skiing for instance...I'm something of a geekster' skier--just point the boards downhill and cruise as fast as I can--but I still go out every season and purchase high-end racing skis and boots even though for my skill level, a recreational ski package would suffice. See, I have this illusion that someday I'm going to get better and I don't want to be held back by my equipment. If I screw up, I want it to be because of **me**--not because my gear is to blame.

And to tell the truth, if I'd ever want to give up my kayak and try open boating, I'd probably buy a Whitesell for much the same reason.

It's a reason Whitesell tries to sell to other open boaters.

"I get a lot of people calling me up for information," Whitesell said, "and they start by saying, 'I'm not good enough for your boat but...' I start to think, wait a minute--anybody is good enough for good quality. A boater's limitations should only be personal limitations, not the limitations of their equipment."





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Canyonlands...

Running into Mexico from Upper Madison is one of the most **magnificent--I mean awesome--** canyons of the trip. This is Thule Canyon. It is **difficult** to see and reach from Upper Madison, but the "trail to the trail" runs directly out of The Patio on the Mexican side along the base of the overhanging bluff.

Once into the mouth of Thule Canyon, you face a mile and a half of the rockiest, scratchiest hiking imaginable, taking the first possible turnoff to the left. After several successive bends to the right, and just about when most normal people are ready to give up, you'll see a tall chimney-shaped opening about 100 feet up on the left side of the canyon. It is not a named cave, but that's the one you're looking for. The last 100 feet upward is also tricky, but the effort is worth it. Once into the mouth of the cave, you will be rewarded with a view unseen by most men--and hopefully you won't mind too much standing in two feet of bat shit to enjoy it!

By now you may have deduced that most normal **people** don't take this trip. At any rate, the bats got there first and have been apparently feeding well for hundreds of years. Seriously--if you have chronic respiratory problems, entrance to this cave is not a good idea. Walking about stirs up too much fine dust.

Half a dozen of us did have lunch here in October, 1987, but did not contribute as much to the **aura** of the cave as the bats did.

Lower Madison Falls lies just two miles below Upper Madison and also is an extensive rock garden. A fresh water spring comes out of a rock ledge just below the falls on the Texas side. It helps to have a funnel at this spring. With water levels above 6 feet, this spring may be covered up. Running at 11 feet in June, 1987, Lower Madison was a huge, smooth, bulging dome of water, with about a **six-foot** drop over the well-covered rocks. Only one of the heavily loaded tandem Old Town Trippers (17 feet) man-

aged to touch a rock going through. That Tripper continued on down, bounced off the side of a raft while **trying** to eddy out, and instantly capsized. The fairly new paddlers in it executed a beautiful "wet exit" through the spray skirt and were pulled out.

Panther Canyon appears just another four miles down river. There is a very large, smooth shelf of rock on the Texas side, split by the canyon's mouth to form a cove and beach where people can pull out and unload for camping and **hiking**. An excellent naturalist, Hal Flanders of Alpine, Texas, was with the June, 1987 trip and conducted a Lizard Tour up Panther Canyon.

Hal has a unique method of catching small lizards, without damaging them, for microscopic examination. It consists of an old car antenna, at the tip of which is a length of fine **fishline** ending in a noose. He can slowly approach a lizard with this device, quickly slip the noose over its neck, and in an instant he has a lizard dangling and ready for examination.

Panther seems to be well stocked with lizards and with Tinajas--basins of water eroded into the rock. It's a great canyon to hike or have lunch but does not have early shade. Panther Rapid is a fairly easy Class II-III, depending on water level.

Perhaps the most scenic canyon of all, **San Francisco Canyon**, lies on the Texas side just 17 miles from the Johns Marina takeout. It offers geologists and rockhounds an exceptionally varied selection of rocks and fossils, in addition to the sculptured cliffs and basins throughout the canyon. About two miles into the canyon is a house-sized boulder blocking the channel. At each end of the boulder, in opposing sides of the canyon walls, are two large caves. They face each other with the boulder forming a pathway or bridge between them. It's a very unusual arrangement and the caves may have been inhabited in "**Pre-Canoeist**" times.

The main attraction here for me, especially during hot weather, is the series of long, cold, spring fed pools winding between the over-

hanging rock. Largely sheltered from direct sun, they are permanent pools whose water remains cool year around. Although not pure enough to drink it does provide a chilling, refreshing swim for anyone tired out by the heat or the hike in.

