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american whitewater

Journal of the American Whitewater

Volume XXXVIII, No. 4

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Blame

By Bob Gedekoh

There are lots of good places to day-dream. Work, for example. Or school. Or your mother-in-law's living room. But the pool just above the rapid called the Brink of Disaster on West Virginia's Lower Meadow River is definitely not a good place to day-dream.

But that's what I was doing yesterday when I paddled right into the Brink as if I didn't have a worry in the world. Now you have to understand that although I ran that particular rapid once or twice about fifteen years ago, I hadn't paddled it since. Why not?

The Brink of Disaster is a steep convoluted slide that is swift and shallow. To make matters worse, at the base of the slide most of the water slams into a barely submerged rock. If you flip in the Brink you are likely, at best, to lose some hide. And because of the erratic turbulence, flipping is a distinct possibility. So on my last four or five trips down the Meadow I haven't even bothered to scout it. I just shouldered my boat and hit the convenient portage trail that circumvents both the Brink and very next rapid, which is an infamous class VI, the Home of Sweet Jesus.

So what possessed me to attempt the Brink yesterday? Well, the truth is I didn't run the Brink on purpose. I did it by mistake. In spite of the fact that I have paddled the Lower Meadow at least eight times during the past year, I just wasn't paying attention to



where I was. I was thinking about my upcoming trip to Colorado. And I had a great Patty Loveless tune playing in my head. So over the brink I went.

A nanosecond later I realized that something was amiss. A nanosecond after that, when I had careened about halfway down the slide, I realized where I was.

"Oh my God," I said to myself. "There has been a terrible mistake! I'm in the Brink of Disaster!"

The next thought that flashed through my befuddled head was one of righteous indignation. "Who is responsible for this?"

By the time I spun into the pool at the bottom of the rapid, fortuitously upright and unscathed, I was feeling a little foolish. Because I realized that the only person I could blame for my misadventure beside myself was Patty Loveless. And that seemed a little farfetched.

But the incident had unmasked, once again, one of my few faults (besides being

cheap, sarcastic, and lazy): my tendency to blame other people for my misfortunes. This is a failing that my mother decried when I was still a child. You know the scenario, the unhappy four-year old, who can't find one of his favorite toys, demands to know who hid it.

Of course, I am not the only one with this childish tendency. The pathologic need to affix blame whenever something bad happens seems epidemic in our culture. Just consider the tone of the evening newscasts.

When a plane goes down, there is immediate speculation regarding the abilities of the pilot, the air traffic controllers, the mechanics, the airline executives and the little old lady in Peoria who packaged the salted peanuts that they passed out mid-flight.

When a multi-vehicle accident occurs on the highway, the newscasters invariably tell us whether charges will be pressed. And the blood alcohol level of everyone within a mile of the wreck is targeted for discussion.

When a deranged adolescent goes on a rampage and murders his classmates, there is a media feeding frenzy of attribution. "Inadequate parental supervision, inattentive teachers, incompetent school administrators, insensitive NRA activists..." Surely someone must be held responsible!!!

When an injured child is brought into an emergency room, there is essentially a presumption that the child had been abused or

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On occasion **American Whitewater** publishes official organizational policy statements drafted and approved by the Board of Directors. These policy statements will be clearly identified.

Staff

Editor: Bob Gedekoh, Box 228, R.D.#4, Elizabeth, Pa. 15037

Emeritus Editor: Chris Koll

Contributing Editors: John Weld, Pope Barrow, Ambrose Tuscano, Bill Sedivy

Art direction/Graphic design/Production: John K. Victor, Mary Hoffelt

Contributing writers: Carla Garrison, Jonathan Katz, Ed Ditto, Lee Belknap, Joe Greiner, Mark White, Bruce Farrenkopf, Nathan Lewis, Brik Miller, John Foss, Paul Tefft, Howard Davidson

Production Assistant: Richard and Teresa Augustin

Advertising Director: Phyllis Horowitz, Box 636, Margaretville, New York 12455 (914)586-2355

Safety Editor: Charlie Walbridge, 230 Penllyn Pike, Blue Bell, PA 19422; Phone 215-646-0157; fax 215-643-0668; e-mail 73514.1714@compuserve.com

Conservation and Access Editors: Rich Bowers, Jason Robertson, John Gangemi, 1430 Fenwick Lane, Silver Spring, MD, 20910 Phone (301)589-9453 Fax (301)589-6121, e-mail: richb@amwhitewater.org, jason@amwhitewater.org, jgangemi@digisys.net

Missing Copies and Address Changes: Contact Phyllis Horowitz

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neglected. The parents are guilty until proven innocent.

Don't misunderstand, I'm not minimizing the importance of air traffic safety, alcohol related driving deaths, violence among teens or child abuse. I'm just saying that irresponsible and premature finger pointing can cause a lot of pain and it doesn't really do much to solve a problem. But that never seems to stop us. With the encouragement of *Court TV* and *Judge Judy* and *Ally McBeal*, Americans have become the most accusatory and litigious people on earth.

Sadly, the whitewater community is not immune to this. Just listen to the chat around your campfire or leaf through some clubs' newsletters. Or better yet, monitor one of the internet newsgroups devoted to paddling after a whitewater fatality has occurred. The insensitivity and shrill, accusatory tone of some of the postings is depressing.

"Someone must be to blame. We just have to figure out who!"

"They didn't scout adequately. They didn't set safety. The group was too small. They were paddling over their heads. They didn't have the right rescue equipment. They were cocky and careless. They had no business on the river at that level. It was the design of the boat."

And on ... and on ... and on.

All too often these opinions are simply the cruel and reckless speculations of individuals who did not know any of the principles involved, have never paddled the river where the incident occurred, and do not really know any of the details of the accident. It is easy to criticize someone when you don't have to look them in the eye.

Hey, we all have close calls once in a while. Lots of times it's just bad luck.

And sometimes it's the result of a mistake. We all make them, don't we? Fortunately, as I demonstrated at the Brink of Disaster, most of the time we get away with them.

But when a serious whitewater mishap occurs, especially a fatality, everyone directly involved does a lot of soul searching. The survivors are inevitably in a lot of pain and they are especially vulnerable to ill-considered remarks. The last thing they need or deserve is someone callously suggesting that they were *to blame*.

The bottom line is that whitewater accidents are just that...accidents. No one sets out to make accidents happen. Sometimes, in spite of our best intentions, they just do. Most river mishaps happen quickly and without warning. No one sees them coming. There usually isn't much time to strategize; often the entire incident is over in a couple of minutes. It is easy to look back on a tragic situation and speculate about what could have been done to prevent it. In medicine, we call that looking through the retrospectroscope. Used judiciously, the

retrospectroscope can be a useful learning device. But in the wrong hands it can inflict a lot of harm.

The sad but undeniable truth is that determining *who is to blame* will never resurrect the dead.

I am not suggesting that we should not attempt to learn from whitewater accidents. Not to do so would only compound the tragedy. Whitewater accidents and fatalities should be thoroughly investigated by experts to see if anything can be done to prevent similar occurrences. For longer than I can remember, Charlie Walbridge has been doing this for *American Whitewater* in a laudable manner. Faced with the unpleasant and unenviable task of querying the survivors of whitewater accidents, Charlie has earned our respect by being tactful, sensitive and non-judgmental. He does not approach these investigations with a cavalier or accusatory attitude. There is no doubt that Charlie's insights, based on his objective investigations, have prevented a lot of whitewater misadventures.

This issue of *American Whitewater* contains several letters in which the subject of whitewater accidents is addressed. I am happy to say that none of them contain any gratuitous finger pointing. In an insightful

letter to the editor, veteran hair boater Paul Schelf asks whether the shortness of the new generation of creek boats might be contributing to the recent surge in fatalities among expert boaters. Another thoughtful letter, contributed by our resident humorist Jonathan Katz, takes a serious look at whitewater risk taking and its potential consequences.

Perhaps the most memorable of these communications is the long, introspective letter to the whitewater community written by Rosi Weiss, the widow of Olympic slalom racer Rich Weiss, who died last year paddling the White Salmon River. In her letter, Rosi reveals the terrible depth of her loss and discusses some factors that she believes may have contributed to Rich's death, in hopes of preventing similar accidents. Rosi raises some important points and makes some valuable suggestions, but, in the end, she doesn't blame anyone for what happened.

It seems to me that if Rosi Weiss, who has lost the person dearest to her in the whole world, can take this approach, we all can. The time has come for all of us to quit worrying about *who is to blame* for the whitewater tragedies of the past and to start concentrating on *what we can do to prevent* whitewater tragedies in the future.



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Letters

Boaters Decry Police Harassment in Tennessee

Dear Bob:

This letter is to inform our members about an ugly incident that occurred at Frozen Head State Park, near Wartburg, TN, and the Emory-Obed rivers, on the night of April 10. There were approximately eight Morgan County Sheriffs and a state park ranger who descended upon a group of campers from central Kentucky at around 2:00 AM, and conducted a warrantless, illegal search of their cars and personal belongings, without probable cause. They said they were looking for "drugs and guns;" however, none were found in this Gestapo fashion "raid."

The Sheriffs only harassed campers who had canoes or kayaks on top of their cars. Because of this, it is not unreasonable for those in the boating community to view this as a "message" to all boaters. This was a gross violation of the Constitution's *Bill of Rights*, which states there shall be no unreasonable search and seizure. It is hard to imagine that this sort of thing could even happen in this country.

It would seem the Sheriffs Department has not quite gotten the message that boaters are not some radical fringe element whose rights they can trample on at will, but tourists who bring real dollars to their local economy. I am sure that the local businesses who depend on the tourists dollars for a living would be shocked and never condone their Sheriffs behavior. Likewise, I would say the fine people of Morgan County would be equally embarrassed, especially since many make their living working for a major canoe and kayak manufacturer (Dagger). It used to be that the only thing we had to worry about was having our cars broken into by thieves. Now it seems that we also have to worry about our cars being broken into by the police, while we stand by helplessly watching.

Sincerely,
James E. Daniel
Frankfort, KY

More Police Harassment?

Attn: Bradley J. Brown, Mayor
P.O. Box 56
Tallulah Falls, GA 30573
Dear Mayor Brown:

I am writing to you in regards to an incident which occurred on April 17th of this year. Two friends and I attended the Tallulah

Falls kayaking event hosted by your community. We had made the decision to go to the gorge, and upon our arrival at the registration site, a patrol vehicle proceeded to pull in behind us. The officer stated that he had received a complaint. This would be an impossibility, since we had just arrived. He then called in our license plate number. Meanwhile, we were questioned regarding whether we had taken any alcohol or marijuana. We had not. There was now a second officer present and both made several presumptive statements, implying that my friends and I were marijuana users. This was both uncalled for and offensive.

The patrolman then requested permission to search our persons and our vehicle; we declined. We retracted this refusal when we were given the alternative of jail time. Both our persons and vehicle were searched in their entirety. This process, which discovered nothing, took over twenty minutes. Once satisfied, both patrolmen wished us a nice day and proceeded to leave the scene.

The derogatory manner with which we were treated reflected negatively on your police department. I felt as if we were being discriminated against due to the fact that we were kayakers. This situation was very unsettling for me, since I am an avid kayaker and had enjoyed my previous trips to the area.

Tallulah Falls benefits greatly from kayaker's who frequent the area, therefore bringing a great deal of commercialism. This type of harassment not only offended me, but if continued could cause the demise of this commercial income. The possibility of such economic loss made me think that you would appreciate being made aware that such harassment and professionals under your direction are demonstrating unjustifiable behavior.

I am sure that Tallulah's reputation is important to you and your community, therefore I felt unable to allow this incident to go unreported. I was greatly offended and question ever returning to the area. If you desire to maintain Tallulah's positive reputation and prevent further such incidences, a departmental evaluation may be in order.

Thank you for your time.

Note: Acopy of this letter has been sent to The Mayor's Office, the *Cornellia* Tribune, and the Clayton Tribune.

Sincerely,
Harry Field
Chattanooga, Tennessee

Thanks for Tallulah

To Whom it May Concern,

We are writing to thank all of you for your efforts in successfully opening the Tallulah gorge to "riverrats," as the people of Tallulah named us.

We heard about the opportunity in the A.W.A. magazine and applied for permits

immediately. We received them a few weeks later. After many frantic phone calls, 4 flights, 2 layovers, 1 hired car, a beautiful campground, and air freight cargo for our boats, we made it back to Colorado. Having successfully run the gorge on Saturday and Sunday; the only injury - a broken paddle blade on The Thing!

The entire operation was well organized from the registration, release, the safety, to the shuttle service (Thank you Perception). We just wanted to thank everyone involved, especially the A.W.A. and the man that opened the valves!!! Also to the people of Tallulah who made us feel so welcome.

We had a great time and will hopefully be back. When can we apply for permits for the next release? If you want any photos or comments for A.W.A. we have some great shots. Also if you would like any assistance with safety during releases, we would be more than happy to help out on the river.

Thanks again, sincerely yours.


Bill Demerest
Ken Hoeve
Paul St Ruth
Vail, Colorado

Behave Yourselves!

Dear AWA Editor,

I would like to express my opinion of an event that occurred this past weekend. This is not a new topic for your magazine, in fact, as I read through this month's edition (March/April 1998) there is already an editorial ("Show Some Respect" by David Russell) addressing the same issue. That issue is the public behavior of boaters.


My wife and I, along with several good friends, attended the Tallulah Gorge Festival this past weekend. Saturday night we camped at a public campground that is generously maintained and provided by Georgia Power. We arrived at our sites around 10PM and noticed two other groups of boaters, an elderly man and his family on a fishing trip, and



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one or two other families just camping. The larger group of boaters had already started drinking and partying at an unusually loud level. After an hour or so of this rudeness, my wife went over and asked them to please turn down (not "off") their music, which they did for a short while.

Within 30-45 minutes, the music was turned back up, and while not as loud, the difference was made up for with whooping and hollering. Shrill laughter and loud singing echoed through the gorge and across the small lake. As I lay in my tent, I heard loud comments by the disrespectful group such as, and I quote, "Hell, this is a festival so lets make it one" and "On the count of 3, everybody yell." I was very embarrassed to be associated with the kayaking community at that time. Later that night, one of my friends informed me that they had called the police because it had gotten so bad.

To top it all off, when we left the next morning, their camp and the close surrounding area looked like a trash pile. Cans and bottles littered the area, gear was hanging everywhere, and cars parked with no regards to the marked-off site lines. We left early that morning and maybe they did clean up, but once a person sees boaters like this, that's their impression. I can only hope that an employee of Georgia Power did not see that mess. If this group wanted to throw a party, then they should have gone away from the public areas.

I very much agree with Mr. Russell's letter in that the local people should not have to tolerate the "freeness" of the river lifestyle. They should not have to look at our bare-butts or listen to our loud stories of bravado in their restaurants. In the eyes of many people, our kayaks and canoes deserve no more attention than if we had a ladder tied to the top of our vehicles; they could care less about our sport. As a result, when one boater makes an "ass" of himself it makes all boaters look bad.

A tremendous amount of work has gone into making Tallulah Gorge an enormous success. Tireless efforts have paid off and provided the paddling community with a "whitewater jewel." I can only hope that boaters respect the local community enough to maintain good relations. It's not enough to just exceed our own expectations as river-runners; we must exceed the expectations of those who allow us to park in their fields, eat in their restaurants, use their restrooms and camp in their forests.

To those paddlers who think that we are immune to public backlash I would like to include a section from a climbing guidebook. The book is the 3rd edition of *The Climber's Guide to North Carolina*, written by Thomas Kelly.

ACCESS PROBLEMS IN NORTH CAROLINA

Climbers in North Carolina are now facing many of the access issues that are affect-

ing climbers across the nation. Since the publication of the first edition of this guide, North Carolina climbers have lost access to several important climbing areas.

Both public and private landowners are troubled by a variety of issues including vandalism, illegal camping, littering, bolting, and loss of privacy caused by public use of their lands. Climbers are learning that access, the legal system, and environmental ethics are inseparable. The difficult questions facing the future of climbing must be addressed by the climbing population. The climbing community is composed of people, many of whom are mavericks and independent people, but the time has come to actively encourage cooperative action and the political behaviors that will be required if the sport is to survive this decade.

Climbing should survive if every climber could do the following:

1. Obey all regulations on public lands.
2. Exit state parks by the posted closing hour.
3. Avoid areas closed because of the presence of endangered plant and animal species.
4. Treat everyone, but especially local residents, with respect.
5. Don't litter, leave fire rings, cause destruction of property, or become a nuisance to local landowners.
6. Give people the idea that you are practicing a reasonably sane sport. Don't give anyone liability jitters."

Boaters should reread number's 4, 5, and 6.

Remember, our actions represent many others and affect many things. Please be considerate and respectful to those around you.

George Prince
Charlotte, NC

Defends New Jersey Whitewater

Dear AWA Editor,

I was a little perturbed by the article on New Jersey paddling by Donna Nussenblatt that appeared in the last issue of the Journal. New Jersey gets a bad rap for being the "Toxic State," the "Pavement State" and the "Strip-mall State." Although New Jersey is probably much better than most people imagine, many of those perceptions are grounded in some kind of fact. However, New Jersey does not deserve a reputation as the "Flatwater State."

In her article, Donna Nussenblatt provides some interesting perspectives on finding fun in flatwater rivers. That is a fine thing to do. However, she also suggests that New Jerseyans have to make due with little ripples for want of anything better. I've only been paddling since June 1997, and I can name five class III, two class IV, and one class V-VI,

rivers or rapids in the Garden State. There are more class II rivers and playspots than I can begin to name. Considering New Jersey is a pretty tiny state, that is not bad! For New Jerseyans willing to travel for two or three hours, a plethora of whitewater delights for every skill level are available in the neighboring States of New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and Maryland.


I just don't want the rest of the country to have one more bad notion about my poorly maligned state. Just because one New Jersey paddler (who paddles a Corsica Sand considers it tippy) can't find the good stuff here, doesn't mean it doesn't exist.

Randy Solomon
Trenton, New Jersey

Note to Editor: The rivers are...

Class III	Rockaway Creek Wicktacheokee Creek South Branch Raritan River Pequanac River Lamington, or Black River
Class IV	Loakatong Creek (also CIII depending on level) Roakaway River (Boonton Gorge)
Class V-VI	Great Falls & Little Falls in Patterson on the Passaic River

Editor's reply: Gee...maybe I should cancel my Colorado vacation and head to New Jersey!



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

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

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

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

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

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

pictures, include a self-addressed stamped envelope with your submission. Because we publish in black and white, photos with a lot of contrast work best.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Short Creek Boats

Dear Editor,

A good kayaking buddy of mine recently remarked that all of the recent high-profile kayaking fatalities of the last 12 months have involved boats shorter than 10 feet and less than 70 gallons in volume. This common denominator has not received much attention. The explanations that you do hear for the deaths focus on:

#1) the increase in the number of boaters on the water #2) the higher difficulty of what's being run

I have never been totally satisfied with these explanations since they do not explain the sudden surge in deaths nor do they explain why the likes of Rich Weiss have died. Statistically, if these two explanations were in fact the reason why more boaters are dying, then we would have seen a gradual increase over "x" number of years, not a sharp spike. Also, the fatalities we would expect to see on established class 5 runs, like the Upper White Salmon, would be in the category of boaters who were relatively new to the sport and relatively less experienced with class 5 water. Seasoned experts with superb boat control, like Weiss, have been running established class 5 runs (vs. cutting-edge descents) safely for time immemorial. Tim Gavin's death in March on West Virginia's Upper Blackwater is particularly noteworthy when it comes to subject of boat size. Tim had a reputation as an extreme creeker, one who often paddled solo on the hardest water. Yet he didn't die attempting a wild solo run. He died in a well-known undercut, paddling with a friend, at an ideal flow, in a creek boat with a stern wall and air bags, and with a rope and safety gear. Not long before Tim's accident, another local creek boater broached in exactly the same spot, but his longer boat bridged the gap and the paddler had time to exit the boat safely.

It's the contrast between these two outcomes in virtually identical circumstances that gets one thinking about boat size. Tim was in a 9.3 foot short creek boat, and the other paddler was in an 11.4 foot cruising creek boat.

The shift to very short boats has been rapid. Rodeo boats are leading the charge, and are commonly used for class 5 river running. But the "pure" creek boats now coming out are also very short, primarily to make them more maneuverable in tight quarters and better at boofing drops, but also to satisfy demand by buyers for river running boats that play well too.

This becomes a problem when your creek boat no longer maintains its momentum, holds its angle, or bridges gaps like the boats common just two years ago. These problems are magnified when you run class 5 in a rodeo boat, which is not only short, but also has sharply reduced buoyancy.

My understanding is that all of the high-

profile kayakers who died in the last 12 months were in rodeo boats or short creek boats. Chuck Kern was one of the great creek pioneers of the era. Rich Weiss was the most accomplished US men's whitewater kayaker in history. Pablo Perez was on the US rodeo team. Why them and why now?

I don't recall any boaters of this stature being killed on the river in the last two decades, until last year. Zero. Now several have died in the span of one year. The explanations involving gradual trends over many years (more boaters and harder rivers) don't add up. By contrast, the transition to very short boats, especially among top paddlers, was a rapid development, occurring in the space of about two years and coinciding with the string of high-profile deaths. It speaks to the question, "why now?"

We will never truly know the cause-and-effect relationship, if any, between boat size and these deaths. But it may well be an important safety issue. I myself own a rodeo boat and a short creek boat. These boats are great fun, and I doubt I'll be trading them in any time soon. At the same time, I'll certainly be careful where I take them.

Paul Schelp Kensington, MD

Short Creek Boats Editor's Reply...

Dear Paul,

This winter, I had been boating with a number of guys who had short boats and they were making a lot of slot moves and boofs look easy that I made look hard. It had to be the length of their boats, right? Surely they weren't just better boaters!?! So, I purchased a new, high-volume creek boat that is 8' 6" long... more than a foot shorter than my last boat (which seemed very short when I bought it.) Needless to say, I read your letter with considerable interest.

It was not uncommon for me to get transiently broached in my old boat (for a few seconds). That doesn't happen nearly as often with my short boat. I thought that was a good thing, but after reading your letter, I'm not so sure. As you implicate, perhaps being broached with your head above water is better than being trapped under water in a sieve.

One of the old time creek boaters around here says of the new, short creek boats, "They're creek boats for folks who don't belong on creeks. The boat designers are trying to make creeks accessible to everyone, including those who don't have the requisite skills, experience and reflexes." He thinks that if you need a short, fat boat to paddle a creek, you don't belong there. He is concerned that the availability of the short boats will lead to an epidemic of accidents.

I don't agree with him completely. As you point out, many of the fatalities that

occurred last year involved boaters whose expertise was beyond question. But I do think that there are a lot of relatively new, inexperienced boaters who are attempting to run steep creeks too soon... in all kinds of boats.

And, in general, a lot of boaters are tackling extreme whitewater without really considering the consequences. There is no arguing with statistics. Running class V+ water is dangerous. Being good helps, but it doesn't guarantee your safety. Last year's experience suggests that *no matter how talented you are*, if you run class V+ water frequently, there is a *significant* chance that you will get hurt or killed.

I really like my new boat and I'm going to stick with it. I think the length helps me stay out of trouble. Besides, I'm not really paddling extreme, cutting edge stuff. But I agree that your concern about short boats is worth considering. Maybe the bottom line is that you are less likely to get into trouble in a short creek boat, but if you do, it is more likely to be *serious trouble*. And it goes without saying that short boat length and bravado are not substitutes for common sense, experience, and skill. I have no doubt that your letter will stimulate a lot of discussion.

Bob Gedekoh



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No Laughing Matter Jonathan Katz Speaks Out

Dear Bob,

My surprise and pleasure at seeing you online at last was tempered by the circumstances: You had written and posted on "rec.boats.paddle" an obituary for another dead expert boater. I didn't know the deceased and I'm glad to say I don't know any paddlers who have died on rivers ... yet. Some of my old buddies from a few years ago have left me behind and have become Blackwater/Bottom Moose regulars and genuine steep creekers. They paddle water that can kill them, and there have been some close calls.

Lets stop kidding ourselves about the close calls: I'm not talking about near death experiences, people revived by heroic CPR, and evacuated by helicopter. I'm talking about people getting in trouble on rapids and escaping unscathed, pinning on undercuts, swimming under strainers, coming up smiling when—three feet to the left and they're dead. There's a lot of sheer luck that never makes the papers, or the newsgroups, or this magazine. Go ahead. Ask yourself: how many genuine near misses have you had?

Certainly after last year anyone who follows our sport got the message that even experts die on hard water. Then they turn the page and read the results of the extreme races. You are closer to the top end of this sport than I ever want to be. Do you know any experts who have changed their behavior because people are getting killed? Anyone shying away from hair runs? Anyone driving home because the river is high and rising? Anyone portaging more? And, if so, what is the perception among their fellows? Are these newly cautious experts seen as a new breed of smarter paddlers who want to live to boat another day? Or are they wimps? Wussies? Or worse? Do they get left behind by their buddies who are more willing to paddle on the edge? Is anyone getting the message?

Or are we simply going to learn to live with the casualty rate, accept these kind of deaths like we accept deaths on the highway, or tobacco and alcohol deaths, or firearms deaths, (or the sublethal mayhem in the NFL) as just part of the price of admission to FunWorld? I fear that people will get hardened, callous, accept the higher level of expert deaths as part of the risk of the sport. Make a buck selling bumper stickers: ADRENALINE KILLS. Sort of like the way climbers accept mountaineering deaths. A helluva lot of people get killed in the Himalayas (and on Mount Washington), and people are still lining up to climb. Anatoli Boukreev, arguably the best of the best, was killed last December in an avalanche on Annapurna.

"He died doing what he loved," his fellows say, as they strap on their crampons, rope up and head into the storm.

The more critical thinkers do a kind of diagnosis/rationalization: the boater made a mistake and died. I won't make that mistake and I won't die. Combine this with the confidence—the aggressiveness—the arrogance—that it takes to be a top-level, expert paddler. You have to believe you can make the move to make the move. And the best of the best will try the move, and 99 times out of 100, or 999 times out of a thousand, they will make it. And that means that out of every hundred or thousand runs a good boater is going to die. And give us something to write about, and think about as we drive to the same river, to make—to TRY to make—the same move.

OK. So how do we cut down on the carnage? It's not easy. Sometimes we carry. Maybe if you don't carry a few rapids a year you're taking too many risks. Sometimes we drive away. And that's hard. My buddy Ted (the inspiration for Bam Bam McBride) and I drove to the Hudson one spring day. When we got to the takeout it was 28 degrees and there was a sleet storm. The river was approaching 6 feet and rising. "That's a West Virginia river," he said. "If you want to paddle down there, you better be able to do this here." I was paddling an open boat, and I thought about going down into that remote, freezing gorge, hitting a hole wrong, swamping, swimming, losing my boat and washing up on shore, battered, exhausted, soaked and freezing, with no boat and no fire, facing a long hike in an uncertain direction. It sounded like a survival situation to me. So I looked at Ted and said "no," and because I had the keys we both drove home. To his credit he never tried to talk me into changing my mind, and he didn't tease me—then. He was angry and didn't say much of anything.

We've paddled lots of rivers together since then, but we haven't aborted any runs, and Ted still kids me about the day I chickened out on the Hudson. And I smile and take it. The people who paddled that day didn't have any fun. And maybe I saved my life by driving home. And maybe, just maybe, I saved his.

(I have another buddy, the inspiration for Omaha. He'd run anything, open boated the Boreas in flood. One day he was C-cling Hubbard Brook, a 300 foot per mile monstrosity that's a fad in New England, and he bow pinned. He didn't get hurt, but his eyes were opened, and he backed off some, and

he's still alive and well.)

Perhaps these two stories about "intermediate" boaters miss the point. Because the people who are dying are not intermediates. (Are the intermediates more careful, more temperate?) And they're not idiots rafting drunk with no helmets. (These fools die too, but they're not what this story is about.) The new class of dead boaters are the elite dead, the very best, the creme de la creme, and they are dying on hard rivers they have paddled before, at optimal levels, with strong companions and first class equipment, on good days when everything else is going right. They are dying because Class 5 water is objectively lethal. It can and does kill. And as more and more elite boaters regularly paddle the hard runs, more and more are going to die. It's part of the sport. Get used to it.

Never forget: whitewater boating is an open-ended sport, like rock climbing. There are always steeper, trashier rivers. 200 feet per mile isn't extreme any more; the only limit is what you can get down and live to tell about. To get credit for a first descent you only have to be alive at the bottom.

