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american whitewater

American Whitewater Journal

Volume XLIII, No. 4

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☐ Cover: Paul Horner boofing on the Green Narrows in North Carolina. Photo by Randy and Mary Pegram©



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A TOUGH act to follow



During the past four years my young friend Dave Hammond managed to become one of the finest kayakers in West Virginia while hardly anyone noticed. This was no mean feat, considering that we live in an epicenter of American whitewater sport, a tight but competitive community where practically everyone **that** is or **wants to be** "somebody" knows everyone else **that** is or **wants to be** "somebody."

But in spite of the fact that Dave recently placed second behind National Champion Andrew McEwan in the Cheat River Wildwater Race and fifth at the 2002 US Wildwater Team Trials, and in spite of the fact that on any given day he is inarguably one of the strongest and most stylish paddlers on the Upper Yough, and in spite of the fact he has paddled some of the toughest whitewater in the United States, Dave Hammond remains virtually anonymous. To most local boaters he's just that incredibly smooth but nameless guy who paddles a gigantic kayak and blows past them like a hurricane on the Big Sandy or the Gauley or the Upper Blackwater.

The interesting thing is that I don't believe Dave really cares whether anyone knows who he is or not. Actually, I suspect Dave enjoys

his obscurity, and that he might just kick my ass for writing this.

But I think it is the very fact that guys like Dave Hammond don't care what other people think about their boating that makes them worth writing about. These are the people who paddle every chance they get simply because they love wild places and the dynamics of moving water and because they want to test themselves against a natural force that has an immeasurable power. They paddle to prove something to themselves... not to anyone else.

Nowadays the whitewater community is awash with youthful wannabes determined to achieve whitewater fame and fortune. They pose like Hollywood celebrities on the pages of the paddling magazines, they strut their stuff at highly publicized whitewater rodeos, they star in hairball whitewater videos, and they *go* on tour. I suppose some of them even have groupies!

Many apparently labor under the impression that all this whitewater brouhaha is terribly important. That setting a record for paddling a kayak over the highest waterfall or winning a whitewater rodeo ranks right up there with writing a great novel or curing cancer, for instance. Admittedly, some of these big fish do manage to attain a transient sort of celebrity in the *tiny pond* of whitewater

sport. But if all the hoopla and lade da were stripped away from the sport, would they paddle for the pure joy of it? I wonder.

But guys like Dave Hammond would. And that's **what** makes Dave, and paddlers like him, so refreshing.

Dave's affinity for whitewater boating is probably genetic. You can find Rob Hammond, Dave's dad, on the river almost every weekend. A stalwart member of Ohio's Keelhaulers Paddling Club, Rob beat a lot of guys half his age in this year's Cheat Race. And his exploits on rivers like the Tallulah are the stuff that Keelhauler legends are made of. Rob introduced his son to the joys of kayaking early on, so when it came time for Dave to choose a college... West Virginia University seemed an inevitable choice. Summers spent teaching kayaking at the River Sport on the Youghiogheny cemented Dave's commitment to whitewater boating.

I first noticed Dave a few years ago when he streaked past by me on the Upper Yough. No one has ever accused me of dawdling on the river, but this kid with a big grin in the Prijon Tornado made me feel like molasses in January. Later that day we got to talking at the take-out and discovered that, because Dave was in college, and because I taking some time to screw off, we were free to boat on the same weekdays.

A few afternoons later I picked him up in Morgantown for a high water paddle on the Middle Fork into the Tygart River. I usually spend at least a couple of hours on that ten-mile run, but that day, chasing Dave, it took less than an hour. "There's something about paddling a river fast," Dave said at the take-out, "that really feels good to me." I had to agree that charging down big, booming rivers was pretty cool. So was having an energetic young guy along game to bike the shuttle. Not to mention a likeable one, willing to concede that it was possible to have a good time paddling an old school river like the Tygart.

One of the things I like about Dave is that when it comes to running rivers, he is not persnickety. True, he prefers paddling difficult rivers running high, but when that isn't happening, he doesn't turn his nose up at more mundane opportunities. If the Upper Blackwater isn't running, he'll work on his wildwater racing technique on the Lower Yough. And he will enjoy it. As long as Dave is in his kayak and moving fast, he's a happy camper.

In fact the only time I ever managed to slow Dave down on the river was during a low water run on the Cheat. Paddling past a cascade near the end of the run, I mentioned that



it was called Fossil Falls because there were hundreds of ancient crustaceans embedded in the rock. Most young boaters would have paddled on without an inkling of interest, but Dave promptly beached his boat and spent the better part of an hour rattling off the names of the tiny creatures. That was when I first realized how seriously he took his studies at WVU.

Although he prefers to paddle with small groups, or even alone, Dave isn't snobbish about his river companions. He gets along with everybody on the river and even though he's really good, he doesn't have an *attitude*. He's even willing to paddle with an old weenie that carries Big Splat when the Big Sandy is running eight feet (very high water), provided that weenie doesn't piss around too long on the portage! And if that old weenie subsequently swims out of the colossal hole in the very next rapid, and such a thing could *theoretically* happen, Dave is tactful enough not to laugh, at least until he makes sure that the old weenie's arms are still in their sockets.

Dave does not allow the elements to interfere with his paddling. He is one of those rare guys willing to paddle no matter how miserable the conditions. In fact, I'm convinced he relishes adversity. We have paddled the Upper Yough and Big Sandy on frigid days with a foot of snow on the ground and



we once dodged massive ice formations during a mid-winter run of the Lower Meadow.

One memorable night we paddled the Cheat Canyon under a full moon. Dave surfed nearly every wave and dropped into nearly every hole. It was January. He was wearing an old paddling jacket, not a dry top, but he never whined once. (Guys like Dave don't usually have a lot of fancy gear, since they don't get "sponsored").

Dave doesn't seem to give a hoot about creature comforts. Rumor has it that he lives on generic cereal, peanut butter and stale cookies. To save money he toyed with the idea of spending his senior year at WVU living in the back of his ramshackle station wagon. Presumably it would have been up to Muttley, Dave's faithful canine companion, to provide the heat. Fortunately, Dave's dad intervened.

No one will ever accuse Dave of being a slave to fashion. His wardrobe seems to consist of a two pairs of oversized pants, three faded tee shirts and a few pieces or moth eaten pile—none of which would survive the final cut at a Goodwill industry sort. Unlike many of his peers, Dave hasn't bothered to have anything pierced or tattooed, and he shears his own hair with a pair of ten-dollar clippers. In spite of all this a female boater once told me that she thinks he looks like George Clooney. I'm not sure how she

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■ Forum continued

gets down the river with that kind of vision. But I suppose some day soon a perceptive woman will drag Dave's mangy carcass home, scrub him off, and discover that she's caught herself a keeper.

I've never taken a road trip with Dave but I hear from those who have that it is an unforgettable and intense experience. God only knows what they ate or where they slept. He spent several weeks last summer tackling some of the toughest hair runs in the western United States and he has driven non-stop to Mexico twice during Christmas break to boat remote rivers.

Besides paddling, he is an accomplished rock climber and hard core mountain biker. Dave's dad recently told me that while he is really proud of his son's accomplishments, that they surprise him, since Dave didn't seem to be athletically motivated in high school. Anyone who has ever tried to keep up with Dave carrying a boat up the mountain at the Gauley's Panther Creek take-out would find that hard to believe. I can't think of many boaters with more stamina.

But don't assume that Dave is a dumb jock. Early on he apparently realized that, even though he really loved whitewater paddling, performing Tricky Whu in an artificial hole in a Wal Mart parking lot was no way to make a living. So while I am writing

this, Dave is completing a six-week field course, the final requirement for his college degree in Geology. In fact, he decided to skip the wildwater competition in Europe this spring so that he could take that course and finish his degree. Don't you think that kind of maturity makes him a better role model than many of the current crop of kayakers *dejour*?

After graduation Dave plans to find a job and relocate to the Pacific Northwest, where there are new cliffs to climb and rivers to paddle. Our loss will be their gain.

During the last full moon, Dave and I paddled the Big Sandy. It was a balmy spring night and the river seemed enchanted. Dave was paddling like a demon and I was hard pressed to keep up. But he dutifully peered over his shoulder below every crux move to make certain the old man was still alive.

When we got to Big Splat I hit the portage, but I paused midway to marvel at Dave's flawless charge through the complex, Class V falls. Those magical seconds when Dave ramped his Tornado over Big Splat in the moonlight might not have been "immortalized" in any "extreme" video, but I will remember them for a long, long time.

And watching from the shadows, I couldn't help but think that Dave Hammond is going to be a tough act to follow.

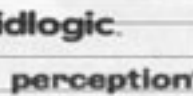
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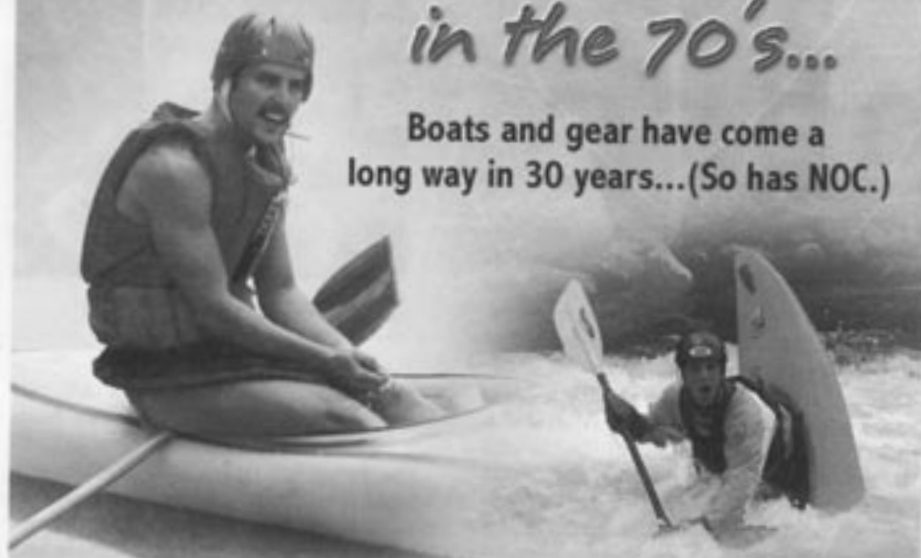
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Corner Charc

This past spring I had the distinct privilege of attending a three-day conference sponsored by Patagonia - their 'Tools Conference for Activists.' I was one of 75 humbled invitees who attended seminars and workshops on how to grow and improve our fund-raising, lobbying, campaigning and overall communications skills.

Our trainers were experienced activists who have worked with a variety of organizations, from those who have protected a section of the South Yuba in California to the many still fighting to save endangered species across North America. They were insightful and pragmatic, and coached us to improve our capacity to initiate stakeholder meetings among adversaries and break through media clutter to communicate our message clearly. Patagonia's 'ace' creative team critiqued materials we provided, gracefully identifying strengths and flaws in brochures, mailers and print.

Patagonia has defined itself by the support it provides to the health of the inhabitants of this planet: you may or may not know the extent to which their commitment extends into the fabric (pardon the pun) of the corporation. I have been a proud fan of the company from the day (over fifteen years ago) Yvon Chouinard saved AW from dissolution with a generous gift. At the time he was running the company, and his interest in floating our boutique conservation / recreation group facilitated the birth of our hydropower reform efforts, now a sustainable initiative in the world of whitewater river restoration.

Today, Yvon still creates presence at the company as a driver for simplicity and pragmatism in design and message. As a result of his commitment, associates have developed an educated depth of understanding of and active support for organizations around the country who are working to protect wilder-



Risa Shimoda
Executive Director
American Whitewater

ness from abuse, bison from extinction, and neighbors of abandoned gold mines from toxic exposure to mercury and arsenic.

The Patagucci (sorry, guys) employees included representatives from their units in Japan and Europe, retail folks from Atlanta (Jason Barringer, a great AW volunteer and supporter), Boston and New York, their internal grants committee, their CEO and CFO, furthering the proof of their commitment. My favorite moment happened while sitting next to Beth Trewick, who creates patterns for sportswear during her regular business day. After meeting attendees and listening to the speakers who exuded enthusiasm, experience and passion, she commented "This makes me want to go home and design some kick ass shorts!" And she will.


The most enlightening news for me at this conference, amidst these amazing activists, was that AW was the ONLY group representing recreationists. Sounds weird, eh? It seems that we are extremely unique, one of the very few organizations in the country dedicated to both protecting our resources and using them intelligently.

I was invited to the conference because of AW's illustrious record as river advocates and to encourage our continued commitment to protecting the country's whitewater. I hope to share with those with whom I work the flashes of brilliance I was able to witness.

You have tons of choices today as you choose your technical gear and streetwear. Patagonia's view is that making clothes supports their effort to support our environment. Quite the paradigm. Quite a bunch of folks.

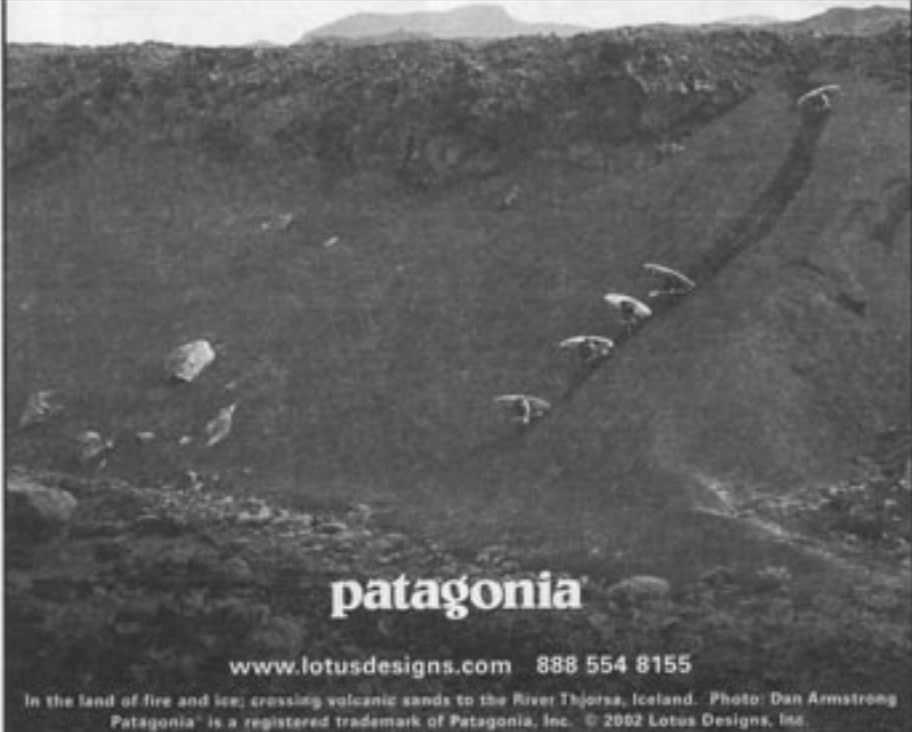
Thanks to A Special AW Volunteer: Denis McLane

Denis McLane has been a tireless volunteer for American Whitewater, as well as for the KCCNY (Kayak and Canoe Club of New York) for...ever. We thank him for wiring and setting up, then unwiring and picking up the last two-by-four at our Gauley Festivals for nearly two decades. He has been an annual pillar of silent strength and a beacon of volunteerism that creates inspiration. Thank you Denny, for many, many hours of sweat and love.



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Good Grief!!!!

Gentlemen:

So it has come to this; "poetry" in **American Whitewater**. I refer, of course, to the blather appearing on page 69 of your March/April 2002 issue. If valuable space is to be occupied in the magazine under this rubric, you ought, at least, to display the work of a *real* poet, a distinction not infrequently conferred upon myself by many of the finest literary minds of our day. This brief sample of my current *oeuvre* will light the way for future contributors:

A paddler poetic of sensitive soul
Painted pictures with words of his elegant roll
While composing his rhymes
He kept missing his line
And got whupped like a dawg by a big ugly hole.

Yours truly,
Sir Nigel Chutney-Jitney
16th Earl of Codswallip
Slackwater Manor
Ripley, Surry, U.K.
TR4 8EU

Editor's note: Does anyone out there know what the hell a "*oeuvre*" is? Is it one of those fancy French toilets that squirts you in the ass?

Geography and Spelling Lessons Needed!

Dear Editor,

Proofing isn't one of my strengths -- Nor am I one of those pesky folks on the Internet that will scream murder at the slightest inaccuracy. While I'm still pleased I received my March issue of AW I was a little dismayed at a couple of things with the article on the Cotahuasi River trip. The country the Cotahuasi flows through is never mentioned in the story - I happened to know it was Peru, as my wife and I had a wonderful journey there. She and I hiked a good stretch of the Andes last year.... Not the ANDIES, as was the usage on the cover and intro. Chuck Kennedy Photographer Knight-Ridder/Tribune Photo Service 790 National Press Building, Washington, DC 20045

Editor's Reply: I don't suppose you would believe me if I told you that the Cotahuasi that we were writing about is the one located outside Kansas City that flows through the backyards of two guys named Andy.

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

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

American Whitewater feature articles should relate to some aspect of whitewater

boating. Please do not submit articles pertaining to sea kayaking or flat water.

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

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

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

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

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



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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 bi-monthly magazine, and by other means, American Whitewater, (AW) provides information and education about whitewater rivers, boating safety, technique and equipment.

SAFETY: AW promotes paddling safely, publishes reports on whitewater accidents, maintains a uniform national ranking system for whitewater

rivers (the International Scale of Whitewater Difficulty) and publishes and disseminates the internationally recognized AW Whitewater Safety Code.

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

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

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Bureau of Reclamation Celebrates 100 Years of 'Progress'

By Lila Thomas

Happy Birthday! It is the Bureau of Reclamation's 100th Anniversary. The agency of the U.S. Department of Interior has successfully built more than 600 dams, 348 reservoirs and 58 hydroelectric powerplants throughout the past century. Reclamation has become the largest wholesale water supplier and the second largest electric utility in the United States.

Their success in taming the wild waters of America came about from early American sentiment. In 1878, John Wesley Powell, the "first truly modern Western hero," published his *Report on the Arid Regions of the United States*. In it, the wily one-armed Civil War veteran debunked popular myths of the time that figured the area west of the 100th meridian to be either an agrarian paradise or lifeless desert. It was, of course, a bit of both.

Powell suggested that the best way to make use of the Western lands was to create large-scale irrigation projects. Americans expanded Westward with a religious zeal. The lands were settled, and federal government set about planning the future use of the American West.

Roderick Nash, environmental historian, refers to the years between 1901 and 1910 as the "Progressive Conservation Crusade." According to Nash, "Progressive conservationists dreamed of controlling rivers with dams and contemplated 'reclaiming' land for civilized purposes by draining swamps and irrigating deserts." The Reclamation Act of 1902, created the Bureau of Reclamation, an arm of the federal government poised to materialize Powell's vision of a blooming desert. "Within five

years the Bureau of Reclamation had twenty-five projects underway."

Now, virtually every river in the lower 48 states is regulated by dams, locks or other diversions. Regulated rivers are fundamentally different ecological and physical entities from untamed rivers. Natural cycles of flooding and sediment transport have been eliminated from many of these rivers and along with it whitewater recreational opportunities. Channel shape, riverine vegetation and instream aquatic communities have changed as a result. And in some cases, such as the Snake River in Washington, environmentalists and state agencies are looking for ways to breach or remove the dams.

As the Bureau of Reclamation celebrates their 100th anniversary the agency should also look forward with an eye toward restoration of riverine habitats and recreational opportunities. Traditionally, the agency has focused on issues of engineering and efficiency, sometimes to the neglect of in-stream environmental values. There are new demands in our society today. Healthy aquatic systems are becoming more and more important as we look toward the future. As the Bureau of Reclamation celebrates their 100th year anniversary it is the perfect time to implement necessary reforms in the agency. There are tremendous opportunities to improve flows below BOR dams, public accessibility to real-time flow information and public access to rivers. American Whitewater looks forward to assisting BOR in the implementation of these changes over the next 100 years.