San Francisco has virtually no late shade and very little early shade on either side of the river. The Mexican side, however, has a much larger campsite with enough river cane to provide some relief from the sun. The rapid here is barely Class I, but both Sanderson Rapid and Agua Verde Rapid are just down river to provide the final thrills of the trip. By the time you pass **Agua Verde Rapid**, the takeout will be in sight.

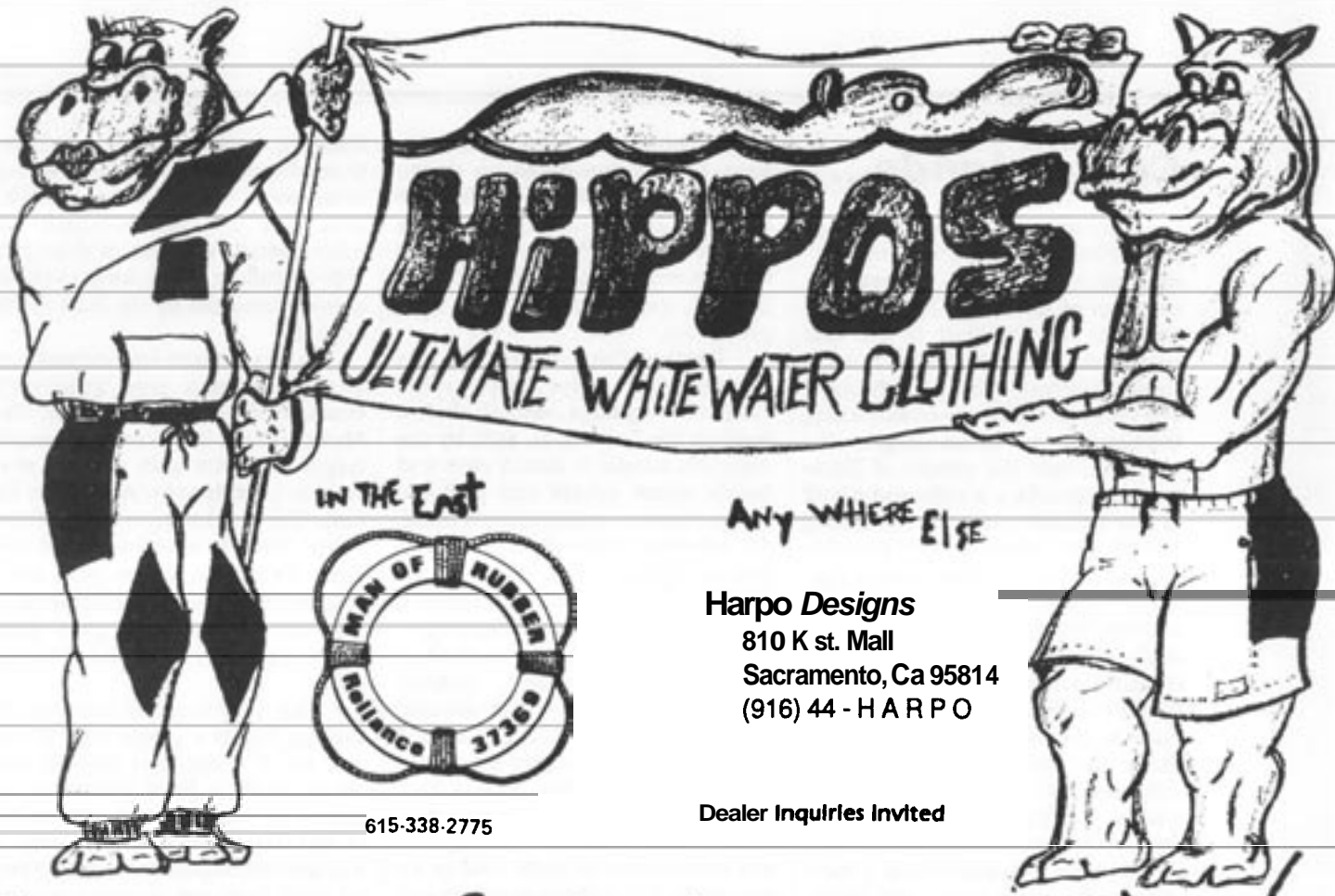
One final word of caution: Although this is a scenic trip, it also can be a dangerous trip at any water level. A Park Permit is required to start the trip, obtainable at Big Bend. If you are a novice or inexperienced paddler, you will be a lot safer (and much better fed and cared for) on a commercial trip.



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Meadow cont.

between several small boulders and dropping over a two foot ledge into a moderate hydraulic. I failed to miss the rock above the drop, went in sideways, catching my bow on a boulder at the edge of the left shore, and banging my stem on a mid-stream rock. The boat tipped downstream and almost capsized, being saved from doing so by my reflexive low brace over the rock and into the hydraulic below. Somehow, I managed to remain upright and to paddle into an eddy on the left shore, where once again, I dumped gallons and gallons of water from my canoe.