And now I'm at the end of this piece, and I'm angry. There's a big difference between mountaineering and kayaking. If I set out tomorrow to climb Everest, the labor of the trek and the ever-increasing altitude would chew me up and spit me out. I'd fail and go home before I ever saw base camp. But I have some cash and a good car, and if I set out tomorrow there is absolutely nothing that would stop me from putting in at the top of the Narrows of the Green. Nothing except the quality of what's between my ears. And if I set out to paddle the Narrows, its all downhill and maybe, just maybe I'd make it to the bottom alive, and I could say I'd paddle the Narrows of the Green. The point? The only limits to our ability to put on at the top of rivers are those we impose on ourselves. And it just might be that at the top end of this sport, people are taking too many risks. Perhaps there are some hard rivers that should be paddled a little less. And perhaps there are some that shouldn't be paddled at all. Maybe, must maybe, its time for the paddling community to back off just a little. Our parents call it discipline, and maybe we need some.

Or maybe we don't. Forget kayaking and try this, sports' fans. We'll all get buck naked, so there's no equipment advantage. And we'll go over to that fire escape and see who can jump off the highest rung. We'll call it "ground diving" and before long we'll all be going off at ten feet or fifteen. Then the little light guys will get into the act, and start plyometric training to teach their legs to take the shock, and before you know it someone will be jumping 28 feet, or 35, and it will be on TV. And then the winners will get back into their kayaks and see who can one up the other by running the highest waterfall. And before you know it, someone will get killed

and it's ... just ... plain ... stupid.

In Chapter 1 of *The Right Stuff*, Tom Wolfe wrote about fighter pilots killing themselves pushing the limits of flight in military aircraft. His dichotomy was "Right Stuff/Death" and people who crashed didn't have what it takes. Women find fighter pilots sexy, and it looks like the dead fliers left some fine looking widows. Of course, these pilots were working. Paddlers are just recreating. Tim Gavin had a four-year-old son. The core of that little boy's world has been shattered. I would not want to face my kids and have to explain to them that I got killed paddling some river. Fortunately I will never have to—not on this planet anyway.

Hey folks. This is just a sport. The objective is play hard, have fun and live to hear your grandkids scream with delight when they take their first tube ride at the water park. Paddling ain't worth dying for.

All the best,
Jonathan Katz

Editor's note: Jonathan Katz regularly contributes stories to the Humor section of this magazine. When someone like Jonathan gets worried enough to get serious... maybe we all ought to listen!



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Directors

Ric Alesch
14262 West Warren Place
Lakewood, CO 80228
73624.2333@compuserve.com

Landis Arnold
P.O. Box 4617
Boulder, CO 80306
landis@wildnet.com

Lee Belknap
1308 Maryland Avenue
Glen Ellen, VA 23060
76513.2466@compuserve.com

Risa Shimoda Callaway
216 Inverness Way
Easley, SC 29642
risa@kayaker.com

Tom Christopher
931 Union Street Rear
Leominster, MA 01453

Brooke Drury
8224 14th Avenue NE
Seattle, WA 98115
brooked@mountaineers.org

Chuck Estes
114 Bay Path Drive
Oak Ridge, TN 37830-7801

David Fallside
1700 49th Street
Sacramento, CA 95819
fallside@rahul.net

Bob Gedekoh
Box 228, RD 4
Elizabeth, PA 15037

Bob Glanville
66 Deer Run
Glenwood, NY 14069
104121.567@compuserve.com

Joe Greiner
7316 Chicora Court
Raleigh, NC 27615

Barry Grimes
124 Hilltop Drive
Richmond, KY 40475
bagriml@pop.uky.edu

Jay Kenney
181 Franklin Street
Denver, CO 80218
jaypk@aol.com

Chris Koll
352 Cameco Circle
Liverpool, NY 13090-2732
ckoll1234@aol.com

Sue Langfitt
Stanton Langfitt
Advertising
5 Martin Rd, Rye NY
10580
slangfitt@gwrr.com

Jeff Leighton, 2079 Reliez
Valley Road, Lafayette, CA
94549,
jeffleighton@prodigy.net

Richard Penny
2499 Los Altos Avenue
Clovis, CA 93611
rpenny@ix.netcom.com

Joe Pulliam
P.O. Box 1500
Harriman, TN 37748
72002.305@compuserve.com

Ken Ransford
1775 Sherman, Suite 2000
Denver, CO 80218
ransford@qcsn.net

Jim Scott
3715 Jocelyn Street NW
Washington, DC 20015
jscott@amfor.org

Bill Sedivy, Route 5, Box 714F,
Clarksburg, WV 26301
sedivy@earthlink.net

Pete Skinner
2 Snyder Road
West Sand Lake, NY 12196
skinnp@rpi.edu

Ron Stewart
P.O. Box 1337
Chattanooga, TN 37401
ron_stewart@baylor.chattanooga.net

Paul Tefft
P.O. Box 4784
Aspen, CO 81611
enviro@qrof.net

Mac Thornton
6467 Wishbone Terrace
Cabin John, MD 20818
72634.316@compuserve.com

Barry Tuscano
RD 1, Box 32
Bolivar, PA 15923
tmr@westol.com

Charlie Walbridge
230 Penlyn Pike
Penlyn, PA 19422
73514.1714@compuserve.com

Mark White, 2034 Hubbard
Ave., Salt Lake City, UT 84108
mark@saltlake.org

Susan Wilson
52 Albemarle Place #16
Asheville, NC 28801
76017.3534@compuserve.com

Phyllis B. Horowitz,
Administrative Director
P.O. Box 636
Mararetville, NY 12455
(914) 586-2355
74663.2104@compuserve.com

Jayne Abbot, Events Manager
450 Ivy Hill Road
Weaverville, NC 28787
(704) 645-5299

AW STAFF

Rich Bowers, Executive Director
1430 Fenwick Lane
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 589-9453
nchb@amwhitewater.org

Jason Robertson, Access
Program Director
1430 Fenwick Lane
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 589-9453
jason@amwhitewater.org

John Gangemi, Conservati
Program Director
482 Electric Ave.
Bigfork, MT
(406) 837-3155
jgangemi@digisys.net

AW OFFICERS

President: Ric Alesch
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Purpose

American Whitewater

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

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

CONSERVATION: AW maintains a complete national inventory of whitewater rivers, monitors threats to those rivers, publishes information on river conservation, provides technical advice to local groups, works with government agencies and other river users, and-- when necessary-- takes legal action to prevent river abuse.

RIVER ACCESS: To assure public access to whitewater rivers pursuant to the guidelines published in its official Access Policy, AW arranges for river access through private lands by negotiation or purchase, seeks to protect the right of public passage on all rivers and streams navigable by kayak or canoe, resists unjustified restrictions on government managed whitewater rivers and works with government agencies and other river users to achieve these goals.

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

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

EVENTS: AW organizes sporting events, contests and festivals to raise funds for river conservation, including the Ocoee Whitewater Rodeo in Tennessee, the Gauley River Festival in West Virginia (the largest gathering of whitewater boaters in the nation), the Arkansas River Festival in Colorado, the Kennebec Festival in Maine and the Deerfield Festival in Massachusetts.

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



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DIRECTORS CUT

On May 23rd and 24th, American Whitewater held its annual board meeting in Leavenworth, Washington. For those of you who have never been there, Leavenworth is east of Seattle, has a Bavarian theme, and sits in the midst of a valley that looks identical to those tourist postcards from the Alps. It's beautiful, and perhaps more importantly, whitewater rivers and streams surround it.

Paddling was critical since the board and staff of American Whitewater are ~~made up~~ exclusively of boaters — active personalities who are not fond of locking themselves in a room for days. While lots of work was accomplished, we were able to hit the river every evening. I'm not aware that any of our people ran Tumwater, but it was cranking. Some of us (in typical fashion) did

Background photo: American Whitewater Director Barry Tuscano on Icicle Creek
Inset: Kate Gribskov, sightseeing outside Leavenworth, WA
Right page: Icicle Creek



watch the old National Geographic film on this stretch, and drank several toasts to Jeff Snyder's ability and downtime while running this in a squirt boat. After work, various directors and staff were able to enjoy the North Fork and main Skykomish, Wenatchee, Icicle and Peshastin Creeks, and others.

You can find a listing of American Whitewater directors in any copy of the Journal. As a paddler, you should know who they are, since many are probably from your area and involved with many of the rivers you paddle. From my experience, our board is made up of people who want to make things happen, which is why American Whitewater has been so successful over the years.

As with most board meetings, our time was taken up deciding on policy changes, program direction, and how to raise money. Emphasis was given to how American Whitewater should grow in the years to come, with an overriding goal of doing even more for boaters and whitewater rivers. We talked about how to better recognize our many volunteers (see the Re-

gional Coordinator article written by Aida Parkinson), and how pleased we are that our membership is now over 7,000 and growing. [American Whitewater has a goal of reaching 10,000 members by the year 2,000, so please help by signing up your friends!]

Like every recent conversation among boaters, we discussed the number of whitewater accidents and deaths. We wish we could tell you that American Whitewater's combined wisdom had come up with a solution to this, but we have no pat answers on why this is happening or easy ideas on how to reverse the trend. River safety needs to be an individual commitment and priority for every boater (please read the safety articles by Bob Gedekoh and myself elsewhere in this Journal). We affirmed our commitment to doing everything we can to provide our members with safety information – but the bottom line is that your safety remains in your hands while on the water. Safety remains dependent on your skill, judgement, and equipment. If you need further incentive, please read the letter from Rosie Weiss in this edition.

WHITEWATER RELEASE ON HORSESHOE BEND — SAN JOAQUIN RIVER, CALIFORNIA

By Michael Latendresse, Brenda Taatjes, and John Gangemi

On May 9, 1998, 57 paddlers gathered beneath Redinger Reservoir Dam on the San Joaquin River in California to paddle the Class IV-V Horseshoe Bend stretch. The San Joaquin is often referred to as the "hardest working river in the world" due to the stair step rhythm of hydropower dam, pumphouse, flume/penstock bypassing a dewatered river bed, generator, reservoir, dam, etc. ad infinitum (ad nauseam?...). This grand scale plumbing of the river leaves little opportunity for whitewater recreation. But this year, a la El Nino, there's more water in the watershed than the engineers designed the system to handle.

Seven hydropower projects are due for re-licensing on the San Joaquin over the next decade. Re-licensing presents a golden opportunity to get scheduled whitewater releases annually for the length of the new license, typically 30 years. The San Joaquin paddling club took advantage of the high water and scheduled a low key paddling fest. It was the club's intention to introduce this rare whitewater run to area boaters in the hopes that they would see its value as a whitewater resource and understand from firsthand experience how important it was to get involved in the Re-licensing process. The event held on May 9 far-exceeded expectations! Each person or group contacted was immediately enthused. People contacted friends, who contacted friends, who contacted friends.... The participants even included a local television station that put together a story about the event in an effort to inform the general public about the incredible value of this section of the San Joaquin River. Southern California Edison, the hydropower operator, even guaranteed water for the event—a positive step toward building a working relationship.

This river is a gem! But, not many people have the opportunity to run it, because the channel is normally dewatered. It is our hope that more people will soon be able to enjoy this beautiful section of river more often!! — The first mile is dotted with short Class III rapids, but the action quickly increases to numerous Class IV's as you work your way through mini gorges and interesting rock formations. The midpoint of the seven-mile run is marked with the sole Class V rapid — Big Dog. The run continues with more Class IV's until it calms down for the final half-mile.

If we all do nothing, we will all get to regrettably tell stories about "what could have been." This treasure is too valuable to be a "could of, should of, would of" story. Please get involved so that you too may one day have the opportunity to experience the Horseshoe Bend section of the San Joaquin River. Write the Sierra National Forest:

Mr. Jim Boynton
Supervisor
Sierra National Forest
1600 Tollhouse Road
Clovis, CA 93611

RE: Big Creek No. 4 Hydroelectric Project (Project No. 2017-011)

Inform Mr. Boynton that you look forward to paddling on the Horseshoe Bend section of the San Joaquin River. The forest service has some misgivings about the boating community's environmental ethics so be sure to remind Mr. Boynton of your strong "leave no trace" stewardship ethics.

You Do Make a Difference!

By John Gangemi

In the March/April 1998 issue, *American Whitewater* appealed to readers to help return water to the North Fork Feather River undergoing hydropower re-licensing (see "Just Add Water" p. 28). Your efforts to phone, write, and/or e-mail the Plumas National Forest made a difference. In May, Plumas Forest staff called my office asking how much water paddlers needed and what time of year. They'd heard your voices. The fax and e-mail were clogged. Thanks for your efforts.

If you haven't had a chance to contact the Plumas Forest it's not too late. Fax the Plumas Forest supervisor at the number below. Your voice could influence conditions for several more hydropower projects up for re-licensing; the upper North Fork Feather project which includes 3 dams and the Poe project.

Mark Madrid, Forest Supervisor
Plumas National Forest
P.O. Box 11500
Quincy, CA 95971-6025
(530) 283-4156

RE: Rock Creek - Cresta Hydroelectric Project. FERC No. 1962

Bull Trout on Threatened List

By John Gangemi

In June, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service upgraded bull trout to the threatened list in Oregon, Idaho, Montana and Eastern Washington. This increased protection could greatly assist the paddling community's efforts to secure whitewater releases from hydropower projects in the Pacific Northwest. Bull trout declines are blamed largely on destructive land use activities and dams. Protecting bull trout will require substantial increases in instream flows and periodic flushing flows to maintain critical riverine habitat. There are a significant number of hydropower projects due for re-licensing in the Pacific Northwest.

The Endangered Species Act allows for species to be designated endangered or threatened, depending on the severity of their condition and habitat. An endangered listing, which has the most stringent protections, means a species is on the brink of extinction in all or most of its range. A threatened listing means a species is likely to become endangered in the near future.

North Fork Feather: First Annual Belden Boating Bash

By Dave Steindorf and John Gangemi

In May, a group of California boaters capitalizing on the high-water levels, compliments of El Nino, hosted a river festival on the normally dry channel of the North Fork Feather River. This was the first annual Belden Boating Bash. The intent was to expose as many paddlers as possible to the North Fork Feather River. Many boaters pass the Feather while traveling to other paddling destinations but few have actually boated the Rock Creek and Cresta sections of the North Fork due to the lack of water. PG&E has plumbed most of the North Fork Feather into a series of reservoirs, flumes, penstocks and powerhouses with few molecules of H₂O remaining for fish, let alone

boats (see March/April 1998 issue, "Just Add Water" p. 28).

PG&E, although invited to the bash, elected not to attend in the flesh but did establish their "dark side" presence by drastically manipulating river flows when dam spills went from 1500 cfs to 350 cfs the day before the event. No wonder paddlers refer to PG&E as "Darth Vader" of the utility world.

Despite PG&E's uncooperative behavior, the event was a huge success with more than 150 rafters and kayakers in attendance. The event turn out was helped by having the sponsors, Belden Town Resort, Chico Paddleheads, Shasta Paddlers, and Tributary Whitewater Tours, and Dagger kayaks, provide cheap food, beer, and a band, free rafting, and kayak demos. Six different runs were boated ranging in difficulty from class II to class V.

This, the First Annual Belden Boating Bash, highlights the forward thinking minds in this group. And there's reason to expect many more boating bashes in Belden. Rock Creek and Cresta Dams are up for re-license. It's American Whitewater's intention and the local paddling groups to get boating flows in the North Fork Feather River July through September for the next 30 years. The event organizers motto, "August, 1999".

Profile: Kevin Lewis, American Whitewater Regional Coordinator



Regional coordinators and members at large are an integral component of American Whitewater's river conservation and access programs. In fact, many of American Whitewater's greatest conservation successes are the result of impassioned volunteers working doggedly to protect their local whitewater runs from destruction.

In northern California, Kevin Lewis is the quintessential regional coordinator. Kevin is involved in all kinds of conservation and access issues through-

out the northern half of the state as well as participating in statewide issues. California has 50 hydropower projects up for re-license in the next 15 years covering 167 dams. Kevin can be found attending public meetings and submitting written comments on a significant number of these projects.

Kevin is conservation chair of the Shasta paddlers. Kevin also serves on the steering committee of the California Hydropower Reform Coalition (CHRC). The CHRC was formed to tackle the tremendous number of hydropower re-licensings due in California. Kevin created and maintains the CHRC web page.

Kevin is not one to be deceived easily by big industry, as they so often like to do. Kevin's long hours reviewing annual dam safety reports for the Cresta Dam on the North Fork Feather River revealed that the failure was the result of a long history of "cowboy" engineering by the utility, PG&E. PG&E was trying to use the breach as a mechanism to rush the re-licensing but Kevin's work literally flushed that card (see *American Whitewater* March/April 1998, "S.E.X Lies and Deception" p. 30).

When Kevin isn't working on river conservation issues he can be found pioneering steep creeks and, when he has the time, running his business. Thanks Kevin for all your hard work. Be sure to send your Kudosto Kevin PRIVATE [HREF="mailto:klewis@snowcrest.net"](mailto:klewis@snowcrest.net) MACROBUTTON HtmlResAnchor klewis@snowcrest.net.

Volunteers & Rivers

By Aida Parkinson, Regional Coordinator

American Whitewater just loves to hear from boaters who want to find something to do with local rivers.

Our Regional Coordinators are volunteers who get to work on whatever river issue is of interest to them. I tend to concentrate on local rivers that I am familiar with, because I found that it was harder to get local agencies to listen to someone who has never been to their river. I use my background in natural resource management, NEPA (the National Environmental Policy Act requires all federal agencies to prepare written statements on the environmental impacts of federal actions) and land use planning to work on projects that require review of environmental documents.

It's a simple matter to tell the executive director, the conservation director or any board member that you are interested, and they will get a package to you explaining all the details. If you save receipts, and keep a phone log, you will be reimbursed for expenses.

I am lucky to live near and be able to boat on rivers that are both state and federally designated Wild and Scenic rivers. The Smith, the Klamath, the California Salmon, the Trinity, and the Eel are within a two-hour drive. While Wild and Scenic designation protects these rivers from new dams and excessive development within a narrow corridor; these rivers still offer plenty of opportunities for river users to get involved.

I am currently working on a couple of issues on rivers on the north coast of California. On the South Fork of the Trinity, there is an access problem at Low Water Crossing, the take-out for the Class 4, Three Bears run. The landowner gated the road, forcing boaters to trespass to climb over his fence or to climb up the steep cliff on USFS property.

I wrote an environmental assessment for a USFS proposal for development of a river access trail and raft ramp. The last we've heard is that the landowner may be willing to keep the gate unlocked from December through June. That would be the lowest impact solution. The USFS proposal included trails, parking, and restrooms, which many of us feel is overdevelopment for the use that the area gets during the cool rainy season when the river runs. What we have been doing to keep the USFS moving on this is to call the forest supervisor in Eureka and remind him that we would like to have safe, legal access to the wild and scenic South Fork.

We think that our gentle pressure relentlessly applied has made both the USFS and the landowner aware that the boating community is serious about using the river.

On the main Trinity, there is a big one coming up. The Secretary of the Interior must decide how much water needs to be released from Lewiston Dam, in order to restore fisheries in the Trinity. The draft EIS should be released in the next few months. We will need to get as many people as possible to comment on the draft EIS and support increased flows. There will be a balance between flows for whitewater recreation and flows providing the best fish habitat. The primary benefit to both fish and whitewater boaters will be in dry years, when most of the water is currently piped over the mountains to Southern California via the Central Valley Project canals.

Trinity County maintains a list-server that provides current information and updates on the restoration proposals. To get on their server, send the following text in the body of the message

<subscribe env-trinity YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS to the server
address Majordomo@igc.apc.org.

The county planner who runs the site even posts river flows now and again. He recently informed everyone on the server that we could expect "tremendous whitewater boating throughout the summer and into the fall." Now, that's what I call a list sewer!

On the North Fork of the Smith, the USFS may be acquiring the

C o n s e r v e
last private land at the put-in. If the proposed land swap goes through, there is interest in constructing camping facilities on the site of the old buildings. These would mostly be used in the summer, but a dry place to change, and possibly camp at the put-in, would be great.

There are many projects on California rivers that deal with renewal of hydropower licenses. Boaters are getting involved to make sure that dam releases for hydropower include consideration of boatable flows.

There are always river issues that affect the national boating community. Private permits for the Grand Canyon is one example.

And American Whitewater, being a worthy nonprofit organization, likes to put on fund-raisers to get enough money to work on the big issues. That's a great way to get to put on a party with your river buds.

Having been on the receiving end of public comments for 10 years in my job as a federal land management agency planner, I have a good idea of what will make a govern-

ment agency take you seriously. But I also know that "gentle pressure relentlessly applied by a sincere river user works just as well - ask my husband if you don't believe me.

My home phone is (707) 839-2101. It's listed under my husband's name, Rick Dimick. If you tell him you're a boater, he'll probably ask you when you want to go boating - but if you say you want to talk about river issues, he'll find me. Let's go boating — we'll talk on our way to the river.

⁶⁶ **Choosing to save a river** is more often an act of passion than of careful calculation. You make the choice because the river has touched your life in an intimate and irreversible way, because you are unwilling to accept its loss." David Bolling, *How to Save a River*

American Whitewater's purpose is to work on the rivers that are important to you and to other boaters. As a national grassroots organization, our mission is to promote, conserve and provide access to the rivers that you care about. To accomplish this, American Whitewater is recruiting river activists to work on regional, state, or local issues. The program is designed to be flexible and doable, and not overwhelming to those working in a volunteer capacity.

As experts on whitewater boating and local rivers, Regional Coordinators act as the principal liaisons for this organization and for paddlers in general. Regional Coordinators are the front line against resource destruction and river closures.

The goal of this program is to cover all the whitewater in the United States, area by area. The *smaller* the area the better – small areas enable the coordinator to concentrate on a smaller number of issues. Therefore, the geographical boundaries of each Coordinator's area are flexible.

As David Bolling mentions throughout his book, river campaigns have been largely dependent on local grassroots efforts. American Whitewater would like to continue and expand this pattern of volunteerism by eventually having an active Regional Coordinator in each major paddling area,

If you are interested in finding out more about how you can help, please call either Jason, Kate or me at the Silver Spring office (301) 589-9453 or by e-mail at Richb@amwhitewater.org

Rich Bowers

Edwards Dam to be Removed

In late May, a settlement was signed that will remove the 160 year old Edwards Dam on Maine's lower Kennebec River between May and September of 1999. Signers included Hydropower Reform Coalition members, American Rivers, and Trout Unlimited. Removal of this dam will provide fish restoration for 17 miles of river up to the next dam at Fort Halifax, owned by Central Maine Power. Removing Edwards will reduce the number of dams on the Kennebec to 13.

Under the agreement, Bath Iron Works will spend \$2.5 million to remove the dam as

off-site mitigation for wetland impacts as they expand their shipyards. This solution frees the licensee, Edwards Manufacturing Co. and the city of Augusta, from the costs of dam removal.

Last year, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) had ordered the dam removed over the objections of both Edwards Manufacturing and Augusta.

Also signing the settlement was Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt who said "Today, with the power of our pens, we are dismantling several myths: that hydro dams provide

clean pollution-free energy; that hydropower is the main source of our electricity; that dams should last as long as the pyramids; and that making them friendlier for fisheries is expensive and time consuming." Babbitt also stated that "...this is a challenge to dam owners and operators to defend themselves – to demonstrate by hard facts, not by sentiment or myth, that the continued operation of a dam is in the public interest, economically and environmentally."

Deerfield Riverfest

**Bigger &
Better than
ever!**

Aug. 1, 1998

Charlemont, Massachusetts

Competitions:

Saturday: 2nd annual Amateur Whitewater Rodeo
and Raft Race, sponsored by Sotar
Sunday: Mass start downriver race on Monroe
Bridge section

The festival site will be bustling all day with
children's activities, educational exhibits and mar-
ketplace. In the evening, we roll out the carpet for
our famous American Whitewater chicken barbe-
cue, live entertainment, marketplace exhibitors
and a silent auction of awesome outdoor gear.

***Come join us
as we celebrate
the Deerfield
River and all it
has to offer,***



Stopping to Smell the Flowers

By Rich Bowers

As outdoor recreation grows, the question is often brought up as to how much impact recreation, including human powered use, has on our natural resources. For the past five years, it has been an ongoing discussion in many of American Whitewater's attempts to open rivers to whitewater boating. Georgia's Tallulah Gorge is one example of how we found a workable solution to this question.

Whitewater paddlers often answer, "We don't even leave footprints!" American Whitewater agrees that this is generally true, and we certainly believe that boaters have been a positive force for improving and restoring rivers over the years. But if you travel to a popular river on any summer weekend, you quickly realize that through sheer numbers, there is no way we can claim "no impact." While the impacts of recreation are not comparable to the outright dam-

for local Georgians. But the ruggedness of the gorge had limited recreation to just a few areas (primarily downstream of Bridal Veil Falls). For whitewater, we needed to find a new trail that would allow us to put-in upstream of Oceana, and just below Hurricane Falls. Without such a trail, paddlers would need to hike in at Wallenda's Walk and bush-whack about a mile and a half up river. This scenario had major drawbacks both for the gorge and for boaters.

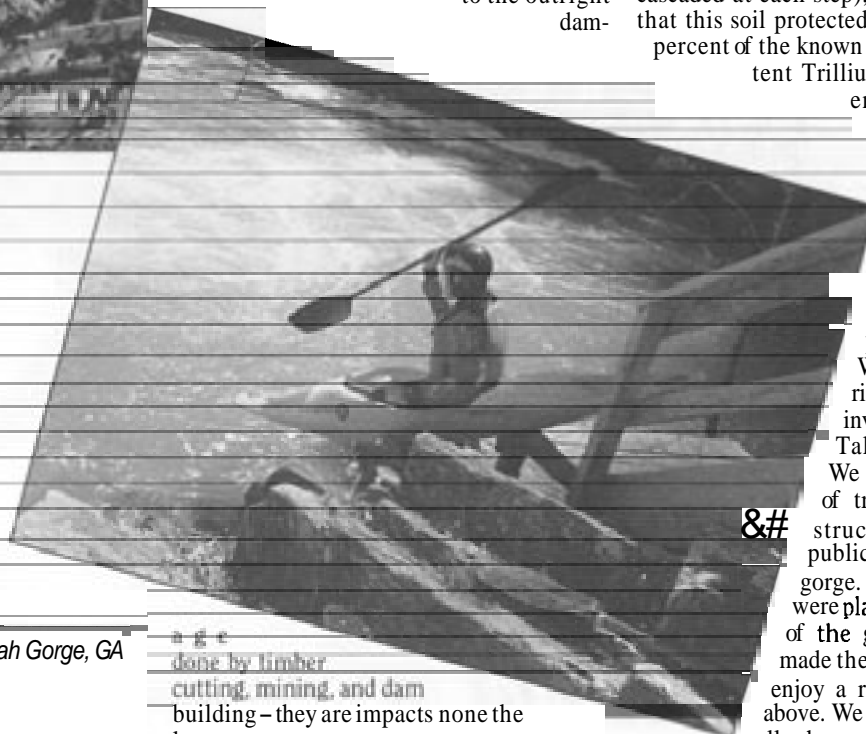
There did exist a seldom used and almost invisible trail that led to Hurricane. And while boaters were able to use this trail on the second day of testing, it didn't take more than one trip to understand that continued use would just tear this up. One rainy day and we would have a lasting scar on the side of the gorge.

Creating any kind of damage to a place as beautiful as Tallulah was unacceptable, but there was more. Not only did we need to worry about the steep, loamy soil (which cascaded at each step), but we also learned that this soil protected at least seventy five percent of the known population of Persistent Trillium, a federally listed endangered species.

The trail to Hurricane ran right through this area. We needed a creative solution!

Through our intervention in the North Georgia Project, American Whitewater and our river allies also became involved in plans to turn Tallulah into a state park. We learned that a series of trails would be constructed to provide the public with a way to see the gorge. At first, these trails were planned only for the rim of the gorge, but paddlers made the case that it is hard to enjoy a river from 1000 foot above. We suggested that to really have a state park, trails needed to run into the gorge as well as along the rim.

I'm sure others pushed for this also, and eventually the plans were changed to include an elevated trail that ran into the gorge, stayed above the Trillium, crossed a (future)



Top: Walkway to put-in, Tallulah Gorge, GA
Bottom: Put-in, Tallulah Gorge
Right: Adding natural flow

age done by timber cutting, mining, and dam building - they are impacts none the less.