Sultan River, Washington

On April 19, American Whitewater staff conducted a site visit to the Sultan River. Local boaters Andy Bridge, Product Designer at Werner Paddles and Tom O'Keefe, Streamkeeper extraordinaire, requested American Whitewater's assistance in solving access issues on the lower and upper Sultan. Gates restricting access to the lower have been closed on weekends and after 6 PM weekdays making this reach virtually off-limits for the 9 to 5 working boater. Access to the upper Sultan below Spada reservoir is closed indefinitely. These closures are in direct response to security concerns in the aftermath of September 11th. American Whitewater recognizes the concern regarding public safety but also feels we need to strike a balance allowing access to public lands while maintaining security. Fencing ourselves off from our very own natural resources in the name of national security simply enables the terrorists to win in the end. In the case of the Sultan River relocating gates could provide the needed security for hydro facilities and public drinking water while simultaneously allowing public river access. Tom and Andy will be working closely with American Whitewater staff to solve this access issue. We welcome your input and assistance.

Tom O'Keefe, e-mail: okeefe@u.washington.edu

Andy Bridge, e-mail: andy@wernerpaddles.com

John Gangemi, e-mail: jgangemi@digisys.net

Hydro License Compliance Violation, Cispus River, Washington

In 1994, Lewis County Public Utilities District completed construction of Cowlitz Falls Dam. The Cowlitz Falls hydro project wreaked sustained and irreparable havoc on recreational (not to mention other) values on the Lower Cispus, including the actual destruction (by TNT!) of the Cowlitz Falls rapid, the flooding of 2 or so miles of Class II whitewater and the flooding of the existing boater take-out on the Lower Cispus. The whitewater community was unable to prevent construction of the dam but the FERC required Lewis County PUD to construct a river access point on the Cispus upstream of the reservoir as mitigation. The requirement was spelled out in detail in Article 42 of the Cowlitz Falls license.

Here it is 2002 and Lewis County PUD still has not secured a river access point for boaters. Lewis County PUD claims they are unable to secure a road access easement from the timber company. American Whitewater staff conducted a site visit with Lewis County PUD to find a solution. Lewis County PUD would like boaters to use the reservoir day use site but this requires a 2.5 mile reservoir paddle. This is unacceptable. American Whitewater feels Lewis County PUD is obligated to secure a river take-out as mitigation for the lost whitewater opportunities.

...Cowlitz Falls become miniature versions of rapids like Granite on Hell's Canyon.... ►

Cowlitz Falls River Description

Historically known as the Cowlitz Falls run and enjoyed as one of the best bigwater runs in the state, this section is now buried beneath the waters of Scanwea Reservoir. Construction of the Cowlitz Falls project was completed in 1994 resulting in a 610 acre reservoir.

In the first edition of his guidebook published in 1991, Bennett described Cowlitz Falls as follows, "The Falls begins with an exciting ride over big rollercoaster waves, then through smaller waves before hurling boaters around a left bend and into more powerful hydraulics...at higher flows, the big waves that dominate Cowlitz Falls become miniature versions of rapids like Granite on Hell's Canyon of the Lower Snake. This drop was dynamited and a 140 foot high dam now stands in its place."

American Whitewater is looking for a local paddler with interest in the Cispus to assist in resolving this issue.

Contact John Gangemi, e-mail: jgangemi@digisys.net

Robert Kennedy, Jr. Sees Boaters as Rivers' Key Advocates

"The present shouts, the future listens."

Thoughtful and deliberate in his delivery, Bobby Kennedy, Jr. commented with familiarity about paddling prior to his keynote address during the Southern Appalachian Forest Coalition Summit in Flat Rock, NC this past April 19th. The summit was held to celebrate the publication of *Return the Great Forest, A Conservation Vision for the Southern Appalachian Region*, birthing an effort to protect both forests and their rich, associated watersheds nationwide.



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'users are the most important constituents for economic policy.'

At a media briefing prior to his keynote speech, Kennedy commented that the public right to float "our right to use undimmed, unobstructed, clean water" is in jeopardy. He felt that "the #1 enemy to both the private and public sector relative to outdoor integrity is sprawl development. It destroys waterways and communities, with the worst polluter being ...pavement."

"Good environmental policy equals good economic policy," he noted. "Every new home today costs taxpayers \$1.40, only \$1.00 of which is returned in the form of taxes. Pre-existing residents - those who have lived 'there' for years - are going to suffer with rising overhead and the receipt of diminishing services. We're treating the planet as if it were in a business liquidation sale, ripe with deficit spending."

I asked how he felt we as paddlers (resource users) can best help this conservation initiative. He clearly stated that "users are the most important constituents for economic policy." As a forefather of a tremendously successful cleanup of the Hudson River, the president of National RiverKeepers (90 watershed organizations), and

owner of a rafting company in New England for fifteen years, he has witnessed the power of user constituencies, first hand. "On the Hudson, the fishermen saw their environment being destroyed. Those whose businesses and avocations were disappearing worked together to improve that resource."

American Whitewater will be supporting the efforts of the Southern Appalachian Forest Coalition, a group of national, regional, state and local conservation organizations from Alabama to Virginia to protect the public lands and heritage of the Southern Appalachian Region: Stay tuned.

[More pictures, articles and speech transcriptions from the summit are available on-line in the media section of www.forestlink.org. You can also attend the US. Forest Service plan revisions this year. Times and location links to US. Forest Service are at www.forestlink.org. The plans they are revising right now will set the management plans for the next 10-15 years. The time is now time to act if we want to boat in clean waters in the future.]

"We're treating the planet as if it were in a business liquidation sale, ripe with deficit spending."

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What is clear is that preservationists have dodged another bullet and have bought some more precious time for their river.

Canadian Rivers Update

Good news and bad news from the Gatineau

The good news is that no decision has been taken to jeopardize the health and well-being of the Gatineau. The bad news is that no decision has been taken to preserve the Gatineau. Is no decision a good decision? That is the question!

Early in the new year, after having heard arguments from both the promoter and preservation advocates, the regional government of the Gatineau Valley was to have reached a decision as to whether or not to accept the Québec provincial government's proposal to invite private developers to proceed with hydroelectric development on the Corbeau and Cîdres Rapids section of the Gatineau, one of 36 sites on 24 Quebec rivers that were being considered for micro-hydroelectric development.

Thursday the 14th of March, 5 days before the Gatineau Valley mayors were to meet and attempt to reach consensus on the issue, the Quebec Government announced unilaterally, that the original list of 36 sites had been cut to 14. The Gatineau was not among them. Many whitewater enthusiasts breathed a temporary sigh of relief. Temporary, because no one is sure if the government is rethinking the pertinence of the micro-hydro development, or, in this election year, if they are not just rethinking their strategy in the face of the mounting opposition to their policy. The provincial coalition opposed to the micro projects has not given up on saving the 14 remaining sites, nor do they labour under the illusion that the other rivers and rapids are permanently saved.

Meanwhile, back in the Gatineau Valley, Mayor Gerard Coulombe of the Municipality of Grand-Remous, argues that his colleagues on regional government should consider asking provincial government to include a new site on their list, the Gatineau's Chute de la Montagne. Mayor Coulombe is spokesperson for a tight-knit triumvirate: his own municipality of Grand-Remous, the private promoters, Hydro-MacLaren and Kitigan Zibi Anishenabeg, the Algonquin Indian Reserve who have been cut in on the deal. Coulombe's arguments are persuasive, and regional government agrees to consider his proposal but stipulate that an independent consultant must be found to verify MacLaren's figures and to put those figures on the balance with the long-term economic and environmental benefits of preservation. Mayor Coulombe, asks his colleagues what they have in mind in terms of a timeline. He is no doubt thinking in terms of weeks or months. One of his fellow mayors asks him if he will be satisfied with a report within ten years! Decidedly there is a wide variety of opinion around the 18 member council table. What is clear is that preservationists have dodged another bullet and have bought some more precious time for their river.

The following points are also clear:

The Algonquin Indian reserve Kitigan Zibi Anishenabeg will continue to pressure both regional and provincial government to accept both the Corbeau/Cèdres site, and Chute de la Montagne.

There will be a 6th edition of the Upper Gatineau Whitewater Festival, August 24th and 25th in Maniwaki.

Preservationists will continue to work to heighten awareness of the splendour of the entire Gatineau and its tributaries, and particularly the five sets of rapids upstream from the town of Grand-Remous which include Chute de la Montagne.

The presence of paddlers on the rivers of the Gatineau Valley, or any endangered river, anywhere, for that matter, is more important than ever. Be polite, be visible and try to spend a little money. When you do, make sure that people know that you are a paddler, that you love all of the rivers and rapids of the region, that you will be back and that you will be bringing friends.

For more information on the Upper Gatineau Whitewater Festival and the River, be sure to visit www.gatineau.org

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Access Updates

Editor's Note:

American Whitewater's Access Director Jason Robertson has learned that it is generally more affordable, timely, and effective to post detailed access materials to the Internet than it is to publish detailed reports. Therefore, we encourage you to check out the website for weekly updates and alerts. We have also provided more detailed information on the following access issues on the site. Enter www.AmericanWhitewater.org/archive/article/ followed by the article number.

Ever Been Stranded at Agers Falls on the Moose (NY)

American Whitewater volunteer and retired board member, Chris Koll, reminds us that boaters planning to paddle the Bottom Moose are required to sign-in at the Fortis Hydro office (located between Agers Falls and the take-out overlooking the right left side of Crystal) before accessing the river. The sign-in process is painless, takes about 30 seconds, and can be performed while running shuttle. This procedure has been in effect for 16 years but few new boaters apparently are unaware of the requirement (or are simply choosing to ignore the policy). The dam operators do not start the release over Agers until paddlers sign in. This past April many boaters arrived at Agers on a release day only to find no water spilling over the falls. As Koll says, "It sucks to be them...but they'd have had water if they'd signed in." Please help by observing the simple, established sign-in procedure and don't get skunked at Agers. (Web article 464).

Final Chance for Ohiopyle Falls Access (PA)

On May 23, Pennsylvania stopped accepting comments on new state regulations regarding boating in the state's parks including the Lower Yough. More than 50 American Whitewater members responded to our appeal to write letters to the state during the comment period. These boaters supported our proposal to open Ohiopyle Falls on the Lower Yough and also shared their concerns with regulations that bar any whitewater paddling in any Pennsylvania Parks other than Ohiopyle (Lower Yough), Lehigh Gorge (Lehigh), and McConnells Mill (Slippery Rock) State Parks.

The boating ban issue was brought to our attention by Ed Gertler, author of *Keystone Canoeing* and was the subject of our meeting with state officials in April. We are confident that boating opportunities will remain open in Ralph Stover State Park (the Tohickon) and a few easy water state parks such as Oil Creek, Tyler, and Leonard Harrison (the famous Pine Creek Canyon) and are hopeful that the language regarding access to Ohiopyle Falls will be modified to our satisfaction. Note that American Whitewater's Ohiopyle Falls Festival is scheduled for September 28/29, 2002. (Web article 457).

Army Considers Closing New River (VA)

In the wake of 9/11 the Army is considering a closure of a particularly scenic 8-mile section of the New River between Route 114 and Whitethorne. Though the whitewater is limited to a notorious Class III rapid, this section, which is 15 miles upstream from the McCoy's play spot, is an excellent place for new boaters and float fishermen to enjoy communing with nature. While we respect and understand the need for security at the Radford Army Ammunitions Plant, losing public access on the New is not a sacrifice that is either warranted or necessary. It should be possible to simultaneously secure the munitions facility while also protecting existing public

access, privileges, traditions, and freedoms. We urge you to join us in working with the Army to protect citizen access to the new. (Web article 455)

USFS Turning the Chattooga into the Ocoee? (GA/SC)

Want your next trip on the Chattooga to remind you of a busy Saturday on the Ocoee? That is one possible outcome of the new management plan revisions.

The Forest Service has announced that they are cutting all names from their Chattooga mailing list that do not contact them anew. This means that even if you are currently on their list, your name will be cut unless you contact them at Sumter Planning Team, Attn: Mailing List, 4931 Broad River Road, Columbia, SC 29212-3530.

Your voice is also needed to help control Forest Service actions that could turn use patterns in the wild and scenic corridor into an anything goes, high use, Ocoee-style experience. In fact, the Forest authorized multiple new permits on the Chattooga for commercial shuttle services earlier this spring. These permits allow substantially increased ducky and funyak rentals on the Chattooga. American Whitewater is very concerned about this decision because the Forest Service considers these rental users to be private boaters. This means that their heavily increased use will add to the current private boater use counts and levels, which the agency has previously cautioned are near threshold capacity limits. The agency has also stated that it is likely to require private boater permits in the near future if private boater use increases. In other words the agency is setting up the private boating community for either restrictive permits or a high use experience on the Chattooga.

To further rub salt in our wounds, the agency approved the new permits before releasing the environmental assessment on the action. Thus, the action to authorize new shuttles was made prematurely and appears to have been made without final legal compliance. (Web article 456)

Can't See the Forest through the Fees?

In March, American Whitewater obtained a copy of the Forest Service's draft, *Blueprint for Forest Service Recreation Fees (March 15, 2002)*. This document details the agency's thinking about charging new fees. As with so many elements of the debate over forest fees and fee demo, this document includes both good and bad management ideas. The most controversial ideas for American Whitewater are the provisions for charging new fees for permits and for expanding the fee program to numerous additional sites.

While the agency clearly needs additional funding, the momentum for this visitor fee program is heading in the wrong direction. American Whitewater wants to see aggressive proposals for fee proliferation slowed down and controlled in a careful, convenient, and affordable manner. American Whitewater's Access Director Jason Robertson has told Congress that "The agency's fee blueprint is

a model for fee proliferation." Robertson added, "There is a high potential for a broad range of new permits requiring fees for all kinds of traditional backcountry recreational uses such as hiking, camping, climbing, skiing, kayaking, canoeing, hunting, fishing, and more." Robertson's statement is justified in the context of the agency's recommendation that "Expanded Fees will be assessed on an individual point-of-service basis... when providing the service requires a significant extra expense on the part of the Forest Service, when the service is provided by a concessionaire, or where participation is clearly allocated by permit or other method." Thus the agency appears ready to implement a fee for permit system like the Park Service's expensive permits in Dinosaur National Monument on the Green and Yampa Rivers. (Web article 452)

You Paid How Much for a Permit?!?!?

In a recent survey of permits and permit prices on public lands American Whitewater learned that boaters are charged more than just about any other visitors on public lands. The most expensive fee for a permit is the Grand Canyon with prices starting at \$100 per head, for a group fee around \$1600.

The Forest Service currently requires private boater permits on 16 rivers in their domain; the average cost per person for a permit is \$16.33 at the 15 sites where fees are currently charged (price range \$2 to \$41, median is \$15.00), the maximum group cost for a permit at any Forest Service site is about \$392.

The BLM currently requires private boater permits on 17 rivers in their domain; the average cost per person for a permit is \$19.80 at the 5 sites where fees are currently charged (price range \$5 to \$40, median is \$12.50), the maximum group cost for a permit at any Forest Service site is about \$495.

The NPS currently requires private boater permits on 6 rivers in their domain; the average group cost for a permit is \$338 (price range \$10 to \$1600, median is \$140).

Santa Cruz Protects Kayaking on Ocean Surf (CA)

On April 24 the town of Santa Cruz rejected proposed regulatory prohibitions on kayaking within 300 yards of shore. Instead, the city decided to emphasize an education solution to address safety and use. Kudos to Rick Starr, Charlie Rath, and all the other American Whitewater members and boaters who helped protect your boating access! See web article 446 for more.

WERNER PADDLES Helps with Access in the Northwest (WA)

Werner paddles & American Whitewater are teaming together to restore and protect future public access to Washington's Skykomish river.

Silver Spring, MD (April 15, 2002) - Werner Paddles donated \$10,000 in 2002 to American Whitewater to support specific efforts to secure access on the Skykomish River in Washington State and grow American Whitewater's access efforts nationwide. The Sky is one of the most popular whitewater rivers in the state, and a close drive to Seattle.

"This is an exciting shift in how we support the continued growth and health of our sport," notes Shelley Furrer, Marketing Director for Werner Paddles. "In the past, we've always supported American Whitewater and conservation efforts indirectly through

donations. This year we are taking a more direct approach by forming a Corporate Partnership with American Whitewater's Access Fund. Our donation will be used to match funds previously raised for the 'Sky Access Fund,' with the primary objective to purchase access to an important launch site on the Skykomish River and have asked the balance go to AW for it's nationwide efforts to restore and protect whitewater rivers." Shelley concluded, "We want current and future outdoor enthusiasts to enjoy our public natural resources, and know they need to be able to get to them in order to enjoy them."

"We are thrilled that Werner is making this commitment to American Whitewater and helping to secure public access to the Skykomish," comments Jason Robertson, American Whitewater Access Director. "Werner is making a very bold and clear statement that they deeply value paddlers' ability to access America's rivers and streams and that they also recognize the direct connection between our work and the needs of their customers."

Local American Whitewater volunteer Tom O'Keefe observed, "Werner's support leverages the funds raised by private donors via the annual Sky Fest river rodeo." Tom continued, "This year's festival is scheduled for June 22 & 23 in Index, Washington and should provide the additional support we need to seriously address access acquisition opportunities."

Skykomish Put-in Issue: Access to Sunset Falls, the traditional launch site for kayakers, was denied by the state in 2000. American Whitewater volunteers met with Washington state officials in January 2002 to discuss the situation and are optimistic that seasonal access can be worked out cooperatively with fish transport operations around the falls. Donations from Werner Paddles and SkyFest will be used to secure access near this site.

Skykomish Take-out Issue: American Whitewater volunteers and staff are seeking funding for the purchase of a take-out from (1) a willing seller, (2) with matching private, corporate, and federal funds, (3) to be developed and transferred to a regional land management agency for permanent access near Highway 2 mile 32 or 33. Currently boaters take-out at the railroad bridge over the Skykomish at (Hwy 2 mile 32.5), upstream where the road is quite close to the river (Hwy 2 mile 32.9), or at the fishing access downstream (Hwy 2 mile 30.4).

White Salmon River Conservation Issue: American Whitewater is helping to acquire river front properties along the White Salmon River downstream of Husum Falls. This reach is used as a training ground for novice paddlers and will become the start of a new run to the Columbia River following PacifiCorp's agreement to remove Condit Dam.

Middle Fork Snoqualmie (WA)

In May, American Whitewater submitted written comments endorsing Alternative E on the environmental assessment for the Middle Fork Snoqualmie River Watershed Access Travel Management Plan. We endorsed the preferred Alternative E because it holds the best promise for improving the quality and health of the river ecosystem while providing for paddler experiences throughout the watershed.

The Middle Fork Snoqualmie is one of the most popular destinations for Seattle-area paddlers from the cascades upstream of the Burntboot Creek confluence to the town of North Bend, and recreational opportunities abound along the tributary streams of the Pratt and Taylor Rivers and Dingford Creek.

While most whitewater paddlers take advantage of paddling opportunities downstream from the National Forest boundary (particularly the section from the Concrete Bridge to SE Tanner Road, popularly known as the "Middle-Middle" section), we recognize that management of upstream areas has a direct impact on the quality of the resource downstream. In addition, sections of the Middle Fork Snoqualmie and its tributaries located within the National Forest, offer a range of experiences suitable for novice paddlers to the



country's top experts. Paddlers access the river both above and below the Taylor River confluence and this usage continues to increase given the growth of the sport and the accessibility of the river to the Seattle-Bellevue metropolitan area. Paddlers enjoy the river year around but peak use is from the start of winter rains (typically late October) to the end of late-season snow melt (as late as mid-July).