By this time, my feeling of terror had become almost absolute. I was hyperventilating uncontrollably and had to make a deliberate effort to calm my pounding heart and quaking limbs. Never have I known such fear and apprehension.

I closed my eyes and tried to imagine myself lying upon the sun warmed beach of a tropical isle with gently undulating waves lapping at my outstretched feet; but my fear invaded my fantasy and turned the gentle wavelets into a roaring tidal wave. So I swallowed my heart and my breakfast sausage for the umpteenth time, got back into my boat and paddled on.

During the time I was portaging "Gateway" rapids, Rusty, Dean and Harvey decided to paddle ahead on the premise that two small parties would progress more rapidly than one large group. Harvey was experiencing considerable pain in his "trick" knee, and needed to get off the river as quickly as possible. This left Ron and Bob to nursemaid me. And nursemaid me they did. They were patient and considerate and offered encouragement and above all, were always there to help me when I went swimming as I did several times. For this, I am deeply indebted to both of them.

My difficulty was compounded by my lacking sufficient strength to maintain control of my canoe, which was often at the brink of

disaster, and saved, not by my ability to avoid hazards, but by my fortunate recoveries. And so I continued on downstream.

The next rapids came in quick succession: 'Big Down-and-out,' a steep Class 5 ledge, 'Taylor's Hole,' where as the tale has it, Bob Taylor, during his first trip down this stream, took a nasty swim as his only **alternative** to spending the rest of the day in the hole. Next came 'Little Down-and-out,' another Class 5 ledge. Then came "Island Falls," marked by the 500 yard long island for which the rapid is named, which diverts about two thirds of the flow into the left channel, while the remainder runs down the right. It begins as a Class 4 complex boulder field/ledge-drop rapid terminating at an eight-foot sheer drop with only one clear landing spot below; that landing being beneath a projecting boulder at the crest of the ledge which only had a thin padding of water. I had managed to make my way to the left shore at the top of the ledge, where I beached my canoe and got out to look.

Having thus far managed to survive more or less intact, and having Ron's assurance that the worst rapids were behind me, I was slowly regaining my confidence and along with it my all-pervading ego. Thus it was that I decided to attempt this difficult drop. I got into my canoe, paddled out of the eddy, took a deep breath, and, lining up on the projecting boulder, launched myself into space.

At this instant, I discovered that I was too far to the right and too slow. The protruding boulder caused me to top to the right, and I landed with my gunwales perpendicular to the water's surface. I immediately capsized, and washed downstream, all the while vigorously attempting to right myself by applying a knuckle-and-paddle brace to the river's bottom. *All* that was accomplished was the leaving of the ~~skin~~ of several knuckles on a boulder or two. As I disentangled myself from my thigh straps and surfaced, I looked about for someone to rescue me before I was swept into the next precipitous drop. And

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there, on a boulder above me on the left shore, was Ron with--was it a rope? No such luck. It was a camera. While I was struggling to save myself and my canoe, here was my guide, the man into whose hands I had placed my very life, recording my shame and humiliation for all the world to see! Fortunately, the water here was moving slowly and I had ample time to swim to shore with my canoe in tow, whereupon I emptied it again and made ready to continue.

The next rapid, according to Ron, was known as 'Sliding Board,' an eight foot, 75 degree sloping rock with a moderate (Class 5) hydraulic at its bottom, followed by more Class 4 boulder-ledge rapids. As I prepared to scout, Ron yelled, "Don't look! Just follow me." To be totally honest, I must admit that following Ron is probably the only reason that I had managed to come out of many of these rapids alive; but any comfort I could take from this was offset by the realization that following Ron was what had got me into them in the first place. Ron later admitted that the reason he advised me not to scout was that he didn't want me to get 'freaked out' any worse than I was already.

So I followed, and managed to negotiate the slide and its hydraulic, taking on only a moderate amount of water. The following were as difficult as those preceding, and I continued hitting rocks, missing chutes, running rapids backwards and somehow accomplishing to swim three more times. Oddly enough, I turned over in the less consequential rapids (Class 4) while remaining upright in the rest (those I didn't or couldn't portage). I bring this to your attention, patient reader, only to salve my wounded pride, which had had to suffer indignity heaped upon embarrassment upon humiliation.