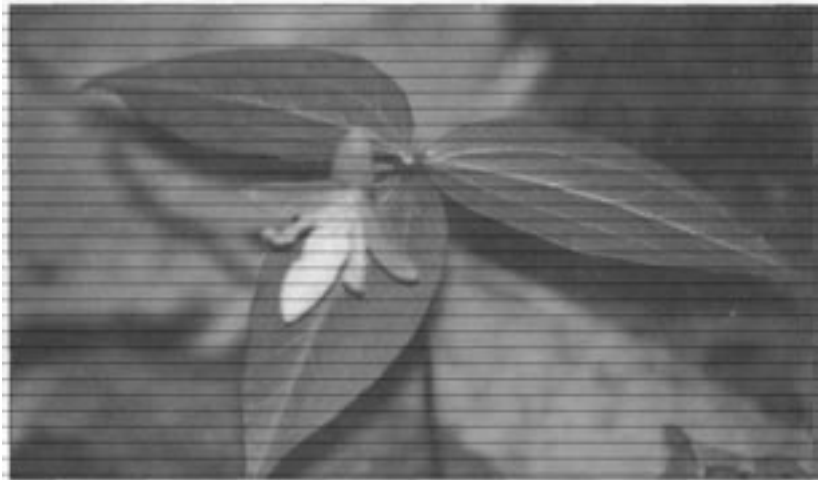
For Tallulah, the issue was not recreation but the introduction of a new use - whitewater boating. While Georgia Power had attempted to limit use of the gorge for decades, the fact was that Tallulah was a popular swimming, camping and party area

swinging bridge above Hurricane Falls, and exited the other side. With boater input it was no coincidence that the future plan led, with a short dogleg, to right below Hurricane.

Now that we had an answer to how we could access the river, the problem became how to pay for and build this before the first scheduled release? The solution came about because a lot of people made commitments. Local Atlanta boater and architect Marshall Wilson (Wilson & Associates) donated the planning for the walkway and other American Whitewater volunteers contributed manual labor. Georgia Power Company, who had already committed some \$80,000 towards trail construction, targeted this money for finishing the boater's trail first. And Georgia State Parks committed months of man-hours and construction to complete the project and keep it on schedule.

The walkway into Tallulah Gorge demonstrates how involvement and good relationships can provide both river protection and allow recreation use. There are a great number of rivers in this country where both the real and imagined effects on various resources (plants, reptiles, raptors, and streambank stabilization) is limiting recreation. In the future, it will greatly benefit paddlers to continue to build relationships and to develop even more innovative solutions if we are to provide new and worthwhile resources and river miles for our sport.

American Whitewater will be working on this also, on rivers that include California's Pit, the main and middle fork Salmon, and on rivers within Yellowstone National Park.



Persistent Trillium

Persistent Trillium

Trilliums belong to the Lily Family (Liliaceae), which botanists estimate includes nearly 4,000 to 6,000 species. Besides Trillium, this family includes Tulips, Hyacinths, Asparagus, Onions, and Aloe.

Trillium comes from the Latin word for "three" which is descriptive since these plants (like most others in their family) have three leaves, three sepals, three petals, six stamens, and a three chambered pistil. There are about 25 species of Trillium in the United States and Canada and most of these perennials flower from April to June. Native Americans and early American settlers used specific species of Trillium to treat hemorrhaging, dysentery and gangrene.

The southeast is home to many species of Trillium. During April, in addition to attending the Tallulah release weekends, I spent a week with my family in the nearby Joyce Kilmer National Forest and along the Blue Ridge Parkway. We (amateur botanists certainly!) found 12 different species of Trillium, including the rare Persistent Trillium in Tallulah Gorge.

The entire known population of the Persistent Trillium numbers less than 20,000 individuals, and all are located within the Tallulah-Tugalo River drainage, about a five mile radius in northern Georgia and western South Carolina. Persistent Trillium can take seven to ten years to go from seedling to flower, and this particular species blooms early, from mid-March though April.

Tallulah Gorge is home to the third largest population of Persistent Trillium, with some 1,930 plants (and about 25 percent of the existing flowering plants). All of the known species are located well above the river, and are unaffected by restored flows through the gorge.

Information gathered from the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the North Georgia Project (FERC #2354), from the Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Wildflowers and from Wildflowers of the United States by Harold William Rickett, McGraw Hill Publishers.



Painted Trillium



Purple Trillium (suspected)



Rivers: The Future Frontier

By Rich Bowers

In late April, I was pleased to attend the symposium "Rivers: The Future Frontier" held in Anchorage, Alaska. Now – I've always wanted to go to Alaska. So for me this was a great way to both fulfill a lifelong goal and get my ticket paid for! But it was also a good way to sit down and discuss rivers, whitewater, and paddlers.

As you might suspect, given the number of current river issues, this meant a ton of meetings. I was able to talk with agency staff working on: the Grand Canyon allocation issue; new management plans for the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness and Arizona's Salt River; river managers in Colorado, Kentucky, Massachusetts and other states; USFS staff on the Chattooga Wild and Scenic River; and with a number of people involved with hydropower re-licensing at the Federal level.

During the week, I spoke with a number of other non-profits and river personalities as well. Tom Martin (Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association), Dave Jenkins (ACA), and I were able to debate the outfitters bill, 1489, and the coming allocation process with Mark Grisham of the Grand Canyon River Outfitters Association. I also spent time with Tom Hicks of the Headwaters Institute, Ric Bailey of the Hells Canyon Preservation Council,

and with Doug A'Hittaker who is working on a number of recreation flow studies. I also was happy to moderate a panel discussion on motorized use on rivers, which looked at the growth, safety, and impacts of jet boats and jet-skies.

The symposium was put on by the River Management Society (RMS), which is a group made up primarily of state and federal river managers – those who manage and establish policies on individual rivers across the nation. Since these people have a great deal of impact on our sport, I recommend that boaters work wherever possible with this group.

While boaters often disagree with indi-

vidual management decisions on rivers, it can be really worthwhile to talk with these folks in a laid-back setting. Many of these river managers are active and accomplished paddlers, and when you get them "out of uniform" it is amazing how many issues we agree on. On the issues where you don't agree, it's still a good opportunity to lobby your theories and try to change their way of thinking (hint – like most boaters, beer helps!)

RMS is a nonprofit educational organization dedicated to the protection and sound management of North America's river resources. The (abbreviated) purpose of RMS is to "develop and promote professional river management techniques, positively influence public policy on river management issues, and educate decision makers and the public..."

For more information on RMS, check out their Home Page at <http://www.river-management.org> / or call them at (406) 549-0514. American Whitewater is a member of RMS, but you can also sign up as a student, professional or associate member.

I had a great time in Alaska. And I thought the weather was great until I got home and showed my family my slides. My daughter's comment was, "These are great Dad, but why are they all in black and white?"



Above left: Grizzly along Kenai River
Above right: Eagle River, Alaska
Bottom: Tom Hicks and David Cernicek looking for a caffeine fix in Anchorage



Jason Robertson, American Whitewater Access Coordinator Paddling on Icicle Creek, WA

Girl Scouts Towed while Rafting: Watauga River, NC

By Jason Robertson

In one of the stranger twists of fate, vehicles belonging to 60 Girl Scouts were towed from the put-in while they were rafting the Watauga River in May with Wahoo Rafts. The vehicles were parked in the middle of Guy Ford Road by the Watauga bridge, blocking all traffic. As anyone who has put on here knows, Guy Ford Road is a narrow dirt road that receives a considerable amount of local use.

Though it is unfortunate that the Girl Scouts' cars were hauled off, it had the benefit of raising awareness of the access problems on Guy Ford Road. This incident also created an atmosphere in which the landowners and officials began working with the boating community to resolve parking problems in the area.

First, the local DOT agreed to take action and post signs showing where it was illegal to park. Then the owner of the gas station at the top of the hill on Highway 321 cleared some land by the bridge and added parking for about 10 more cars.

Access problems have been escalating at the put-in all Winter and peaked in May. A couple of vehicles were keyed by locals and another car had paint thrown on it. Apparently the locals were indignant after a boater flicked them off and made some less than innocent remarks when the locals raised holy hell and complained about the bridge being blocked.

Hopefully the addition of these new parking spaces at the put-in and the placement of "No Parking" signs on the road will ease tensions between the people who live here and the boating community. Please respect the traffic laws in the area and consider buying your pickled pigs feet, RC Cola, and chewing tobacco at the top of the hill. The guy that owns the convenience store is pretty awesome and has gone out of his way to help boaters by providing parking.

On a different note, the State of North Carolina has begun

surveying Guy Ford Road to pave and improve it. The DOT also plans on building a new bridge across the Watauga that will be less prone to flooding than the existing one. American Whitewater is working with the state to create additional parking during the construction process. Unfortunately, Guy Ford Road will be closed to all traffic while the road is paved and the bridge is being built. Expect to be denied access to the road for about 9 months around the turn of the millennium.

North Carolina residents should write letters to John Williams in the NC-DOT's Planning and Environmental Branch asking the state to obtain a right-of-way permitting them to shift the new bridge, leaving the old bridge in place as a boat launch and access point for the Watauga River. Letters should be personalized and emphasize support for American Whitewater's recommendations, the economic value of supporting access to the river (i.e. how many dollars you'll spend buying soft drinks, pork rinds, and fuel during each visit), appreciation for the scenery, and request that access to existing parking on either side of the bridge remain open following the construction. It only takes a few letters to make a difference, so please be sure to write!

Send letters by August 15th to:

Ref. # B3263, Secondary Rd 1200.

Attn: John Williams

Planning and Environmental Branch

NC-DOT

PO Box 25201

Raleigh, NC 27611

Work Party Digs In: Watauga River, TN

By Jason Robertson

American Whitewater purchased a new take-out on the Watauga below Watauga Falls, Tennessee. This land will be opened up for general use in time for the Fall paddling season. American Whitewater sponsored a work party on this property on July 11th. A complete write-up detailing our work on this property will be included in the next journal, as will a map to the site. Plans include planting a tree barrier around the border of the property, improving the road, clearing parking, building a changing screen, and constructing steps up the bank of the river. Volunteers should contact Lee Belknap at rivergypsy@sprintmail.com

Thanks to everyone who helped out with the initial purchase, the land swap, taking me down the river (Spencer, Rion, and the rest of you know who you are), clearing the parking, getting down in the mud, and planting trees. You've all been invaluable and we never would have gotten this far without your help!

Senate Bill 1489, The Outfitter's Bill

By Jason Robertson

American Whitewater's Executive Director, Rich Bowers, wrote a convincing review of the shortfalls of Senate Bill 1489 (S1489) in the March/April edition of the Journal. Since that time, American Whitewater has solidified our opposition to the bill which secures allocations for commercial operators without acknowledging a role for private visitors to federal lands. However, we also have been working with American Outdoors and their lobbyist to modify the language, thereby making it more palatable. Though we believe that the current version of S1489 is dead in the water, we are vigilant against its rebirth. One of our concerns is that the language from this bill will find its way into another bill and haunt private boaters, hikers, climbers, and other recreationists for years to come.

Though American Whitewater is adamantly opposed to the original language of the bill as well as several of the rewrites, we commend the bill's sponsors, Senators Craig and Wyden for working with us and the outfitter industry to find an amicable solution that will satisfy the commercial and private interests. Senator Wyden's staff have been very forthcoming, and have made a real effort to learn about and address our concerns regarding the bill.

As of press time, we are working with the American Canoe Association (ACA) and Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association (GCPBA) to edit the bill. Our organizations recognize the utility of this bill for the commercial rafting industry and are only opposed to language which limits our rights as private citizens. Though the bill does not explicitly hinder our rights as individuals, several components do damage our opportunities to enjoy federal lands and our opportunities to enjoy them without using commercial services.

American Whitewater continues to believe that the Outfitter Industry should not have attempted to bypass the river management agencies and gone directly for a legislative fix for problems that they are encountering.

Send letters to:
The Honorable Senator Larry E. Craig
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510
Fax: 202-224-6435

Frank Church, River of No Return: Salmon River, ID

By Jason Robertson

There's striking evidence that paddlers' voices are being heard loud and clear by the Forest Service in the Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness. The Forest Service representatives publicly stated in a May meeting in Seattle, WA that the so-called "preferred alternative," which would reduce the number of launches and permits for private and commercial boaters, is no longer preferred. This came about as a direct result of the letters that the boating community has mailed to the Forest Supervisor over the past several months chastising the agency for its Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

The agency has obviously recognized that a new management approach is needed which will synthesize some of the suggestions from the initial comment period. However, American Whitewater is disappointed that the Forest Service does not intend to develop and publish a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) defining their final proposal. Though the Forest Service understands that broad public participation and feedback are essential for consensus and acceptance of new management strategies, the managers seem to believe that they should be able to implement a new policy without additional public notice and comment.

Though an SEIS is not absolutely required under the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA), the Forest Service would be violating our public trust by its failure to generate one. We hold that this is a unique opportunity for a Federal Agency to work with the public in a constructive discussion of the impacts from recreational use of a wilderness area and generate a solution reducing recreational impacts to the environment.

Discussions of the Forest Service's DEIS focused on the allocation of use between commercial and private boaters, and proposed reductions in the maximum number of visitors in the river corridor. The DEIS for the Frank Church area concerns both private and commercial boaters, particularly in what looks like heavy-handed across-the-board cuts in party size. Jay Kenney, American Whitewater's Access Committee Chair, describes the Forest Service's preferred alternative as a "sledgehammer approach to problem solving."

American Whitewater does not support further reductions in access to the region unless reduced party sizes and numbers of groups are proven to have the desired and needed effects of restoring the environment of the camp sites along the river corridor.

Furthermore, American Whitewater is not convinced that the Forest Service needs to increase so-called, "opportunities for solitude" in the wilderness sections of these rivers. If the Forest Service is serious about increasing these opportunities we contend that it would make more sense to reduce the party sizes, rather than reducing the number of launches.

The Forest Service is obviously listening to our comments, so it is very important that you write and share your opinions with them. It's important that you write and ask the Forest Service to develop an SEIS and provide an opportunity to submit additional comments. The comment period on the Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness Management Plan has been extended to December, 1998.

Send letters to:
Salmon and Challis National Forests
Attn: FC- RONRW Coordination
RR 2 PO Box 600
Salmon, ID 83467

Oregon Rules! "Oregon River Access Law"

By Jason Robertson

American Whitewater is one of more than 18 organizations that have joined to form the River Recreation Rights (RRR) coalition in Oregon. This coalition is unique in that fishermen, kayakers, rafters, canoeists, conservationists, and hunters are working together to give everyone the opportunity to use Oregon's waters for recreation. The proposed language in the "Oregon River Access Bill" formalizes existing case law and collects past legislation into a single document reflecting the variety of ways in which people use the State's rivers. As in Montana, this bill formalizes boaters' rights to float down any tributary that is capable of floatation during any portion of the year. However, it also permits other recreational uses such as swimming, wading, picnicking, fishing, and camping.

If passed, this bill will have three major impacts on navigability and recreational use in America. First, it will have the obvious effect of allowing boaters the undeniable right to float down, scout, and portage all of Oregon's rivers. Second, it will bolster Montana's navigability laws which are also premised on recreational use and the Public Trust Doctrine. Montana's laws are being attacked internally by the livestock and agriculture industry. Supporting Montana's laws is important because they

represent the baseline for navigability and recreational use in this country. Third, it will create a new benchmark for recreational use statutes throughout the country and supports a movement defining navigability for the public trust based on a waterway's suitability for recreational use.

So, what are the odds that this bill will be passed? Well, they're good. We have a solid chance of getting this bill passed because it is essentially collecting and formalizing existing case law and legislation in the state; therefore it is unlikely to be challenged on individual grounds that a river is not navigable. The bill is also being marketed under the popular aegis of the Gold Beach initiative which secured all of Oregon's beaches for the public.

As in Colorado, opposition to the bill is coming from the agriculture industry and landowners. These two groups have a fundamental belief that this bill takes land away from them and gives it to the public. The RRR coalition contends that this is not the case, since existing laws in Oregon already give the public the right to float down navigable waterways. Finally, the opposition has raised concerns that this will increase landowner liability if someone is injured on a river. However, the landowners are already protected from this type of liability based on Oregon's recreational use statutes.

How Oregon Residents Can Help:

Write or **call** your state Senator and Congressman **and express your support** for the bill.

Ask your favorite recreation or environmental group **to** join the coalition and lend their support.

How Everyone Can Help: Write to the individuals that are listed below and express your **support** **for** this bill. Describe your interest in whitewater recreation; how much you either have enjoyed or expect to enjoy floating down Oregon's rivers; and how much money you have spent or intend to spend while touring the region.

For **more** information contact:

Association of Northwest Steelheaders

PO **Box** 22065

6641 SE Lake Rd

Milwaukie, OR 97269

(503) 653-4176

(503) 653-8769 fax

Jason Robertson
Access Director
American Whitewater
Jason@amwhitwater.org
301-589-9453

Lehigh Falls Fishing Club vs. John Andrejewski: Lehigh River, PA

By Jason Robertson

Judge Ann Lokuta ruled in May that the Lehigh River is a navigable river. As such, it is owned by the citizens of the commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Therefore the Lehigh Falls Fishing Club cannot deny access to its waters. In a broad statement, Judge Lokuta ruled that, "The beds of all navigable rivers, including the Lehigh, belong to the public. The right to the use of the water follows the ownership of the bed in which it flows. The Commonwealth is therefore the owner of the Lehigh River and holds it in trust for the use of all its citizens. It is a public property, a natural highway, open to all who may have occasion to use it."


Though this is a case regarding a fisherman, it is important for our rights of navigability as boaters. Furthermore, this decision highlights the fact that we need to work with fishermen to expand and ensure our rights to access America's waterways. There are a number of cases around the country in which fishermen are defending their rights to access the rivers based on navigability law. American Whitewater has provided legal and financial support for many of these cases, but often relies on the deeper pockets of the fishing clubs to pay for legal expenses and court challenges.

American Whitewater offers our thanks to the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen for defending the case and to Ed Gertler for providing his assistance as an expert witness on behalf of the boating community and American Whitewater.

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☐ Yes, I would be interested in working as an AW volunteer.

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Signature:

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Detatch and mail to: AWA, P.O. Box 636, Margaretville, NY 12455



Big Bushkill Creek on the Lehigh River, PA. Photo by John Schneller

Big Bushkill Creek near Marshalls Creek, Pa.

By Jason Robertson

Big Bushkill Creek near Marshalls Creek, Pa. The Cradle of Liberty Boy Scout Council has a camp at Ressica Falls with a parking lot which they have denied boaters access to. This popular Class II-III section runs from Ressica Falls to Shoemakers, Pa. American Whitewater is examining the legality of portaging around the waterfall and is appealing the Scout's decision denying access to boaters. In the meantime, the Scouts have issued warnings to "trespassers" and have promised to arrest violators on their second offense.

Nature Lovers vs. Developers In Battle for U.S. Waterways

BY ALLEN G. BREED

From THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, Monday, June 1, 1998
Reprinted in the American Whitewater Journal with permission.

ON THE CHATTOOGA RIVER — Paddling down the West Fork of the Chattooga, it's easy to imagine you're in a different era.

The clear, spring-fed waters drift under overhanging hemlock and Carolina silver bells, past rock grottos. Swaying in the breeze on the opposite bank is a patch of native bamboo prized by the Cherokee for everything from flutes to blow guns.

The only sounds on this stretch, where Georgia and the Carolinas kiss, are the songs of warblers and the occasional splash of a rainbow trout rising to snatch a bug from the water's surface.

But suddenly, you're yanked back into 1998.

Strung across the river on a cable is a sign: "No Trespassing,

Fishing, Floating." Underneath: "PRIVATE PROPERTY. SURVIVORS WILL BE PROSECUTED."

Buzz Williams, coordinator of the Chattooga River Watershed Coalition, steers the canoe toward the shore. Recognizing a man, he calls out.

"Hey Earl, this is Buzz. We came down here to talk to you."

Earl Lovell, a burly white-haired man wearing a fedora, shouts back in a thick Georgia accent. "You know there's a highway out there," he says.

To Williams, the river IS a highway.

To Lovell and two partners who own the 230 acres on either side here, it's NOT. What's between the banks that they own — even if it's a federally designated wild and scenic river — is theirs, they say.

Who's right? This not-so-simple question is at the heart of a growing number of disputes, from the furtive Chattooga to the mighty Hudson, from Pennsylvania to Colorado.

Environmentalists and landowners have battled for years over public access vs. private property rights. Now, as millions of Americans turn to nature for recreation and developers move deeper into woods to build second homes, this old war has opened a new front.

And a river runs through it.

Both sides cite ancient authority for their claims.

Decrying government "land grabs," some landowners wave titles from long-dead kings granting them exclusive rights to the flowing water.

Conservationists, canoeists, kayakers and fishermen go even further back, saying their rights come from the Magna Carta, or even natural law.

Laws and court decisions often address narrow issues: whether a river is navigable; whether a stream that stays within one state's border is subject to federal jurisdiction; whether recreational boating and fishing, big business nowadays, amount to the kind of commerce envisioned by lawmakers when logs and barges floated on most waterways.

In some states, you can float on a "privately owned" stream but can be charged with trespassing if you push off on the bottom. In others, you can fish from a moving boat but can't walk on the bed.

Rights vary from state to state, stream to stream, case to case.

"I'm working on probably 400 different cases right now across the country," says Jason Robertson, river-access director for American Whitewater in Silver Spring, Md. "I probably get five or six every Monday that are brand new."

— In Arkansas, Atty. Gen. Winston Bryant has taken farmers to court for stringing barbed wire across Crooked Creek — a vaunted bass fishery.

— In New York's Adirondacks, paddlers are battling a fish and game club's exclusive claim to a 12-mile stretch on the South Branch of the Moose River.

— In Colorado, a canoeist complains that a landowner's plan to stretch a low bridge across the Taylor River is a thinly veiled attempt to force travelers to trespass on the shores.

— And at a camp on Big Bushkill Creek in Pennsylvania's Poconos, one of the combatants is none other than the Boy Scouts of America.

"We will determine who can come on that camp," says Richard Marion, head of the scout council, citing safety concerns.

Daniel MacIntyre says the idea that someone owns the water is absurd.

"I just believe that the rivers are the people's highways — always have been from the beginning of time, says MacIntyre, an Atlanta attorney and avid paddler who has represented the Georgia Canoeing Association in access matters.

Landowners say it's easy to paint them as usurpers of some public birthright.

H. Douglas Barclay, an attorney and former state senator, waged a successful four-year battle in the New York courts to uphold his claim of sovereignty on the Salmon River near Syracuse. The surrounding land has been in his family since 1807, but overuse of the

river was trashing it, he says.

"What I was trying to do was to make the thing better," he says. "And all they said was I was full of greed, and I was trying to stomp on the little guy."

A group of river guides sued, saying the river was navigable under federal law and should be open to fishing. No, said the state's Court of Appeals; Barclay held the exclusive fishery rights, even though the fish were put there by a state stocking program.

But the public's rights predate and surmount those of the private landowner, argue Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and John Cronin, officers of New York's Riverkeeper conservation group. They have battled to broaden access to the Hudson River.

"In the early 13th century, the exclusion of the public from England's forests and streams helped prompt the citizen revolt that resulted in Magna Carta," they wrote last summer in an op-ed piece in The New York Times. "Among the rights affirmed by Magna Carta were 'liberty of navigation' and a 'free fishery.' "

Sometimes, it is hard to tell what constitutes the greater good.

Armed with letters of patent from Kings George II and III of England, property owners along the Jackson River in western Virginia sued to affirm their exclusive fishing rights. The grants were valid, according to Virginia's highest court.

So this year, for the first time in a decade, the state decided not to stock the river with trout.

Pressure on the government and conservation groups to buy up environmentally sensitive properties is mounting. On the Chattooga, some say the landowners are using their deeds to hold the environment hostage.

The Chattooga was made infamous by the 1972 movie "Deliverance." In the film, Burt Reynolds, Jon Voight and Ned Beatty are canoeing down the river when they are accosted by a pair of genetically challenged hillbilly stereotypes bent on sodomy.

But Earl Lovell is no backwoods caricature. He and two partners bought the West Fork property last summer for \$1.6 million from several landowners. It wasn't long before the gates and cables went up.

Following news reports about the threatening signs, the landowners and the Forest Service began negotiating a possible sale or land swap. In the meantime, the owners informally agreed to allow free passage on the river.

But all that changed this spring. Lovell was back on the banks waving people in, and a cousin who works for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources came out one April weekend to ticket "trespassing" anglers.

"They're just being obstreperous, just trying to be as big a pain as they can, to try to [get] as much money as they can out of the Forest Service," says MacIntyre, the lawyer.

The agency was unwilling to pay the asking price, which had risen to \$3.8 million.

In mid-May, the Forest Service broke off talks and filed suit in U.S. District Court for a declaration that the river is navigable under federal law.

The next day, bulldozers began cutting roads on the property. The owners plan a house on every acre.

National Park Service Asks for Help: Grand Canyon, AZ

By Jason Robertson

The National Park Service (NPS) held a public meeting on May 16, regarding progress on the Colorado River Management Plan (CRMP). The NPS team described their desire to involve the public in the decision making process. The Park Service described eight primary issues that they would like our assistance in resolving. These issues include:

- 1) Access and Allocation of Use
- 2) Distribution and Volume of Use
- 3) Noncommercial Permit System
- 4) Spectrum of Outfitter Trips and Services
- 5) Resource Stewardship
- 6) Wilderness Management
- 7) Lower Colorado River Gorge
- 8) Public Education

The NPS also presented definitions, objectives, and a statement on each topic. Of these eight issues, the NPS proposed forming five public workgroups to address the following topics:

- 1) Access method or system which provides for all users equally.
- 2) Distribution and Volume of Use (Computer-Modeling Project).
- 3) Noncommercial Permit System.
- 4) Spectrum of Outfitter Trips and Services.
- 5) Resource Stewardship.

A description of each topic is described in the May 1998 issue of "Soundings," an NPS publication, and on the web at www.nps.gov. Most of the work in these groups will be conducted through the internet and a variety of public workshops.

Public involvement is essential; however the deadline to join the workgroups passed on June 15th. As it is essential for private boaters to be well represented in these workgroups, American Whitewater offered to participate on each of the groups and will continue to represent our members' interests. Though it is too late for you to volunteer, you can still participate on the periphery by sending messages to Jason Robertson, the Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association, or Linda Jalbert in the NPS explaining your concerns and interests.

Besides proactively seeking public involvement, the NPS also should be commended for publicly recognizing that the current system of allocations favors the Commercial outfitters and is unfair to private boaters. As demonstrated by calling for these stakeholder workgroups, the NPS is very interested in opening a dialogue and resolving this and other issues with the Colorado River Management Plan. American Whitewater is looking forward to working with the members of the Park Service's CRMP team.

For more information contact:

Linda Jalbert
CRMP Project Leader
Grand Canyon National Park
P.O. Box 129
Grand Canyon, AZ 86023
e-mail: GRCA_CRMP@nps.gov

Alternatively, you can write to American Whitewater or the Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association (GCPBA) and we will forward your concerns to the workgroups. The GCPBA is unique in that they run the GCPBA NEWSWIRE. This is a free service. Send them your e-mail address and they'll add you to the list; tell them to remove you and consider it done.

Jason Robertson
Access Director
American Whitewater
1430 Fenwick Lane
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Jason@amwhitewater.org
Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association
P.O. Box 2133, Flagstaff, AZ 86003
(520) 214-8676
gcpba@flagstaff.az.us
<http://www.flagstaff.az.us/~gcpba/>

Trouble in Paradise: A note from the Access Director on the Blackwater River, WV

By Jason Robertson



Following American Whitewater's success in working with Alleghany Wood Products (AWP) and the US Forest Service (USFS) in negotiating a temporary access agreement to the Blackwater Canyon, American Whitewater got hammered by several local environmental groups. Apparently these organizations took umbrage at American Whitewater's position endorsing the premise of

a land swap between the USFS and AWP. This land swap would ensure the preservation of the Upper Canyon down to Lindy Point as well as the entire river corridor. These groups have accused American Whitewater of selling out to the logging interests and made personal attacks on me through the internet and public meetings.

Frankly, I don't understand the personal attacks against myself. I firmly believe that I am working for a constructive solution that will protect the integrity of the Blackwater Canyon from development.

One comment that the groups have made is that American Whitewater is only concerned about access in the Blackwater Canyon – though this is not the case. While our organization is concerned about getting to the river, we are equally concerned about protecting the unique character of this gorge. That is why we are working proactively to facilitate a land swap between AWP and the USFS. We have reserved our support until we are informed about the land that the Forest Service intends to offer in exchange.