We support several key components of the preferred alternative:

- 1) Closure of spur roads: Closing all spur roads that currently provide vehicle access to sensitive riparian areas and to river gravel bars will improve current environmental conditions. Off-road vehicle use in these areas has created significant sediment delivery problems and degraded the riparian habitat. We support the idea of converting these spur roads to day-use areas with pullouts along the road for parking and developing foot trails to the river. In developing day-use areas at River Bend, Pratt River Bar, Camp Brown, and other dispersed sites, we encourage you to create suitable foot access to the river for those wishing to launch a hand-carry craft, such as a kayak or canoe. Identifying launch points at these sites would enable managers to locate access in areas less prone to bank erosion and minimize disturbance to riparian vegetation. Our members from the Seattle area would be happy to meet with Forest Service staff in planning these river access points.
- 2) Closure of FR 56 above Dingford Creek: While reduced road access to areas above Dingford Creek will limit easy access to upper areas of the watershed, the preferred alternative still preserves paddling opportunities in this reach for those willing to hike in and represents an effective balance between user access and protection of the resource. We recognize that the continued maintenance of this chronically eroded road cannot be justified due to the cost and impact on aquatic re-

sources. Sediment delivery problems and mass wasting events represent both an impact to the river resource and become a serious safety issue. There are several places on National Forest lands where consistent failure of poorly engineered road results in anthropogenic debris (blown culverts, bridge debris, rebar, etc.) that has resulted in serious injury and fatality. The preferred alternative effectively addresses both the safety and sediment delivery issue by decommissioning those sections of road most prone to flooding and failure.

- 3) Recognition of Wild and Scenic Qualities of these rivers: The Middle Fork Snoqualmie, Taylor, and Pratt Rivers have all been recommended for designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. This river possesses extraordinary recreational opportunities, scenic values, and water quality. The management actions proposed in the preferred alternative will significantly reduce sediment run-off resulting from off-road vehicle use in erosion-prone areas, decrease potential for unnaturally elevated levels of sediment loading, improve overall habitat conditions and preserve the scenic qualities of the river corridor. In addition, the proposed reduction of land area suitable for timber harvest from 5703 acres to 2473 acres will limit the potential future impacts to the river corridor. This will further enhance the unique ecological and recreational attributes of these rivers that continue to recover from harvest activities during the last century.

The Middle Fork of the Snoqualmie and its tributaries has high ecological and recreation value that is enjoyed by our members living in the region. The preferred alternative E will maintain and enhance these values for them, for visiting paddlers, and for future generations of paddlers and other river users. We strongly support the efforts of the Forest Service to present a strong and effective management plan that balances access considerations with improving the quality of this treasured resource.



Thanks

to **All the**

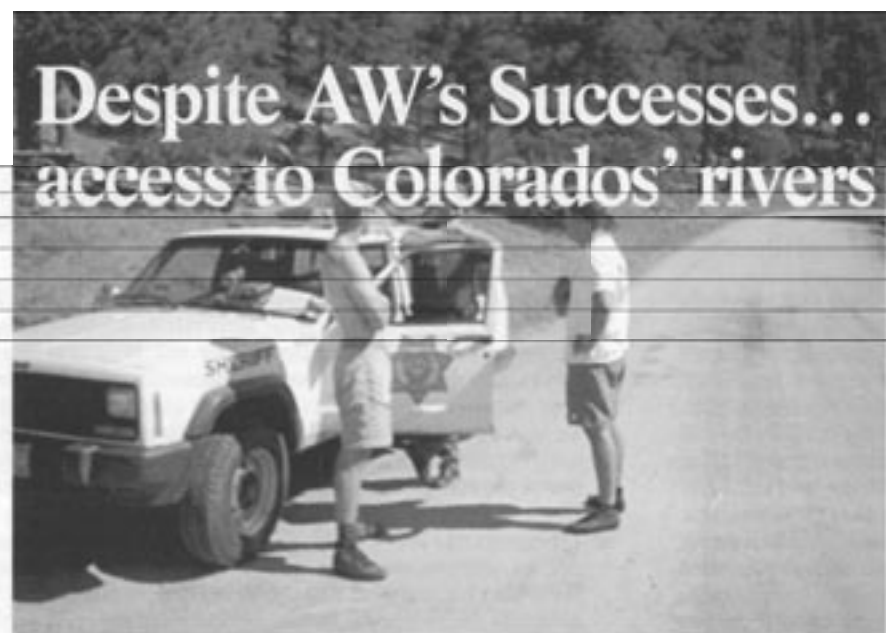
Volunteers



Photo by Julie Keller©

Who Helped Clean the Cartecay (GA)!

In March, Diane Smith and Mark Neisler ably organized a team of volunteers to clean up the American Whitewater and River Right public access point on the Cartecay. Volunteers from American Whitewater and the Atlanta Whitewater Club helped spread mulch, lay railroad ties to prevent erosion and improper access to the river, repair the existing path to river, replace landscape timbers, pick up litter and take it to the dump, split wood for use by campers, and even set up a new gauge provided by River Right. Thanks to everyone who came out and helped!



is still filled with Fear and Loathing.

By Tim Kelley, AW Board Member

Left: A visit from Deputy Valdez

After six years that saw paddlers being threatened, intimidated, assaulted, and ticketed for trespassing; the fishing club "Sportsmen's Paradise" (SP) informed American Whitewater (AW) that they lifted the "trash rack" that created a riverwide strainer on the Upper South Platte River in Colorado. The strainer prevented ready access to one of Colorado's best creek runs, necessitating a two-mile portage at elevations over 8500'. AW and Colorado White Water Association (CWWA) have encouraged and continue to encourage paddlers to follow the guidelines listed below in connection with paddling sections of creeks and rivers that are frequently fished or that pass through private property to help solidify these kinds of arrangements.

Sportsmen's Paradise (SP) and many Colorado landowners still assert that the public doesn't have the right to "float" through private property, and individuals that do "float" through private property are committing civil trespassing. SP prefers that boaters not paddle the section of the South Platte that passes through their property (preferring instead that paddlers take the 2 mile "Paradise Portage" around SP); however, they will not seek to harass or interfere with a boater's downstream passage as they have in the past. SP has made clear that they believe they could pursue civil trespassing charges against a paddler or group of paddlers just like the landowner on the Lake Fork of the Gunnison is doing.

Cannibal Outdoors, the outfitter that was the original defendant in the Lake Fork lawsuit, was forced to sell its rafting and other equipment to keep from going under financially. AW and CWWA are involved in the lawsuit as co-defendants, in an attempt to protect boater's rights to use the surface waters of Colorado for recreational purposes without threat of civil trespassing. The exact status of the case is uncertain as this article goes to print. Visit AW's web site, www.americanwhitewater.org, for the latest on the Lake Fork case.

Sportsmen's Paradise will seek prosecution of those committing criminal trespassing, "paddlers touching the riverbed or banks,"

which they assert constitutes SP property. SP has marked its property line across the river with numerous "no trespassing" signs hanging from a cable. There can be no doubt when you are paddling through SP, so stay in your boat on that section of the river. The Park County DA has confirmed that touching the diversion dam and streambed just below the dam is not criminal trespassing. The 6-8ft dam is located less than 100 yards below the "no trespassing" signs and just upstream of the bridge from which the trash rack hangs. A fence across the downstream property line marks the end of SP land and is about a mile above the first rapid, Club Dues. You can paddle under the fence safely on river left. The section of river that runs through SP is approximately two miles.

The public and commercial users are protected from criminal trespassing by a 1977 amendment to the criminal trespass statute (C.R.S. 18-40-504.5). The 1983 interpretation of this statute by then Attorney General Duane Woodard states that if a craft floats on the surface of the river and does not touch the bed or the banks, then the floaters are not trespassing. No paddler has been convicted of trespassing under this statute, largely because of the extensive legal support AW and CWWA have provided paddlers that have been ticketed.

River access in Colorado remains American Whitewater's number one Access priority. To that end, we have an opportunity to show landowners how responsible paddlers are and how low our impact is. We can only accomplish this through our actions and language.

We need to remember that while it's not fair (or legal) for landowners to close the river, it's not cool for boaters to mess up anyone's "fishing holes."

Guidelines for paddling past fishermen: 1. **Stay in the main flow.** Feeding fish congregate on eddy lines and seams. A kayak passing downstream usually won't "put down" feeding fish, but catch that eddy, or squirt that seam and you may spook those fish for an hour or more. Just because

Below: Dos Chaos



Access

nobody's fishing that drift right now, doesn't mean they aren't planning on fishing that area soon. Fishermen generally work upstream.

2. Paddle Quietly. Fish are disturbed by noise and surface activity. Voices carry well over water. Kayaking is the most exhilarating of sports, but fishing is by its nature a solitary and contemplative activity. Save your socializing until after you pass fishermen and save your paddling yahoos for places like Slap you're Mama Falls, the 15' Class IV+ waterfall in the heart of Cheesman Canyon.

3. Be Observant. Fly fishermen wear clothing that deliberately blends with surrounding bank vegetation, and are frequently difficult to spot until you are right on top of them. Furthermore, a fisherman is generally watching the drift of his or her fly and not looking upstream for approaching kayakers. Be sure not to startle a fisherman. One of Sportsmen's Paradise's real concerns is the safety of older fishermen that could be startled by a boater. While it seems highly unlikely that this poses a real safety concern, do your best to help prevent this. Act as if a fisherman is around every bend in waters that are heavily fished.

4. Don't approach casting fishermen. This should be obvious, but if you want to say hi or do a little "public relations" for boaters, smile and nod. In the fisherman's language you have spoken volumes. If the fisherman wants to talk he will initiate the conversation.

5. Move thru. There are plenty of eddy's and little play spots that are not prime fishing spots, so paddle through fishing areas at a good pace, but calmly and quietly keeping in mind the above considerations. Definitely don't get out of your boat on private property in Colorado; it's criminal trespassing. The exception to this is "imminent danger" when you need to scout or portage a rapid. This has not been tested in Colorado courts so beware, you could be ticketed for criminal trespassing and required to appear in court.



Boat in a Sieve

How often do we tell ourselves, what a better place the world would be if we all kayaked. Let's show landowners and all river users how true this is. Help remind your friends. If you do choose to paddle through Sportsmen's Paradise, then please do so between 0900-1100. This is part of our effort to again reduce paddler impact on fishing. If you start any later than 1100 you risk finishing in the dark, especially if you're not familiar with the run or have a problem, which happens quit often on Cheesman.

Our actions and language will cement or nullify these kinds of

have fun stay dry

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solutions. I have met dozens of SP members over the last year and find almost all to be very reasonable. There are a few, however, that may try to provoke you or your group. Please "turn the other cheek" and report the problem to AW or CWWA.

River access in Colorado remains very unstable "week to week." Down river from Cheesman Canyon on the "Deckers" section of the South Platte, a lawsuit involving CWWA and a private landowner was settled this past winter allowing boaters to paddle through private land. But on the first run of the season another landowner, a bit farther down river, intimidate paddlers with his dog as they paddled through his property. The landowner then met the paddlers at the take-out swinging an axe handle. CWWA lawyers are working with the sheriff and DA to solve this problem.

This year's drought has funneled paddlers onto just a handful of Colorado's runs stressing many access agreements with private landowners, like those on the Bailey Canyon section of the South Platte's North Fork. AW and CWWA ask paddlers to be on their best behavior when paddling through any private property and please



Above: The Slide for Life

follow the guidelines above. Equally important, we need your donations to the Colorado Access fund so AW can continue to win the access battles for all who paddle in Colorado. Get your dead-beat friends to cough up some dues and join AW as well. Remember if you're charged with trespassing, civil or criminal, AW will assist in trying to find you a pro bono lawyer, if you're an AW member and have acted in a reasonable manner in accordance with state laws. (Thanks Pete for being there for me!)

One final thought, "Cheesman Canyon" is a CLV+ run with a CLVI-rapid.

You can walk the big drops, but many of the CL III/IV slots have tree strainers and sieves w/ CL VI consequences. This run is far less forgiving than most runs in the state. It is remote and it would be very difficult to evacuate an injured person from the

heart of the run. Be safe, be humble, and don't attempt this run before you're ready

I would like to thank Jay Kenney, Charlie Ebel, Gordon Banks, Dave Eckhardt, Landis Arnold, Andrew Shoemaker, and Pete Thomas for all their help in dealing with the access problems in Cheesman Canyon. Please do your part and donate to AW's Colorado Access Fund <http://americanwhitewater.org/donate/>.

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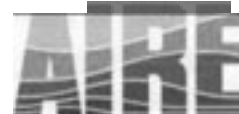
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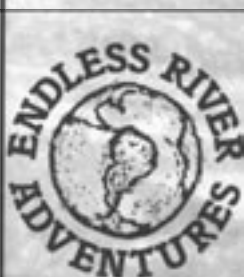
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Youghiogheny Hosts 2002 Wildwater Team Trials

By Chris Norbury
Photos by Emmy Truckenmiller

The Lower Yough in Pennsylvania has long been a favored site for paddling competitions of all kinds, including Slalom and Wildwater Team Trials and Nationals, as well as AW's annual Ohiopyle Falls Race. In recent years heavy raft and recreational traffic have made it increasingly difficult to stage a high profile race on the most popular section of the river, so the last Team trials were held on the Yough in the early 90s. That considered, the effort by squirt boat innovator Jess Whittemore and Team Friendsville to host the 2002 Wildwater Team Trials on the Yough was a noble and heroic one. After almost a year of negotiating with the Yough outfitters, the Park Service, the town of Ohiopyle, and potential sponsors, the 2002 Wildwater Team Trials were held on the third weekend of April.

Paddlers from as far away as Washington State and California descended upon Ohiopyle for the race. A moderate flow of 3.3 feet provided a demanding course both days. The Saturday Classic ran from Entrance to No-Name rapid. This followed the current trend toward shorter wildwater races. The 1973 Nationals and, more recently, the Mid Atlantic Downriver Series (MADS) races ended quite a bit further downstream at River's End rapid. Sunday's event featured a dual sprint through Entrance and Cucumber, a challenging course that

La Badie

Goldberg



Weigh in.

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Tilghman

offered a number of alternative lines. Overall rankings were decided by combining the sprint race times, then comparing to the percentage of the race winner's time on both Saturday and Sunday.

Racing was fast and furious, with spots at both the World Championships in Italy and the World Cup series in Slovenia, Austria and the Czech Republic, on the line. In Men's K1 Andrew McEwan returned from flatwater training in California to take the honors in Saturday's classic event. But despite posting the fastest individual sprint time on Sunday, he lost out to the combined sprint run times of Chris Hipgrave. Behind them Middy Tilghman cemented his position on the team with a pair of solid sprint runs.

In 4th Simon Beardmore survived a scare as he flipped off of a curling wave in Cucumber during his second sprint run. Opinions at the finish were divided as to whether Simon crossed the line with his head above the water, a requirement for qualification. After consultation with a video, it was decided that there was no evidence to disqualify Simon, so his position just ahead of local favorite Dave Hammond stood. In his first year of racing Dave was lightning quick, but a mistake in Railroad during Saturday's Classic lost him 25 seconds, and probably attendance at the World Championship.

In Women's K1 Chara O'Brien managed to capture first with two strong sprint runs on Sunday, but ended only 0.08% ahead of Jennie Goldberg after two intense days of racing. Classic winner Amy Dingle had to settle for with third after a mistake in Entrance during her second sprint run resulted in her running Cucumber backwards in a downriver boat no mean achievement at three feet.

In C1, National Champion Tom Wier dominated the field, sadly lacking the injured Mike Beavers. Stalwart Wildwater team member Chris Osment took second ahead of Bob Bofinger, who belied his lack of whitewater practice by posting an impressive classic run in third. In fourth, newcomer Ed Gordon ditched his Wildwater C2 to take the final World Championship spot, while former team member Mike Harris failed to qualify in C1 since he swam across the line during a sprint run.

Mike wasn't the only one to have trouble. Slamming through the big and powerful waves at Cucumber after sprinting full tilt for more than a minute resulted in a number of spectacular incidents, including a phenomenal effort from longtime Yough paddler Chris Iezzoni, who sculled across the finish line with his head only inches from the water.

The event was the most competitive U.S.

Team Trials in a number of years. With the Wildwater World Cup coming to the Kern River in California in 2003, this increased enthusiasm for Wildwater Racing can only be a good thing.

Many thanks to Jess Whittemore and the many volunteers of Team Friendsville for the huge effort they put in to stage this race. The organizers and competitors also appreciate the support of Immersion Research, the Falls City Pub and Restaurant, Prijon, the Ohiopyle Trading Post, Wilderness Voyageurs, Whitewater Adventures, the Little Falls Wildwater Club, Riversport School of Paddling, Precision Rafting, Ohiopyle Prints, Mountain Surf, High Mountain Sports, Laurel Highlands River Tours, Ohiopyle State Park, Airtight Inflatables and the Army Corps of Engineers.

1. Andrew McEwan
2. Chris Hipgrave
3. Middy Tilghman
4. Simon Beardmore

Women's K1

1. Chara O'Brien
2. Jennie Goldberg
3. Amy Dingle
4. Bunnie LaBadie

C1

1. Tom Wier
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STORY AND PHOTOS BY BOB GEDEKOH
AMERICAN WHITEWATER EDITOR

THE UPPER PACUARE



"Be real careful, there must be a thousand of those nasty toads jumping around up here," I warned my buddy Troy, who was scrambling along the slippery bank behind me.

Troy stopped dead in his tracks. I could tell that he was not happy. I might just as well have told him that a jaguar was about to pounce on his head.

Sure, I know what you're thinking. What kind of weenie would be scared of a puny hoptoad?

But I wouldn't call Troy Dyke a weenie if I were you. He's a pretty tough customer. I've never seen him back down from anyone. Not even from guys nearly twice his size.

Besides, it wasn't exactly Kermit the Frog who was holding Troy at bay. No sir! Troy was surrounded and outnumbered by a formidable army of dreaded Dendrobatids... Poison Arrow Frogs!!!

Someday I reckon Troy may go down fighting, but it will be with dignity. I can guarantee that he does not aim to be laid low by anything with slime or scales.

When it comes to creatures that slither, Troy ain't no Crocodile Hunter. He knows a lot about amphibians and reptiles, but it's not because he likes them... at least not up close and personal. As best I can tell, the only poisonous critters Troy wants to see are the ones appearing in his favorite Discovery Channel wild-life shows. No doubt that's how he knew that the cute little red frogs that were bouncing against our legs packed a potentially lethal wallop.

Dendrobatids secrete a toxin from their skin that can paralyze and kill many animals, including humans. The toxin is so potent that Indians used to dip the points of their hunting arrows into it.

Troy turned his gaze longingly back to the river. I knew what he was thinking; *maybe we should steer clear of these damned toads and take our chances running Bobo Falls*. But I don't think either of us would have been willing to risk the horrendous recycle at the base of the falls, even if there hadn't been a strainer blocking the approach. There was only one way we were going to get past Bobo, and that was on foot, right through the horde of bebopping Poison Arrow Frogs.

"Don't worry about the frogs," I declared, perhaps less than convincingly. "I'm pretty sure the toxin can't penetrate intact human skin. I think we're fine as long as we don't get it in a cut." That was easy for me to say; I was wearing paddling pants. Troy, on the other hand, was in shorts. But there was no choice, so he shouldered his kayak and gamely resumed the portage.

Fortunately I was right about the poison arrow frogs. Even so, when we slid back into our kayaks we weren't out of the proverbial woods. We were still only half way down the **Upper Pacuare**, the most difficult whitewater run we would tackle during our recent foray to Costa Rica.

Expert boaters who enjoy tackling unfamiliar remote and challenging Class V whitewater consider the fifteen-mile long **Upper Pacuare** to be the best run around Turrialba. Don't be misled by the relatively mild average gradient of 68 feet/mile. Several long stretches of easy water dilute that figure. According to Mike Mavfield's guide to Costa Rica, the gradient approaches 100 feet/mile in the three most difficult miles of the run. And even at relatively low flows more than 1000 cfs pour through the narrow canyon, resulting in a steep, technical run with plenty of push.