As if I hadn't done enough to overwhelm all but the most hardy and determined paddlers, the river turned mean again, and flowed through a most intimidating piece of mayhem known as "Double Undercut." Bob Taylor, on a previous trip, and probably in a funereal

mood equal to mine, had dubbed this one 'Casket Spray' for a coffin-shaped boulder above the right shore, which was adorned by a fully flowering Rhododendron "wreath."

Here, the river turns abruptly right, drops over a concave four foot ledge, forms a large hydraulic, plunges between a tombstone boulder on the left and the right hand arm of the ledge, and then over a three foot ledge with another swamping hydraulic. If the paddler is still in control of his boat at this point, he has a chance of survival if he can negotiate a quick left turn and a narrow channel between two radically undercut boulders which almost touch each other about five feet above the surface. It was without a moment's hesitation that we all chose to portage this one. We were to find later that Dean Tomko, who was now ahead of our group, had made a daring run through here. It seems that he capsized in the first hydraulic, but managed to "eskimo roll" back up in time to meet the next one, and ran the remainder without mishap.

Somewhere near the middle of the fourth mile, Ron paddled up beside me and said, 'You're through the worst of it now it's all Class 3 and 4 from now on.' I never thought I would greet such a statement as "it's all Class 3 and 4" with such relief. Nonetheless, two of my most spectacular upsets occurred in this final mile and a half. I would relate these episodes, but the memory has blurred, owing to the intensity of the day's experiences. Perhaps I practice selective memory, as well as selective listening.

In long last we came in sight of the Gauley River and the beginning of the rapid known as "Lost Paddle." Here was the site of the eastern landing of the eighteenth century Carnifex Ferry of civil war fame. Here also is the U.S.G.F. Mount Lookout Gauge, which was reading 5.10 feet as we floated by. Rusty, Dean and Harvey were already there. Harvey's knee was very painful and he chose to carry out here, rather than paddle the remaining ten miles of the Gauley to Peter's Creek the next day. The rest of us

hid our boats and gear in the bushes and took turns carrying Harvey's boat up the long steep hiking trail to Carnifex Ferry State Park, where our shuttle was awaiting us.

I am now sitting at my dining room table, wearing bedroom slippers and bathrobe. Even in these comfortable surroundings, and even though several months have passed since the events I have related above, I have only to close my eyes to recall the terrible feeling of near total helplessness in the face of disaster that had been my constant companion throughout this expedition.

Upon reflection, I have been forced to acknowledge (ego not withstanding) that even if I were twice the paddler I sometimes fancy myself to be. I had no business attempting such an undertaking; especially in an open canoe. That I survived. I credit only to luck and the help of my friends. Had I but known what lay in store at the beginning, I probably would have abandoned the idea. But I am one who seems to learn only from experience.

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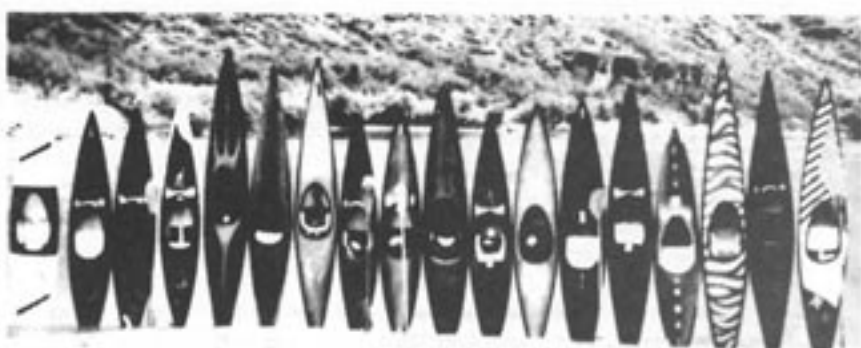
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Goshen...

drop. Avoid the temptation to sneak the heavy stuff by running through the more lightly watered channel to the right of this boulder island because it is festooned with strainers and studded with undercut rocks. Land above the entrance of Devil's Kitchen on the left and take a long hard look at it on foot.

Although Devil's Kitchen may look particularly ominous, the river is not as malicious as it seems.

"It's an open canoe as well as decked boat river," Rose said. "It's actually pretty forgiving. I screwed up a couple summers ago when we had a lot of water--the river was running about 4.5--and dumped in Devil's Kitchen. I just put my feet up and floated out. Usually you can catch a rock so you won't swim long."

Below Devil's Kitchen the Maury provides another delightful Class II-III boulder garden. Then the paddler will find himself at the picnic area where, after Devil's Kitchen, he may wish to use the restrooms near the road.