The groups have also stated that American Whitewater made a pact with the Devil and agreed to allow developers to destroy the canyon. In response I can only say that we have made no agreements with AWP or the USFS. We have merely facilitated the arrangement that allows boaters to paddle down the canyon and fishermen to hike along the shores. This is a temporary solution that allows the public limited access to the Canyon. John Crites owns AWP. He is a shrewd businessman; but he is no Devil. He just makes a living through logging. Mr. Crites is also a fisherman and avid canoeist. While we may not agree with some aspects of his business operation, I don't believe that he has earned the level of vitriol that has been directed against him.

In essence some groups believe that any degree of cooperation between any conservation or recreation organization and AWP is

tantamount to selling out all of the other organizations. I do not believe that this is the case, and I believe that American Whitewater will achieve more by working in incremental steps towards the conservation of the canyon in a courteous atmosphere of cooperation than dealing in absolutes and treating other organizations and individuals with wholesale disrespect.

So, go out, paddle the Blackwater, hike around on the rocks by the creek, bask in the sun, listen to the hawks, take a tumble in Krakatoa, keep an eye out for black bears, have lunch under the trees, and fly off Double Indemnity. I'm proud of our work in the Blackwater Canyon. American Whitewater has helped to negotiate this opportunity to enjoy the canyon for a year. Take advantage of it. If the swap doesn't go through, we may be back to square one and have to stoop to poaching the river all over again next year.

Personal Watercraft Banned from Canyonlands National Park

Effective January 6, 1998, the waters within Canyonlands National Park were closed to the use of personal watercraft (PWC) under the Superintendent's authority found in 36 CFR, Sec. 1.5(a)(1), pending final rule making on this issue.

The justifications articulated in the compendium for closing the park to PWC use include: (1) Historical use of the Green and Colorado Rivers has been and continues to be primarily slow moving rafts and canoes. (2) The visitor experience of a multi-day river trip includes infrequent encounters with other parties and the expectation for solitude and a primitive setting, which is consistent with the General Management Plan. Total numbers for overnight use are capped to protect the opportunity for such an experience. (3) The introduction of high speed PWCs resulting in frequent interruptions of slow moving river trips is inconsistent with the purposes of the Park and the values being protected within the river corridors.

It is expected that motorized users will take this battle to the courts. American Whitewater will be writing a letter of support to the park on this decision, and we urge whitewater boaters to write their own letters on this issue. Send your comments to:

Walter Dabney
Superintendent
Canyonland National Park
2282 S. West Resource Blvd.
Moab, UT 84532-8000

Events Central

by Jayne H. Abbot

American Whitewater/NOWR Event Manager

News from the NOWR Circuit

If you build it, they will come. How true those words ring when looking at the phenomenal growth of the whitewater rodeo scene and the NOWR circuit. Years have been spent laying the foundation for the sport and "they" have come to compete in droves. Across the country, record numbers of expert/pro competitors are touring the NOWR circuit and creating a strong following on the rodeo scene. "Famous" rodeo star names are heard in boating groups of all kinds. "Did you hear that Johnny Cartwheel beat Wave Wheel Dave?" I've heard from organizers from as far away as Australia looking for advice on how to run rodeos. Everyday I answer requests for results from the latest rodeo (by the way, you can find the most complete results listing on the NOWR web site at . Long-established and new events managing this competition mania are finding it to be a handful.

In a new twist on the rodeo scene enters the "professional" paddler. These semiprofessional athletes are looking for the events to be run professionally or at least not as loosely as might have been acceptable in the past. More and more frequently, their livelihood depends on it. Some competitor sponsors are providing cash for top placement at NOWR events and for end of the season Point Series placements. These sponsor incentives have motivated competitors to care deeply about the running of the event and organizers can find them to be "testy" when they feel the event has not met their sponsors' requirements. They can be quite vocal at times...with money at stake I can understand their position.

Many existing events were developed primarily as fund-raisers with a focus on a friendly gathering of boaters with some fun, easygoing competition. The events were left to unfold as the weekend progressed without a lot of stress on the organizers. This worked for years and hey, it was all for fun and to raise some money anyway. With the implementation of standardized judging, a Point Series Championship and better promotion of the circuit, the NOWR has been legitimized in the eyes of both competitors and sponsors to the point where sponsorship money is involved. There is now a tremendous amount of pressure on the events as they are expected

to cross every "T" and dot every "I," sometimes a foreign concept to event organizers and volunteers who just want to "go with the flow" as usual. This sometimes leaves the organizers and competitors at odds. A frustrating place to be for both parties.

These growing pains are not completely unexpected and in fact should be welcomed as a sign that rodeo is making an impact. It only proves that there is lots of interest in the sport of freestyle rodeo and in keeping it's growth alive. In talks with various other sports (slalom, mountain biking, snow boarding, etc.), they've all been through the same types of growing pains and have learned, changed and grown from their experiences. I expect we will too.

NOWR Judging:

The new NOWR judging includes a sometimes controversial new variety requirement. Competitors must complete a certain number of different moves out of a list of moves (such as a surf, cartwheel left, cartwheel right, split wheel, etc.) in order to receive their full score (see the March/April issue or the NOWR web site for more details). Those who do not perform a variety of moves receive deductions for lack of variety. No longer can the expert/pro level paddler win a competition by simply performing a left cartwheel over and over again. "Mix it up" is now the phrase to be chanted by the riverside.

NOWR Events Results:

The following are brief event highlights and the results from the top classes at each event through the end of May. Full NOWR competition results are located on the web site at or can be obtained by calling the events office at (828) 645-5299.

Kern River Festival / April 17-19

The Kern was as awesome as ever. With forty-eight men, fifteen women and nine juniors competing in the Expert/Pro classes, the rodeo was packed with some of the hottest boaters in the country kicking off the 1998 rodeo season in style.

ExperVPro K-1 Men

1. Jason Bates
2. Dan Brabec
3. Dan Gavere

ExperVPro K-1 Women

Deb Ruehle
Amy Wiley
Jamie Simon

ExperVPro K-1 Junior

Brad Ludden
Ryan Felt
Andrew Holcombe

Merced River Rodeo / April 25-26

This year marked the first year of the Merced River Rodeo. See the article by Susan Scheufele for details on this great first year event.

ExperVPro K-1 Men

1. Shane Benedict
- Eric Southwick
- Clay Wright

ExperVPro K-1 Women

Brooke Winger
Saskia Van Mourik
Whitney Lonsdale

ExperVPro K-1 Junior

Brad Ludden
Nathan McDade
Charlie Beavers

New River Rodeo / April 25-26

Celebrating it's 11th year, the New River Rodeo's "Free for All" rodeo format left competitors smiling as the competition moved smoothly from one class to the next.

ExperVPro K-1 Men

1. Luke Hopkins
2. Casey Cockerham
3. Eric Jackson

Expert/Pro K-1 Women

Katie Neitert
Karen Mann
Susan Wilson

Expert/Pro K-1 Junior

Andre Spino-Smith
Patrick Metheny
John Stehlin

Expert/Pro C-1

1. Eric Jackson
2. Allen Braswell
3. Luke Hopkins

Canyon Creek Waterfall Rodeo / May 1

Yes you read that right...a waterfall rodeo. The water was too low for the hole to be showing so the creative minds behind this event came up with a unique alternative, a rodeo held at a 12 ft high waterfall. Competitors had a blast and spectators were awed as wave wheels, spins, boofs and other "crazy" moves were performed at the lip of falls while more traditional cartwheels, split wheels, etc. were flying at the bottom. One reporter said it was the most interesting and fun event he had ever seen!

Expert/Pro K-1 Men

1. Shane Benedict
2. Dan Gavere
- Clay Wright

Expert/Pro K-1 Women

Erin Miller
Alexa Schuman
Heather Lamson

Bob's Hole Rodeo / May 3

The resurrection of Bob's Hole Rodeo was received by hordes of competitors as forty-nine men, thirteen women and seven juniors competed in this famous hole.

Expert/Pro K-1 Men

1. Brandon Knapp
2. Rusty Sage
3. Sam Drevo

Expert/Pro K-1 Women

Saskia Van Mourik
Brooke Winger
Heather Lamson

Expert/Pro K-1 Junior

Andrew Holcombe
Brad Ludden
Charlie Beavers

Maupin Daze Rodeo / May 9-10

From Canyon Creek and Bob's hole, the rodeo crew headed to Maupin Daze to round out the three competitions over two weekends making up the Oregon Cup. Winners of the cup are listed below.

Expert/Pro K-1 Men

1. Jay Kincaid
2. Jimmy Blakney
- John Flett

Expert/Pro K-1 Women

Jamie Simon
Brooke Winger
Amy Wiley

Expert/Pro K-1 Junior

Brad Ludden
Nathan McDade
Kai Kinder

OREGON CUP WINNERS

(Overall winners of Canyon Creek, Bob's Hole and Maupin Daze)

Men's Expert

Brandon Knapp
Dan Gavere
Jay Kincaid

Women's Expert

Jamie Simon
Brooke Winger
Erin Miller

Juniors

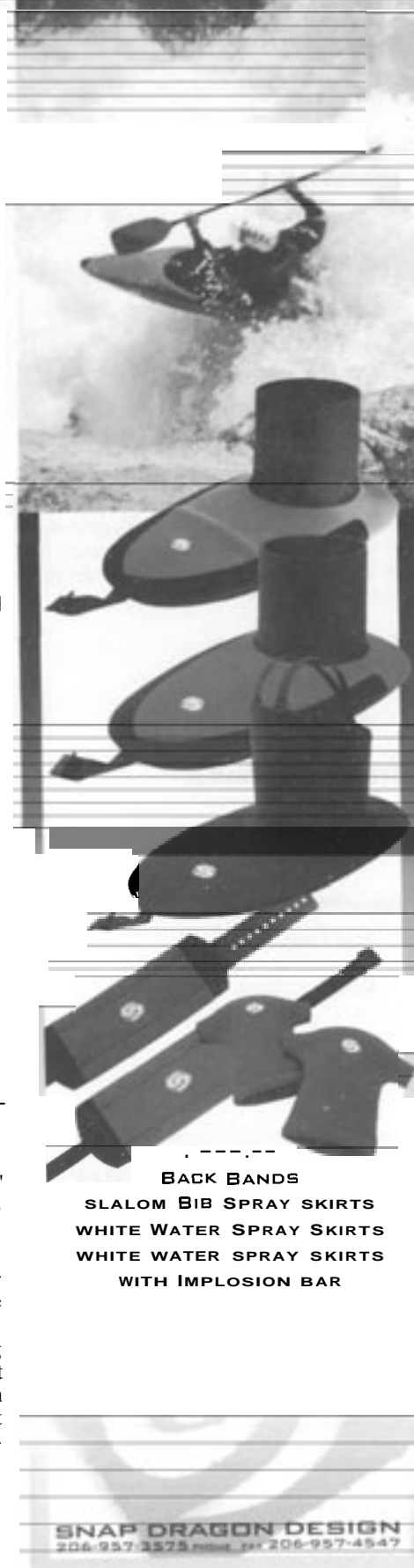
Brad Ludden
Andrew Holcombe
Nathan McDade

Gilman Falls Rodeo / May 2-3

In the weeks before this new rodeo I was asked many times, "What's the hole like?" After talking with some competitors who attended the event I can tell you that it's EXCELLENT and that the organizers really knew how to run an event. Some competitors were even given showers and a bed at the local "Y"! Unfortunately, due to high water, the "gates" could not be opened to bring water into the event site so the hole was not as sticky as it could have been but I've been told by those competitors who attended that they'd be back next year and highly recommend this event to others.

Expert/Pro K-1 Men

1. BJ Johnson
2. Peter Lataille
3. Brad Sutton



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ExperVPro K-1 Women

Shannon Carroll
Julie Dion
Katie Neitert

Expert/Pro K-1 Junior

Jeremy Todd
Brian Cataldo
Dustin Urban

Expert/Pro C-1

1. David Smallwood
Wright Hartman
Gigi Rioux

Bigfork Whitewater Rodeo / May 16-17

The Bigfork Festival proved to be much calmer this year as the river god's cooperated by not flooding the river. The rodeo was held at a new hole that proved to be great for competition.

ExperVPro K-1 Men

1. Shane Benedict (tie)
Dan Gavere (tie)
3. Eric Southwick

Expert/Pro K-1 Women

Brooke Winger
Jodee Dixon
Whitney Lonsdale

Expert/Pro K-1 Junior

Brad Ludden
Andrew Holcombe
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Kananaskis Rodeo / May 23-25

The first of the Canadian rodeos went off without a hitch with competitors on the NOWR tour flooding the area for this well attended event.

Expert/Pro K-1 Men

Eric Southwick
Sam Drevo
Jay Kincaid

Expert/Pro K-1 Women

Erica Mitchell
Saskia van Mourik
Heather Lamson

Expert/Pro C-1

Cody Boger
Bo Wallace
Lyle Dickenson

Potomac Whitewater Festival / May 30 - 31

The Potomac was hot, hot, hot...literally! It was a heat scorcher and with competition as hot as the weather. The rodeo was well attended with sixty-three men competing making it the largest men's class to date this season! The Great Falls race brought a huge crowd to the banks of the Potomac to watch the carnage, oops, action on the river.

Rodeo Results

Expert/Pro K-1 Men

1. Luke Hopkins
2. BJ Johnson
3. Eric Jackson

Expert/Pro K-1 Women

1. Jamie Simon
2. Deb Ruehle
3. Katie Nietert

ExperVPro K-1 Junior

1. Andre S. Smith
2. Sebastian Zimmer
3. Danny Stock

Expert/Pro C-1

1. Luke Hopkins
2. Eric Jackson
3. Ryan Bahn

Great Falls Race Results

Times shown are for prelims. Finals were head-to-head with placement determined by who crossed the finish line first and were not timed.

Men

Preliminary Times

1. Kurt Braunlich 1:37.80
2. Eric Jackson 1:39.81
3. Brian Homberg 1:42.66

Women

1. Amy Brown 2:01.60 *
2. Jamie Simon 1:54.84 *
(see note above)
3. Deb Ruehle 2:05.18

Junior

1. Sebastian Zimmer 1:41.48
2. Carleton Gould 1:43.67
3. Nejc Poberaj 1:48.88

C-1

1. David Hepp 1:49.47
2. Scott McClusky 1:52.83
3. Andy Bridge 1:55.37

Jackson Hole Rodeo / May 30 - 31

The Jackson Hole Rodeo was lucky enough to have a great warm weekend, especially since it snowed the next week! The hole unfortunately never materialized so the competition took place on a breaking wave instead with lots of town folk coming out to watch.

Expert/Pro K-1 Men

1. Dan Gavere
2. Jason Bates
3. Ed Lucero

ExperVPro K-1 Women

1. Brooke Winger
2. Polly Greene
3. Erica Mitchell

Expert/Pro K-1 Junior

1. Brady Johnston
2. Scott McCoy
3. Ryan Talermo

CONGRATULATIONS to all of the winners! Were looking forward to the summer season events!

Upper Ocoee Rodeo Hole Construction Update

By Jayne H. Abbot, American Whitewater/NOWR Events Manager

I'm quickly learning what it takes to coordinate a project such as this as I find myself wearing the new hat of a construction manager – where can I find sand, trucks, drills, bolts, sandbags and a myriad of other items needed for building a hole? And this is only for the temporary structure. It boggles my mind to think of what it will take to coordinate the permanent structure...one step at a time, one step at a time. I find myself muttering these words as the pressure mounts.

As of the date of this writing (early June), the temporary structure will be completed by June 15 and a test release will be held shortly thereafter. We'll know then if, gulp, our hole concept will give us great playhole or an unbelievable body, boat and all sucking hole. A small army of volunteers will descend upon the Ocoee Whitewater Center on June 13 exerting pounds of sweat equity and building those arm muscles while filling sandbags and placing them into the river. You'll be the first to know if we are successful so watch for more news in the next issue of the Journal.

First Annual Tallulah Festival

Responding quickly to American Whitewater's successful negotiations to restore flows to the Tallulah River last fall, the town of Tallulah Falls rallied to design the first annual Tallulah Falls Festival slated for the first scheduled release of the spring.

Although a chilly, blustery day caused a few red noses and the cancellation of on-water demonstrations, the festival was a great success with an estimate of 5,000 guests attending the one-day festival. The crowd was a mix of excited boaters discussing their runs of Oceana and families wondering what breed of people are these paddlers to tackle water that looks like that? Booths from local arts and crafts to boat manufactures were busy selling their wares throughout the day. Of particular interest was Harley Charlie, a Harley Davidson Motorcycle artist "tattooing" boats in the park. Bluegrass tunes, boiled peanuts, and down home barbecue cooking rounded out the festivities.

The evening brought to town two showings of the best picks from the Carolina Film Festival (a benefit for Canoeing for Kids) to the visitor center. Both showings were packed with paddlers and non-paddlers enjoying the latest in boating action and humor.

And what of the river...well, the river speaks for itself. There were no complaints from those lucky enough to draw a permit.

The town of Tallulah Falls is rejoicing in its successful first annual event earning some \$3,000 of which a portion will be donated to American Whitewater and other Tallulah Falls organizations. The remainder will be used to make the second annual Tallulah Falls Festival even better. Mark your calendars for April 3, 1999!

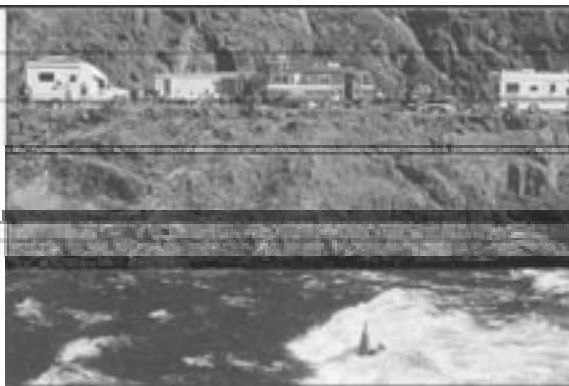
Merced Rodeo Startup

By Susan Scheufele, Event Organizer

If only I had known in the beginning just how much work is involved in organizing a whitewater rodeo, I could have gone in for counseling and had my head examined. I'm sure every event organizer ends up feeling the same way, especially when you are still writing letters and making phone calls more than a month after the event. Last fall, I was hoping to revive the Loma Prieta Paddlers Merced slalom race. How did it get turned into a whitewater rodeo?

I found a course architect for the spring Merced slalom race at the fall Loma Prieta Mokelumne race, but then I went home and read the newspaper articles about the El Nino weather phenomena happening this winter. There would probably be too much water for the Merced slalom race, but maybe a whitewater rodeo would work, even with higher than normal water levels. The BLM thought we were crazy, but after it rained almost every day in February, they had to concede that the long-range weather forecasts were right on target. Two days of warm rain at the end of March, a month before the rodeo, spiked the river up to 15,000 cfs, and my nerves started to fray. The Merced is a Wild and Scenic river with no upstream dams to control the flow, so all we could do was pray to the river gods to give us good flows.

Then there was the Gauge Hole issue where the received wisdom was that the hole was too big and juicy at certain water levels. Gauge Hole was not a popular play spot with Central California boaters. This was partly due to the older, high-volume boat designs, which were wonderfully stable at the bottom of the hole. Also, most of the boaters who would enjoy playing in it prefer to kayak the more challenging upstream runs, as Gauge Hole is located in the middle of the Class II



Merced River Rodeo
Photo by
Shelby Thorner

run. One of the better Loma Prieta Paddlers went into the hole (on purpose) at 7,000 cfs last spring, while leading a club trip. A safety boater on the trip was so concerned that he

got out on shore with a throw bag, just in case there was a problem. There had never been a rodeo held at Gauge Hole before. Would it work? Club members were dubious. But after a few stimulating discussions, the club voted it's support and gave free reign to those of us who wanted the rodeo to see if we could make it happen - or not!

The go-ahead decision was followed by some initial paperwork and phone calls to NOWR (National Organization of Whitewater Rodeos) and the BLM. Both Jayne Abbot of American Whitewater/NOWR and Jim Eicher, from the BLM Folsom Resource Area office, were very supportive. The winter was filled with volunteer recruitment phone calls and NOWR information such as insurance forms, financial form, media form, a list of potential sponsors and list of the other event organizers. The '98 NOWR judging rules needed to be mailed to all the judges, scorers, and timers, and copies of the judging video delivered to the judges. I started to envy the organizers who lived near their river with a community of other boaters, so they could hold meeting with volunteers without getting a laugh. Volunteers were spread throughout Silicon Valley and Monterey Bay and we all had regular jobs and daily commutes. The thought of meeting after work did not appeal to many of the volunteers.

.....

The winter brought many months of rain, the serious El Nino rains. But the weather in April was cool, and the Merced stayed at a reasonable water level. We took my niece, who is learning to kayak, paddling on the Class II run the weekend before the rodeo, and also measured the mileage distances for the Freestyle Through a Rapid map to the "mystery rapid" at Motel Hole. I've had a problem mentally recalibrating the gauge levels to the perceived water levels since the major flooding changed the river bed last year, and new gravel bars were formed. What used to be cleanly boatable at 1,000 cfs looked scratchy at the same flows after the floods. The rapids above the South Fork Merced looked bony even though the California Department of Water Resources gauge showed the inflow to Exchequer to be 2484 cfs that day. My boyfriend Greg and I surfed some waves above Gauge Hole while my niece strayed downriver in her kayak, and the boaters in the eddy next to Gauge Hole yelled at her to paddle hard and punch the hole, which she did. The hole did not look like the gnarly monster that I remembered from my Class II boater bad dreams.

The next day I got a phone call from a paddler who went to the Kern River Festival. He told me about the hordes of expert and pro-boaters following the rodeo circuit this year, most of whom were soon to descend upon the Merced. So much for "You'll only get 20 or 30 boaters for your rodeo" prediction that I'd heard a week earlier from one of the judging volunteers. The Merced River Rodeo was happening, ready or not! Pro-boaters started calling me during the week before the rodeo, asking "Where is the hole?" I told them "3.1 miles from the BLM building at Briceburg, which is located about 10 miles from Mariposa heading east on Hwy 140 towards Yosemite National Park." Our playhole was not very well known, to say the least. The weather got warmer and the flows came up during the week before the rodeo. When Greg and I arrived at Gauge Hole on Friday afternoon before the rodeo, there were only happy faces. The pros loved the hole, and they told us that it was one of the two or three best play holes on the rodeo circuit! Greg quipped, "That they've been to on the short circuit this year."

After the Saturday morning registration, the rest of the weekend went by quickly as one long, exhausting but fun blur. It was a great opportunity to see some of the best play paddlers in the country on my favorite river. Thanks to an incredible amount of hard work from the many Loma Prieta Paddler and other local and pro-boater volunteers, the "Freestyle Through a Rapid" and "Hole Riding" events ran smoothly and successfully. The Loma Prieta Paddlers would especially like to thank Shane Benedict for organizing all the judging for the hole riding event on Sunday, and Dan Gavere and friends for providing the music and a running commentary at the hole riding. And last but not least, we would like to give special thanks to the pro-women on the tour, who spent many hours on the river-right rock judging the men's classes. The main casualty from the event turned out to be myself, as after handling all of the organizing before and after the rodeo, I have "organizer burnout!" If you are interested in organizing or being a volunteer for next year's Merced River Rodeo, slated to be an American Whitewater fund raiser, please call Susan Scheufele at (408) 459-7978 or Jayne Abbot at the NOWR Events office at (828) 645-5299.





1998 SCHEDULE OF RIVER EVENTS

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

AMERICAN WHITEWATER EVENTS

Sacandaga Festival	CANCELLED	Hadley, NY	Pete Skinner	518-474-2432
Black River Festival	July 25-26	Watertown, NY	Chris Koll	315-652-8397
Deerfield Festival	August 1	Charlemont, MA	Mike Coleman	781-646-2012
"Don't call this a Festival River Rendezvous"	September 5-7	Belfort, NY/Beaver River	Chris Koll	315-652-8397
Gauley Festival	September 26	Summersville, WV	Phyllis Horowitz	914-586-2355
Russell Fork Rendezvous	October 2-4	Haysi, VA	Brent Austin	606-278-2011
Moose River Festival	October 17	Old Forge, NY	Chris Koll	315-652-8397

and Introducing the AMERICAN WHITEWATER CASCADE SERIES
a series of American Whitewater premier level races from mild(er) to wilder held across the country

Black River Race	July 25-26	Watertown, NY	Chris Koll	315-652-8397
Upper Yough Race	August 27	Friendsville, MD	Jess Whitternore	301-746-5389
Gore Canyon Downriver Race	August 22 -23	Kremmling, CO	Paul Tefft	970-923-3955
Russell Fork Race	October 3	Haysi, VA	Brent Austin	606-278-2011
Gauley River Race	October 5	Summersville, WV	Donnie Hudspeth	800-950-2585
Moose River Race	October 17	Old Forge, NY	Chris Koll	315-652-8397

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF WHITEWATER RODEOS (NOWR) CIRCUIT

Gorge Games - WW Rodeo	July 11 -12	Hood River, OR	John Trujillo (TREE)	541-386-4286
Derby Creek Days	July 25	Bums, CO	Chris Emerick	970-736-0080
Kootenay Whitewater Festival	August 1-3	Castlegar, BC	Gerry Harmon	250-362-7259
Wausau Whitewater Rodeo	August 29-30	Wausau, WI	Julie Walraven	715-845-5664
Ottawa River Rodeo	September 5-7	Bryson, QB	Paul Sevcik	416-222-2223
American River Festival	September 12-13	Placerville, CA	Larry Goral	916-621-1224
Outer Banks Surf/Kayak Rodeo	September 19-20	Nags Head, NC	Pam Malec	919-441-6800
Coosa River Whitewater Festival	October 2-4	Wetumpka, AL	Lonnie Carden	334-272-0952
Ocoee Rodeo	October 9-11	Ducktown, TN	Susan Wilson	704-628-1791

OTHER EVENTS

Nike World Masters Games	August 9-16	Oregon	Dave Slover	541-395-2201
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Nike World Masters Games include both whitewater slalom and rodeo events. You must be 30 or over to compete in the games

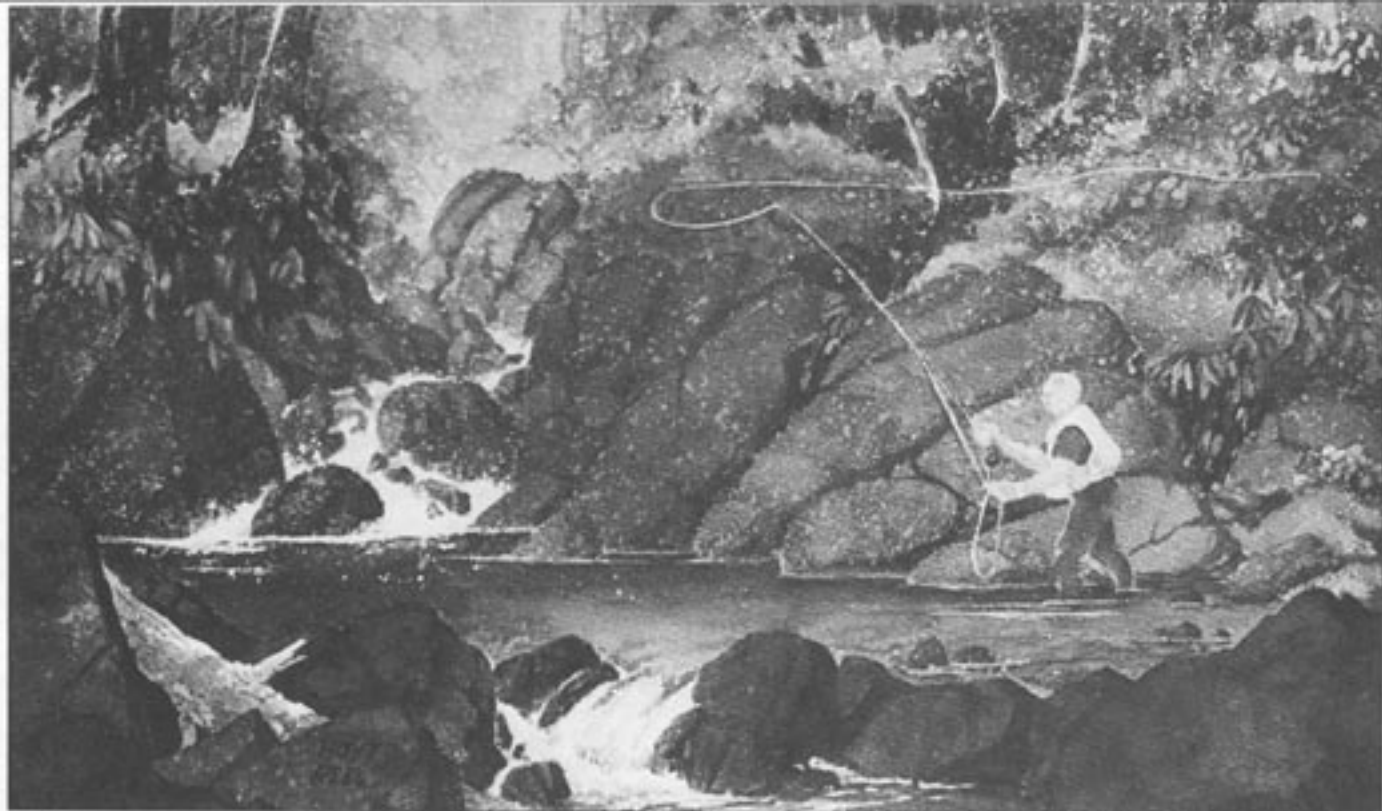


Portrait of a Whitewater Artist

Meet Hoyt Reel

By Bob Gedekoh





"That paddler in the lead looks like she's going to handle that drop just fine," I said. "But the woman on her tail looks like she might be in for some serious trouble!"