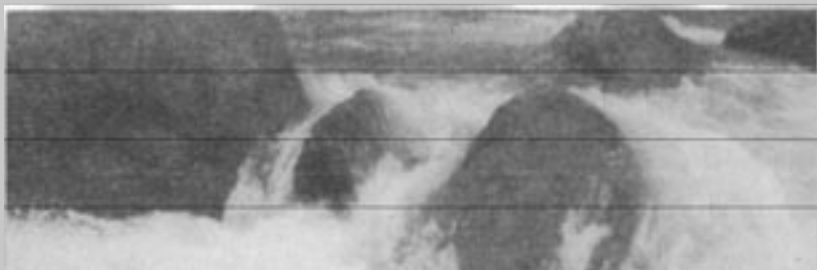
The Upper Pacuare contains many solid Class IV+ and V rapids that command respect. Most eastern boaters would consider the Upper Pacuare to be similar in character to- but a notch tougher than- Maryland's Upper Youghiogheny. Western boaters find it comparable in difficulty to Gore Canyon of the Colorado, albeit with more rapids. And unlike Gore, no railroad parallels the Upper Pacuare. If you get into serious trouble, you could be spending a lot of unpleasant hours climbing out through an inhospitable jungle. Even if things go well, the Upper Pacuare makes for a grueling day.

The difficult rapids on the Upper Pacuare are located in three clusters. The easiest cluster lies between the put-in at the village of Bajo Pacuare and the swinging footbridge at San Joaquin. There are several Class IV+ rapids along this six-mile section of the river. Boaters who have trouble with these rapids would do well to bail out at the swinging bridge. The rapids are decidedly more intense in the two



Left page background: Hydraulic Blood- the Class V lead into Leapin Bob Falls. Inset: Surrounded by poison arrow frogs, Troy Duke contemplates his options.

Above: Jess Hartman and Trow Dyke on a side hike from the Lower Pacuare. Below: Jess Hartman negotiates the Golden Tongue on the Upper Pacuare.





gorges down river, where the Pacuare narrows and the gradient increases.

The Class IV+ whitewater near the top of the first gorge is typical of the Upper Pacuare. It is possible to boat scout many of these rapids, if your skills, reflexes and strength are up to the task. But that's a big **if**. Large boulders punctuate most of the rapids and the slots between them abruptly drop six to eight feet. The recycle at the base of many of these flumes packs a wallop. Backendering into the maw of one of these bad boys is an ever-present danger.

One of the most intimidating rapids on the river, a long, powerful and complex Class V known as Hydraulic Blood, flows into a fast flowing pool that terminates in an noxious river-wide hydraulic, followed immediately by Bobo Falls. Hydraulic Blood is a rapid ripe with consequences: a powerful and greedy looking recycle at the base of the first ten foot ledge, several virulent hydraulics in the turbulence

just downstream, undercut walls, and, as if that were not enough, a log strainer **hanging** vertically into the current near the bottom. **This** rapid and **Bobo Falls** are probably the two rapids most frequently portaged on the Upper Pacuare.

This year two members of our six-person party decided to give it a shot while the rest of us anxiously set safety. The first brave soul, a veteran Canadian slalom racer, fared well until he was swept against the strainer and flipped. He pinned upside down until he abandoned his boat, a nasty gash above one eye. He wound up perilously close to an undercut wall, dangling like a fish on the end of the rope that Troy had tossed from above.

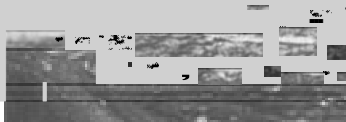
Undiscouraged by this carnage, Jess Hartmann, a Dagger rep and aspiring hair dog from Pennsylvania, boofed the first ledge, dodged the holes, plowed through the turbulence, then capped it all off with a wild stern squirt that barely carried him past the tree. It took a lot of skill and more than a little luck, but there was no time for Jess to gloat... he had to retrieve the hapless Canadian from the end of the rope.

Downstream local fisherman had suspended nets over Bobo Falls, hoping to catch the migratory Bobo fish as they leapt into the air, fighting to attain the ten-foot ledge. They waved knowingly as we portaged Bobo, no doubt remembering the time they rescued a U.S. Slalom Team member who attempted the falls and nearly died in the backwash.

The first gorge ends not far below Bobo Falls, but the Upper Pacuare is far from over. Soon boaters enter the second gorge, which contains even more rapids than the first. The first of these, known as Minefield, is one of the longest and hardest on the river.

We eddy hopped our way through second gorge until we reached the Golden Tongue. Here a wild and narrow flume of water careened obliquely between two ugly looking holes. All of this ended in a turbulent pool, created by a log-choked sieve. We scouted the Golden Tongue long and hard. Even if you dodged the holes, the likelihood of flipping in the reactionary at the base of the tongue seemed high. It looked to me like you would need to throw a simultaneous left and right brace to stay upright. The consequences of a missed roll above the siphon seemed ugly.

Top: A close call for Jess Hartman midway through Hydraulic Blood. Below: German, Andreas Shultz on the Upper Pacuare.



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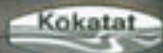
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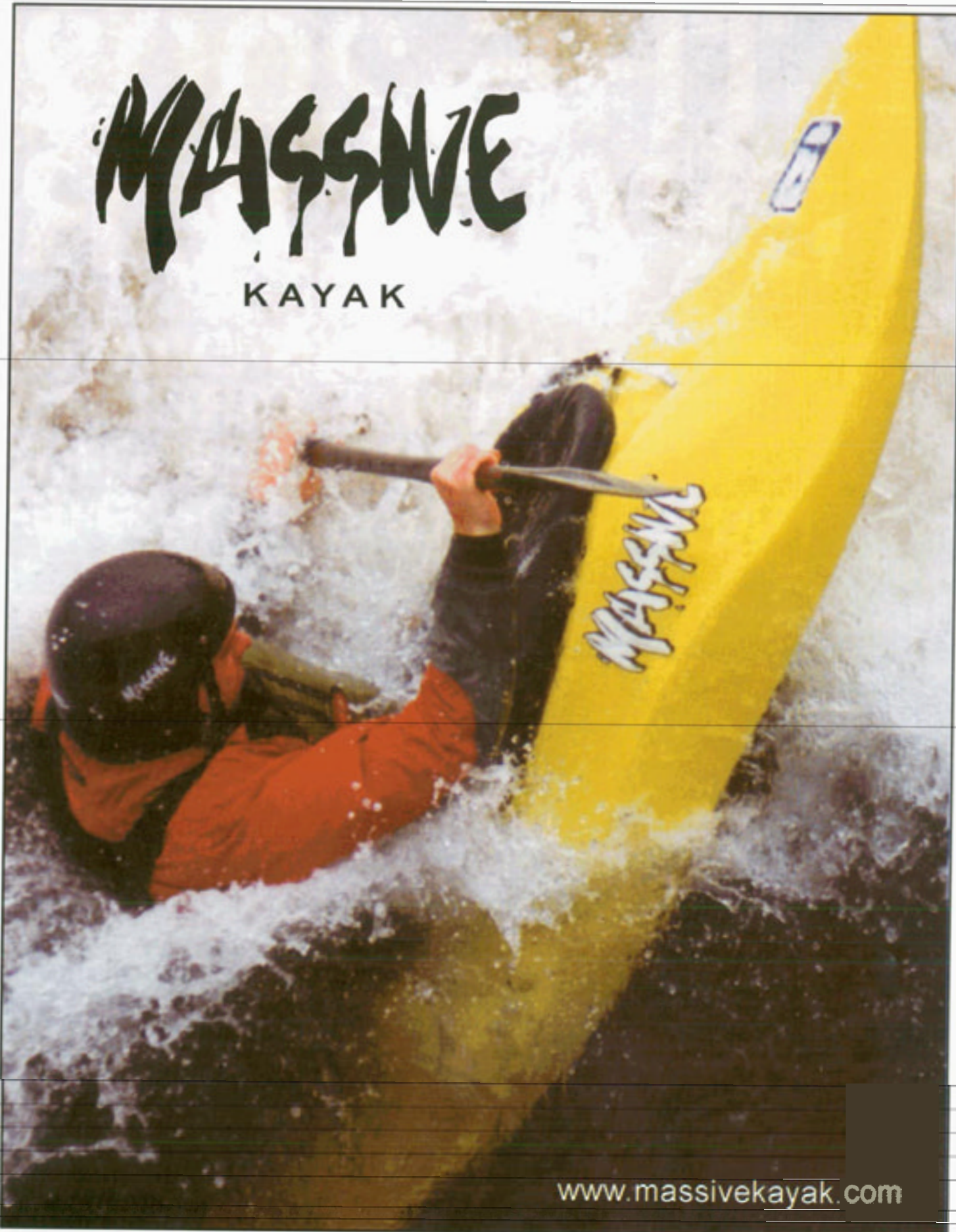
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Above: German Raymond Bulczak below Leaping Bobo Falls on the Upper Pacuare. Below: A deadly eyelash viper at the local serpentarium.

The portage would have been easy, but, for reasons that escape me now, we all gave it a shot. No one made it look easy, but Jess and Tim had the prettiest runs. I was among those who flipped and rolled. Happily no one wound up in the holes...or in the sieve.

Expert groups unfamiliar with the Upper Pacuare should expect to spend at least six or seven hours on the run. It is possible to shorten the run by launching at the San Joaquin swinging bridge; this eliminates six miles and the easiest of the three clusters of difficult whitewater. I have paddled the Upper Pacuare twice, both at relatively low levels. On both occasions the gauge just upstream of the Bajo Pacuare bridge read about 1.5, a level which Mayfield's Guide calls ideal. There is no doubt in my mind that at higher flows the river would be increasingly difficult and dangerous. When the Lower Pacuare is considered to be at moderate to high levels, most boaters avoid the Upper altogether.

It is possible to put-in as much as eight miles upstream of Bajo Pacuare, a section of the river known as the Upper Upper Pacuare. This beautiful and infrequently paddled portion of the river has an interesting gradient of 87 feet/mile according to the Mayfield guide, but is only rated Class III-IV. I have only paddled the two-mile section above Bajo Pacuare; steep and wet roads prevented us from traveling further upriver.

Various put-in options exist for the Upper Upper, but all apparently require vehicles capable of negotiating Class V roads. After even moderate rain these put-ins may be inaccessible. Some boaters opt to combine the Upper Upper Pacuare with the first six miles (easiest part) of the Upper Pacuare, utilizing San Joaquin as their take-out.



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THE LOWER PACUARE

The fourteen-mile section of the Pacuare River between Tres Equis and Siquirre is justifiably considered to be one of the world's most spectacular whitewater treasures. Most boaters traveling to Costa Rica will remember their sojourn through the deep and remote jungle valley carved by the Pacuare as one of the highlights of their trip. The precipitous mountains that tower over the Pacuare are covered with dense vegetation and trees of monstrous proportion. Tarzan would be quite at home here. Aside from a couple of rustic resort complexes built by rafting outfitters, the gorge of the Lower Pacuare is pristine.

The **Lower Pacuare** probably hosts more visitors than any other stretch of river in Costa Rica. The spectacular scenery and the exciting, yet friendly, rapids attract hard boaters and rafters alike. Expect to have company on the Lower Pacuare... and not just of the human variety. Ocelots and jaguars stalk the dense forest, though it is unlikely that you will see them. On the other hand, you will almost certainly see some brilliant yellow or gigantic, neon blue Morpho butterflies hovering over the river. And you will certainly see and hear flocks of parakeets, which never seem to stop squabbling. If you are lucky you may even spot a toucan or make the acquaintance of the pair of inquisitive river otters that practically climbed onto my kayak last January.

Several streams plunge into the Lower Pacuare along its course. Nearly everyone stops to clamber up to waterfalls on Quebrada Fria, which tumbles into the Pacuare about a mile and half into the inner gorge. And between Upper and Lower Huacas Rapids another spectacular cascade drops more than one hundred and fifty feet into the river.

Play boaters love the Lower Pacuare, which features an abundance of lively waves and holes. The water is pleasantly warm, clean and clear and convenient eddies beside many of the best wave trains and hydraulics facilitate multiple rides. On my last trip to Costa Rica, Jeremy Garcia, an excellent young Costa Rican boater whose uncle owns Tico's Rafting, paddled the lower Pacuare with us, demonstrating all the cool moves and hot lines, including one through Lower Huacas that left me scrambling.

Above: Leaping Bobo Falls.

Below: A cascade plummeting into the Lower Pacuare.



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With the possible exception of a rapid known as Lower Huacas, the Lower Pacuare is Class III and easy Class IV at low to moderate levels. Many rapids are long, but sizable pools for rescue inevitably follow them. The overall gradient is just less than fifty feet per mile.

Lower Huacas (Huacas means graveyard in Spanish) is located in the inner gorge about two miles below the rafting company camp on river right. Here the river makes a turn to the left and drops through some large boulders. At moderate levels Lower Huacas packs a solid punch and probably rates a Class IV+. It can be scouted and/or portaged on river right.

The Lower Pacuare reportedly has adequate flows most of the year, including the dry season of February through April. The Pacuare rises quickly after heavy rains and can be quite dangerous at high water. Two visitors from the United States perished on a high water raft trip on the Lower Pacuare several years ago. Take heed. If the local raft companies have cancelled their trips because of high water, you probably should think twice before launching. This is the voice of experience speaking.

My friend Ken Ryan and I paddled the Lower Pacuare twice during my first trip to Costa Rica. The first time the

continued page 67

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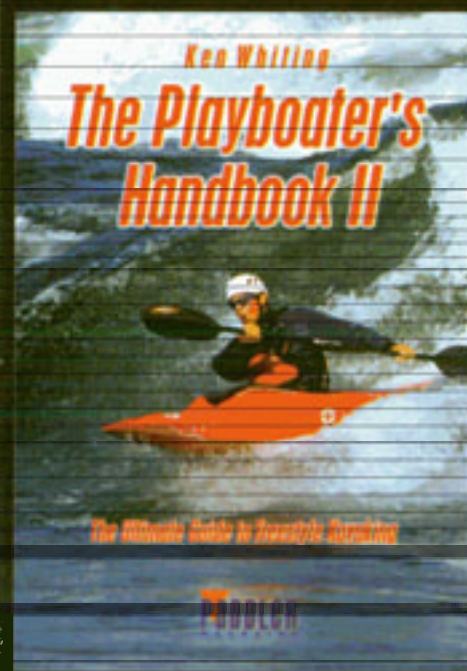
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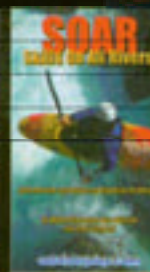
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Willie Keen on the Middle Fork of the Kings

Gus

The Search

I had learned that the Taureau was somewhere on the Jacques Cartier River and after digging around for a while in a dark corner of my paddling club's office I came across some maps of Le Parc National du Jacques Cartier. It seemed like the topo lines were pointing to a remote section of the River in the north end of the park. From the map it was unclear how one would access the put-in, but the take-out looked easy to find.

Not long after that I was up at the Tewksbury section of the JC for a weekend of paddling. After we had finished our run I managed to enlist some friends to join me in the search for the put-in to Le Taureau. Tim drove as we headed north towards the National Park, quickly passing the southern entrance. We continued north, further away from the small Quebec towns and into a wilder region where there were few roads leading off from the highway. We drove for a while, turned around, drove some more, tried a couple of different dirt roads, but to no avail. My enlisted help was getting a bit frustrated, but they agreed to try one more dirt road.

The road we chose was narrow and poorly maintained, alternating between washboard and bedrock outcrops with big loose rocks. We drove for about 20 minutes, winding back and forth, seeing no sign of the Jacques. Then we came to some old gravel pits where a number of old shanty camps were set up, all long abandoned. Off to the right of the road was the Jacques Cartier, meandering serenely through the forest. I was ecstatic! But to my dismay there was no whitewater in sight. I assumed it was the put-in, but wanted to see some burl for confirmation. We decided to try driving a little further.

We started along the road again and as we came around a corner we startled a bear and it bounded off into the forest. Most of us had never seen a bear, and this chance meeting made us realize just how isolated the Taureau really was. We continued on a short way until the road became unpassable. Tim and I abandoned the car and set off on foot. It was a little scary knowing we had just spooked a bear, but the lure of finding the elusive gorge was stronger. The road continued for a while, but seemed to lead away from the heart of the valley. We tromped off into the woods a few times trying to find the river but to no avail. Eventually the trail petered out. We headed back as darkness began to set in, running to stay ahead of the mosquitoes.

I returned home excited and determined. The myth was real! We had found Le Taureau... now we HAD to run it. Most of my paddling buddies wanted nothing to do with the adventure, but the three regulars: Mike, Tim, and Colin, were in.

We quickly gathered as much information on the run as we could find. Most importantly, we learned that there were no mandatory portages and no unportageable drops. Our appetites were sufficiently whetted.

continued next page ►



Taking a Hit on the Taureau

Story and photos by
Jolyon Rivoir-Pruszinski

How I first heard about the Taureau I can't quite remember. What I do remember is that I was intrigued by the mystery of it. I knew no one who had run it, but almost everyone who had heard of it had something vague and scary to say. A Class V run, hidden away in the Quebecois wilderness, fifteen miles long, inaccessible along its whole length, and runnable all summer. Regardless of the stories, even the facts made it seem like a Northeastern boater's fairy tale. In a region known for its short runoff season and shorter steep-creek runs it seemed almost impossible. I had spent every summer of my college years scouring the landscape for a summertime runnable drop, or driving hours and hours to the big-water runs. I wanted to believe the legend more than anything, and I wanted to find this mythic run.



Page 45: Mike cleans the sieve ledge.
Left: Mike on the ledge above the sieve.
Below: The sieve and the first ledge.

The Set-Up

We packed up the creekboats and headed up on a Friday afternoon in August. We had food, breakdowns, rescue gear, maps, experience, low water, and good weather. We had it all, and we were psyched. We even had a backup crew coming up Saturday to ensure someone would come after us should we, heaven forbid, need rescue.

We got to the Tewksbury section at 6 pm, about an hour before sunset. In the parking lot we met a nice Quebecois fellow sporting a shiny Riot getup. We asked him about the level at the Taureau and he replied, in broken English, "Le Taureau? I think... there are... too many rocks." We assumed that he meant it was too low, but we decided to shrug it off until it was a real issue. We put on to the 4-mile Tewksbury run for a quick warm-up.

We flew down the run, boat-scouting quickly in the fading light. It was low, but fun, and easy Class IV creeking if you took the hard lines. We were all watching each other closely, looking for clues about mental state, physical state, comfort level in the boats etc. We were right on line, boofing big, and feeling good.

When we got to the end of the run it was dark but we felt suitably prepared. We cooked a quick pasta dinner on the side of the road and scarfed it. We then headed north into the Park. We drove over the Cachée, the Sautauriski, and other J-C tribs as we cruised the road along the river. Soon the road turned to gravel and its condition deteriorated. We drove for what seemed like forever, working our way to the furthest point upstream we could get to. Finally we got to the end of the road and a dirt parking lot shortly after 10 pm. I walked down to the river to take a look at our take-out. All I could see was placid flatwater in front of me, and all I could hear was the roar of rapids upstream. We loaded all the gear into Tim's Jeep and headed back out to the put-in.

The shuttle for the Taureau is very long. We drove for more than two hours before we found our way back to the secluded spot we had discovered earlier in the summer. As we piled out of the car all we could think of was getting the

tent set up and getting some sleep. We weren't in bed until 1 am, A bit late considering the long day we were planning. Before I got into the tent I looked up at the night sky. It was amazingly clear and the stars shone incredibly brightly. Again I was reminded of how far out we were. Then I crawled into my sleeping bag to take as much rest as my nerves would allow.