Leaving the picnic area, the highway, perhaps sensing more accurately than paddlers what lies ahead, again retreats away from the river and remains cowering high above the canyon floor for over a mile. On the river, more small ledges follow the picnic area and culminate in a four-foot drop that requires an S-shaped course. Soon tiny Laurel Run enters the Maury from the right and there are three small drops before Laurel Run affording nice play spots.

Then you reach Comer Rapid. This Class III-IV rapid, located after a sharp bend to the left, is formed from boulders cut from the cliffs on the right. The river is squeezed to the left and through a boulder jumble. Paddlers should run the upper section on the left and then get right for the top section. Avoid being pushed too far right at the top as you'll be squeezed into one of two violent channels; the lower left is ugly, with pinning spots and scrapy channels.

Soon a smoothly sloping rock wall will be seen on the right. This indicates Sloping or Sliding Rock Rapids, a 100 yard long ledge series. The route is straight through on the right. The channel is directly next to the sloping rock wall, which runs uninterrupted into the water, and zooming down this bouncy channel with the rock within arms' reach on the right is like looking out the window of a speeding subway. The eddies against the wall are very entertaining if they can be caught, and they provide opportunities for dynamic eddy turns, exciting surfing chances, and the possibility of customizing your boat by grinding off the bow on an unyielding stone.

Downstream is a long Class III rapids that has some nice surfing waves toward the end. Then the paddler reaches a calm spot known as Indian Pool. Below here is a long 1/2 mile long Class II-III rock garden. After this, paddlers who only want the ziest part of this run can take out on river right after three miles of frolic.

However, first-timers should continue down 2.5 miles to Rockbridge Baths. Although the canyon has opened out into a valley, Class II-III boulder gardens and ledges

continue, with the river occasionally splitting around islands. The last two notable drops are easily recognized and are both within a few hundred yards of the Route 39 highway bridge.

The first is called Lava Falls, after the igneous rock intrusion that forms this rapids. Lava is a Class II-III chute, run on the far right. Good surfing waves are found at the bottom.

Shortly below is Brillo, an abrupt four-foot ledge. Scouting here is in order since the channel is difficult to see from above. The route of choice at low and medium levels is on the far left, but even a perfect run will likely be accompanied by a grinding sound on the hull of the boat, thereby answering how Brillo got its name.

The Route 39 bridge is now in sight, but do not take out here because it is frowned upon by landowners. Instead, continue downstream to the General Store on the left bank in Rockbridge Baths. Now go back and do it again!

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Landmark cont.

of understanding the ins and outs of the 50 page Orange and Rockland case. The bottom line, however, is this: States cannot subsidize hydropower generation if any part of the subsidies are charged to ratepayers in another State. Since almost all electric utilities are connected to electric utilities in other States and since they all participate in big power pools buying and selling energy across State lines, it is hard to see who can escape coverage under the Orange and Rockland case. Unless the case is reversed by the courts, or Congress steps in, it looks like from here on out, new small hydropower developments will have to make economic sense—or not get built.

What motivated the FERC to do what it did in the Orange and Rockland case? No one really knows for sure, but the unholy stink being raised by whitewater boaters and other river lovers about hydropower subsidies may have had something to do with it. Electric utilities have to buy power from small power developers. Utilities are not wild about paying independent companies—anything, much less sums which they consider to be exorbitant. At first utilities were reluctant to fight. But when environmentalists and river lovers also began to complain, utilities began to fight back with more enthusiasm. One of the most aggressive utilities on the block was Orange and

Rockland Utilities, Inc.

The people now making decisions at FERC seem to have faith in only one thing: free market economics. Unfortunately for hydropower developers this faith is not compatible with subsidies for hydropower. The millions and millions of dollars in subsidies to hydropower appeared to make FERC's free-market economists uneasy. With electric utilities bitching and moaning, and with AWA and other groups squawking like stuck pigs about environmental disaster, this unease finally got the better of them. The Orange and Rockland case was the result.

Cheat dams look dim

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Pittsburgh District, has thrown cold water on the recent proposal to build five flood control dams on the upper tributaries of the Cheat River. Tucker County commissioned the report by Dr. Robert Eli and sent it to the Corps.

In a letter to American Rivers, Inc., the Corps stated, "Through a strictly hydrologic analysis, Dr. Eli concluded that five moderate size dams on the Cheat River tributaries upstream of Parson, West Virginia would substantially reduce flood damages to Parsons and nearby communities and would provide lesser protection to points farther downstream along the Cheat River. From a hydrologic standpoint, we generally concur with Dr. Eli's findings. However, although hydrologic feasibility was established, the study did not significantly address environmental, social, engineering, or economic feasibility.