Hoyt Reel sighed like a nervous parent.

'Yeah, she's spinning and she's a little out of control. She's going to have to pull that boat around or she's going over that big drop backwards," he observed.

"Do you think she can?" I asked worrisomely.

"Can't tell for sure," Hoyt replied. "She's tackled this kind of water before and she's pretty good. Otherwise she wouldn't have made it this far down the river. Besides, she's in one of those short boats. I reckon she'll do fine."

But I wasn't convinced the scenario was going to have such a happy ending.



Fortunately the paddlers under discussion were in no real peril. In fact, they were negotiating a precipitous class V rapid in a watercolor Hoyt had created and donated to the AWA to be this issue's cover and to ultimately be sold at the 1998 Gauley Festival. And Hoyt and I were not face to face on the banks of a river.

He was several hundred miles away on the other end of a phone line. He had just come in from paddling the Potomac below Great Falls when I called to tell him how much I liked the painting. A mountain biking injury had kept him off the river most of the winter and he was clearly excited. At 71, his enthusiasm for whitewater had not waned a bit. "The Potomac is running four feet... a great level. It felt great to be back in my boat," he announced. "Now, I'm raring to go!"

I've never known Hoyt Reel to be anything but.

Hoyt has been running whitewater for a long time, since the mid 60s. He has been on and around the river as long as I can remember. He towering presence is a familiar figure on the mid Atlantic rivers that he loves. If you have done much paddling in Maryland, West Virginia or his home state of Virginia, you may



well have met him. A long time AWA supporter, his Possum Point Productions booth has become a fixture at the Gauley Festival. And though he describes himself as "something of a recluse," everybody seems to know and like him.

He is good natured and amicable, modest and self-deprecating. Hoyt has paddled with all the well-known "old timers" and he never seems to have a bad word to say about any of them. Even the notoriously eccentric and cantankerous ones. But his life has been as colorful as his paintings. And Hoyt does have a thousand stories to tell.

Hoyt Reel was born in 1926 in Marion, North Carolina, a small industrial town with a population of 3000, thirty miles from Asheville. The youngest of three brothers, he recalls a rough and tumble childhood. Besides his brothers, two older cousins lived nearby. Hoyt says they were a rambunctious and mischievous lot. Turf wars were inevitable and Hoyt, who ultimately grew to 6'4", says he was a short, fat kid who had to scrap a little to hold his own.

When he was eleven or twelve Hoyt and his brother James worked odd jobs and used the money they made to buy bits and pieces of wood, from which they constructed a primitive canoe. They sealed it with pitch and paid a neighbor fifty cents to haul it to a nearby lake. To everyone's amazement but their own, the boys' boat held water. For years they used it on their fishing and swimming expeditions. Hoyt was already obsessed with water.

But Hoyt's childhood was not entirely idyllic. Hard times came with the depression. During those years Hoyt's mother operated a boarding house. Her tenants, who paid three dollars a week for room and meals, were mostly workers from the local furniture plant and



cotton mills. If you just wanted a meal, she charged a quarter.

But in spite of the depression, the Reels never went hungry. "My mother kept three cows... one for each boy. Whenever a brother grew up and left home, she sold a cow." Unfortunately, leaving home in the forties meant going to war. Hoyt's oldest brother was in Honolulu when the Japanese attacked. He subsequently spent most of his life in the military, including service in Korea. The middle brother, Bud, fought in the Battle of the Bulge.

As a teen, Hoyt recalls watching trains filled with wounded soldiers rolling by on the way to an army hospital. "Typically the trains that came through Marion had three or four passenger cars, but these troop trains

had fifteen or twenty. When I thought about how many guys were in each car..." It was a sad and sobering image, which Hoyt has never forgotten.

It was also an image which no doubt haunted Hoyt's mother. Fortunately both of Hoyt's brothers survived the war, but Hoyt's favorite cousin, J.T., was not as lucky. He died when the observation plane he was piloting was shot down in Africa. Hoyt took it hard. "J.T. was always my hero. He was a smart kid and he could do just about anything."

In 1944, at age 17, Hoyt enlisted in the Navy and soon all three of Mrs. Reel's boys were within harms way. Hoyt served as a deck-hand on a destroyer, initially off North Africa, then later in and around the Mediterranean. "We chased German subs near the straight of Gibraltar and escorted hospital and troop ships to Marseilles." Hoyt's days at sea were exciting, though not always pleasant. "I slept in a cramped bunk right under a noisy chain staircase. And because destroyers took on water on heavy seas, there was often vomit tainted water sloshing around."

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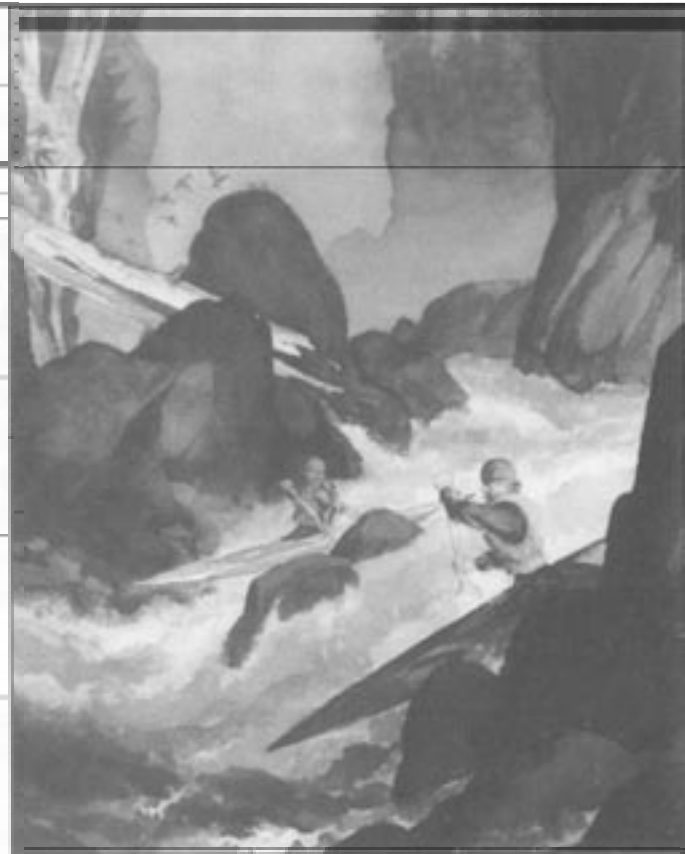
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But it was on board that Hoyt was introduced to painting. Lawrence Hurd, a sailor from Maine who was fifteen years older than Hoyt, painted seascapes from the deck and scenes of life aboard ship. Hoyt watched with interest and the two soon established a friendship that has lasted to this day. In fact, this summer Hoyt plans to tour the Maine coast with his old Navy pal, painting the seacoasts, lighthouses and isolated fishing villages that Hurd knows so well.

"On the destroyer, Lawrence painted with watercolors because they were cheap, portable and they dried quickly," Hoyt recalls. With Hurd's encouragement, Hoyt tried his hand at painting, though he now remembers those efforts as primitive.

After the war, Hoyt returned to North Carolina where he took a job firing steam locomotives. For those readers less than fifty... that means shoveling coal. The trains traversed the rugged valleys of the southern Appalachians. Hoyt was intrigued by the rivers speeding by. He longed to explore and eventually paint those rivers. But running whitewater for pleasure was still unheard of.

"The engineer used to stop the train beside a lonely gas station on the Nantahala so we could buy moon pies and R.C. Colas. Who could have imagined that place would eventually become the N.O.C.?"

After working for a year and half on the railroad, Hoyt lost his job when diesel engines replaced the old steam locomotives. Since his wanderlust was intact, he decided to enlist in the army to "see some more of the world."

As a consequence he turned 21 in the bleak landscape of postwar

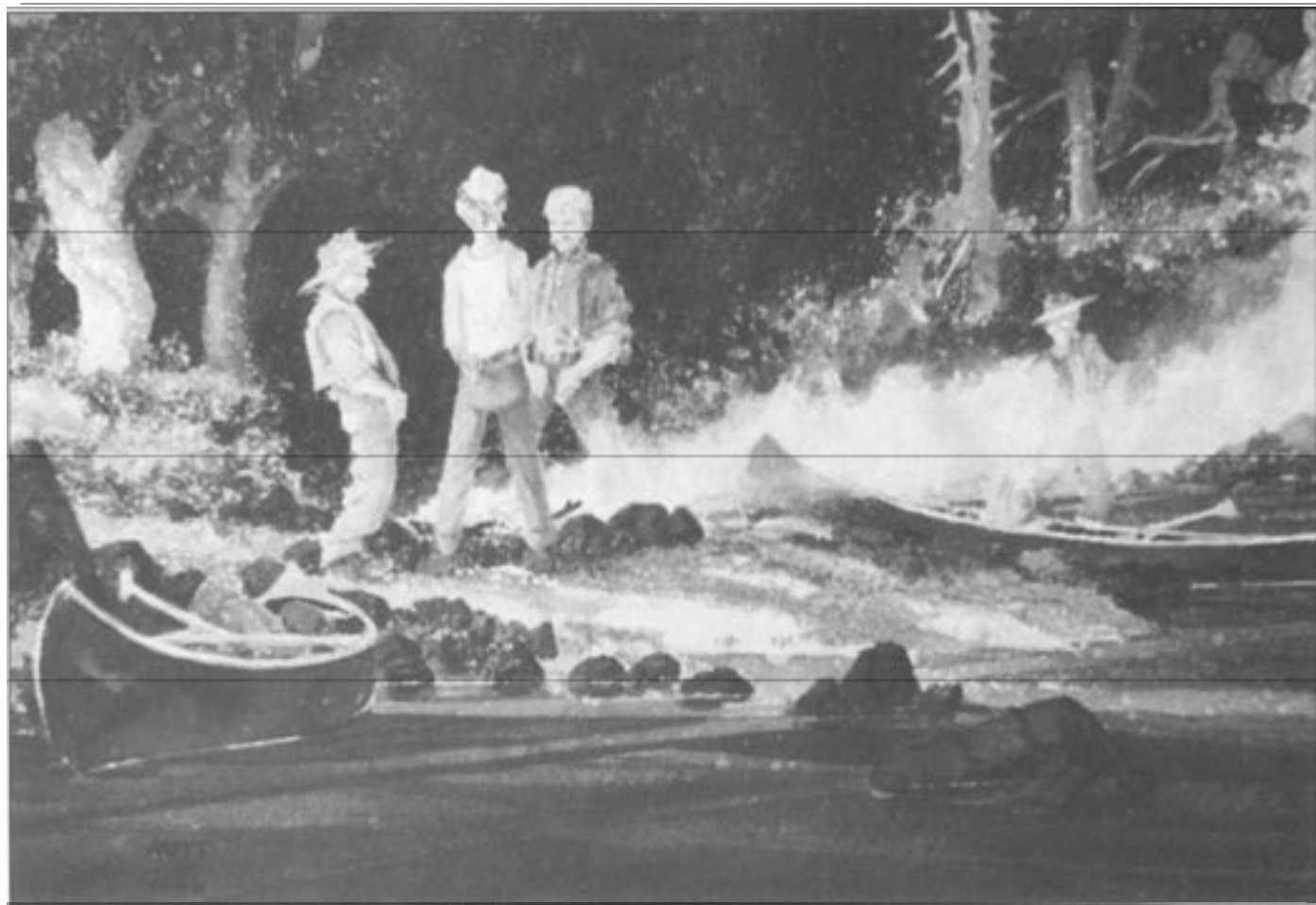


Berlin. "You could walk three or four miles and see nothing but bombed-out rubble," Reel remembers. To make matters even more interesting, the Cold War intensified while Hoyt was stationed there. The Russians intermittently cut off the power and barricaded the city, necessitating massive airlifts of supplies.

But he found time to take some painting lessons in a serviceman's center while stationed in Berlin and spent some time exploring the northern Alps. Hoyt eventually returned to the States and, after five years, left the service, got married and used his GI benefits to enroll in the engineering school at North Carolina State. After graduation he took a job as a mechanical engineer for a power company. Eight years

later Reel went to work for a contractor who provided support services to the Army and Navy; he stayed with that company until he retired in 1987. While at that job, Hoyt was responsible for creating standards, specifications and user manuals for diving and boating equipment. It also introduced him to the sport of scuba diving, which has continued to be one of his passions.

In the mid sixties, Hoyt and his wife purchased a cabin cruiser, but they soon tired of the hassles of maintaining a big boat. So they bought a Dakota canoe, which they wore out running the Rappahannock River near their home in Virginia. Their next boat was a Grumman, which they initially used for flatwater fishing and camping expeditions. Before long the call of rapids lured Hoyt toward more challenging runs, like Section III of the Chattooga and the Cheat. Hoyt soon learned that running challenging whitewater can be hard on long,



heavy aluminum canoes. About that time a friend that he met at N.C. State, Jim Rogers, introduced him to kayaking. Hoyt caught the bug. He purchased a plastic Holoform kayak, but soon sold it because it could not accommodate his massive frame. Hoyt had better luck with a fiberglass Phoenix kayak, which he assembled from a kit in 1970.

Soon he was exploring the headwaters of the Cheat in West Virginia with his friends, Steve Melnikoff and Dick Bodof, who he met through the local chapter of the Sierra Club. Hoyt recalls these as wild times and it sounds like they were. Armed only with road maps and the old Randy Carter guidebook, they paddled a number of West Virginia rivers like the Blackwater and the Stoney, now regarded as classics. They paddled in quarter-inch wet suits right through the winter and swims were not uncommon since the science of rolling was still in its infancy. "Back then if you flipped, you bailed," Hoyt says matter of factly.

Soon, Hoyt's whitewater circle of acquaintances widened. He often paddled with Jim Williams, a marine officer that he met through his job. Hoyt laughs when he recalls their first trip down the Shaver's Fork of the Cheat. It was a cold winter day and they got a late start. They did not know about the McGee Run put-in, so they launched at route 250, adding ten miles of flatwater to the 13 mile, class IV+ run. Fortunately, they had heard rumors of the High Falls

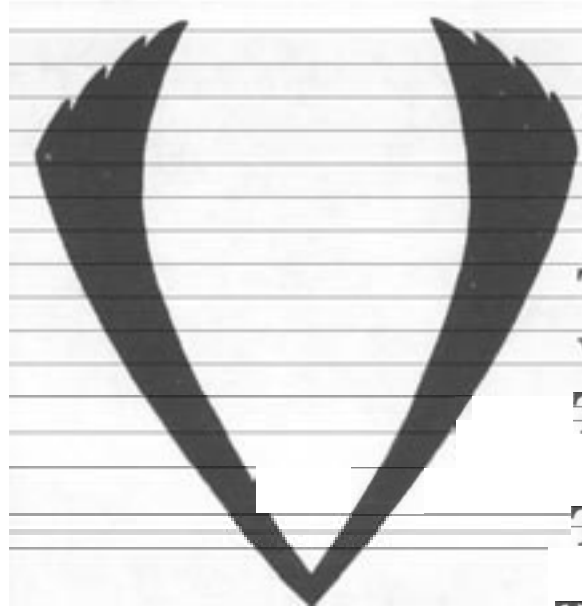


of the Cheat, which they portaged. But it was nearly dark when they reached Mule Falls, which has an innoknt-looking approach.

"I lost track of Jim near the top of the rapid, but soon found him stuck in a big hole at the bottom. Unfortunately, I wound up in the hole right beside him!" They paddled the rest of the way to the take-out at Bemis in the dark. "But that would not be the last time that happened," Hoyt grins. In fact, one early winter day, just a year ago, Hoyt and his close paddling friend, Bob Swartz, paddled off bne of their favorite rivers, the Laurel Fork of the Cheat, under similar conditions. It was the price they paid for stopping to help a group of novices who were having a bad day.

Early in his boating career, Hoyt tackled a number of difficult streams. He traveled to the Obed Emory system and paddled Clear Creek and Daddy's Creek with Bob Foreman, Art Chenowith and Rick and Dave Bradley. He followed Pittsburgh's Jim Painter and Wayne Vogel down the Watauga. He introduced his older brother, Jim, to kayaking. Sometimes they still paddle Chattooga III together.

Sadly, Hoyt was part of a party of four on a frigid winter day when Paul Bryant perished in an entrapment on the Stony River in West Virginia. "I was running first and Paul was behind me. Mike Fetchero and Ed Little were running sweep. Paul was the least experienced in the group, but he was having a good day and hadn't had any trouble."



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Hoyt remembers.

"We stopped in an eddy upstream. I'll never forget my last conversation with Paul. He was talking about what a beautiful day it was. There was snow on the ground and a lot of ice on the hillsides. Paul said it was a privilege to be on the river on such a wonderful day."

When Reel ran the next class III rapid he bumped a log submerged and hidden in a hydraulic. He immediately caught an eddy to wave the others away but Bryant apparently didn't see him. Within seconds Bryant's Phoenix Cascade was wrapped on a fork on the log and the deck soon collapsed, trapping his legs.

"We had a hold of Paul but the water was ice cold and relentless. No matter what we tried, we couldn't get him out." After struggling for an hour, they realized Bryant was dead. "It was late and a blizzard was blowing in. We didn't know how to hike out so we paddled to Kitzmiller on the Potomac. It was almost dark when we got there."

Two weeks later, at low water, Hoyt hiked in with a saw and removed the log. "Paul's death sure gave us all food for thought. I was real nervous about boating for a while."

But most of Hoyt Reel's river memories are good ones. He grins broadly when he reminisces about a trip to Colorado he made with Bob and Ron Alexander and Bob Wood. "There was a lot of snow that year and everything was running high. We paddled the Blue, the Cross Mountain Gorge of the Yampa, the Crystal, the Arkansas and the Roaring Fork."

During his boating career Hoyt has paddled the Colorado River



through Cataract Canyon once and through the Grand Canyon twice. Mimi and Dave Demery, who manufacture inflatable rafts in Friendsville, Maryland, asked Hoyt along on one of these trips in appreciation for a painting he did for them. "They wanted a picture of rafters so that's what I did," Hoyt chuckles. "Actually, I like rafters, too," he adds apologetically. "I like all the river critters!"

On that trip Hoyt met Bob and Shirley Marietta, who own Whitewater Adventures, a rafting company on the Yough in Pennsylvania. "After the trip they really helped me market my work," Hoyt says. "They displayed and sold it in their shop in Ohio." Hoyt soon began to sell large prints reproduced from his original paintings, as well as note cards.

Around that time, Hoyt started doing custom watercolors commissioned by individual boaters, an enterprise that he has continued to pursue. Typically he depends upon photos provided by these individuals to duplicate the colors of their gear and boats, but he uses artistic license to create the whitewater milieu. Reel relies upon his feel for whitewater, gleaned from decades of on-the-water experience, to great effect... managing to capture both the explosive power and subtlety of whitewater.

"The hardest part is painting the transition between whitewater and flatwater," Hoyt sighs. "The change is subtle and there should be no hard line. Getting the right color is tough."

A technical purist, Hoyt refuses to use white or black paint in his work. "When I was seventeen or eighteen I met an accomplished

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Portrait of a

watercolor artist and he gave some advice. He said the most important thing was never to use white or black paint."

A white acrylic "watercolor" is available, but Hoyt says that most classical watercolor artists avoid it because it has an opaque quality that can deaden a painting. So Hoyt must work around the white in "white" water, leaving it unpainted. By manipulating the colors around it he has perfected the technique of making it seem to explode from the paper, just as whitewater explodes from the river. He calls this method "glazing;" it allows him to create the illusion of translucency.

"One of the disadvantages of working with watercolor is that it is difficult to correct your mistakes... you can't just paint over them like you can with oil." Sometimes when Hoyt is dissatisfied with a painting in progress he is able to salvage it, but other times it is impossible to manage a rescue. "Sometimes the pieces just don't fit together and you hit a dead end."

"It's hard when you're working on a plane to create a three dimensional image. Using light and dark contrasting colors allows you to create a sense of depth, by duplicating the sense of light and shadow."

Reel doesn't just paint whitewater pictures, but his subjects



Whitewater Artist

clearly reflect his personal interests and preferences. He paints underwater shots based on his scuba diving experiences, Blue Ridge landscapes and fishing and flatwater canoeing scenes. He is currently finishing a painting of a woodpile, trying to capture the texture of the slabs of wood. "I try to make every other painting or so a whitewater picture, so I don't get stale or bored."

I recently asked Hoyt about his plans for the future.

"I plan to keep on paddling rivers and keep on painting them. Only I plan to do both even better."

One of Hoyt's immediate goals is to paint Big Splat on the Big Sandy, though not necessarily to run it.

"Paddling has never been a macho thing for me," Hoyt explains. "Back when we were running the tough stuff... it wasn't to prove anything. It wasn't competitive. Paddling whitewater was a means to an end. We just wanted to have a good time and to explore some wild and beautiful rivers."

At the 1997 Gauley Festival while admiring a painting Hoyt had done for Bruce Farrenkopf, a regular contributor to this magazine, I decided to ask him to paint one for me. I asked Hoyt to do watercolor-invoking memories of my unforgettable (in more ways than one) kayak trip through Colorado's Black Canyon of the Gunnison. For-

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WHITEWATER CHALLENGERS

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tunately, Hoyt had done some hiking there, so he knew the terrain. But he insisted that I send him some slides of the boaters on the expedition.

The finished product, which, in my unbiased opinion, may be the best he has ever done, portrays two kayakers negotiating a severe class 5+ sequence that terminates in a falls. The boater in the foreground (who is supposed to be me... though I can assure you I would never, ever attempt such a rapid, at least on purpose!) has completed the complex approach and is about to plunge over the falls. He is (I am), of course, perfectly on line (Thanks, Hoyt!) But you cannot see the base of the falls. That lies beyond the lower edge of the image.

So I asked Hoyt, when I picked up the painting, "What's down there, anyway? A placid pool? Or a big rock or terminal hydraulic?"



Hoyt looked at the picture, shook his head and grinned deviously. "Can't tell for sure, Bob," he said. "Guess you'll just have to commission another painting to find out!"

I've been thinking about it. I'd really love to have another of Hoyt's paintings. But then again, maybe some questions are better left unanswered.

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THE NEW RIVER DRIES

by Tim Daly

Downstream from the traditional takeout of the New River Gorge lies a section of the New River known best as "The Dries". This section derives its nickname from the fact that most of the year is left dry due to a private hydroelectric power project by Elkem Metals Corporation. Approximately three miles downstream from Fayette Station lies Hawks Nest dam. From there the river makes a six mile journey to the town of Gauley Bridge through a spectacular gorge tilled with challenging whitewater and awesome scenery.

HISTORY

In the midst of the great depression a hydroelectric power project was undertaken by

Union Carbide Corporation. A complex including the Hawks Nest Dam, a diversion tunnel and hydroelectric turbines was constructed between 1930 and 1935. Thousands of workers came from throughout the country to work on the project.

What resulted was Americas single greatest occupational health disaster. The purpose of the dam was not for water impoundment but rather for the diversion of the river through a man-made tunnel. A three mile tunnel was dug through Gauley Mountain by these workers through silicosis by the time the tunnel was completed in 1935, a majority of workers had acquired deadly silicosis from breathing dust





from the tunnel. As many as 764 workers would die from the effects of silicosis while hundreds more were debilitated.

WHITewater FLOWS What is well known to the paddling community, is the portion of the year when the riverbed is not dry. The diversion tunnel typically diverts approximately 7000 CFS during the spring months. However, average flows of the New River in February, March, and April exceeds 16,000 CFS. This results in average flows in the native riverbed of approximately 9000 CFS during these months. The month of May delivers an average of 6000 CFS to the natural river. These flows provide multiple opportunities for Spring and Winter paddling.

THE RUN The Drys contains some of the most exciting big water and beautiful scenery in the Eastern US. This section is perhaps best known by paddlers for its wide variety of play spots and surfing waves. In these respects, The Drys is in every way equal to the better known and more often

paddled gorge section of New River. The ease of the short shuttle, as well as the length of the run, makes two trips a day easily accomplished.

The put-in is located at Cotton Hill, just downhill from Fayetteville. From the parking lot paddlers can put-in directly at the river or walk upstream to the base of the dam. Even at relatively low flows, The Drys has the appearance of a flooded riverbed. The first two miles consists of multiple ledge holes and surfing waves.

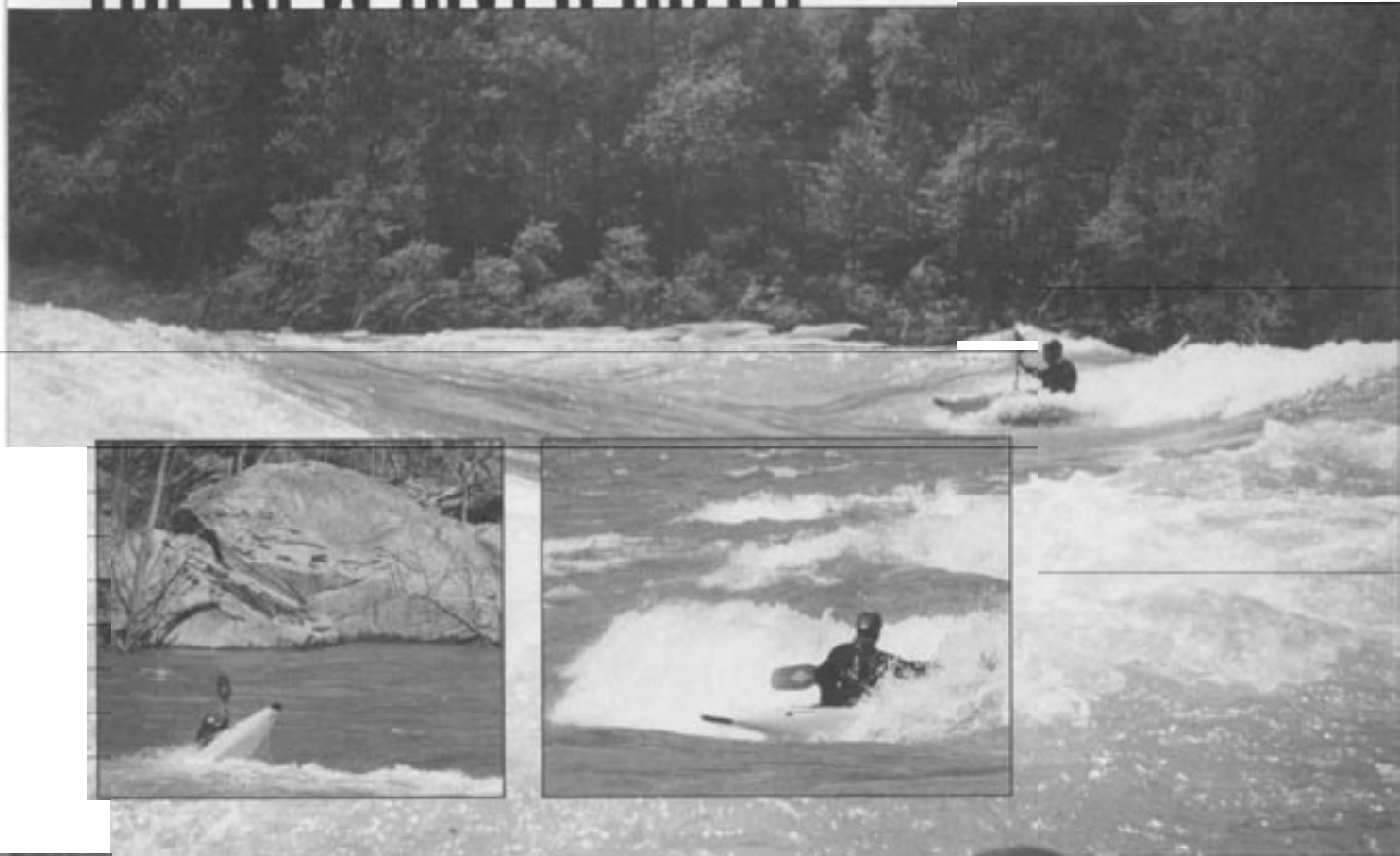
Midway through the run, the river makes a sharp left which signals the entrance to a rapid known as Super Savage or Mile Long. At high flows this can be an intimidating mile of monstrous holes and swirling eddy lines terminating in a ten foot high pour-over. At lower flows the same rapid is broken into areas ideal for surfing and playing.