Crescendo

We rolled out of bed reluctantly at 7 am. I felt tired. Not a good sign. We cooked up some oatmeal and hot Tang as we packed up the car. I tried to eat as much as I could, knowing that I wouldn't be getting very much nourishment again until that evening. Unfortunately the oatmeal just didn't go down very easily and I stared for a while at what remained of the congealing lump. It felt chilly from the clear skies and the late summer weather, but we all knew it would heat up later. We each donned shorts and some kind of light top. Hike and I took the breakdown paddles and some rescue gear. I threw some Swedish fish into my pin kit for good measure. Colin took the lunch and his rescue gear. Tim took his rescue gear and some other odds and ends. We each had a **headlamp** that we were hoping to leave unused. We got on the river at 8 am.

We knew that some serious Class V lay between the **flat-water** put-in and the flatwater take-out, and we assumed that it would make up the bulk of the 15 miles of river. I must admit that we were a bit concerned about getting trapped on the river with no daylight left and had talked about how to avoid finishing in the dark. The plan was to move swiftly through boogie-water and boat-scoutable drops. If a scout were required we would spend no more than a minute or two looking before running or portaging.



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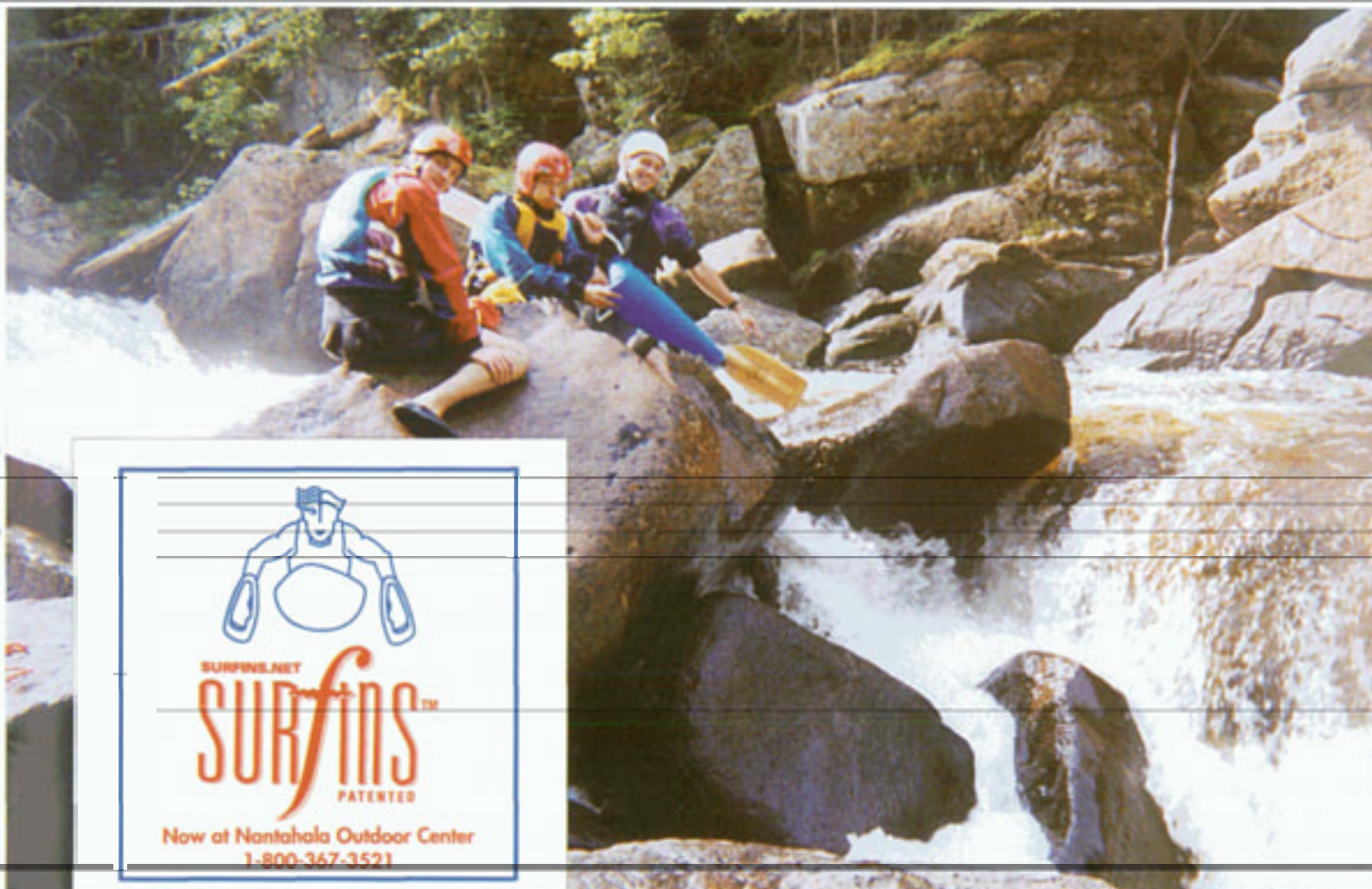


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Tim, Mike, and Colin making light of the situation.

If in doubt, portage. That was it. We had no time to ponder, no time to waste... only to do.

The first few miles provided a good warm up, gradually moving from flatwater up to easy Class IV rapids. Colin was leading and catching a few eddies. I was behind him. Mike was behind me, and Tim was bringing up the back. I could tell that Colin was trying to push himself, deciding on a line as he committed to each drop. It felt like we had zipped through the first few miles. I was feeling good. The weather was incredible. The Jacques was high enough to run, but low enough for good eddies. It was going to be sweet! Then river began to gorge up significantly as we got to the first big horizon line.

An old footbridge dangled above the entrance to the drop. It swayed in the wind, broken and rotting, and lent an eerie feel to the place. It told of times long past and plans left abandoned. We all pulled over to look quickly at the drop. Colin and I got out on the right, Mike and Tim on the left. The water squeezed through and over a tight boulder choke at the top and then funneled into bedrock as it approached the final plunge at the bottom. Total vertical drop was about 20 feet.

Colin decided on his line quickly and began to get in his boat. Tim asked him what his line was from the other side of the river. When Colin yelled it out, Tim gave him a big "no" signal. Tim had seen from river left that Colin's line would end with a boof onto rock. A technicality Colin had not seen from his cursory scout. I got in my boat to run the variation on Colin's line that landed left of the rock. I scraped down the entrance, paddled out to the right, careened down the rock

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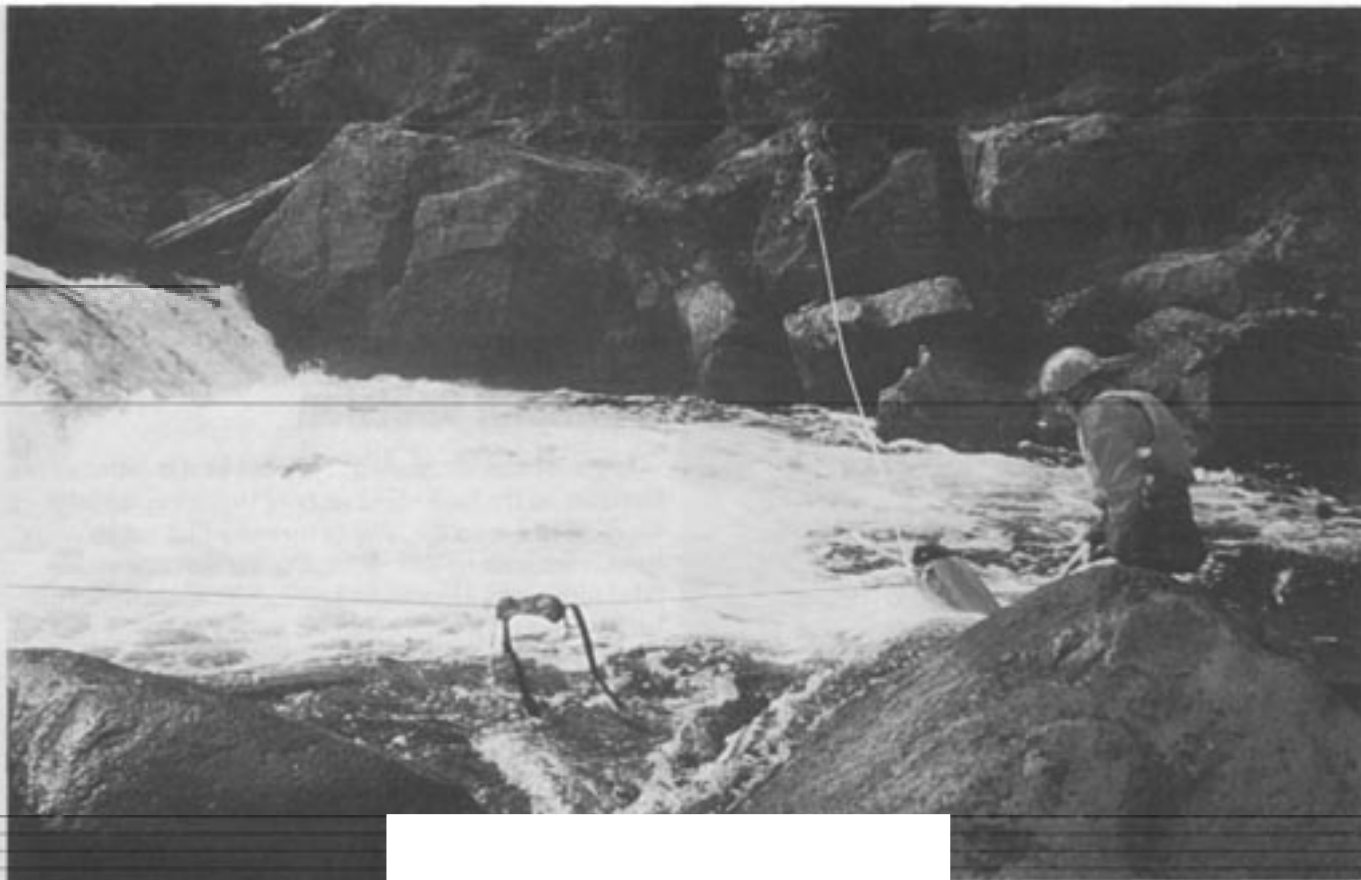
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ed out of the eddy. Pull, Pull, took a stroke on the curtain... ed through the hole. Pull, Pull, d took my last stroke on the left. like it wanted to fly. Boof! I le the fast runout to the last ie last stroke... Boof! I swung et out another whoop! It was in- It felt like this was shaping up to d had on a river. I felt like God ioned those moves just for us. I

ke photos, I heard the resound- s he landed the boofs. He got to ng up and echoed my joyful yell. ot photos of him as he plum- of the first ledge was obstructed m on the second ledge, framed by rcited. Colin was next. picture too. I saw his helmet as he dropped the first ledge, and igh the viewfinder. I watched the catch him mid-air. I peered in- low, trying to see him. No Colin. s. No Colin. Tim said, "Where is grey bow of the Micro 240 sud- slowly in the sieve on river

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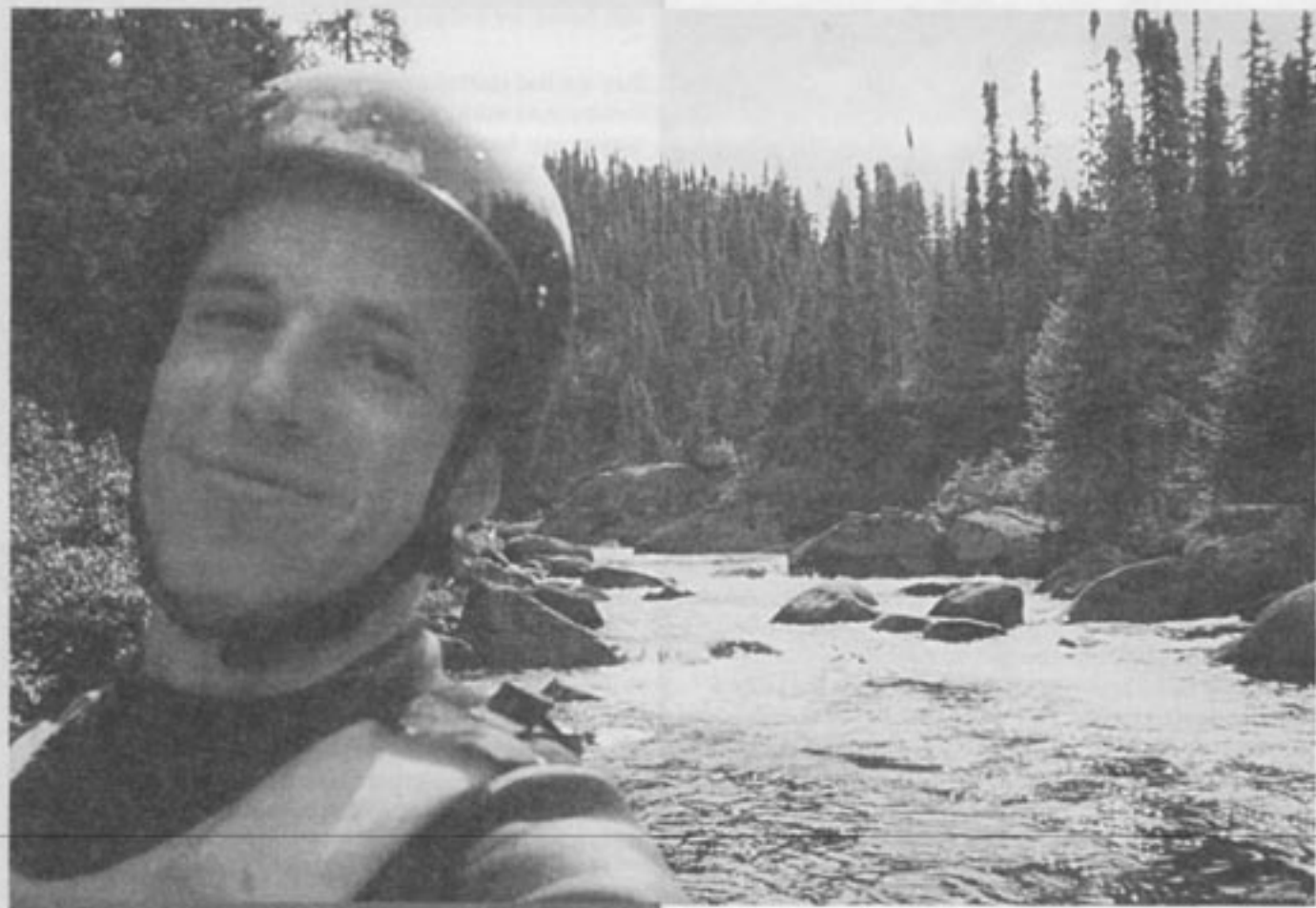


ried that he'd be swept under the sieve if he tried to swim out. Tim held him as he popped his skirt. As Colin wriggled out, his boat sunk deeper into the sieve until only about a foot of the bow was exposed. Tim pulled him up onto the sieve and we helped him over to the bank.

A Difficult Decision

Colin seemed ok. Shaken... yes, but ok. He collected his thoughts on the bank while we tried to retrieve his boat. We climbed out on the sieve to try and pull it out by hand... but with no luck. It felt like the boat had mostly filled with water when Colin bailed. Mike appeared on the left bank across the river with his throw bag, so we decided to throw the boat. We clipped two ropes to the bank. We yanked on those ropes for a while. We looked for a tree or a rock in the gorge there were no good trees were too weak, and the boat worked, the boat was sucked it was completely submerged. I didn't be getting it out. I tried from the downstream end to try and really to try anything to ameliorate it around in there for a while, but we used the float bag.





At this point another party arrived at the top of the drop and got out to scout. They shouted a hearty "Bonjour!" and started speaking in that special Quebecois brand of French that no amount of American-high-school-French-class prepares you for. Mike tried to explain that we had lost a boat in the sieve. They weren't really understanding until I shouted from across the river, "Le bateau est Là!" while pointing at the sieve. Then they understood the gravity of our situation.

Mike tried to ask about a way out, a trail, anything. Though they were familiar with the run, they didn't know of any trails. One of them explained in broken English that someone had walked out through the woods from a mile or two upstream of where we were, but that was all they knew. We decided not to bother them further, since they were also trying to move quickly through a very long and difficult run. They wished us well and were on their way.

After the locals had moved on, we decided to take a break and think about our options. Mike ferried over to river right where we were so we could all talk together and get up to speed. It turned out that Colin had underestimated the ledge hole in the first drop, gotten surfed, flipped, washed out, and rolled up into a tail-stand in the sieve (in a micro 240 no less). He had somewhat hyper-extended his knees during the rescue, so he was hurt but not too badly. He had his paddle, but we were down one boat. We were also down lunch, which was still neatly packed in his boat.

I pulled out the map to reconnoiter our location. We

The author giving up on the rest of them.

guessed we were about five miles into the run, based on the tributaries that had come in and the orientation of the gorge and surrounding landscape. I was still hoping we could finish the run. I thought that maybe we could continue while Colin walked along the banks. Mike took me aside and convinced me that Colin was pretty shaken and in no state to walk the 10 miles to the take-out alongside us (thankfully Mike is a more perceptive fellow than I at times).

Back in the group, we decided that if Colin were to walk back up to the car, one of us would have to go with him. That would leave only two boaters for the rest of the descent, and we all knew that two boaters was one too few for a run like this. Our only option was to abandon the run and get back to the car. We would all head back together. I have to admit that I was pretty bummed about bailing on such an incredible run, but I knew that we had to take care of Colin and make it back before dark. It was only 9:30 am, but we had already managed quite handily to get ourselves well out into the middle of nowhere.

continued next page ►



Matt, Danimal, and Brett give us a mixed reaction.

Through the Forest

We finally decided that we would try to find the roadtrail that Tim and I had hiked a couple weeks earlier. We hoisted the remaining boats up the cliff on river left and around the sieve drop and started slogging our way up to the ridge a few hundred feet above. From there we hoped to make out a direction to head in. As we trudged, we quickly realized that our progress would be exceedingly slow due to the fact that walking on the forest floor was not really possible. The soft carpet of pine needles was buried under a thick layer of downed, rotting trees and brush about four to six feet deep. In order to make forward progress we had to step from limb to limb and tree to tree well above the ground. A nasty array of sharp pokey sticks and logs lay waiting to impale us if we slipped.

On top of this difficulty were the bugs. Somehow during our descent of the river we had not noticed the bugs. But now that we were in the forest, sweating our brains out and moving at a snail's pace, they were painfully obvious. Swarms of black flies surrounded us as we trudged uphill. Each of us wished we were better covered despite the hot and sweaty work. My hands were bloodied every time I'd wipe my face.

After about 45 minutes of this we reached what seemed like the top of the canyon. We craned our necks to try to see a trail, but with no luck. We looked for a tree to climb from which to take a look. However, all the trees that remained standing were so badly rotted and without sturdy branches that it was impossible. We abandoned the boats and spread out to look for a viewpoint from which to see the trail, or anything. We got separated as we meandered through the deadfalls.

As we wandered, fear began to grip me. I became convinced that one of us would fall to serious injury if we kept this up. The difficult terrain was wearing me out, and I started to lose it. I was freaking out. I didn't think we could get back safely, traveling for hours through such thick deadfall. I yelled to the other guys that I was going back down to the river. They could tell I was freaked, and I think

they too had started wondering if heading off through the forest would work. We all tromped back down to the river, hurling our boats down the slope as we went. We found a gully with less deadfall than the surrounding areas and followed it back down to the Jacques.

Retreat Along the River

When we got back to the river we left the boats on the bank and soothed our bug bites in the cool water. We took turns hiding from the bugs underwater, hoping that when we resurfaced they would have given up their relentless pursuit. I spent several minutes at a time completely submerged, poking my mouth out of the pool just long enough for a quick breath.

After a while we got up the energy to leave the pool and make another attempt at retreat. It was already 11 am and we had not made any progress getting back to the car.

The gully we had bashed down to get back to the Jacques had deposited us at the foot of the first big drop, and our first task upon setting out again was to portage this rapid. Of course, the drop happened to be somewhat gorged up, necessitating some rock climbing in order to get around. The bugs had been alerted to our presence again and were swarming in ever increasing numbers. I dreaded what lay in store for us that afternoon.