"Because of the indicated relatively **high** cost, it does not appear that construction of the proposed dams could be justified economically under current Corps of Engineers criteria." (emphasis added)

Although this statement is encouraging, the dams are not a dead issue. The fate of the Cheat tributaries probably lies in the hands of Senate Majority Leader Robert Byrd (D.-WV). If Senator Byrd decides that

he wants dams on the Cheat, they have a good chance of being built, economics and environmental considerations notwithstanding.

The Corps is known to be actively studying local flood control measures for Parsons, Hendricks and Hambleton (the principal towns in the upper Cheat watershed), such as dikes and channelization. Conservationists may wish to support such local flood control measures, as an alternative to large scale dam construction.

Yough hydro delayed

Early this year, the hydropower developer at Yough Lake Dam in Pennsylvania had initially proposed plans to construct the project over the summer, and pump only 125 CFS over the dam! This would have devastated whitewater recreation on the Lower Youghiogheny River which annually accommodates over 100,000 rafters, canoeists and kayakers.

(Under heavy pressure,

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the developer backed off, step by step, until he has now abandoned plans to construct his project this summer. He plans to install the project next winter.

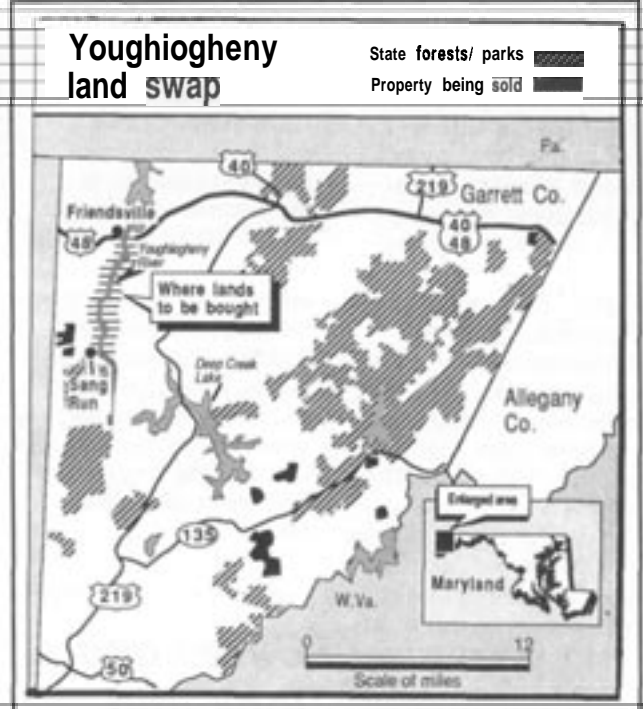
Paddlers owe a debt of gratitude to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources, Congressman Austin Murphy and Larry Adams, Superintendent of Ohiopyle State Park. Pennsylvania state officials held firm in their insistence of a minimum flow of 650 CFS on the Lower Yough. To give credit where credit is due, the Army Corps of Engineers and FERC also helped rein in the renegade hydromaniac.

The fact that the hydro developer has been so difficult to deal with is not good news for the future. After the project is built, he may try to alter river flows in a manner unfavorable to paddling.

Upper Yough land-swap stalls

In what appears to be an interminable struggle to straighten out the mess at the Upper Youghiogheny River, the State of Maryland has become entangled in two new disputes. This time the disputes are over land purchases and commercial raft regulation. Earlier this year, the State announced plans to adopt emergency regulations to control the growth in commercial rafting at the Upper Yough. The emergency regulations are expected to stay in effect until a river management study can be done to set appropriate levels of river use.

As usual with everything involving the Upper Yough, the proposed regulations were controversial in the extreme. No outfitters liked the proposed regulations. No landowners liked the regulations. No private



boaters liked the regulations. And even the State agency which drew up the regulations began backing away from them almost as soon as they were put out for comment. Outfitters want more raft trips. Private boaters want more space (less rafts). Landowners want everybody to go home and leave them alone. The State has no idea of what to do.

Final regulations are expected to come out in late Spring or early summer, possibly before you receive this issue. If past experience in any guide, the regulations will probably be greeted with a groan from everyone and we will be back in the snake pit of controversy, even deeper.