The remainder of the run consists of a rapid named landslide with multiple slots around house-sized boulders. From there to the takeout you paddle through several smaller rapids and past the turbines where the tunnel releases the bypassed water back into



*Photos by Katie Nietert
Left page: B.J. Johnson @ put-in
This page clockwise: Bottom of Mile Long'
Brandon Squires, B.J. Johnson @ Big Kahuna
Wave, Dave Persolja*

THE NEW RIVER DRYS



Back: Marc Harmon, Insets: Brent Toepper, Bottom of page: Take-out

the river. The takeout is adjacent to New River campground in Gauley Bridge.

The Drys provides a dynamic experience from an intense high-water run to a low to medium level play run.

RIVER ISSUES several issues currently affect the New River Drys. The traditional takeout at New River Campground is currently for sale. The paddling community could suffer if no attempt for lease or purchase of a small takeout area is arranged.

Secondly, a grass-roots initiative is taking place concerning the feasibility of scheduled weekend Spring flows. This would not require true reservoir releases, but rather guaranteed river flows by adjusting the amount of flow diverted through the tunnel. This can only be accomplished through the cooperation of Elkem Metals Corporation. Due to the high natural flows during this season, tunnel flow reductions would not be required when natural flows are greater than

15,000 CFS. Tunnel flow reductions would only be required during eight hour windows to establish recreational usage.

Justification for scheduled Spring releases would be the economic development and increased tourism generated through an increase in river usage. The precedence has been set by many other whitewater rivers with scheduled releases. The local rafting industry is already established and would benefit from scheduled releases. There would be a further increase in tourism provided by the private boat-

ing community provided to the town of Gauley Bridge.

The brief decreases in tunnel flows would result in some decreases in power generation by Elkem Metals. Through the cooperation of state and local leaders, state tax credits or other incentives could be offered to Elkem Metals to offset any losses due to decreased power generation.

The whitewater industry is West Virginia's greatest renewable natural resource. Efforts should be made not only to preserve, but also expand this resource.



Coping with cabin fever

Paddling in Ecuador a sure cure for the winter blues

By Rick Danis

Photos by Phil DeRiemer

Grinning ear to ear, I shouldered my kayak and carefully walked across the rickety bridge spanning the rushing waters of the Rio Quijos.

My first day of boating in Ecuador was not particularly noteworthy. The section of the Quijos we paddled was only Class III and I was stiff and rusty and flipped several times. But I was joyous nonetheless. The bottom line was this: it was December 28th and I was warm, comfortable and lovin' life on vacation, looking forward to a nice, cold cerveza back at the hotel. I smiled as I thought about my paddling buds freezing their tucos off in the Pacific Northwest.

I can't think of a better way to break the mind-numbing grip of cabin fever in the winter than to schedule a paddling

vacation to South America. I've done it the past three years and it's worked like a charm every time.

Contrary to my initial conception of what it takes to paddle south of the border, you don't need to be an expert kayaker. Most outfitters offer paddling trips for beginners through expert.

And you don't need to be rich. I'm a carpenter and for the past three years have managed to scrape up enough cash to enjoy these overseas extravaganzas.

You certainly don't need to speak a word of Spanish, which was my biggest worry about traveling in South America. You'll be surprised how many people speak English and your guides, provided you've picked a reliable outfitter, will be glad to interpret for you.





All it really takes is a desire to visit a fascinating part of the world and a week or two of your time. That's it.

The key though, is to sign on with a quality outfitter whose guides have years of experience both on the rivers and in dealing with the logistics and hassles that, through no fault of their own, occasionally arise in South American countries.

I look for a trip in which I'll be staying in clean, reasonably comfortable quarters, have good, safe food to eat, and don't have to worry or think about anything except my own boating and how cold the beer is at the restaurant.

So far I've been extremely fortunate with Expediciones Chile, Endless River Adventures in Costa Rica, and most recently DeRiemer Adventure Kayaking in Ecuador. All have not only met, but exceeded my needs and I've made friends with some good people.

In Ecuador, our group of six boaters and two guides, Phil and Mary DeRiemer, were introduced to each other at the Magic Bean restaurant in downtown Quito on a Sunday morning.

After a hearty breakfast, we loaded up our van and headed east for Baeza, a small town rooted on the steep eastern slopes of the Andes that would be our base for the next two days.

We wasted no time outfitting our boats and heading for the river. By afternoon we were paddling a four mile warm-up run on a Class III section of the Quijos. The weather was pleasant, but partly cloudy. So I wore a dry top to counter the cool water of this high altitude (4,600 ft) river. I was surprised to find myself breathing heavily for oxygen in the thin Andean air.

Monday found us near the headwaters of a tributary of the mighty Amazon, the Rio Cosanga, a challenging Class IV run that was an eddy hopper's delight with huge, visually stunning, boulder gardens blocking views downstream and keeping newcomers in suspense, if not on edge. Had the volume of water been a bit higher, this fairly steep 10 mile run could easily have jumped to class V or higher.

It was on the Cosanga, the most challenging river of our trip, that I really appreciated the skills of Phil and Mary as river guides. Both have outstanding credentials.

Phil, who has been leading clients down rivers since 1983, earned his reputation as an outstanding expeditionary kayaker and has several first descents to his credit, most notably Chile's famed Futaleufu along with Lars Holbek, Mark Allen and Eric Magnuson

in 1985. He is also head instructor at Otter Bar Kayak School in northern California.

Mary's resume is equally impressive. A former nursing supervisor at a prenatal complications clinic in Alabama, she caught the boating bug in 1980 and promptly switched careers to take an entry-level position as an employee at the Nantahala Outdoor Center in North Carolina. In two years she was a member of the instruction staff and by 1986 she was assistant head of instruction at NOC. Her rise into the ranks as a world class boater was capped off in 1989 when she won the Women's U.S. National Wildwater Championship, then repeated the feat in 1991. Having boated out of the country every year since her first trip to Chile in 1983, her skills as a kayaker and medical background made DeRiemer Adventure Kayaking an easy choice for me when it came time to pick an outfitter for Ecuador.

As our group worked its way down the Cosanga, either Phil or Mary would verbalize concise descriptions of the rapids and then one of them would run the drop, providing us with a visual reference of the line just described. As most of us know, it's easier to paddle an unfamiliar rapid when you can watch someone make the moves before it's

Paddling in Ecuador a sure cure for the winter blues

your turn. And the less experienced and skilled the boater is, the bigger difference it makes to be able to watch a probe.

It was a long day on the Cosanga, but we finally made it to the takeout after six hours of scouting, snacking, lunching, a bit of portaging by some and a swim or two by others. But we all made it down safe and sound and the beer was cold at the hotel. Again, my priorities were well met.

Tuesday we revisited the Quijos, paddling an upper section that was a bouncy, somewhat technical Class III+ run with one

or two IVs on it. It wasn't as pushy as our first day's trip down the lower Quijos, which fills up when the Cosanga joins it.

We had loaded the van early that morning and after paddling the Quijos we bid farewell to Baeza and headed south to Tena, where we would spend the next three days paddling in the much warmer jungled-lowlands of the Rio Misahualli.

Wednesday was New Year's Eve and we celebrated the day by boating a big water section of the lower Mis. Not nearly as

technical as the Quijos or Cosanga, the Mis made up for its lesser gradient with a much higher volume, which I estimated to be about 4,000 cfs.

Easily the most visually spectacular river on the trip, the Mis' deep jungle-gorge had a distinct high-water line that was at least twenty feet about our heads and featured several waterfalls along the banks and unbelievably massive caves carved out of the soft rock walls. Numerous kinds of colorful parrots, butterflies and a wide variety of flora and fauna kept one occupied when not having to focus on getting big enders, hole riding and wave surfing at some of the outstanding play spots. If you can think of a better way to cap off a year, I want to know what it is.

Our takeout was near a cushy jungle lodge. The rooms were large and airy and the lodge featured a surprisingly comfortable cool water Jacuzzi, wet bar, pool table, television and restaurant. It was New Year's Eve and we celebrated at the outdoor bar and restaurant with Mary's delicious Pisco sours. Mmmm. Mi favorita.

New Year's Day, Thursday, was a free day. We had the option of playing on a wave about a mile upstream of the lodge, just lounging, resting aching muscles, or going on a jungle hike. I lounged a bit, feeding crackers to a couple of giant scarlet macaws that hang out at the restaurant, and poked about, eventually crossing paths with the owner of the establishment, a German entrepreneur who moonlights as a botanist. When not tending his lodge, this gentleman studies jungle plants for their medical value and sends results and specimens to his company back in Germany for further analysis. It seemed weirdly cool to meet someone out in the middle of the jungle who was doing what he was doing.

I bought a beer and thought about the two days of boating in front of me, wondering what other surprises lay in store. Then I kicked back in the Jacuzzi, as comfortable and relaxed as I've ever been. What a great way to start the year.



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A Rite of Friendship

Paddling the Rocky Broad

Remembering Pablo Perez

by Leland Davis

It was one of those days when winter is letting go. The sky was not quite perfectly blue; there were a few clouds. And the weather was just chilly enough for a layer or two under the dry suit.... But it was the first pogieless day, nonetheless. I had put off boating all day, passing up many swollen creeks to have a go at a late afternoon with a good friend, on a run that had called to us for a month.

We met at the gauge, as boaters will do, late enough in the afternoon that working was over, and that the sun was in the tail end of its winter descent to the afternoon horizon. The level was a bit over zero, pretty good for a run that neither of us had done before, so we left a car and headed toward the put-in.

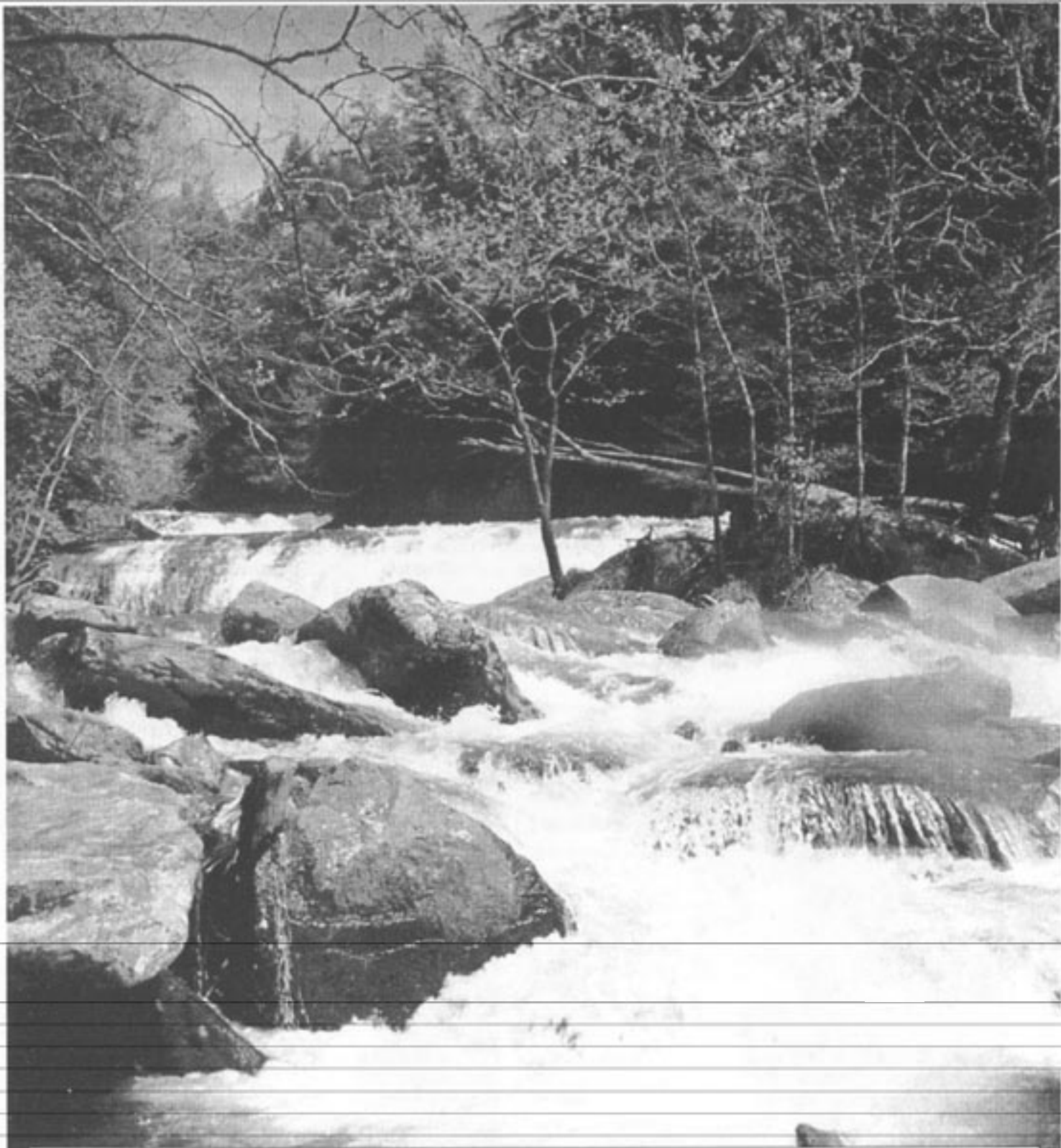
Being careful to walk the white line farthest from the double row of no parking and no trespassing signs, we launched right next to the bridge, bouncing down the rocks to splash into the river. I welcomed the drenching, which didn't bring an icy chill to my face, and I welcomed the swell of the current under my paddle blade as I peeled out into the flow. I floated between the rows of trees, which separated the river from the pasture in this wide part of the valley.

About a half-mile later, the forest pinched in on our tiny aquatic conveyor belt. Dark green hemlocks loomed closer and closer, and the valley walls closed in as well. Water, which had recently rippled over gravel bars, deepened and surged between the banks. It reared up into waves, which snapped their way over the slanting

shelves and between the boulders which signaled the beginning of the gradient. Not more than fifty yards passed before we could see the first horizon line. I dug in, my paddle blade pulling steadily toward the river right eddy while my boat pivoted and rocked over the rising waves.

From the swirling eddy I could see that it looked like a ten footer and Trip, out of his boat on shore, said that there was a simple line that he would demonstrate. He slid into his boat, into the river, and disappeared over the lip of the drop. He boofed to the right off a bit of flow 6 feet or so from the slab of rock which formed the right bank. I followed, sweeping a big cstroke and thrusting my hips to make the offside boof into the pool ten feet below. I eddied, grinned at Trip, and took in the stretch of river to the next horizon line, which was not very far away.

We eddied on the left this time and hopped out onto a rock shelf which ran along the bank, about two feet above the steadily flowing water. As soon as I pulled my boat onto the ledge and stood, it became clear that the gradient storm was about to reach full fury. I saw the river cascading over drop after



drop, then disappearing over a horizon line at the edge of my sight. I stepped through the puddles on the rock ledge, squishing carefully through the soft mud and moss that filled the path of a tiny stream that ran through a tributary tunnel of rhododendron to merge with the tumult below. I edged along the bank, ducking and dodging the branches as I wormed my way downstream for a better view.

The first drop wasn't as bad as it had looked from above. There was a two-foot ledge with a little hole for starters, then a fast approach to a twelve footer, angled from right to left. A notch afforded a vertical drop into a deep spot between rocks, the remainder of the current flowed over the drop downstream, careening onto the left bank. The flow over the deeper landing spot fed a fast moving sheet of water, which

slid with increasing speed for twenty or thirty feet over shallow, low-angle bedrock. Then the angle of the slide increased to sixty five degrees or more, rushing the water another eight vertical feet into a rooster tail hole and onto another rock shelf. It looked like you could bang over to the right on that rock shelf and get out before the next horizon line, another 30 yards or so downstream. Or you could eddy in

...Remembering Pablo Perez

another deeper spot at the base of a cliff on the left. It also looked like this was going to be one hell of a lot of fun!

Trip ran first while I watched, nailing the line on the first drop and running the slanting ledge left of center, so that he could swing into the eddy at the base of the cliff. He gave me a big thumbs up with a grin as he climbed out of his boat to stand in the eddy with his rope. My turn.

I ferried back and forth above the initial two-foot ledge until I got my bearings. Then I leaned hard right, dug in a bow draw which swung into a forward stroke, and planted another stroke for the boof as I went over the first small hole. Now I was onto the rush of water headed for the big one. I boofed through the notch drop, missing rocks on both sides and landing flat in the deeper spot ten feet below. I angled right and drew that way to slide myself over before going down the next slanting drop. I banged over the shallow shelf below it, stopping on the rocks a few feet from the lip of the next horizon line. What a screamer!

I hopped out and pulled my boat onto the rocks, waved to Trip on the other side of the river, and walked to where I could see the bottom of the next drop. It was a river-wide ledge with shallow flow over it, slanting at an almost vertical angle 13 feet into a

large pool below. The best launch was in the middle. The right hand side was too shallow and the left-hand side careened over the edge into a jumbled tangle of trees and logs. I signaled to Trip that I could see it and climbed into my boat to peel out into the middle of the flow. When I got as close to Tripp as I could I shouted, "Follow me!" and bounced over the shallow approach to the drop. He peeled out too, but had to spin backwards to avoid hitting me when I stalled out on the rocks and stopped for a second. He washed over the drop backwards, right behind me, and came up grinning. "I had to slow down somehow," he laughed in explanation.

We headed over to the right to check out the next drop, which proved to be far more obstructed than we had anticipated. It was super technical, but Trip squeezed down between the boulders and logs on a nearly waterless

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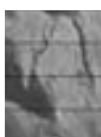
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...Remembering Pablo Perez

This is how it must have been. Good friends, laughing and playing and smiling their way down the river, checking out the day, enjoying a rite of friendship, and the joy of a beautiful afternoon mountain creek at winter's end.

route that seemed to be the best option considering our starting point on river right. I ferried over to the left and carried my boat back up to where I could run the "proper line," which went through a couple of small slots and then over a sweet five foot boof. The next drop seemed like a gushy one, and Trip got out on the left to scout. He waved me on through, seeming to indicate that I should head for the left at the bottom. When I was about 3/4 of the way down the pulsing channel, he shouted, "right, right!" I had to snap my boat around to get to the right of a hole at the bottom.

We were down in the gorge now, weaving our way through a beautiful riverbed, bopping over class III slides and ledges while wispy lines of white snaked across the deepening blue of the evening sky. Trip had one good unintentional surf in a hole at the bottom of a slide, and we crashed over one more sizable ledge. We didn't need to talk, only to smile and laugh and paddle as we immersed ourselves in the wetness and joy of one of the most important rites of our friendship. We moved smoothly and quickly downstream as a unit, like always, until we eddied left, just above the only spot on

the river which I had seen before.

This is how it must have been. Good friends, laughing and playing and smiling their way down the river, checking out the day, enjoying a rite of friendship, and the joy of a beautiful afternoon mountain creek at winter's end.

I slid over to the left and bounced over the rocks in the sneak slot. I pulled up on the beach and turned to look at the rapid from below. I pulled my skirt, pulled my thigh straps, and unclipped my throw rope without ever taking my eyes off the drop. Trip was standing at the top, scouting. He

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VIPER 12	128"	27.5"	15.5"	48 LBS	ROYALEX	\$875	\$656.25
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...Remembering Pablo Perez

headed back for his boat and got in. As he pulled his spray skirt on, I turned to look at the log, sitting on shore, gnarled and bumpy and battered barkless by the water, and placed too late on the bank by forces other than the river.

Trip peeled out, and I turned my attention back to him as his boat slid down the current next to the undercut, pierced the water, and sprang up over the foam pile on a little backender. He swung into the eddy, and I headed back for my boat.

I stared at the rapid again as I put my straps back on, drinking in the beauty of the place as I pulled my skirt back over my cockpit and slid off the beach. Then I peeled out into the current and paddled on down the river away from Pablo's place, to drink in another evening on a creek, and to cel-

ebate a beautiful, fragile, frightening moment of friendship, of nature, and of wonder, while the river and my heart still allow it.

Editors note: Veteran kayaker Pablo Perez died late this winter after becoming trapped by the aforementioned log, which was subsequently removed from the streambed of the Rocky Broad River.

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Who We Are, and What We Do

By Rich Bowers

The safety discussions at American Whitewater's directors meeting (as well as discussions on the Internet and letters from our members) have raised several issues for me as Executive Director. How can we do a better job on river safety? And how do we both address safety and continue to represent all aspects of whitewater including high-end paddling?

American Whitewater's position is fairly simple — we don't want accidents and deaths among paddlers. To prevent this, we will do everything we can to educate boaters and non-boaters about the sport and river safety.

At the same time, we believe strongly in personal responsibility, in determining ones own limits, and do not support limiting this responsibility. As Executive Director, it is my job to balance these sometimes contentious responsibilities. At a time when accidents among our members and friends are on the rise, finding this balance is not easy.

We have boosted our emphasis on safety by hiring a safety intern, distributing updated safety codes and rapid classifications to our entire membership, and continuing to update our accident database (check out our Home Page at www.awa.org for more information). We also intend to hire a full-time safety person in 1999 and continue a discussion of extreme racing at the August Outdoor Retailer Show and NOWR meeting in Salt Lake City.

The second question, safety and represen-

tation, is trickier. While we will continue to focus on safety, it is not my intention to change what American Whitewater is, or whom we represent. If you're a paddler, regardless of your skill level, we want to represent you.

Recently, I reread a series of articles "Why Explore" published in the February, 1998 edition of National Geographic. While these articles were not speaking about paddling, and while they discussed exploring for science not recreation, I believe they provide good insight for paddlers also.

In the article, the author quotes from Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* — "The only true voyage of discovery is not to go to new places, but to have other eyes."

The article then takes this one step further, stating that "If exploration means having other eyes, we can all be explorers. But if we can all be explorers, then who are our heroes — the people whose daring takes us to places we could never go ourselves?"

Hopefully, in addition to providing humor, conservation, access and safety features, American Whitewater, especially through the Journal, lets all of us see through the eyes of others. Many of us, myself included, may never develop the skills or desire to run Class VI. We may never have the time or income to travel to distant rivers around the world. I'd like to see American Whitewater continue to be a way for our members to know these rivers, run these rapids, and learn new skills.

American Whitewater is about whitewater — the good, the bad, and the constantly changing.

But since each of us have now been elevated to "explorer" status, American Whitewater needs to see through a larger selection of eyes. We want to hear about the first descents, the exotic destinations — but mostly we want to hear about your river, your friends, and your thoughts on rivers and paddling. Make it interesting, keep it on track, and send it to us. Hopefully, we can continue to grow this sport, protect your rights, increase your safety, and take you wherever you wish to go through the eyes of your fellow paddlers. You can help by understanding the risks and paddling safe!



Safety Intern at American Whitewater

Erik Neidy, new intern with American Whitewater, is a graduate of Western Illinois University. Erik has a degree in Zoology and Recreation, Parks and Tourism Administration: Outdoor Education. His fuel as an intern with American Whitewater is due to a tremendous love and respect for our natural world.

Erik comes to us from Hudson Trail Outfitters in Rockville, Maryland where he is an Assistant Manager. Hudson Trail Outfitters is a Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, D.C. based company specializing in wilderness outfitting.

When Erik is not working or being an intern, he enjoys a great deal of outdoor

activities such as: mountain biking, backpacking, hiking, rock climbing and a newly found whitewater sport called kayaking.

Erik is currently working on two specific projects for American Whitewater. The first is a local safety pamphlet and waiver for whitewater boaters in Montgomery County, Maryland. The second is gathering statistics that can quantify the accident rate per user days for our sport and directly compare it to other similar outdoor sports. This particular project has turned out to be a lot more leg work than anticipated. So any information you may have for Erik would be greatly appreciated. Contact Erik at (301) 589-9453.



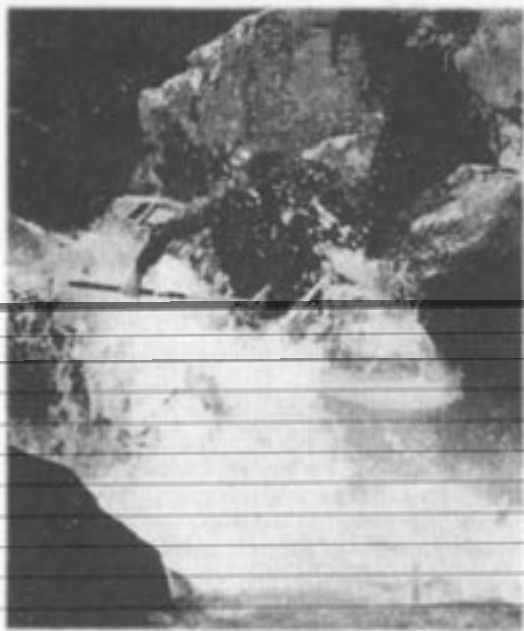
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A Letter From Rosi

Rick Weiss' Widow Reflects Upon His Death

How I have waited for Rich to walk through the door and hold out his arms and give me one of his big hugs, where my body just gets eaten up by his. Instead, I now have little arms that hold me around my neck, my son's little face looking more and more like his fathers. I have kept to myself and have not wanted to talk to anyone. Everyone thinks that I am so strong, but I am not. I am scared and find this new world of mine not to be a very happy place. People have been extremely kind, sending letters, gifts and putting money into the fund that was made in Rich's honor to help me care for Rich's little boy. I have always known how special and precious Rich is to me, but I never imagined that so many of you knew that too.

Rich would never believe the outpouring from his friends and from the many people we do not know. I know I should have written and said thank you to each of you, but that has been so painful to do. When someone says thank you they should be happy about what is happening and excited about the gifts, but I am so sad and I miss Rich so very much that, even though I am very grateful, all I have wanted is Rich.

Rich did not deserve for this to happen to him. He was never unkind, never said anything bad about anyone - he lived by the rule: "If you don't have anything good to say, don't say anything." Rich worked so hard in everything he did, his schooling, his sport and being the best friend I could ever have hoped for - and he excelled in all. Not having Rich to hold every night and to smile at every morning, I just want to lock myself away from everyone and everything. People want to go on living and be happy even though the sunshine has gone out of my world. But I know that soon the snow will be melting and many boaters are going to want to go and paddle on the first big water of the season. For this reason I need to say what I have been thinking - if only to ensure that no other wife or husband has to hold their best friend in their arms for the last time, the way I had to. I know that I need to write this, but I have hoped that this was all a very bad nightmare and I'd wake up and see Rich lying next to me.

I would love just to say: "Don't paddle waterfalls and difficult rivers ever again", but



I know that it definitely NOT what Rich would want. Rich loved the competition of racing his best but he loved the challenge of big water even more. He loved it when another paddler

would phone and suggest running a big river. He would not want me to ever say stop paddling because it is too dangerous or for any of you to ever think that either. He would agree, yes, it is dangerous and that is why people should know their limits. Rich did know his and also appreciated the river as a force of its own. I think, like his racing, Rich never bragged at this ability. Anyone that paddled with him would tell you that Rich never tried to show off and do anything silly just so that people would know about him.

Rich was quiet and never did anything to impress anyone. He just wanted to paddle. A week before the accident he was supposed to run a river but the other person canceled. He looked at me and said: "Darn, that means I cannot go either." He knew that paddling alone was foolish, even though he was so tempted to go. And he knew what his limits were too - he did not feel uncomfortable on the White Salmon. I could not watch the run as I did with almost all the rivers he ran, but he had told me how beautiful it was in the gorge and how funny it was that from the road one would never imagine that a river was even there. Rich paddled rivers because he truly loved it. I knew that by the smile he

had on his face when I watched him go through a hard section and then at the end of the run where I always waited for him.