As we headed up the river Colin did his best to stay on shore, but many times he was forced to wade or swim in order to proceed further. Mike, Tim, and I had adopted a paddle-wade-carry approach. Whenever possible we would attain while in our boats, or wade while dragging the floating boat behind. When these failed we would take to the rocks and shore, carrying the boat while keeping away from the thick underbrush as much as possible.

Few sections of the river were really attainable, as it was mostly made up of Class III and IV rapids. Rarely did I sit in the boat. Rarely was there a long enough stretch to paddle that it was worthwhile. More often we would shove off of rocks while using the boat like a sled or jump on the back of the boat to paddle for a quick move. Then we would jump back into the river or onto a rock to portage or wade when it was too shallow, powerful, or vertical to use the boat.

It was a draining exercise, and a disheartening one. The thick forest and undergrowth hemmed us in and kept us in the active river channel, which was often narrow or gorged. The water, tea-colored from the tannic acid of the forest, hid what lay beneath its surface. Nevertheless, we plowed through the river, smacking our shins and knees constantly. We threw ourselves onto rocks and into the current. We forced ourselves up eddies.

It might almost have been fun if we had not had to move so far so fast through clouds of bugs without food. There was almost a rhythm. Making moves that required deft transitions between sliding, leaping, swimming, wading, and paddling was challenging for sure, and gratifying to a degree. It certainly wasn't boring, but I could easily have fallen

asleep right there on any one of many uncomfortable rocks.

The afternoon was quickly passing away while we toiled against the powerful team of water and gravity. Eventually a gentle breeze began to blow as we rose up out of the gorge. This resulted in a welcome respite from the seemingly tireless and insatiable bugs. We were encouraged a bit and pressed on. However as we continued the wind died away again and the bugs returned.

Our muscles had begun to ache, and our limbs had ceased to do exactly what we asked. Colin and Tim were showing definite signs of fatigue and Mike would have if his determination to get to the car hadn't been so strong. It was nearing 5 pm. We had drunk most of our water and had not eaten since early that morning. Our situation was really starting to feel dire. It was then that I realized what I should have thought of earlier. The Swedish Fish! They were still in my rescue kit!

We broke out those little lumps of sugary refuge and devoured them in seconds. Our spirits were immediately improved. We had no clue how much further along our unconventional path we had to continue, but we were encouraged to endure with strength. We pressed onward and upward with new resolve and were pleased to find the difficulty of the rapids decreasing. This spurred us on even further despite pain and exhaustion.

However, as the shadows lengthened the rapids seemed to go on and on. Our spirits fell again as it appeared we would not finish before dark. Then, as the sun sank lower in the sky we were revived again as we came to a pool that had no rapids at its head. We had finally reached the flatwater section! None of us could remember exactly how long we had paddled the flatwater at the beginning, but it hadn't been too long. Unfortunately, the deep pools and encroaching vegetation made progress very hard for Colin. We tried towing him but it didn't work too well.

As we rounded the first major bend in the flatwater we came upon an old road off to river left. It was a bit grown over but was still obviously frequented by fishermen. We debated about whether to make our last dash to the car along the river or by the road. We decided that though the flatwater would be easy enough for the boats to negotiate, Colin would be screwed. So we left the boats by the river and began hiking back to the car. Thankfully the car was only a short walk away along the old grassy road.

Before we reached Tim's Jeep, another car came bumping down the little road to meet us. It was driven by one of the Quebecois boaters who we had passed much earlier in the day. The amiable fellow had come looking for us to make sure we were alright. Though thankful that he had been so concerned, we were more thankful that we had made it out in time to see him and avoid a rescue squad entanglement. We all agreed he had earned a good name for "Crazy Quebecois Bastards" everywhere.

When we got to the car we changed and piled in to drive back to the boats. We bumped down the little road as

the sun was setting behind the trees. It was about 7:30 pm and we were exhausted. We hauled the remaining boats up from the river and loaded them up. Then we said goodbye to Le Taureau, peeled out, and drove back towards the highway under the quickly gathering darkness.

After a long and uncomfortable ride we made it to the take-out where Mike's van was waiting. Then we drove, fighting sleep, back to the Tewksbury put-in where we were to meet our friends. We pulled in, threw up the tents, ate some pasta, and finally passed out of consciousness.

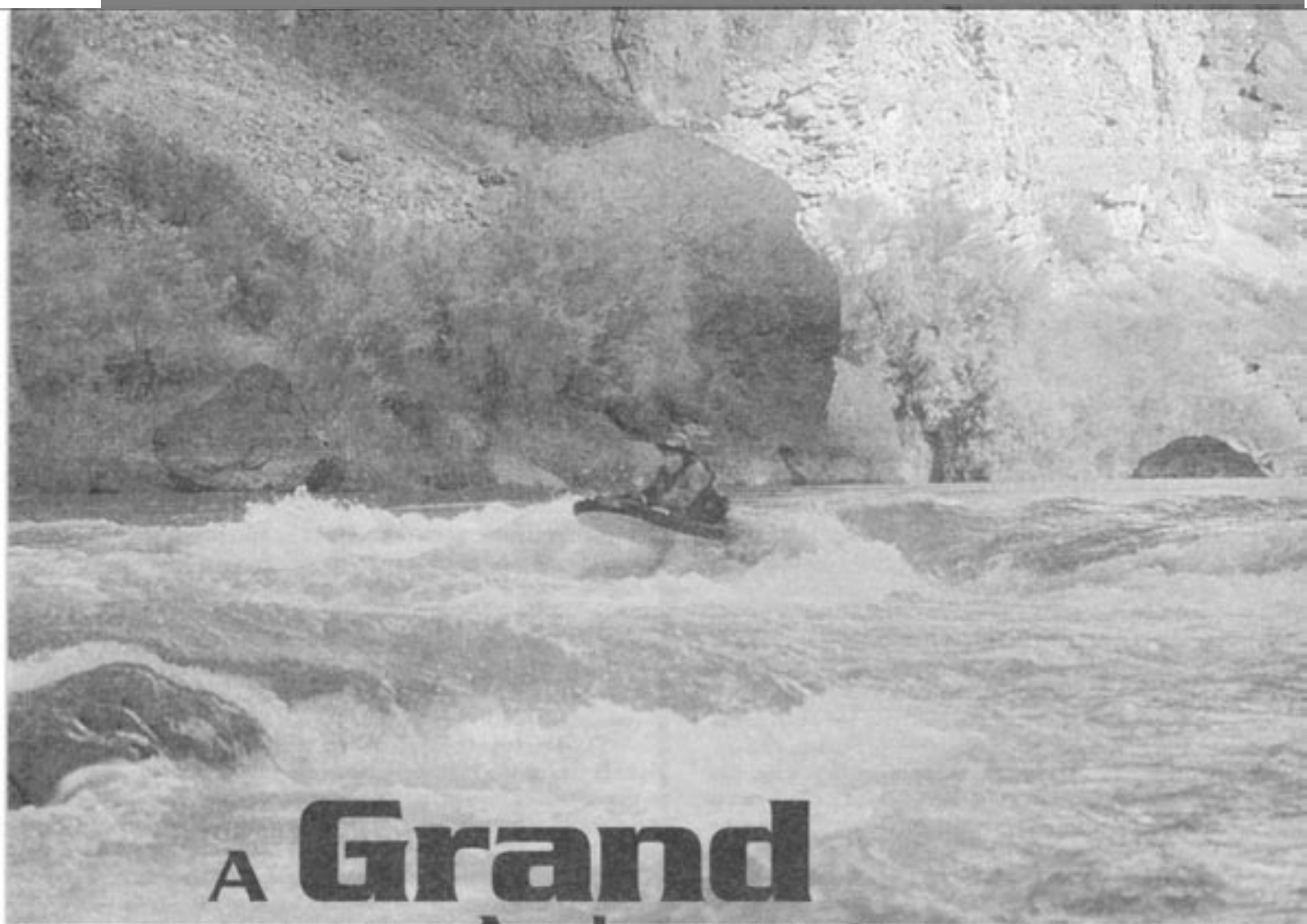
The Next Day

In the morning we were awakened by our friends as they checked to make sure we were all still alive. They had seen that only 3 boats remained from our little expedition and they were a bit concerned. When we told them what had happened we were met with an interesting and mixed reaction. Some showed a bit of disapproval for losing a boat, but mainly they were very glad to see us all in one piece.

We rolled out of bed just in time to join them for a quick run on the Tewksbury section. I've never been so thankful to be headed DOWNSTREAM on a river. The weather was beautiful and the whitewater so pleasant that I began to forget our troubles of the previous day. The cool, clear water soothed my bruises and bites and without a sound our heinous retreat began to slip quietly into a corner of my mind. At the same time all of the superlative qualities that had drawn me to the run came back into focus. So did the feeling of exuberance that had been welling up inside of me just before our little mishap. ■



Glad to be headed home.



A Grand Adventure

By Ambrose Tuscano

Imagine yourself on a river. Not so hard, right? Now imagine that it's a big river, pulsing with the force of more than 15,000 cubic feet per second. The distant banks rise high above the edges of your peripheral vision, but for the moment your focus is straight ahead, where monstrous waves mark the entrance to a colossal rapid. You think you see an opening between the crests of two surging waves, so you begin your move . . . and suddenly you realize that there's no paddle in your hands. In fact, there's no boat around you either. Your only lifeline in this vortex of exploding whitewater is a four by two foot piece of Styrofoam.



Actually, the situation is not all that bad—especially if you're anything like Julie Munger, Kelly Kalafatic and Rebecca Rusch. These three superwomen tackled all 295 miles of the Grand Canyon atop Carlson river boards. Oh, and did I mention that they did it in December?

November 25, 2001, the three women and some supporters (including Munger's father) arrived at Lee's Ferry, the conventional Grand Canyon put-in. To do the Canyon properly, they decided that they would need to start 15 miles upstream, at the base of the Glen Canyon Dam. The boat ride upriver was emotional for Munger's father whose prior experience on this stretch had been in 1959, as part of a Sierra Club trip to protest the damming of Glen Canyon. Unfortunately for the intrepid riverboarders, the journey back to Lee's Ferry was so demanding that all nostalgia was washed away. The five-hour float was both slower and colder than anyone had planned.

The first concern about speed was a real one given the limited gear that they could carry. Munger, a Grand Canyon raft guide in warmer months, had cached supplies at points along the Colorado that she calculated to be approximately three days apart. If they could not cover a specified number of miles per day, they could, quite literally, run out of food. The second concern, however, was more immediate. Kalafatic had rented dry suits for herself and Rusch from a dive shop. She was assured that they were fully waterproof, but the first day's experience



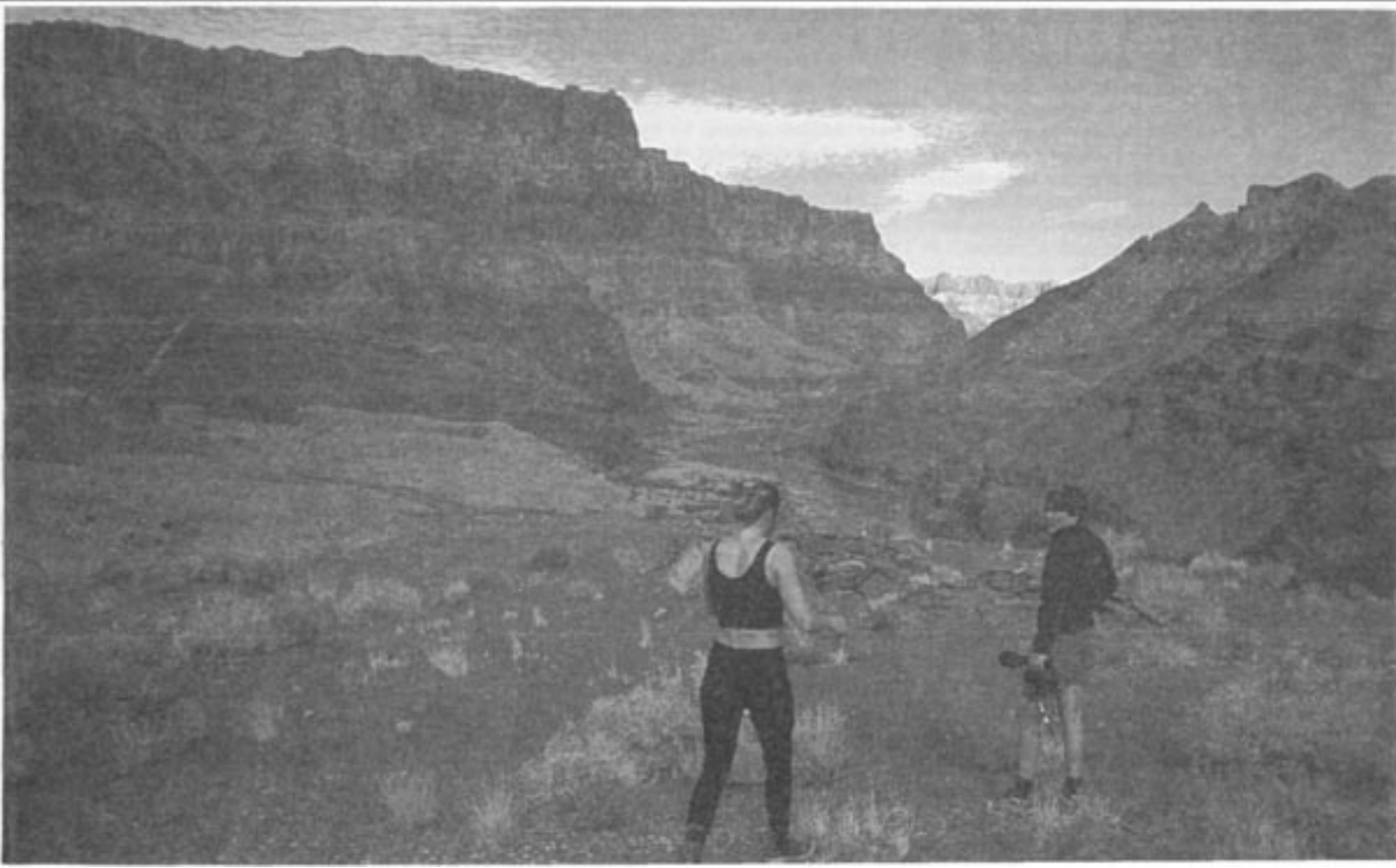
proved that claim a lie. Rusch finished the day with several gallons of frigid water inside her suit, while Kalafatic's leaked nearly as bad. With the high temperatures peaking around 50 degrees, and the water a steady 48 degrees, leaky drysuits were an intolerable burden.

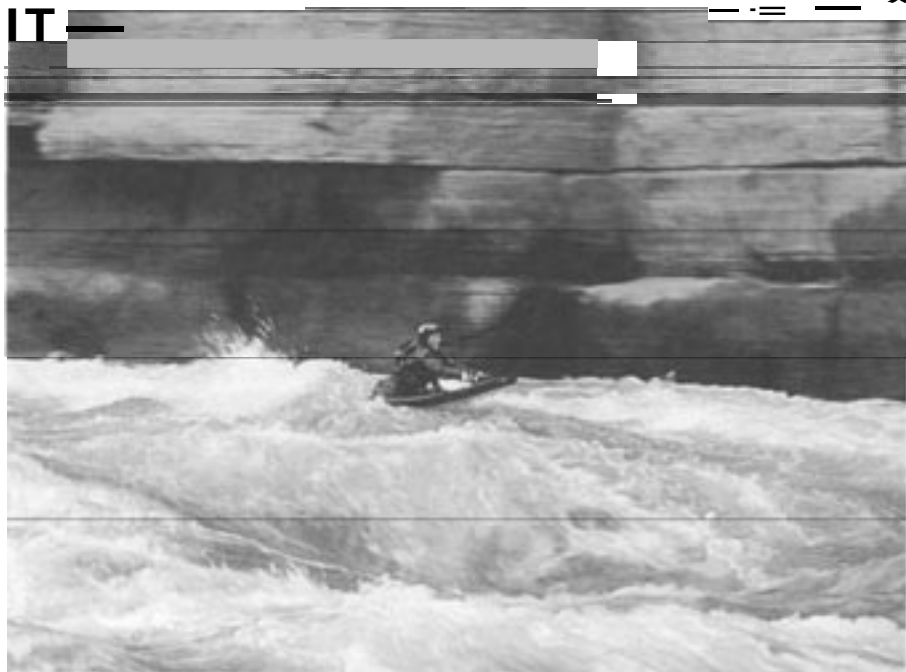
When the group pulled in at Lee's Ferry that evening well after dark, they faced some difficult decisions. Rebecca Rusch voiced the possibility that had to be on everyone's mind: termination of the trip. However, Julie Munger, the trip leader, had been through

too much to let it all end in the face of such small obstacles. One year earlier, she, Kelly Kalafatic and another companion had arrived at Lee's Ferry with permit and riverboards in hand, only to be denied access by the rangers on duty. The rangers claimed that the women were attempting to "swim" the river, an activity strictly prohibited by park rules.

Munger devoted a tremendous amount of time and energy to a 100-page document which she presented to the Park. The proposal showed, among other things, the potential uses of riverboards and the group's ability to carry all equipment required of Grand Canyon parties. Remarkably, after less than a year of pursuing the proper bureaucratic channels, Munger was informed that the trip would be allowed to proceed.

Back at Lee's Ferry, the group was working at a frantic pace. It was the 26th of November, and they had only one day to overcome a logistical nightmare. After a number of emergency phone calls, NRS came through, over-nighting them materials that would make their spare dry suits leakproof. The package would arrive the same day that they were to put on the river, so friends volunteered to hike it into their first night's campsite. As a temporary fix, Rusch and Kalafatic wore their spare dry suits under the rental suits for extra protection. However, their first day out from Lee's Ferry was uncomfortable for both, as the extra gear made every movement a hassle. Unfortunately they arrived at camp that night too





late to make any modifications to their dry suits, and so had to endure another day of the same discomfort.

Despite this setback, the group was winning small victories with each passing mile. This sense of progress, along with the exhilaration of navigating massive waves made the persistently cold river water a little more bearable. Munger, an experienced kayaker and longtime raft guide remembered feeling "so small, dropping into rapids on those little boards." Aside from causing feelings of insignificance, the lower vantage point in the water reduced the riverboarders' downstream vision. However, on the whole, the women found that maneuvering through rapids was easier than expected. Their consensus was that a riverboarder with swim fins could move side to side in the river better than a raft—perhaps almost as well as a kayak.

One point that became clear to all three was that using the riverboards as floatation for both their bodies and gear was a decided advantage over swimming un-aided. One of the most famous trips down the Grand Canyon was conducted in such a manner. In 1955, two brave and naïve young men decided that instead of purchasing an expensive boat to navigate the Canyon, they would simply swim it. Bill Beer later told the story of their extraordinary journey in a book. *We Swam the Grand Canyon: The True Story of a Cheap Vacation That Got a Little Out of Hand*, is a mind-boggling tale of misadventure and triumphant achievement.

Making camp the second night out from Lee's Ferry, Rusch and Kalafatic were finally able to spend the necessary time gluing extra pieces to their personal dry suits. After drying in what remained of the daytime heat, the suits were transformed into nearly watertight protection, complete with attached booties. The group settled into their evening routine that night, satisfied at having overcome their greatest obstacle to date. But even as they grew confident with success, a new and greater problem arose.

November 30th, the first day of dry riverboarding for Rusch and Kalafatic, was to turn ugly before its end. While the trio relaxed in camp that night, cooking the evening meal, a stove malfunctioned. The faulty fuel bottle sent gasoline shooting from its gasket which ignited into angry streaks. Before anyone could comprehend what was happening, Rebecca Rusch saw flames coming from her down jacket. As soon as they helped her extinguish the flaming arm, the other two began to move everything within range of the rogue stove, including a food bag which had been set ablaze.