The other problem now surfacing at the Upper Yough involves the State's plans to buy land in the

river corridor. Problems between landowners and boaters at the Upper Yough have been bubbling away for 12 years. There have been trespass lawsuits, even gunfire, at times in the past. Finally after years of acrimony, misunderstanding, and just general ugliness, boaters, landowners, and the State succeeded in reaching an agreement in 1987. The deal was for the State to buy up the land in the river corridor. The only hitch was the county. 78,000 acres (1/5 of the county) is already State-owned and the county wanted no more land taken off the county tax rolls. So in order to buy land in the Youghiogheny River corridor, the State had to agree to sell an equal amount of State land elsewhere in the county. This was finally agreed to

NH passes river law

The state of New Hampshire now has on its books a watered down law that will help protect 6 rivers, 5 of which contain significant whitewater runs. The original bill was to include 12 rivers, 10 of which contained stretches of whitewater.

The bill places a moratorium on the development of new dams, the expansion of new dams and the transfer of water from the each of the proposed rivers for a period of two years. The bill, "considered a step in the right direction" by New Hampshire Rivers Campaign Executive Director Sarah Muyskens,

also establishes an advisory committee that will work with the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services to draft permanent river protection legislation in the year 1990.

Covered in this legislation are several well-known whitewater rivers: Connecticut River (Israel River to MA border), Contoocook River, Merrimack River, Pemigewasset River (main branch), Saco River and the Swift River. This bill also leaves the door open for other Granite State rivers to be added to the 1990 protection list.

NY river inventory gains funding

by all parties and a bill was enacted into law. Years and years of struggle seemed almost over. Whitewater boaters breathed a sigh of relief.

But then State officials announced the details of the land sales plans, and all hell broke loose again. The State proposed to sell off 2,200 acres of State land in various tracts scattered around the county. Some of these tracts are rich in wildlife, including some rare and endangered species. (See map insert). Sportsman's clubs, environmentalists and landowners owning property adjacent to the tracts to be sold are all unhappy. 28 hunting and fishing clubs, organized by the Allegany-Garrett Sportsman's Association began a letter-writing campaign to stop the land swap. If the State caves in, its back to square 1 at the Upper Yough.

Greenbriar studied

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Huntington District, has announced plans to study the economic feasibility of a main stem flood control dam on the Greenbriar River. The Corps of identified four potential dam sites between Cass and Marlinton.

The Corps has eliminated all other flood control alternatives for the Greenbriar Valley from the study, such as local flood control projects. Conservationists are questioning the elimination of such alternatives, and also questioning the economic feasibility of a dam.

Thanks to support by AWA and Ron Dodson of the NY Audubon Society, Assemblyman Bill Hoyt convinced the powers that be to make \$150,000 available during 1987 and 1988 for a NYS rivers inventory. NYS DEC went ahead and created the NYS Rivers Inventory and Assessment project the goal of which was "To support efforts to protect and enhance New York's rivers and their associated resources for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations."

To accomplish this goal, DEC staffers have decided to:

1. inventory significant natural, cultural, and recreational resources associated with New York's rivers,
2. evaluate inventoried resources within each resource category,
3. comparatively assess river corridors based upon the combined value of their resources,
4. prepare a report to show the results of the inventory and assessment, and
5. maintain the data base in a readily accessible, revisable, manipulable form.

They have chosen nearly two dozen "Task Force" and "Working Committee" members to assist in this project and identified ten river resource categories they intend to evaluate. Although neither AWA nor NY Audubon (the original prime movers behind the river program) were invited to participate in the project, two environ-

mental groups, The Nature Conservancy and the Adirondack Mountain Club were given responsibilities for particular assessment efforts. All the other participants were federal and state resource analysts.

One of the other goals of the \$150,000 budget item was to create a NYS "Water Watch" program under the leadership of NY Audubon Society Executive Director, Ron Dodson. Ron's work in Kentucky some years ago revolutionized the entire river and water resource protection strategy of that state. In addition, his leadership skills motivated thousands of concerned citizens to get involved with river protection activities of all kinds. It was this program many envisioned Ron creating in New York.

Although DEC delayed issuance of the contract to

Ron, he did complete most of the work by the deadline. Hopefully, he will eventually be paid for his efforts. Sadly, however, insufficient funds were provided to create the citizen network necessary to facilitate riverway improvements and more robust enforcement of river protection programs. Similarly, only minimal amount has been earmarked for analysis of recreational opportunity attributes of rivers. Finally, no money has been earmarked to analyse the impacts of small hydro development or the unique aesthetic attributes of river segments.

AWA will continue to work with the DEC staff in efforts to modify the focus of this study so that the paddling and aesthetic aspects of free-flowing rivers receive a sharper focus.