One of his favorite river running partners was Brian Homberg. They were like 2 naughty little school boys. Brian would forever leave something behind, so Rich would try and pack 2 of everything. Rich liked to paddle with Brian because he knew that even though they were both keen and eager to do hard things, they would be safe. When Brian, who is known for paddling good hard rivers, decided that he did not want to run waterfalls anymore because he had hurt his back, Rich never tried to talk him into it. Rich did not think it was right to force anyone to paddle anything that they did not want to by making them feel like a "wimp."

But that would not stop Rich from running the waterfall. It would just mean that he would take Brian's plastic boat and run it instead of running it in his race boat. Often I would stand on the bank and just smile at them, but inside I would be hoping that they would decide against running a section. I would never stop Rich from doing what he loved most, but every time he would go, he would kiss me and I'd say: "I love you, please be careful." One of the last times he paddled he came out of the river and hugged me and said in his boyish manner: "You would have been proud of me, I did not run the last drop because it looked a little too dangerous this time and I thought of you and our baby." Rich did not run it because he was never foolish and knew when to say no.

The last thing Rich wrote was a message



on a poster that he signed for Tree (John Trejillo). It was a poster of the 96 Olympic Team with Smokey the Bear. With reference to Smokey he wrote: "Keep smoking down the river." I honestly believe that is exactly what Rich would still want to tell everyone today, but there are some things that I think needed to be added.

I would like to suggest that we take another look and rethink the format of the race that Rich was training for. I think the race itself might push paddlers that one step too far when they need to make a judgment call if something just isn't how it should be. I also feel that I need to tell paddlers what Rich said to Tree and me before getting into his boat the afternoon of the 25 June.



The morning of 25 June was no different to any other day. Rich had taken me on a hike around the base of Mt. Hood. Being six and one half months pregnant, Rich was very protective of me. We had talked about our future, our new baby, buying a house and about the proposal he was working on for work. That in itself was so normal. Rich and I shared everything and never hid anything from the other. I still remember making one of his favorite things to eat for our lunch - pasta. We picked Tree up at 4 PM and drove to the river. On the way we stopped to check the river gate. The river was higher than it had been the time before. Rich knew how I always worried if they were late coming to the end of a run and knowing I could not see any of the run, he warned me that they might take longer than the time before. He said he felt that they would need to do some extra scouting. I had still said that was fine, I'd rather them take time to scout then get down quicker and run into problems.

Rich really did not like the put-in because it was down a very steep, high, windy path. He had hinted that he would rather get in higher and paddle further than have to negotiate the steep put-in. How I wish I had encouraged him to do that, maybe then I would be sitting laughing with him now and not writing this. We all stood at the car and he and Tree changed into their paddling gear. Rich then said things that today haunt me. He looked at his racing lifejacket and helmet and said: "Well if I'm going to do so much river running now, maybe I should get some different paddling gear." I then asked him if he had his other helmet with him and he said no and laughingly said: "The only helmet that would be of any real good would be those funny football helmets that the Germans wear at Augsburg." Even writing

this makes me feel sick. How I wish we had his other helmet or even the funny German helmet that afternoon. Rich has worn an Ace helmet since I met him in 1986 and, as a racing helmet, was and still is perfect for the job. But as Rich himself said, maybe not what should be worn for river running.

I have never asked Tree to tell me exactly what he thought happened nor have I read the account of what was thought to have happened. I truly feel I know Rich so well that I think I know what happened, plus I would like to believe that Rich was unaware of anything. I feel that Rich bumped his head on a rock that was under the water which he could not see and was unconscious straight away. I do not

think he got trapped beneath the water at all - he was far too good a swimmer and athlete for that to have happened. The sad thing is that during the winter he swam twice a week and had been practicing to see how far he could swim under water, and he would proudly tell me if he had improved on his time. If he was not unconscious there would have been some sign of him struggling by marks on his hands. I hugged him and held his hands and there was no sign of any struggle. Rich would have fought to get out of any situation if he could have - he would not allowed this to have happen. He would have done everything in his power to be here to hold the two of us today.

What I really want for other paddlers to know, especially racers, is that running rivers is different from racing and therefore different clothing should be worn. I truly feel that if Rich was wearing his other helmet he would not have suffered a hit to his head on his temple. I think the cut on his temple is what caused him to be unconscious. Maybe if he had not been wearing his racing life jacket, which racers try to keep as thin as possible, things might have been different, too. Yes, maybe even a more buoyant lifejacket might not have helped him get to the surface quicker, but it just might have.

I am not sure what Rich would think about this, but I think paddlers should consider paddling in a group of at least 3. I can see Rich shaking his head and saying that it

is not always easy to find 3 paddlers of the same caliber to paddle with. But I feel it is not only easier for 2 people to help one that is in trouble, but it is often too dangerous for one person to attempt to help the other. It puts a lot of pressure on the 2nd paddler to put themselves in danger to help the first.

But, if nothing else, please wear a good lifejacket and low fitting helmet to run rivers. Believe me, I would change everything if I could, and I have tried. But you still can and I ask you to, if not for Rich and I, then for the ones that love you.

So many people have asked to see a photo of River. I know it is because in their hearts they hope to see a little glimpse of his father in him. For that reason I have asked them to print the photo of our little boy. He has forced me to keep going, even though I just want to be with Rich. His little face has little things that look just like Rich. I have also asked for a picture of Rich to be printed because I never want Rich to be forgotten. If there are people out there with photos of Rich, I would love to have copies for myself and baby. I hope that you will always talk about my best friend with love and affection. Please do not be scared to talk to me about him too. I love him so much. Rich made this world a beautiful place for me to live in, he will always be my sunshine. I love and miss him.

An Addenda

After writing I forced myself to ask Tree to take us to the waterfall. We had to hike into the area. I could not believe what I saw. It made me sadder than I already was. My first thoughts were: "Why? Why would anyone want to run this?" Tree then told me that Rich had stood for a very long time looking at the falls. They had looked at it together and when Tree got back into his boat, Rich was not with him. Tree then ran the falls, only to

see Rich still standing where he had been earlier.

That, in itself, is so unlike Rich. It makes me believe that Rich was not happy with what he saw. Rich was the person that always ran things first. He never liked to waste time; once his mind was made up he would get on with the business at hand.

My next thought was: "But Tree made it?" I think it is understood that Rich was a much

better paddler and if either of them was going to make it, it would have been Rich. I know that is not how Rich thought, but it makes me wonder. It made me realize that his boat





played a major part of the accident. Again, it is a question of equipment. I know Rich had been trying out a lot of plastic boats and had said that he needed to get a boat with more volume for the race. Now I understand why. Tree was paddling a boat with a lot more volume and it definitely helped.

The volume of water that goes over that drop is something I will never forget. It has

so much force that the spray is everywhere. The force of that hitting the back of Rich's boat, causing him to be pulled back into the falls, must have been so strong. I still think that either that force, creating a whiplash effect, or the blow to his temple, caused him not to be able to help himself. Rich's knowledge of water and knowing that he

stood there for so long would lead me to believe that the first thing he would have done was try and take his life jacket off in order to swim down, and then out of harms way.

Please understand I am not saying anything against the boat he was paddling, but I think Rich himself stood there and realized that even though he liked the boat because it turned and felt more like his race boat, it was

not the boat for those falls.

I know Rich would be very sad if he knew that I went and looked at the falls and he would be so cross with himself for what happened, but if it means you will think twice, then he would hug me and smile.

On the 13th and 14th of June, the Yampa River festival is here in Steamboat with Slalom Races. They are dedicating the whole park here in Rich's Honor and calling it the Dr. Richard Weiss Park.



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First Swim

By Terry Foxworth

I bit my lip and tried to look reassuring while her paddle floated downstream toward the large pool and sandy beach. My girlfriend had just experienced her first swim, and with it I remembered the cold, wet frustration of learning to kayak. "Are you okay?" An ice cold stare... "You know I swam the first 832 times I got in my boat, hun." An ice cold stare... "Your far more advanced than any beginner I've ever met." An ice cold stare... "Really it wasn't that bad, you flipped upstream in a hole, it's okay." Ice cold stare continued... "Boy if you could boat like you give looks you'd be running the Green Narrows right now." Ice cold stare gives way to warm fist.

I've been boating for about 8 years now and forgot what it was like back in the old days. You remember, when the Dancer was the hot boat and high float pfd's were the norm. Watching Nicole empty her new multicolored boat brought back a flood of memories. I remember my first river trip, which led to my first swim. Funny, I can't remember my first date, my first day of college, or

"Boating is about having a good time, and if your not having fun you should not be on the river."

my first day of work, however I remember my first swim like it was yesterday. Sitting in the eddy watching her replace the drain plug gave me a chance to reflect on why I paddle and what has brought me and my friends to the level we're paddling at.

Its been a few years since we had a beginner in our group and I guess I had gotten a bit selfish in my pursuit of more challenging runs. I forgot how my dear friend and mentor, John Keys, gave up a day at the Ocoee to chase me down the Nantahala. Not being a natural at this activity, my progression was painfully slow. One weekend I mistakenly got on the New River Gorge and gave all five of the other participants a full day of boat recover and swift-water rescue practice. Not one of them said a negative word to me, and

I was invited back for an easier trip the next weekend. What if I had not been invited on another trip or, worse, ostracized by my friends due to my skill level? What if I had quite paddling? I'm sure I'd have more brain cells, but who would my friends be and what would I skip work for?

Those of us that have been around for a while should patiently pass on our knowledge and encouragement to the new comers. Be pleasant and understanding when a beginner plows through your eddy creating a fusion-like explosion of plastic. You know you did it too. Don't cuss or deliver finger messages when that out-of-control newbie knocks you off your wave. They did not mean to, and, hell, we've probably been waiting behind you forever.

We need to also be careful of the little league dad's syndrome on the river. If they don't want to run it, show them the way around the rapid. I think that many significant others have been turned off from boating by pressure from the other partner. Not everyone has the same ability to control fear. A good friend of mine told me of a father and son team he use to paddle with. The dad would shame the kid into running rapids that he was afraid of. I've seen the same scenario between friends and significant others. The only people who benefit from this attitude are the family counselors and attorneys.

So what's my point? Boating is about having a good time, and if your not having fun you should not be on the river. We all enjoy different aspects of paddling; the dude boy likes the holes and the hair head loves the drops. Some enjoy the solitude and scenery, while others are drawn to the cult-like fraternity that migrates from river to river. Whatever turns you on.

I use to advocate placing a moratorium on the sport similar to a wildlife management program. But watching Nicole getting back into her boat and the icy stare fading into a hesitant smile, my attitude towards beginners changed. Bring them on, I say, encourage them. Take them under your wing and show them the lines. Kayaking has shaped my life. All my close friends are boaters and I can never have enough friends.

The beginners that are swimming past you today may be saving your butt tomorrow, or at least, giving you a cold beer at the take out.

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Margaret Langford
Photo: Mike Driscoll



Killing Her Softly: A River Essay

by Karen L. V'Soske

"Man is the dandelion of the animal world, blowing hither and yon, settling on any appropriate region of the landscape, and then destroying the very qualities that were originally sought."

- Richard Hevly

Despite a brisk wind snapping through the gorge, the sun lays a golden path across autumn-colored trees that glow with a luminescent warmth. Overhead, a red-tailed hawk catches an updraft and rises mystically toward the cliff tops, while near the shore a green-brown turtle watches from its perch on an end-sunk log. Behind me I hear the soft chatter of fellow boaters but I block out their words, preferring, instead, to listen to the quiet whisper of my paddle as it moves through the water. Rhythmically, hypnotically, the paddle dips and swooshes, dips and swooshes,

dips and swooshes. The other boaters fall quiet, perhaps they hear it too, our paddles chanting a mantra as the river caresses our boats and pushes them onward.

The river, forever flowing and draining and reshaping the earth, talks to those who know her language. Boaters guess at her secrets and are moved by the power of her message. She plays with us, invariably changing, tossing up ceaseless challenges. We dote on the rise and fall of her current like a woman beset by the rise and fall of hemlines. And we watch her. We study the white crests of her waves, the satin smooth vee of her downriver flow, the curl of her arms as she reaches around rocks, trees, and the legs of men. Though we know we can never possess her, her siren song seduces us, her beauty holds us captive.

The sun sits skewered on the tall pines that lace the ridge and soon will sink behind the mountain. Our time on the river draws to a close; one more rapid, one more peek beneath the river's skirt, and then a short stretch of flatwater. Around me people lean forward and wiggle side to side, stretching sore muscles, flexing stiff limbs. We pay the

river's price of admission with a few back kinks and an assortment of cuts and bruises for those who flirted with her too closely. The river begins to speak a little louder and we grow quiet, sit up straight, and scan the horizon. We check our position, grip our paddles a little tighter. Our hearts tap dance in our chests in sync with the river's cadence. I slip over a ledge and a slice of cool water pelts me from the side but I paddle through it, shaking the water drops from my eyelashes. A rock on the right forces two quick strokes from my tired arms and then I drop over another ledge and plop into a small hole, a beautiful boiling pot of white-green foam. A few more strokes and I'm riding the roller coaster wavetrain out the bottom, a smile blossoming on my lips. I've made it. I haven't conquered the river, no one can, but I have serendipitously enjoyed her charms and she has let me pass.

The takeout lies just ahead on the left, a tear in the trees where a muddy brown slash of gravel road claws its way to the river. Broken chunks of concrete lie to the side as if once upon a time someone sought to violate the river with a cement road but she rejected it, smashing it and vomiting it back upon her banks. The remnants, their jagged ends not yet worn by time, wait to be swallowed by spring floods to become tumors upon the river's bottom.

We haul our boats out of the river's grasp and carry them up a short, steep hill to a parking lot cawed out of new growth forest. These second generation trees, tall and still slim, shade the area where their ancestors



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succumbed to the axes of loggers, where their siblings fell to the bulldozers that carved out our access road and parking area. As we strap our boats to our cars, the sun evaporates into twilight and our wet gear begins to cool us. Those with dry clothes in their cars quickly change in the backs of trucks, beneath towels, or, for some, in front of God and all his children. Sometimes you can't get warm quick enough. A hot shower sounds heaven-sent and I can hardly wait to feel the water sluicing over me, the steam enveloping me. There's a rumor that a changing area will be built here at the take-out. No one knows if it will include showers but it's certain to have sanitary facilities, pit toilets at least.

With all the boats loaded, we check for left-behind gear, stuff the remains of our lunches into the overflowing waste barrel, and police the area for trash. Diligently, we pick up pull tabs, cigarette butts, and apple cores. Before leaving, a few disappear into the woods to relieve themselves. Then, with everyone accounted for, we fire up our engines and head back to where we started. Twenty minutes later, in a cloud of dust heavy with the smell of hot brakes, we arrive back at the put-in to collect cars, take showers, and grab a bite to eat. Later, around the campfire, our day on the river fills us with a contentment bordering on the spiritual. For a brief time, we had talked with the river, heard the winds as they danced through the trees, and moved as one with eternal forces.

Most boaters are avid - if not rabid - environmentalists. We pluck cans, bottles, and all manner of rubbish from the river as we paddle. We tread lightly and never leave behind our lunches, though we inadvertently lose a paddle or two. We organize river cleanups, write letters to our congressional representatives, and give our money to environmental groups. We support river conservation efforts and belong to the AWA, Sierra Club, Rivers Unlimited, and a host of other like-minded organizations. We strive always to give back to the river more than she has given us. Of all people, those of us who enjoy the pleasures and wiles of the river, appreciate most her beauty, her strength, and her fragility, and make every effort to keep her healthy. But because we love her, we cannot stay away and I worry that by our presence, like star-crossed lovers, we unwittingly wound her.

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The Wet Ones:

A review by Greg Aiken

Does every paddler fantasize about taking an extended paddling vacation? Maybe renting a big motor home and inviting their best friends. Then stopping at some steep creeks, some big water runs and all the best rodeo spots.

After watching *The Wet Ones*, I feel like BJ Johnson and Katie Neitert took that vacation and were kind enough to put it all on film for me.

This tape is not a video guidebook. The filming of the runs is short enough to show just the meat of a drop and only a few of the more heinous rapids are filmed more than once. Don't buy this video if you think you

can learn all the lines on Mann's Creek by watching BJ and company run the drops. But, for me, that distinguishes this video from its predecessor, *Falling Down*. I felt like I was watching highlights from a season of boating rather than a documentary on the hair runs of Appalachia.

The video revolves around an interplay of insanely sick drops, great rodeo and the lighthearted playfulness which seems to always surround groups of boaters. A couple of runs are named (Hell's Kitchen, Mann's Creek, Mineral Creek), but mostly the action jumps quickly from drop to hole and back again. When I reviewed the first of *Falling Down* Productions efforts, I criticized the missing stream identifications. *The Wet Ones* also neglects naming most of the creeks featured. However, in this video it seems like the play is being featured more than the rivers.

Some naysayers may claim this video

validates the kind of irresponsible boating which claims too many lives every year. The footage subtitled "Sometimes the best piece of rescue equipment is a well-trained friend is for those folks. This section highlights some scary moments. It demonstrates that these paddlers surround themselves with people they can trust on the river. A lesson we should all take to heart.

On the days when other responsibilities prevent a paddling trip, during weekends spent, reluctantly, off the river, *The Wet Ones* provides a voyeuristic release from dryness. It gives every paddler, no matter their skill level, the opportunity to vicariously advance to the edge of modern kayaking and live that dream life of traveling around the country endlessly paddling the hairiest runs and the biggest holes. Hopefully, we will see many more offerings from *Falling Down Productions* and maybe the *Stark Moon Kayak Platoon* will invite me on their next vacation.



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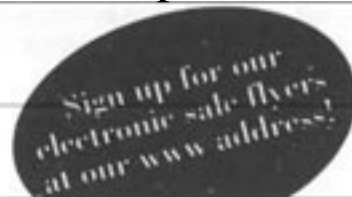
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The Lek Hole

by Ken Strickland

In a land of rugged green mountains there is a valley. Though no more vital or awe-inspiring than many others, it inspires the presence of many beings. What draws them like so many compasses to a lodestone is the river which flows through this particular basin. By most standards an average waterway, it saves its best for last, culminating in a kinetic marvel that lives its dynamic life under a bridge. It has the required shape - a large standing wave preceding the fluff of the accommodating hydraulic. Today we see these odd beings gathered in an almost herdlike group in their favorite spot. While the hole cradles him, one dancing male displays his talents and superior genetic traits before a mixed audience of rivals and potential mates. A large river-left and smaller river-right eddy serve as the backstage for those who wait to perform. These havens of slower water provide a place for others to stretch, psyche up, observe the current performer, and preen their colorful plumage. And while all of these elements are important, they are all secondary to an impressive dance.

Suddenly a Resplendent River Dancer darts into the hole, spinning and gyrating in such a fashion that his brilliantly colored plumage and water craft form all the colors of the rainbow. Complex moves linked together - carts and splits - are put forth for the rivals to contemplate and duplicate, if they can. As he exits the hole, he casts a peripheral glance toward the Tan Rock Sprite perched high above the river on a slab of stone. Her quick nod of approval, is a sure sign of his eminence. But the river quickly covers the wet tracks of his perceived success as another male drops into the hole and begins his dance. He flat spins, then carts endlessly as the air grows thin. The admirers are hyperventilating. He exits the hole in a spectacular whirling double helix. His superior genes are on display for all to see! The Golden-Tasseled Eddy Flower blushes when he looks her way, he is sure.

When the river allows, they assemble here each day from late morning until late afternoon beginning in March and continuing into early November. The fanfare of the season is in October when various migrating individuals and subspecies from the more isolated regions of Paddlioniagather to display their finest plumage and test their mettle and genetic superiority with the best of the Resplendent River Dancers. Each year this ritual is repeated, for the yearling of the previous year often becomes the current Alpha, while the previous year's Alpha is eventually relegated to the threshold of the Dominion of the Grayhairs.

One such dancer sits and waits patiently in the backstage eddy, the veins in his sinewy arms pulsing with anticipation. He then flows into the Lek Hole! He's noticeably slower in



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Johnny Kern deep testing gear
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Photo: Braden May

the placement of his strokes and not nearly as flexible as the current Alpha. Too, his moves are less complex, but he manages a Zen-like front surf on the top wave before dropping into the fluff of the hole. There he manages one linked move, followed by the scrap of another before being expelled by the indifferent river. No one notices the gray ringlets of mane protruding from beneath his helmet, and his once dazzling plumage has been painted over by the Relentless Artisans: Sun, Water, and Time. His dance, though unspectacular, is at least respectable and therefore accepted throughout the gallery. But he is here for the love of the dance only. His procreation conundrum was solved years earlier and his double helix is already whirling into the future. However, even he was once on center stage engaged in Lekking behavior. It was just a different arena and performance many years prior. The dance itself has lived on, though. A dance from time immemorial and one that can't be denied. The unending dance of creation.

Waller's Rules of the River

by Benny Waller

1. Training, Preparedness, and Common Sense are the three most important things you can take on the river. They don't weigh anything, they are easy to pack in your boat, and they don't smell bad after an overnight river trip.
2. Don't go onto the field unless you are dressed to play.
3. The river is ALWAYS the boss!
4. Q. How strong is the river? A. Stronger than me!
5. Mother Nature plays dirty.
6. The river gives the test, and then teaches the lesson.
7. Having rapids named for you is generally a bad thing.
8. Cold, tired, hungry, stressed-out paddlers tend to make bad decisions—even if they are your friends.
9. Don't paddle it if you can't swim it!
10. Portaging is much easier than CPR... so is scouting.
11. All bleeding stops... eventually.
12. If it's cold, get it warm, if it's wet, get it dry.
13. When in doubt, dress for immersion.
14. Improper use of rope on the river can kill you... proper use can save your life.
15. No on-the-job training at a real rescue.
16. It is much more important to feel good than to look good. (Unless you are a rodeo paddler or a raft guide)
17. Fear is God's way of letting you know He wants you to stay alive... pain is God's way of letting you know you still are alive.
18. Pain is temporary, embarrassment is FOREVER.

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Whitewater in Belgium?

By Bryan Stewart

I hadn't paddled in 6 months. Ever since the Army transferred me to southern Belgium, I had been in withdrawal. Finally it got so bad that I was starting to itch. After getting settled in Europe, I was dying to try some local river cuisine. I made some contacts through the Alpine Kayak Club web site. One fellow invited me to meet him in eastern Belgium for a raft race at Coo. He promised that afterwards we could do some kayaking as water levels permitted.

I had driven through the Ardennes Forest a few times and it had reminded me of Tennessee's Cumberland Plateau, but I didn't expect it to have any serious whitewater.

Still, I showed up at the Coo Raft Race on March 8th. My contact from Antwerp and his friends were racing. I hadn't met Steven except by e-mail. The race was starting at ten and I was getting worried that they wouldn't show up at all. Everyone else had arrived hours before and were already getting their gear ready. Finally at 9:45, Steven's van pulled up. I walked up and introduced myself. He said, "I'm a little late. Tough party last night. You can follow us in your kayak if you want." Then his team made a

mad scramble to inflate their raft and get to the start point while I tagged along behind.

The race began at the base of a 60 foot waterfall which Corran Addison allegedly made the first descent of when he lived in Belgium. I scrambled to get my boat in and followed them down the Class 2 river. We finished in no time. At the take out, Steven called the river gauges. It had been raining all week, so there were some unusual options available. Steven told me we were going to look at the upper Hoegne.

We piled into cars and went to have a look. At the takeout, a beer house sat beside the creek. It was only about 15 feet wide and 3 feet deep. I thought "Can't be much to this. It's so small." Steven looked at a gauge in the creek and said it was a great level. Before we left we met a couple of other boaters just getting off the river who warned of downed trees.

As we drove to the put-in, Steven told me we would need to hurry. "This river is illegal to run and we don't want to get caught by the Forest Service," he explained. I asked why and he said, "Fishermen don't like kayakers."

"Just like America," I thought. We went through the town of La Gleize which had a German Tiger Tank from WWII on display. It marked the farthest point of advance by the German army during the Battle of the Bulge. "The first 2 kilometers of the creek are very steep," Steven warned. "Yeah right," I thought, "this is only Belgium." I should have remembered that Steven had guided trips in Africa, Corsica, and the Grand Canyon.

We got to the put-in and everyone made a mad scramble to put on gear and get downstream to avoid the Game Wardens. We passed some hikers and they yelled at us in French about dangerous rapids downstream. The action picked up quickly. The stream was small and brown. We descended some drops ranging from 4 to 6 feet. There weren't many eddies anywhere. We got to a spot where Steven told us to stop and scout.

I couldn't believe what I saw. The stream flowed over a waterfall then into a rapid that emptied into a jagged chute reminiscent of Compound Fracture in Tennessee's Island Creek.

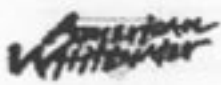
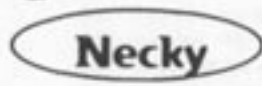
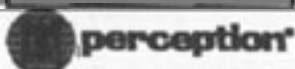
My lack of paddling over the last 6 months made my decision easy. Everyone else walked too, except Steven, who put on a motorcycle helmet and ran it in perfect style while I waited below with a rope. After another half mile, we stopped to look at what Steven called "the best drop on the river." It was a 20 foot slide into a pool of moving water followed by another big slide. Only one problem: at the bottom was a river-wide tree which hung only one foot above the water. Steven said, "No problem. We can't miss this drop. Just roll under the tree at the bottom." I thought he was kidding, but of course he wasn't. He stood at the top of the drop as I went over, telling me to slow down, but it was a little too late. It was a great drop followed by the mandatory tree clothesline and roll at the bottom. The Hoegne didn't let up all the way to the takeout.

We got to the bottom, changed clothes and had refreshment at the beer house. The favorite was a local beer brewed in a nearby monastery. After this experience I've learned that you don't have to go to the Alps to find good whitewater in Europe.



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8:00am

Competition Begins

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Sunday, 9/20

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8:00am

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American Whitewater

75

July/August 1998

Briefs

Membership Maniacs Wanted

by Paul Tefft

MEM•BER•SHIP•MAN•IAC A contestant in a cool contest which is designed to allow American Whitewater members to support their sport by signing up their paddling friends. A good Samaritan who is competing in AW's 40th Anniversary Membership Mania contest which has been created to help AW increase its membership base and raise awareness about the merits of the country's premier river conservation organization. A smart and all around great person who is signing up boating buddies and about to win thousands of dollars worth of prizes including an all expense paid paddling trip to Ecuador with Small World Adventures.

The summer paddling season is in full swing and most AW member's are probably too busy boating to increase their vocabulary. Since you probably haven't been off the river long enough to check out the latest addition of Webster's New World Dictionary, I took the liberty to enlighten you about a new noun. Now that you know what a Paddlemaniac is, it's time to take a little quiz to see if you might qualify for this worthy status.

Do you like kayaking in exotic locales? Could an all expense paid, international pad-

dling trip with professional guides possibly be part of your whitewater itinerary? Does the idea of checking out a snow-capped volcano rising to 20,000 feet one day and paddling a river in the Amazon basin the next tweak your fancy? How about Pacific beaches, the Andean Mountains, and the legendary Galapagos Islands...does this sound like a great vacation or what? Do you enjoy the first day on a river in a brand new kayak? Are you getting sick of these stupid questions? So am I, so let's move on to check out your grade on this brain-straining test.

If you answer yes to any or all these questions then you definitely have the potential of becoming a Membershipmaniac. It is really not that difficult to catch this "disease". Membershipmania is not fatal or complex. It is simple... the AW members who sign up the most new members will win product prizes. Thousands of dollars in prizes will be awarded, including two all expense paid trips to Ecuador with Small World Adventures and new kayaks generously donated by Perception, Prijon, Savage, and Dagger. Membershipmania is a philanthropic affliction that allows members to support their sport and our riparian environments by

strengthening AW's membership base and clout.

For those of you who are currently Membershipmaniacs...keep up the good work and cut out the Membership Mania forms in this issue and keep signing up your paddling pals. If you have not joined the Membershipmaniac bandwagon, it's not too late. You still have plenty of time to get involved in the contest prior to the big prize drawing during Gauley Festival 1998. Just dry your river soaked hands off, pull out the scissors on your Leatherman and cut out the special registration forms. All you have to do is sign up two people and you will win a whitewater poster courtesy of photographer Chris Smith!

AW's 40th Anniversary Membership Mania has been created to give you the chance to make a difference by increasing our constituency base and our lobbying power. This contest allows members to jump on board and take a stroke or two. In forty years, AW has evolved from a handful of river rats with grandiose aspirations into one of the country's top river conservation organizations. We appreciate our members support in the past and look forward to your help in maneuvering AW downstream into the next millennium.