A minute later the excitement was over and the damage had to be assessed. Besides the stove, no gear was beyond repair. Rusch, however, was another matter. They found her at the river's edge with her burned arm plunged up to the elbow in the water. They were suddenly grateful for the water's efficiency at drawing heat out of living flesh. Even with immediate cooling, her arm did not look good. However, considering that it had recently been on fire, it could have been worse.

Rusch downed some whiskey as a general anesthetic, and eventually dozed off with her arm immersed in a bucket of frigid river

water. The next morning, everyone watched anxiously as she tested the hand for mobility and for pain. As she had earlier, when faced with the leaking drysuit, Rusch again weighed the possibility of hiking out. Perhaps believing that the river couldn't possibly dish out more suffering than she had already experienced, Rebecca Rusch decided to remain with the group for the remaining 200-plus miles. As the morning drew on they wrapped the burned hand with gauze, covered it with a surgical glove then a neoprene one, and hoped for the best. Fortunately for the entire party, the hand was not further aggravated, though it continued to pain Rusch throughout the trip.

Another source of constant pain (if less intense than a second-degree burn) was the group's gear—first, how to carry it all, and second how to keep the darn stuff dry. The boarders knew that they would find no answers to these questions in existing guidebooks. Only their own trial and error would determine what works for self-contained riverboard trips. This much they knew before they began: the riverboard was not big enough for a person plus her gear. The solution was to bring a second board for each woman. The "gear board" could be loaded with drybags containing one person's equipment. The board would keep the bags from being constantly submerged in the river, thus reducing the chance of leaks. At least that's how it worked in theory. In reality, use of the gear boards was a bit more complex.

At first, gear bags were attached to the board any old way, usually piled roughly in the middle. However, leaving the eddy at Lee's Ferry all three gear boards immediately rolled upside down, signaling the beginning of an unwanted learning experience. After serious trouble keeping the gear boards upright for the first few days, the group realized that some strategy was in order. By the time they reached Badger rapid, they had enough testing behind them to solve the problem. A low, wide load was the key to keeping the boards upright. With this theory in hand, they found the additional boards to be much less of a liability in the whitewater.

Of course, any veteran of a Grand Canyon trip must realize by now that the real miracle of the gear board wasn't that the three women managed to keep them upright, but that they managed to keep them from sinking. Typical Canyon trips are supported by enormous oar-rigged rafts carrying thousands of pounds of equipment. Some of the heaviest items are the ones required by the National Park Service: a metal fire pan and all solid human waste generated on the journey. Before the riverboard trip was given the green light, the group had to demonstrate their ability to carry these items down the length of Marble and Grand Canyons. Their fire pan was a smaller version of those commonly used in the Canyon; the solid waste receptacles were made from plastic pipe, easily stowed in drybags. All told, each boarder carried between 80 and 100 pounds of gear apiece.



A Grand Adventure

The women were attached to their gear boards by lengths of floating rope, which were secured to their life jackets. The extra boards could be released quickly by pulling a pin on the life jacket. In smaller rapids they would remain beside their gear boards, high-siding them when they seemed in danger of rolling over. For larger rapids, the boarders would set the gear boards afloat to fend for themselves, collecting them in the pools at the bottom. The three biggest rapids, House Rock, Granite, and Lava, were the only ones where they chose to line their gear boards down the shore.

Lugging heavy gear boards behind them, the trio made poor time for the first four days out of Lee's Ferry. At the end of November, Glen Canyon Dam was releasing about 7,000 cfs, a low flow for the Grand Canyon. Despite kicking between four and five hours a day the women averaged only about 8 miles in the last days of November. Based on the distance between food caches, the group needed to average 13 miles a day in order for logistics to work. Concerned about their progress, the three women began to make painfully deliberate moves to increase their mileage. By 4 am the crew was awake, preparing for the coming day. They began their morning routine in the pre-dawn chill. By the time breakfast was eaten and camp broken, it was usually 7 am. The boarders would try to kick until early afternoon. Sometime between 3 and 5 pm they would set up camp, hoping to catch the winter sun's last rays deep in the Canyon.

On the first of December the group received what may have been their first break of the trip. Miles upstream, the Glen Canyon Dam began to release significantly higher flows. For the remainder of the journey, they would see between 10,000 and 17,000 cfs. This higher water volume reached the group at President Harding's Rapid, on the morning of December second. From that point on, they had little trouble meeting their daily mileage expectations.

Passing President Harding's must have been a relief for the group. It was the drop that turned out to be the most devastating to their predecessors, Beers and Daggett. During their 1955 expedition, John Daggett became pinned beneath the main feature of the rapid—a huge, undercut boulder. After spending perhaps half a minute underwater, Daggett won free, but not before cutting his head and laying one hand bare to the bone. While their whitewater experience was vastly superior to Beers and Daggett's, the women were all familiar with their tale, and undoubtedly wary of this spot. With the added maneuverability of riverboards, the trio easily won past President Harding's Rock and made their way downstream.

Three days after passing President Harding's, the group arrived at the traditional midway point of the Grand Canyon, Phantom Ranch. Here, they received their first taste of civilization after a week of soli-



tude. Their arrival caused a stir of curiosity amongst the tiny community of Park employees living at the bottom of the Bright Angel Trail. The women were warmly received at Phantom, particularly by the Park Rangers. Since the group was a day behind its schedule, some Rangers had undoubtedly begun to question the wisdom of the trip, and were relieved to find that they would not have to perform a winter rescue.

Leaving Phantom Ranch, the group faced perhaps their most rigorous day of whitewater. That day they kicked through famous drops like Granite, Hermite and Crystal. With the higher flows, the women must have felt even smaller and less significant amongst the giant waves and holes. However, they successfully navigated the rapids without incident. Their greatest resource in the whitewater was the experience of Julie Munger. As a Grand Canyon guide, Munger had come to know the river as well as anyone who navigate it. In addition to her familiarity with the river, her years as captain of the US Women's Whitewater Rafting Team speak for her proficiency at reading water. Even though she was able to point out the best lines from shore, all three women had difficulty keeping their bearing amidst the chaotic whitewater.

Fortunately the riverboards gave them a greater ability to make quick, last minute adjustments to their lines.

The second "half" of the Canyon presented far fewer surprises than the first. At this point they had resorted to cooking on their firepan, as the spare stove had also malfunctioned. Still, the group connected with the Grand Canyon as perhaps only Bill Beer and John Daggett before them had. Not only did they feel a rare solitude in the Canyon (passing only a single private raft trip), but they got to experience the river in a far more personal way than rafters or kayakers could. Munger remembered feeling the "the power and gentleness of the river all at once," as she floated through the rapids. At times the boarders' close proximity to the river made some drops more intimidating and confusing than they would have been in a boat. Despite these considerations, Rebecca Rusch felt safer on her riverboard.

As the miles drifted away, the trip began to feel less like pure survival and more akin to a regular Canyon journey. The group did some side hikes and even layed over for a day at Tuckup Creek. Of course, there were still the trials of cold water and air, but now the boarders knew that they were prepared to handle anything that the Colorado could dish out. Besides their improved confidence, the women were gaining physical immunity to the effects of cold water immersion. Instead of spending four hours on the water each day, they now kicked for closer to six.

On December 15th three women, and a handful of Watershed drybags floated into Pierce's Bay atop a half-dozen riverboards. After 19 days of seclusion, they probably no longer recognized how odd they looked as they dragged themselves from the water in Gortex and swim fins. After 295 miles of kicking they had accomplished something no other woman or man before them had.





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Death of a Local Hero



Charles Paul Horner
1969-2002

By Beezer Molton

On January 20th Charles Paul Horner of North Carolina was killed while paddling the Oyacachi River in Ecuador. The rapid that claimed his life was described by his companions to be Class IV and is found on the very first portion of the run. One companion compared the rapid to Corkscrew rapid on the Chattooga, but added that it did not seem as difficult. In the center of the rapid a large boof-able pillow formed over a prominent rock. Immediately downstream of this rock was an upturned slab. Much of the current passed underneath this slab, forming a sieve with a tapering outlet that left no room for escape. This sieve could not be seen while boat scouting and probably would not have been recognized from the riverbank. It apparently developed during recent floods and so was a new feature of the river.

After narrowly missing the boof, Paul flipped and pinned, with the force of the river flowing on to the bottom of his boat. Paul was unable to self-rescue and despite the best efforts of his two very capable companions he perished.

Once when my little brother was eight years old and craving anything to do with mountain biking, Paul packed up a pair of his old tired rock shocks and sent them, knowing my little brother was without. There was no letter or explanation, just this oft used quote:

*Broken bones heal
Pain is temporary
Chicks dig scars
Glory is forever.*

The words above were not really a creed of Paul's, just a funny thing to send an eager young friend. Ever ready with the well-timed quote, but generally using words sparingly, Paul loved the written word, and he fueled his passions with a voracious appetite for books. Paul and I became friends in the classrooms of the English department in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, in 1989. I think it was there in the pages of great literature that Paul's quest for adventure was born. World travel became a priority for Paul. In the next ten years Paul would visit China, Africa, Europe (five times), Costa Rica (twice), Chile, Brazil, and Ecuador (twice). As his taste for travel crystallized he realized that almost everywhere he wanted to go had either rivers or surf.

Paul was a gifted athlete who set high standards for himself. This necessitated strenuous daily exercise. In addition to paddling and surfing, Paul was an accomplished aerobic athlete. For three consecutive years after college he ran the Cooper River Bridge Run (10k) in about 37 minutes, once posting a time of 36:17, even though

Photo by Cefeste Jorge

Death of a Local Hero

he had been out most of the night before celebrating with old friends. In 1999 he ran the NYC marathon in 3 hrs 2 minutes. Shortly after that run, Paul dropped all other sports and focused on kayaking. During the next year Paul treated paddling like a job. He had a strong work ethic; he trained and sought education, and he had specific targets for improvement. Kayaking was his love, and it perfectly mirrored his disdain for the commercial world. The Narrows of the Green became his own personal training ground and refuge. At times the Green must have seemed an indifferent but exquisite lover, for, as some of you know, the challenges there are impressive.

Paul, some other college friends and I started paddling together in 1994, on the more forgiving rivers of western NC. Paul's skills soon progressed past most of ours. He became passionate about paddling during early trips to the Chattooga River in western South Carolina. During those early years Section IV of the Chattooga troubled our dreams and kept us talking, analyzing, and bonding.

Kayaking was at its very best for Paul midway through the Five Falls of Section IV, where the world drops away and everyone's goal becomes making it to the lake safely. Pure joy, fear and success all lurked in the missed and the nailed lines of those legendary drops. Good friendships turned to gold in the passage of that descent, for the Chattooga demanded selfless observation and care of your fellows. The reward of the run was the two-mile paddle out on Lake Tugaloo. Many kayakers complained about it, but Paul taught us that it was an earned honor, another opportunity to savor the splendor upstream before reentering the "real" world at the boat ramp.

In 1997, Paul moved to New York City where he and his brother ran a successful family business. He took full advantage of his new home and traveled to most of the rivers in the Northeast, developing a particular fondness for the Yough, the Moose, the Deerfield, and the Gauley, all within an afternoon's drive of the city. Paul often traveled solo. The open road was his friend, and these drives provided a perfect

time to listen to all the great music that he somehow seemed to find before everyone else. He had a perceptive ear, and managed to keep legions of friends musically in the know. Whether it was Radiohead or Lucinda Williams, Ryan Adams or Sublime, Paul's passion for tunes was a gift to us all.

But living in New York City with a full time job had limitations, and late in the winter of last year Paul tactfully exited the business and left New York for Asheville, and the loving arms of the Appalachia. He found a perfect little log cabin, with really good acoustics, a wood stove, and a beautiful view of Mt. Pisgah. This would become home base for his daily paddling forays, mostly to the Narrows of the Green River.

In the late spring of 2001 he took an extended road trip with some Green River brethren to Colorado. Together they paddled Gore Canyon, the Animas, and the Big South, but on the day that everyone was to paddle the Vallecito Paul decided to pass. Careful and methodical, Paul had been trained in swift water rescue, had received his Wilderness First Responder, and set his own limits. Later that summer at a paddling movie premiere and party in Greenville, South Carolina Paul would howl in regret at the footage of the Vallecito.

In November of 2001 Paul summed up his situation in an e-mail to a friend living in L.A.:

I no longer live in Asheville. I didn't even move, I just found myself in Pleasantville, where it is 65 and sunny everyday, cold enough for a fiveat night and it NEVER rains. Rain is a good thing you see, forthose rivers. Fortunately we have the Green 45 minutes away. It is a stunning steep Creek that has a hydro plant at the top, so it runs almost every day. And I am there almost every day. I have run it about 60 times since I moved here, and I finally screwed it down and ran Gorilla the other day, after portaging it about 50 times. It is a super technical 25-foot waterfall that lands in about a foot of water and it keeps lots of people around here up at night. So while y'all are making movies, getting hitched, and having babies, that is my accomplishment of the season.

So my life here is quite simple. I kayak daily, hang out and drink really dark beer with local misfits some nights, but most often cook dinner and read by the fire. This is the perfect base camp for me. I can run a Class V river, get in a quality two-hour mountain bike ride and be home by 4. There is a great crowd, good music and the smaller town thing seems to suit me well.

Right now I am digging on The Strokes and typing after a day on the Green. I am going to spend the first three months of 2002 in Ecuador, so bring that noise on down south.

In every respect Paul will be a tough act to follow. He leaves behind a soulful legacy of discernment. He despised television and fast food, never listened to commercial radio, and was generally suspicious of the corporate world. But Paul was never self-righteous or prudish. He loved to challenge himself and found every aspect of life worth examining. Descending rivers with close friends became a spiritual calling and a pursuit that he found to be true.

His death is not to be compared with those of the inexperienced or the foolish, nor was it the result of a dreadful miscalculation brought on by a driving ego. Paul was simply pursuing his dream and it delivered him to this place, a beautiful jungle river in rural South America and the company of friends. He died a hero's death.



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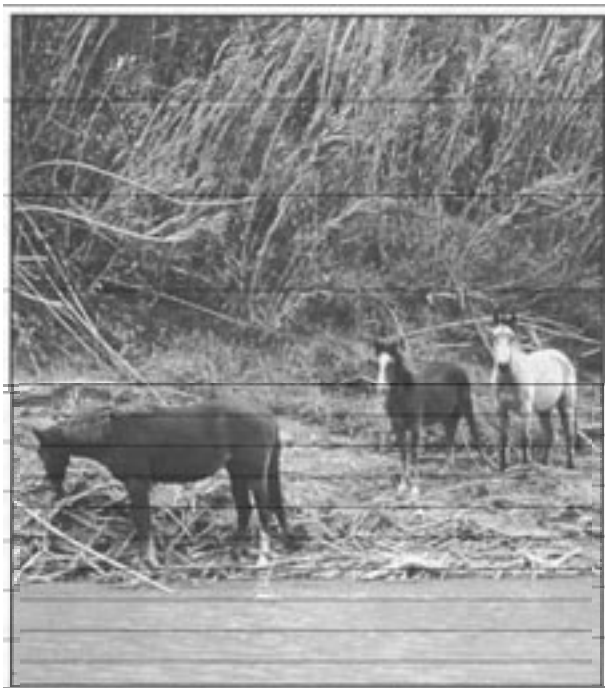
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The Lower Canyons

THE SNIPER & THE STALLION

By W. Scott Morris



The horses of Big Bend

Firearms are rarely found on anyone's list of paddle gear, but there are times when boaters think about packing a gun. This often becomes an issue when planning remote trips on unfamiliar rivers, especially in country inhabited by large predators or hostile locals, and particularly when travelling alone or in a very small group.

Carrying a gun, however, introduces a host of potential safety and legal problems. And there is the question of whether a gun would actually do any good if you were attacked. Lots of boaters have strong opinions on this issue but, as far as I know, there have been no documented cases of any armed recreational boaters being attacked on the river; so it is hard to predict what might actually happen. If someone was shooting at you in your boat, or if a large animal attacked you in camp, would having a gun really help? Perhaps the story of what happened to me many years ago on the Mexican boarder will shed some light on this issue.

In early December, 1983, I put-in on the Rio Grande, at Rio Grande Village in Big Bend National Park, Texas. My plan was to boat through Boquillas Canyon and the Lower Canyons to the take-out at Dryden Crossing, 115 miles downstream. I had a small borrowed raft with a rowing frame, camping gear, and food. I also had packed a nine millimeter pistol where I could reach it in a hurry.

I had been reluctant to take the gun, because I had never

THE SNIPER & THE STALLION



The Village of Boquillas, Mexico. Moments after this photo was taken, a sniper opened fire from the area on the right side of the picture.

wanted or needed a weapon on wilderness trips before. And, although I was familiar with guns and a fair shot, my interests were in freedom and adventure, not warfare. Furthermore, handguns are illegal in national parks, and very illegal in Mexico (river right). On the other hand, I had been to Big Bend before and had heard several stories of rafters and kayakers being shot at from the Mexican side. No one had

been killed yet, but people were worried and I was pointedly warned. So along came the pistol. Whatever else might happen to me, at least I would not become the proverbial sitting duck.

A couple of miles below the put-in is a village on the Mexican side known as Boquillas. A variety of run-down adobe and stone buildings lay scattered above the right bank. Someone had recommended a stop here. Cold beer was available and, for a couple of bucks, you could get your picture taken sitting on a donkey. But my plan was a loftier one, to leave civilization far behind as soon as possible.

As I neared the first buildings, however, a gunshot exploded from up on the right bank. The bullet, passing 20 feet in front of my boat, ricocheted off the rocks of the left shore and tore through the cane which lined the river. Trouble!

I stopped rowing and scanned the right bank. Whoever was shooting was invisible, hiding in the rocks or vegetation near the first building. I leaned over and gently opened an ammo box that held the pistol, but didn't pick it up. Another shot rang out, tearing into the river only ten feet in front of me. I studied the right bank hoping to see some telltale movement, anything that might offer a target. But the gunman was well hidden.

Pow! Another shot, this time right over the bow. It was so close I could hear the whiz of the tumbling bullet as it screamed past. My mouth started to go dry as I realized that, despite my pistol, I was still very much a sitting duck. I could shoot back in the general direction of the sniper, but I had no hope of hitting him. In fact it might give him the excuse he needed to kill me.

ZZZZing! Another bullet tore through the air like an angry wasp only four feet in front of my face. Should I jump overboard? I could float with the boat between me and the sniper for protection. Good idea. But I couldn't make myself do it. Anger was running neck to neck with fear and I wanted to fight back, not run and hide.

The pattern of the shots led me to believe that the gunman was trying to scare me, not kill me, and the bullets sounded like they were coming from a cheap 22 caliber rifle. Probably a teenager trying to terrify a gringo. I resolved to hang tight and act unconcerned. I wouldn't give this spineless bastard the satisfaction of scaring me out of my boat. Let him shoot up the air all he wanted. But I also decided that if any of his bullets hit me or the raft I would row quickly to shore, hunt him down, and kill him.

Pop-whizz! Only three feet from my head. I hate this! I was almost abreast of a rocky point which would offer me protection from this unspeakable piece of slime, and I knew he would only have time for one or two more shots. Two shots it was, both so close that if I had

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THE SNIPER & THE STALLION

stuck my hand up in front of my face, the bullets would have gone right through it.

As I rounded the point the shooting stopped, but I couldn't relax. I was boiling with fear and rage. I drifted down the river, uncertain if the gunman would follow.

Just downstream some locals were doing their laundry in a hot spring by the river and their presence may have prevented more shooting. In any case, I was able to continue downstream unmolested, but badly shaken.

Within a few minutes the fear started to subside, leaving outrage and anger. I considered landing on the U.S. side and walking back to the ranger station to report this incident, but I suspected that there was little the rangers could do, except to delay or cancel my trip. While I was considering my options, the river swept me into the entrance of Boquillas Canyon, a vertical slot with no trails and no easy way to get back upstream.