Racquette project opposed

FERC issued in late May both the license and environmental assessment for Adirondack Hydro Development Corporation's (AHDC) 2.2 megawatt Sissonville Project near Potsdam on the Raquette River. FERC issued their license in spite of the provision of substantial information about the paddling resources by northern New York paddlers and another intervener, the Norwood Lake Club. AWA plans to appeal the decision in concert with an amalgam of statewide and national paddling and

environmental groups. In issuing their license, FERC relied on their Order 464 override of the NY state Section 401 water quality certification procedure which FERC alleges had exceeded the 1-year limit.

The project will create a sizeable new impoundment and inundate a Class II - III set of rapids heavily used by northern New York paddlers for race training and instruction. The section of the Raquette to be inundated is one of the river's few free-flowing sections outside the Adirondack Park.

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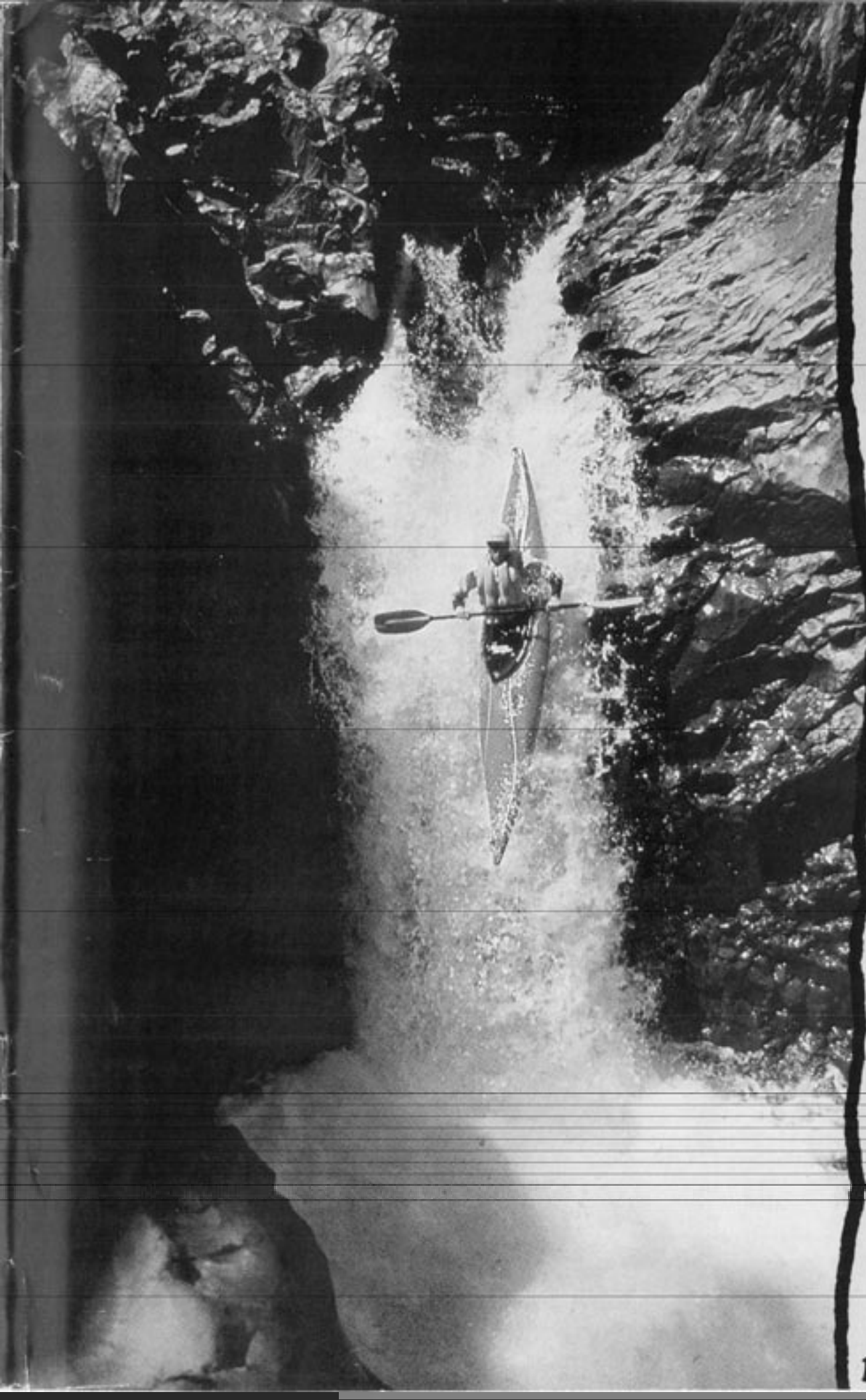
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