As you flow through the river of life, think about taking the time for a bit of riverside promotion of your organization. After all, no one has ever been hospitalized for Membershipmania!

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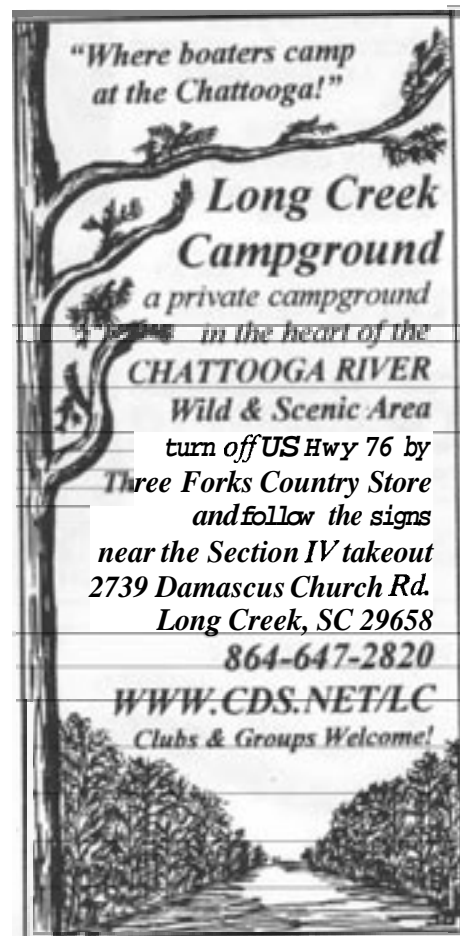
by Ambrose Tuscano

As I opened Kelly Fischer's newest book, *Playboating the Nantahala River*, I found myself thinking, "Wow, this is going to be really useful." Thumbing through the first several pages I found an interesting section covering the history of whitewater on the Nantahala along with a helpful map of the area and numbers for local gauges. There is even a cartoon-ish map of the river labeling some two dozen odd rapids, and all of this before Fischer even begins to describe the individual spots. However, as I began to peruse the rest of the book's contents I became more and more disgruntled. I was aware that the book is aimed at beginners and novices but the detailed descriptions of individual rapids seemed a little overdone. In fact, it seemed more like a cheat-sheet to the river. As I read, I found myself grumbling: "When I was a beginner there was nobody to describe every riffle and eddy of the river for us. We just had to guess as we went along because the only thing our trip leader ever said was 'Follow me.' Not to mention that we had to walk our shuttle-in three feet of snow with a kayak on either shoulder. . . ." So for all you old-timers out there as well as anyone who is interested in self-discovery and suspense, don't even glance at this book or you run the risk of ruining the Nantahala for

yourself. But for the rest of you who aren't too proud to admit that the Nant's class III whitewater still interests you and too claustrophobic to confront its carnival-like atmosphere, this book should prove quite enlightening. Each rapid has its own detailed drawing reminiscent of William Nealy's whitewater cartoons. And while they lack his humor, they make up for it with their excellent detail. And a good thing too because Fischer describes each rapid just as painstakingly. Whether it's a direct route you're searching for or one fraught with tiny eddies and big waves, the author describes it for you. Along with advice on how to run each rapid, Fischer also elaborates on any possible play spot. Plus he includes his own rating of each particular route or play spot called the "Screw-up factor." This operates on a scale from one to ten and tells the reader just how far he/she will be sticking their neck out by trying any particular move. All told, this book has a wealth of information on the Nantahala River including many things that I don't even have room to mention. And, like most good books, *Playboating the Nantahala River* comes complete with a surprise ending. That's right folks, for those of you who were certain that the book would end logically with Nantahala Falls or the N.O.C. or even the slalom gates below, you're wrong—it finishes with a bonus section on the nearby Tuckaseegee River. So the next time you can't think what to get your little nephew from Tennessee for his birthday why not donate an old fiberglass boat, discard some stinky boating gear and buy him Kelly Fischer's latest book.

North American Water Trails Conference

October 10 - 13 North American Water Trails presents its Third Biennial Conference at the National Conservation Training Center on the Potomac River, Shepherdstown, West Virginia. The NAWT hopes to further its efforts to build a continental network of recreational water trails along the shores of North America. This conference features the Chesapeake Bay Region. For more information contact the Conference Host, the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay: Phone (717) 236-8825 e-mail acbpa@pipeline.com. Or write to them at: North American Water Trails Conference c/o Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, 225 Pine Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101



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McEwan Triumphs at Cheat Downriver Race

Once again, young Andrew McEwan blew into town and handily defeated the local favorites in the 1998 Cheat Race, held on Friday, May 1, in Albright, West Virginia. McEwan is currently a member of the U.S. Wildwater Team. Veteran extreme race Roger Zbel finished second. The fastest time in the women's category was posted by Coleen Laffey, who finished eleventh overall in the field of 40 competitors.

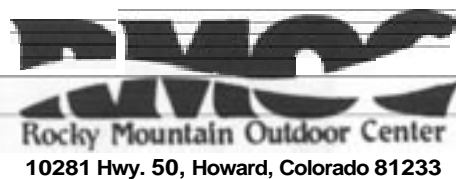
The fastest time in a recreational kayak was posted by John Edmunds, who finished the eleven mile course in 1:13:20. This year the race was extended from the put-in at Albright to the take-out at Jenkinsburg. The Cheat was running about 3.5 feet the day of the race.

The Race kicked off the annual Cheat River Festival, sponsored by the Friends of the Cheat as a fund raiser for their conservation efforts.

Andrew McEwan	58:24	Rick Gusic	1:10:19
Roger Zbel	1:01:38	Oliver Grossman	1:10:38
Jesse Widdemore	1:05:08	Scott Stough	1:10:41
Chris Norbury	1:05:18	Tim Kennedy	1:11:58
Brian Homberg	1:06:54	Colleen Laffey	1:12:55
Steve Kauffman	1:07:33		

(All of the above were in wildwater boats, wavehoppers or equivalents.
All of those below were in recreational boats unless otherwise noted.)

John Edmunds	1:13:20	Pat Bradley	1:18:50
Nate Lucas	1:14:07	Tracy Hines	1:18:55 wavehopper
Bob Gedekoh	1:14:33	John Jeffries	1:18:59
Mike Hedrick	1:14:54	Nick Mason	1:19:11 ck
Wally Hatfield	1:15:04	Geoff Lewis	1:19:47
Barry Toscano	1:15:50	Garth Boyd	1:20:24
Mike Kinney	1:16:01	JR Seay	1:23:11
Steve Dicicco	1:16:26	Bob Opatchko	1:23:11
Adam Webster	1:16:45	Babbitt/Giddings	1:25:51 k2
Joe Hatcher	1:17:15	Amy Conger	1:26:14 ck
Randy Robinson	1:17:17	Kelly Patton	1:28:30 ck
Jim Snyder	1:17:25	Doug Schmitt	1:31:37
Bassage/ Steckel	1:18:26 k2	Julie Wingard	DNF
Chris Haines	1:18:41		



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WATAUGA GORGE RACE

SWEET 'N' SAFE

AND...FROM A SERIES
OF ACCESS HEADACHES
HAS EVOLVED A
BRIGHT FUTURE FOR
PADDLERS

By Risa Callaway
Photos by Wishbone

**'Got to add the Watauga Gorge Race to the
'must do' list for springtime fun...**

Edge of the World in Banner Elk, NC hosted this down river race on one of North Carolina's crown jewels. Originally scheduled for the day before Mother's Day and postponed due to high water, Race Day (May 16) was framed by perfect weather, a moderate water level, and twenty-nine eager boaters.

Ken Upton and Spencer Cooke, the inspired organizing duo, are locals who have been bitten big-time by paddling. They put together an extremely well-run event and have



started a tradition which has the potential for longevity.

The course spanned four miles, from below Cabin Rapid to the pool below Watauga Falls, a spectacular seventeen-foot drop which rewarded clean boofs with dry runs. Lower levels risk sore ankles and high water makes the approach tricky: the 225 cfs level was straightforward and handled well by each competitor.

On the way, several blind rock gardens and an unencumbered negotiation of Hydro Rapid made familiarity a truly critical element in a paddler's ability to post a decent time. The winning paddlers needed to 1) be familiar with the quicker lines throughout the run 2) maintain constant focus, to avoid getting slowed on eddy lines and surface rocks, and 3) be able to motor through the flats.

THE FIELD

The fastest times were set by paddlers who possessed that special combination of river familiarity and brawn. Their choice of whitewater craft appeared to be less of a factor. Though the 'Race' Class (over ten feet) was intended to separate faster boats from all others in the 'Open' Class (under ten), the overall winning time was posted by Brian Knight of Banner Elk, in a Perception

Super Sport. Brian inched out Sherwood Horine in a vintage fiberglass Assault by only 0.03 seconds. "This was twenty years of fun rolled up into one day," reflected local Horine, when asked to comment on the fact that Brian was barely old enough to walk the first time Horine ran the gorge.

Most of the competitors were young K-1 paddlers. Senior on the roster was John Heffernan, 59, from Bristol, Tennessee. A trio of women raced in a pack, and two open boats also competed. They posted unspectacular but decent times, and it was nice not to have a completely homogeneous field ('Stud Kl's Only')

EDGE OF THE WORLD - ABLE HOSTS

Greg Barrow, owner of hosting retailer Edge of the World Outfitters, could not have been more pleased with the planning and execution of the race. "It was awesome. The atmosphere was relaxed, the attitude was positive and everyone supported the organizers and volunteers. The race went like clockwork, due to the guys being prepared and our shop having extensive experience running the (Edge of the World) Snowboard Series. I am used to finishing a snowboard

race day fielding competitors' and resort owners' complaints galore. The boaters, by contrast, were super, super cooperative."

The event was originally scheduled for the week before. The original high-end water level had been set at 600 cfs (with a mandatory portage of Hydro over 450). As the river rose, there had been some boater pressure to raise the limit to 700 cfs. The level was 750 cfs on Race Day, and Greg decided at the Competitor Meeting to postpone. Woody Callaway made the comment that articulated a big hand of support for him. 'Regardless how many times you've run the river and how well you think you know it, it feels a lot different when you've just heard the words 'four, three, two, one, GO!' and you are cranking at your top speed, with no one else in sight.'

"I was very glad that the competitors totally supported me on this decision. During the following week, lots of folks stopped by the store to thank us for having postponed."

The race organizers would like to thank those who gave up good water time to volunteer as starters, safety sentries, etc... Tate, Dillon, Wishbone, April, Tripp, Travis, Mark, Jason, Brent, Jody and the guy with the curly hair who helped us as Asskicker!

Next year's date - make a note of it! The day before Mother's Day, May 9, 1999!

WATAUCA PUT-IN NEWS

The temperature of locals was raised this spring by parking on Guy Ford Road that blocked passage and resulted in a tow-fest that nailed even properly parked vehicles. As a pleasant surprise and terrific act of partnership, a local landowner (who owns the corner store), Mr. Trivett, cleared enough land at the Guy Ford Road put-in to accommodate a dozen or more vehicles. Crowding on the day of the race was virtually eliminated by EOW shuttling all competitors, using their school bus, van and trailer.

Temperatures have not fully abated among the locals, but there is a movement toward a more peaceful put-in coexistence. Boaters from the tri-cities (Bristol, Kingsport, and Johnson City, Tennessee) and western North Carolina are working together to assure a safe acceptable access to the river.

It is critical that boaters respect the fact that we are not entitled to park on private land and/or block local traffic just because:

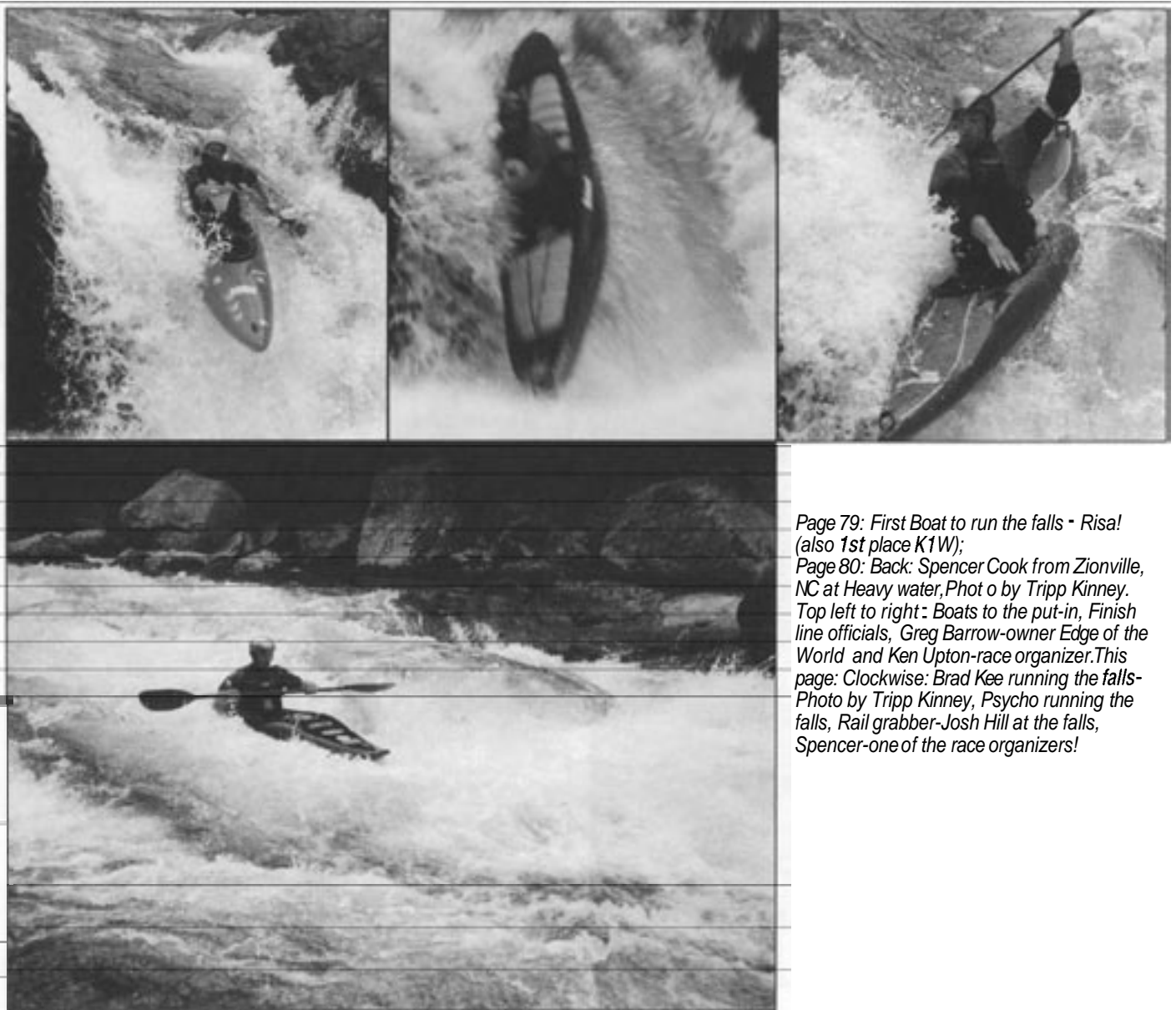
- *that's what we have always done
- the flagrant abuse has been due to 'some-one else's idiocy
- we are too lazy to seek alternatives

AMERICAN WHITEWATER TAKE-OUT - A GODSEND TO BE

At the end of the gorge we had a motor boat waiting to tow the competitors six miles across Watauga Lake to Pioneer Landing, a park and camping area where our vehicles and awards ceremony awaited. While being pulled across flatwater beat paddling it, we passed the former takeout (now a private campground) and looked forward to next year when we will be able to take-out at the property recently purchased by American Whitewater...by boaters, for boaters!

Regarding this AW land acquisition: American Whitewater now owns just over an acre near the old 'short take out' off of Stansbury Road. We have a temporary agreement with a local landowner; he will keep an eye on it and mow it in exchange for being able to use some of it for growing hay. Our ultimate intent, since we are not planning to be in the land management business, is that he will purchase the land in a few years, with the stipulation that boaters be allowed to continue to use it as a take-out.

We have scheduled a Work Party for July 11th to prepare the lot for access and parking. If you are interested in helping to make sure that the site remains clear, safe and well-maintained, please contact Jason Robertson, AW Access Director, at (301) 589-9453, or Lee Belknap, American Whitewater Director, at (804) 266-9060, or rivergypsy@sprintmail.com



Page 79: First Boat to run the falls - Risa! (also 1st place K1W);
 Page 80: Back: Spencer Cook from Zionville, NC at Heavy water, Photo by Tripp Kinney.
 Top left to right: Boats to the put-in, Finish line officials, Greg Barrow-owner Edge of the World and Ken Upton-race organizer. This page: Clockwise: Brad Kee running the falls-Photo by Tripp Kinney, Psycho running the falls, Rail grabber-Josh Hill at the falls, Spencer-one of the race organizers!

WATAUGAGORGE RACE RESULTS 5/16/98

Class	Name	Boat	Time
Open - Under 10'	Brian Knight	Supersport	27.23
	Jason Arnold	Overflow	28.13
	Spencer Cooke	Hammer	28.25
	Quin Slocumb	Overflow	28.25
	Josh Hutchins	Creek 280	28.58
	Doug Helms	RPM	29.17
	Vincent Beasley	Freefall	29.26
	Brent Meadows	RPM	29.35
	Ken Porter	Freefall	30.06
	David Blanding	Sparc	31.11
	Matt Lee	Hammer	31.33
	Dwight Shuler	Micro240	31.36
	Steve Althaus	AcroBat	33.40
	John Bruno	Blade	34.03
	Ashley McKenzie	Freefall	34.05
	Fred Seifer	RPM	35.29
Race (10' +)	Sherwood Horine	Assault	27.26
	Mike Mayfield	Crossfire	28.00
	Brad Kee	Tornado	28.11
	Clem Newbold	Fox	28.23

Class	Name	Boat	Time
K1W	Dave Simpson	Crossfire	28.57
	Joshua Hill	Dancer	30.22
	Erin Purves	Gravity	31.53
	John Hefferman	Mt. Bat	35.58
	Risa Shimoda	Callaway Overflow	36.18
	Maggie Everett	Crossfire	36.40
VOC1	Ava Carr	Freefall LT	36.54
	David Simpson	Ocoee	44.03
	Jonathan Campbell	Ocoee	45.22



Sherwood loading his winning boat-an assault-vintge-the only glass boat in the race....



The geezer girls' class- Risa, Maggie Everett, and Ava Carr

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Ocoee Double Header

The 19th Annual "Ocoee Double Header" was held April 4th and 5th at the Ocoee Whitewater Center near Ducktown, Tennessee. Over one hundred competitors gathered at the Upper Ocoee River, site of the

1996 Olympic whitewater slalom race, for this two-day event. Eric Giddens, who had the fastest overall time on either day, was one of many Olympians attending the event, including Scott Shipley, Cathy and David Hearn,

Lecky Haller and Joe Jacobi. Many of them, as well as other national-level athletes in attendance, saw this race as a warm-up for the U.S. Team Trials held this year May 8th and 9th in Wassau, Wisconsin.

"Saturday, April 4"

Men K1

Name	Time 1	Penalty	Run 1	Time 2	Penalty	Run 2	Total
Eric Giddens	131.51	0	131.51	127.64	0	127.64	259.15
Scott Shipley	125.43	2	127.43	129.45	4	133.45	260.88
Erie Jackson	130.37	0	130.37	134.6	0	134.6	264.97
Scott Parsons	131.66	6	137.66	130.82	2	132.82	270.48
Louis Geltman	135.87	0	135.87	136.6	0	136.6	272.47

Men Junior K1

Name	Time 1	Penalty	Run 1	Time 2	Penalty	Run 2	Total
Brett Heyl	139.17	2	141.17	137.65	0	137.65	278.82
Ethan Winger	144.62	0	144.62	143.72	0	143.72	288.34
Neja Poberai	146.04	4	150.04	144.69	0	144.69	294.73
Sebastian Zimmer	144.72	6	150.72	144.9	2	146.9	297.62
Danny Stock	146.76	4	150.76	144.5	6	150.5	301.26

Women K1

Name	Time 1	Penalty	Run 1	Time 2	Penalty	Run 2	Total
Margaret Langford	150.65	2	152.65	152.45	0	152.45	305.1
Megan Stallheim	155.45	6	161.45	157.16	0	157.16	318.61
Sarah Leith	157.16	54	211.16	155.11	4	159.11	370.27
Mary Marshall Seaver	156.97	54	210.97	165.09	6	171.09	382.06
Cathy Hearn	148.8	50	198.8	152.97	102	254.97	453.77

Women Junior K1

Name	Time 1	Penalty	Run 1	Time 2	Penalty	Run 2	Total
Aleta Miller	170.39	6	176.39	164.03	6	170.03	346.42
Hannah Larsen	164.18	54	218.18	174.14	8	182.14	400.32
Emily Beck	177.79	52	229.79	190.13	4	194.13	423.92

Men C1

Name	Time 1	Penalty	Run 1	Time 2	Penalty	Run 2	Total
David Hearn	145.96	0	145.96	138.34	0	138.34	284.3
Joe Jacobi	144.8	4	148.8	145.79	2	147.79	296.59
Jamie Cartwright	151.26	0	151.26	145.95	0	145.95	297.21
Adam Boyd	148.24	6	154.24	146.69	4	150.69	304.93
Steve Conklin	149.18	8	157.18	146.25	2	148.25	305.43

Men C2

Name	Time 1	Penalty	Run 1	Time 2	Penalty	Run 2	Total
Taylor/Haller	146.14	4	150.14	142.95	0	142.95	293.09
Hepp/McCleskey	149.15	4	153.15	150.35	6	156.35	309.5
Lawler/Steumpel	171.08	56	227.08	166.85	8	174.85	401.93

"Sunday, April 5"

Women K1

Name	Time 1	Penalty	Run 1	Time 2	Penalty	Run 2	Total
Sarah Leith	161.14	2	163.14	157.19	0	157.19	320.33
Megan Stallheim	163.03	0	163.03	163.53	2	165.53	328.56



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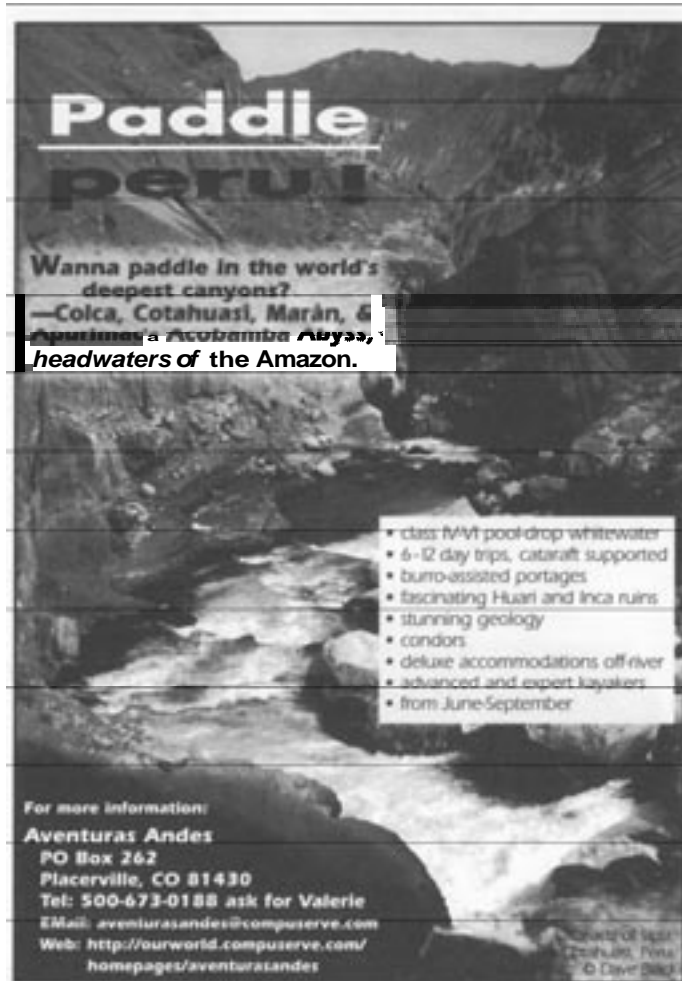
B	r	i	e	f	s		
Mary Marshall Seaver	166.08	8	174.08	158.77	4	162.77	336.85
Cathy Hearn	154.67	2	156.67	156.7	52	208.7	365.37
Margaret Langford	154.35	2	156.35	173.87	52	225.87	382.22

Women Junior K1

Name	Time 1	Penalty	Run 1	Time 2	Penalty	Run 2	Total
Aleta Miller	171.61	2	173.61	173.61	4	177.61	351.22
Hannah Larsen	172.11	2	174.11	180.46	4	184.46	358.57
Emily Beck	196.46	10	206.46	178.8	4	182.8	389.26

Men C1

Name	Time 1	Penalty	Run 1	Time 2	Penalty	Run 2	Total
David Hearn	144.22	0	144.22	140.79	0	140.79	285.01
Adam Boyd	147.22	0	147.22	146.61	8	154.61	301.83
Joe Jacobi	154.67	2	156.67	145.53	0	145.53	302.2
Ryan Bahn	150	6	156	145.38	0	145.38	301.38
Steve Conklin	150.12	2	152.12	151.87	2	153.87	305.99



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When: Sunday, Aug. 30, 1998. Registration begins at 10 a.m.
Where: Beautiful Valley Falls State Park near Fairmont, West Virginia. Why: Because it's fun!
How: To enter, just show up and pay a \$15 entry fee.
All proceeds from this event will benefit American Whitewater and Valley Falls State Park.
For more information, call Clarksburg attorney and super-kayaker Todd LaNeve at 304-624-1700, or, e-mail him at tfllaw@ibm.net.

Men C2

Name	Time 1	Penalty	Run 1	Time 2	Penalty	Run 2	Total
Taylor/Haller	149.77	2	151.77	149.73	4	153.73	305.5
Lawler/Steumpel	177.13	60	237.13	170.61	10	180.61	417.74
Soileau/Soileau	196.98	116	312.98	194.5	64	258.5	571.48

Men K1

Name	Time 1	Penalty	Run 1	Time 2	Penalty	Run 2	Total
Scott Shipley	129.89	0	129.89	133.33	0	133.33	263.22
Eric Giddens	134.81	2	136.81	133.81	0	133.81	270.62
Eric Jackson	137.35	0	137.35	134.51	0	134.51	271.86
Keith Klapstein	136.93	2	138.93	138.79	0	138.79	277.72
Jason Beakes	137.36	0	137.36	137.67	6	143.67	281.03

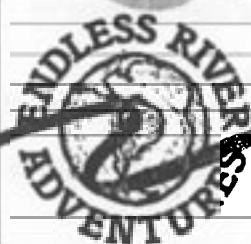
Men Junior K1

Name	Time 1	Penalty	Run 1	Time 2	Penalty	Run 2	Total
Brett Heyl	144.17	2	146.17	142.6	2	144.6	290.77
Ethan Winger	147.26	4	151.26	145.85	0	145.85	297.11
Sebastian Zimmer	155.12	4	159.12	153.24	11	153.24	312.36
Danny Stock	158.24	0	158.24	152.52	2	154.52	312.76
Burch Fischer	160.9	8	168.9	156.22	0	156.22	325.12

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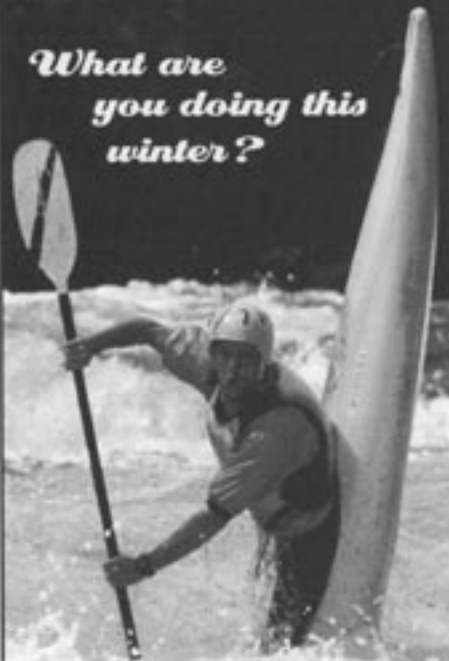
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