The next few days slipped by quietly as I drifted through a deep rugged canyon. Steep cliffs rose a thousand feet above the canyon floor, parading the power and persistence of this ancient river. But despite my love for such wild and spectacular places I found it hard to enjoy myself. The incident with the sniper had soured my mood. Instead of basking in the raw beauty of this place, I found myself constantly scanning my surroundings for any sign of trouble. Any unusual rustling of the cane or glint of unnatural color triggered a barrage of defensive thoughts. Where to hide? Where was my gun? I kept a particularly sharp watch on the canyon rim. It didn't take much imagination to realize how vulnerable I was. Given enough malice even a child could kill me with a few large rocks. Perhaps I should have stayed at home to help with the Christmas decorations. I chose my campsites carefully and slept with my pistol.

The fourth day found me rowing through the Black Gap, an open area between Boquillas Canyon and the Lower Canyons. The river banks here were sand and mud which supported a dense interwoven thicket of cane. It was virtually impossible to penetrate this living fence, which sometimes went on for miles on both sides.

The current here was slow and it proved difficult to make my targeted twelve miles on each of these short winter days. As the sun set behind me, I was still rowing between endless walls of cane. Finally, just as it was getting dark, I saw a small gap in the cane on river left and landed to explore.

It was an animal trail paved with fresh hoof prints of the feral horses that are common here. I had already seen several on this trip. The trail would do nicely for a bivouac. And another trail I spotted downstream would provide an alternate route to the river for the horses. I started my little gas stove to boil water as I prepared a simple camp. Although cold, the night was clear so I didn't need a tent. A wide place, where I could lie crosswise to the trail, made a good sleeping spot. As I spread out my bedding, a blur of faded white moved toward me, a ghost in the gathering night.

It was a horse, an impressive white stallion, walking straight toward me. Behind him, about 100 feet back in the desert, 3 mares stood shyly near some scraggly mesquite trees, all eyes on the stallion and me. The stallion kept coming, watching me carefully as I stood holding one end of the sleeping bag. He walked right up to the thicket of cane and stood at the end of the path staring at me.

"Sorry Big Boy" I explained "I know this is your trail and normally I wouldn't dream of camping here, but I am in a bit of a bind tonight and I'm afraid you are going to have to use the other trail, just for tonight. In the morning I will be gone." He just stared at me and started pawing at the ground, radiating machismo.

"Beat it!" I yelled suddenly and jumped at him. He leaped away, spun, and ran back into the desert. I went back to fixing my dinner with the horse on my mind. He appeared to be the local warlord, big, tough, and ready to kick the crap out of anything that got in his way. I was right to chase him off, I decided, he would just be trouble.

I was sitting on an ammo box finishing dinner when the horse returned. This time he came closer, into the trail, and stopped only 15 feet away. He whinnied, pawed at the ground, and moved a step

closer. He was getting antagonistic. I chased him away again and watched as he ran back into the desert. But he didn't run far. Only a hundred feet away he came to a stop and stared back at me, obviously giving serious thought to the idea of chasing me off his trail. But I was determined to defend my camp. I was cold, tired, and in no mood to play games with difficult animals.

He was about five times my size, true enough, but he did not have sharp teeth and he did not know how to throw rocks. I searched for some good throwing stones and then, with a pocketful of missiles, I wiggled backwards into the thick cane at the head of the trail to wait in ambush.

Sure enough, the stallion came back, walking quietly but with determination. As he got close he slowed down, stretched his neck, and peered into the dark empty trail. That's when I jumped him. I burst out of the cane like some insane savage, yelling and screaming. My first throw with an egg sized rock smacked into his ribs with a satisfying *thwack*. He jumped, snorted, and took off like a scared rabbit, pursued by more rocks and loud threats. As the galloping faded into the distance I assumed that the issue of who owned this trail for the night had been settled and went to bed. Big mistake.

In the middle of the night I awoke from a very deep sleep to find the stallion right on top of me. He was up on his hind legs clawing wildly at the air straight above my chest. The moon had come up and illuminated every twitching muscle on his chest and neck. Plumes of white fire blew out his nostrils as he cried out to his gods and his girlfriends to watch this final revenge.

I was terrified and instinctively tried to get out of the way, but I was zipped up tight in my mummy bag with only a small face hole, so I simply thrashed around without really getting anywhere. I tried to undo the zipper, but my right hand couldn't help because it was clenched around something. Then I realized that this something was



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THE SNIPER & THE STALLION



Boquillas Canyon

my gun, which I had been taking to bed by habit since the sniper incident. I pointed the weapon upward through the sleeping bag into the massive chest right above me. I could hardly miss. But what then? Suppose I did hit him, even kill him? Certainly he would fall on top of me; probably crush me to death.

I hesitated as he boxed with the moon, great hoofs tearing through the air like war clubs. Once he had the whole world's attention he would drop down and his hoofs would probably smash into my chest. I had visions of crawling across forty miles of desert with splintered ribs sticking out both sides.

Then I remembered something a friend had told me once, that a horse will never intentionally step on a person who is laying on the ground. I seriously doubted that this applied to angry wild stallions, but I knew I was about to find out. I couldn't move out of the way and the stallion was preparing for the coup de grace.

I screamed inwardly as he plunged downward for the kill. To my great amazement, however, he twisted left at the last possible moment and his front hoofs crashed hard into the ground, inches from my own feet. With a wild leap he kicked a whole bucketful of sand straight back into my face and bolted into the night.

I struggled with the sleeping bag, gasping and spitting sand. I had to let go of the gun to work the zipper. When I got the bag open and sat up, I looked up the trail just in time to see the stallion in the distance racing across the moonlit desert. His head was high and his mane flew like a victory banner.

I just sat there under the cold moon listening to my heart go Ka-boom, Ka-boom, Ka-boom. I took deep deliberate breaths and soon became mesmerized by the reassuring rhythm of my own body. Eventually I came out of this trance to find myself shivering under the moon. I got into my warmest clothes and did exercises to warm up as I made coffee. By dawn I was packed and ready to go, eager to

leave this battlefield behind. If the stallion's intent was to chase me away, he certainly succeeded. I felt lucky to be alive.

The next six days were more of the same, long periods of tranquility and great beauty punctuated by several other intense moments. By the time I reached the take-out I was ready to head home. I hadn't seen anyone at all in ten days and I was beginning to feel like the last survivor of the human race, scurrying down an endless crack in the earth while the gods kept trying to stomp me out.

The long drive home gave me a chance to reflect on the trip and my various adventures. I was not entirely happy with my passive response to the attacks of both the sniper and the stallion. But using my gun, which I had taken along to deal with such situations, clearly was not the answer. Both assaults were designed to scare me away, not kill me, and shooting would only have led to more serious problems. I resolved to leave the gun behind on future trips. I also thought more about ways to avoid hassles with people and animals; this started to make more sense than relying on my luck in mortal combat.

The confrontations with both the sniper and the stallion were clearly caused by territorial issues and each could have been avoided. There was another put-in below the village of Boquillas which I could have used, and there were campsites below the stallion's trail that I would have found with a little patience. I realized that the best protection from these attacks was simply more sensitivity to territorial issues and a willingness to go out of my way to avoid problems.

Since then I have done dozens and dozens of similar wilderness river trips, mostly solo. While I have had adventures of many kinds, I have never again been attacked by a human or large animal. And I have never again suffered from the illusion that a gun could protect me from such problems.



COSTA RICAN WHITEWATER A TURRIALBA SAMPLER

continued from page 40

river was running at a low to moderate level. We enjoyed the river, but did not find it particularly challenging. We drifted merrily along, boat scouting and playing; the river seemed friendly and almost gentle. The rains started that evening.

With each rainy day our paddling options became more limited. We managed to catch the Upper Pacuare and the Pejibaye just before they went too high. Then we spent a couple of rainy days at the beach in Cahuita. On the bus ride back to Turrialba we noticed that there were houses and banana trees careening down the Reventazon, which had turned into a monstrous muddy torrent. When we got back to Turrialba, we learned that mudslides and flash floods had closed several major highways. And we only had one day left to kayak.

The Reventazon, Upper Pacuare and Pejibaye were now out of the question. That left the Lower Pacuare as our only option. Based on our low water run we convinced ourselves that we could handle it, no matter how high it was running. Sure, we knew it would be big, but we thought it would be straightforward. That morning on our way to put-in we bumped into an old friend from the States, Phil Coleman, who owns Rainforest World in Turrialba. A veteran Class V West Virginia boater, Phil is no stranger to big, powerful water. When Phil heard what we were up to he looked more than a bit dubious. Phil told us that no one ran raft trips at such high water levels and that we had better be careful, particularly when the river rounded tight bends bounded by cliff walls. I remember him saying something about swirlies and hydraulics that could eat you alive.

The river at the put-in was an intimidating sight. The long sloping beach and parking area were buried under the deluge, which was lapping around the trees. We estimated that the water was at least ten vertical feet higher than on our previous visit. The flow was far beyond reasonable estimation. There were five of us boating that day and I think that if any one of us had balked at putting on, the rest of us would have gladly fallen suit. But no one did, so away we went. I realized that things were going to get intense after I backended in the first rapid, a Class III at normal levels.

Stuart Smith, a fearless Class V boater, who has written guidebooks to western Canada, had been staying at the same hotel and was part of our party. We all felt better when Stuart took the lead. We were moving down river with incredible speed. Huge waves exploded around us, and the eddy lines were vicious. Nevertheless, we fared well until we reached Upper Huacas, located well within the inner gorge. Suddenly Chris Buchanan, one of our new Canadian friends who was paddling a tiny rodeo boat, was swept into the maw of a monstrous mid river hydraulic. As I surged by the hole on the left I got a bird's eye view of Chris battling the monster. He was putting up one hell of a fight, but I honestly wondered if he would make it out of the hole alive. The rest

of us caught a boiling eddy downstream and anxiously hoped for the best.

After at least a minute Chris's spray skirt popped and his boat swamped and surged out of the hole. Now Chris, who looked pretty beat, was out of his kayak, in the middle of the torrent and being swept downstream toward what we all knew would be the ultimate nightmare, Lower Huacas. Somehow we managed to nudge Chris onto the river right shore just above the maelstrom. Once Stuart was certain that Chris was safe, he gamely charged downriver alone after the errant rodeo boat. We learned later that Stuart finally managed to corral and beach the boat *five wild miles downstream!*

That left me to ferry Chris back to river left below Lower Huacas. At lower levels this is placid water, but that day we were swept at least a quarter mile downstream while accomplishing the ferry. Not knowing the fate of his boat, Chris had no choice but to climb out of the inner gorge through a jungle that is not just a home to jaguars, but also several species of poisonous snakes, including the dreaded fer-de-



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Mike McQuade and Troy Dyke absorb the Mellow beauty of the Lower Pacuare.

COSTA RICAN WHITEWATER A TURRIALBA SAMPLER

THE REVENTEZON

Sadly two sections of the Reventezon that were once popular with whitewater boaters have fallen victim to *progress... progress* in the guise of hydro power. The first, a twelve plus mile Class IV bigwater run was buried under the lake created by the Angostura Dam.

The second, known as the **Peralta Run**, lies downstream of the dam, but is often dewatered by the hydro diversion. Sometimes during periods of high water, especially during the wet season, enough water spills over the Angostura dam to allow lucky Class V boaters to tackle this nine mile Class V river, which is said to be similar to but more difficult than the Upper Gauley. Unfortunately... or perhaps fortunately... I haven't had the opportunity to paddle the Peralta Run. But I know several paddlers who have, including American Whitewater President Barry Tuscano, who followed Phil Coleman down the river. Barry said it was big, tough and scary... and I believe him. The Peralta Run is said to be particularly dangerous at high levels.

lance. More than seven hours later poor Chris stumbled onto a road and flagged down a ride to town. We were so glad to see the stalwart Canadian alive that we treated him to a steak dinner that night.

We finished the Lower Pacuare that day in what must have been record time. No one was disappointed to see the take-out and I doubt that any of us would tackle the Pacuare again at that level.

Not far above the take-out the Pacuare is severely constricted into a narrow canyon between two towering peaks, known as Dos Montanos. Here sheer cliffs tower over the river on both sides creating an incredible spectacle. Unfortunately this unique geologic feature has not gone unnoticed by dam builders, who have episodically threatened to install a hydro project here that would bury the Lower Pacuare under a stagnant lake. Over the years several dedicated river minded Costa Rican environmentalists have monitored this situation, alerting boaters around the world when political pressure to block the project is needed.

A fair number of Costa Ricans have become kayaking enthusiasts and the children who live around the commonly run rivers are definitely intrigued with the sport. This year while we were hanging out at the Lower Pacuare take-out, we were mobbed by boys, aged 5-10, who demanded rides in our kayaks. I was concerned that they would get in over their heads, since the eddy along the shoreline paralleled some Class II water, but my fears proved groundless. Small as they were, they man-handled our oversized boats and paddles like pros. Before we could stop them they were eddy hopping and ferrying all over the river. Those exuberant kids were fearless and clearly had mastered basic paddling techniques. If they ever get boats of their own, look out!

Fortunately, the Reventezon downstream of the Angostura project diversion still runs reliably. This 13 mile long section, commonly referred to as the **Pascua Run**, has a gradient of over fifty feet per mile. Most boaters put-in on river right at Linda Vista. Another put-in is located three miles upstream on river left near Peralta, though using this put-in is said to complicate the shuttle. The take-out is near the town of Siquirres, not far from the take-out for the Lower Pacuare.

I have paddled the Pascua Section of the Reventezon twice; both times it was running very high. This came as no surprise during my first trip to Costa Rica, since it was the rainy season and the Reventezon has a huge watershed. But I didn't expect to see high flows on my second trip, which was in late January, the beginning of the dry season (February-April). But when we arrived at Linda Vista, the river was raging again. I was told that since the Angostura hydro project went on line very little water is released back into the river during the night. As a consequence, daytime flows tend to be high. This, coupled with several days of unseasonable rain, had set the Reventezon to booming,

Mike Mayfield classed this section of the Reventezon Class IV+ in his guide to Costa Rica, but to my mind at high levels it might even merit a V. Although most of the rapids are relatively straightforward, this is some of the biggest and wildest whitewater I have ever seen in more than twenty years of paddling. Think Lava Falls with teeth. There are quite a few major rapids and many of these are quite long. At high water the Reventezon is swift and turbulent, even between rapids. Rescue of a swimmer and his or her gear would be difficult. In the event of an emergency, an aban-



Diego Rodriguez Solano - Class V boater and local shuttle magnate.

doned railway bed parallels the river on river left, a remnant of the glory days of the once famous jungle train.

At lower levels I understand there are a number of rocks and play spots on this section of the Reventezon, but I have never seen them. I have seen huge wave trains that seem to barrel on forever, fifteen-foot rollers that explode and just as suddenly disappear, and a couple of hydraulics the size of boxcars. Happily I have been on the Reventezon with strong and competent boaters and we have managed to avoid most of these potential man-eaters. But even very capable boaters should expect to be inadvertently upside down at least once or twice during a high water run, especially in rodeo boats.

If no one in your group knows the river well, it helps to have a fearless probe along. On my first trip down the Reventezon, Raimund Bulczak, an accomplished German boater involved with the distribution of Rainbow kayaks in Europe, played the role of Fearless Leader.

This year Cynthia Mahoney, an intrepid native of Colorado, served as probe for our multi-national party, one that included folk from France, Spain, England, Costa Rica and the States.

"If you see me fall into any big holes just go around me," Cynthia announced nonchalantly at the top of one long and particularly suspicious looking rapid. They were prophetic words. Two thirds of the way through the rapid we saw her tumble into a sneaky, deep and virulent hole that scared the bejesus out of the rest of us. One by one we scrambled to dodge the monster, peering down at poor Cynthia as we

were swept by. ... regrouped ... bottom of the rapid, expecting the worst. But after "playing the hole for a while," Cynthia emerged with a big grin... seemingly nonplussed. Look out *Erica Mitchell*, was all I could think.

Just how brave is Cynthia? Well, consider this. She is finishing a graduate degree in International Relations in Colombia. No, not at Columbia University in New York. Cynthia is attending a University in Bogota, Colombia! She swears that Colombia has lots of great whitewater, too. (But Cynthia, what about the guerillas?!?)

There are several large islands in the river and at the bottom of these, where major channels collide, turbulent eddy walls and ferocious swirlies form. I have seen small boats and their occupants literally eaten by the river, like baby ducks swallowed by hungry catfish. Even those in bigger kayaks are not immune to this mischief. Ask Troy, who spent an anxious thirty seconds spiraling along in an inadvertent stern squirt before he managed to drive his sizable Eskimo Diablo back into the horizontal plane.

My guess is that there was at least 10,000 cfs flowing in the Reventezon during my runs. It might have been quite a bit more. The power of the river was such that you could hear boulders tumbling down the riverbed as you paddled above. In the midst of one long rapid near the end of the run a vertical slab of rock midriver sent an enormous geyser of water straight-up more than twenty feet into the air!



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The Pascua Section of the Reventezon offers big water excitement that is hard to beat, but unfortunately there is a down side to this run. The river is polluted by waste from several cities including Cartago and Turrialba. Some local boaters avoid the river for this reason, saying that it smells, particularly at lower levels. Others make a ritual of drinking a shot of Tequila immediately after paddling the run to "sterilize their guts." This probably doesn't do much to prevent disease, but hey, any excuse to celebrate as long as you're not driving. But a better idea might be to get the hepatitis A vaccine a month before you leave home. And playboaters might want to limit extensive underwater antics to the Pacuare, where the water is doubtlessly cleaner.

THE PEJIBAYE

If there has been rain this small river, which flows into the Reventezon upstream of the lake formed by the Angostura Hydro Dam, is a good warm-up for travel weary boaters and a fine introduction to the joys of tropical whitewater. The **Pejibaye** flows through a lush and spectacular jungle tunnel. Vine laden trees tower overhead creating an astonishing setting. If you have been wintering in the Great White North, the greenness of the river valley is almost overwhelming.

On the drive to the Pejibaye you will pass through several small villages surrounded by immense fields of sugar cane. In Costa Rica sugar cane is still machete cut by workers who make the equivalent of ten dollars a day. The fields are burned prior to harvest to drive out poisonous snakes, concentrate the sugar, and to eliminate some of the razor sharp leaves. Harvesting sugar cane is clearly not an easy way to make a living!

Since the Pejibaye is short and mostly Class III, it can make for an easy day. The shuttle is straightforward, so boaters often run it two times in one day. Several take-out options are available; it is even possible to paddle out onto the Reventezon and down to the lake. Generally the Pejibaye gets easier as you move downstream.

If you talk your shuttle driver into taking you up to the "top" put-in, located at the confluence of Pejibaye and another sizable stream, you can add about a mile of challenging technical Class IV whitewater to your run. Possibly the most difficult rapid on the Pejibaye lies immediately below this put-in; scout it before you launch. Note that this rapid continues beyond the point where the river disappears from sight. If the first rapid looks a little too fierce, an alternate put-in about a mile downstream will allow you to dodge the Pejibaye's most intimidating rapids. Less confident boaters may want to join the group here.

At higher flows negotiating the turbulent and serpentine course through the first mile is a real challenge. I have seen more than one hapless boater windmilling in the dangerous hydraulics that form below the ledges in the first rapid. This is not a good thing. Swims here are memorable, for both the swimmer and those faced with the daunting task of rescue. There is nothing like coping with a yard sale on unfamiliar water to get the adrenaline pumping. Some would argue that this section of the river merits a Class V at high flows, and that it should be avoided when the Pejibaye is in flood, a not uncommon event during the wet season.

About two-thirds of the way through the difficult mile most of the outflow from a potent wave train feeds into a narrow slot between gigantic boulders. Maintaining proper boat alignment in the approach can be difficult. If you turn sideways, an ugly broach seems inevitable. If you can drive into an eddy on river right near the base of the wave train, it is possible to avoid the slot altogether... you can finish the rapid on river right. I have been told that dangerous strainers have lodged in this rapid over the years, so heads up!

Boaters who are intimidated by the difficulty of the first mile of the Pejibaye should definitely not attempt the Upper Pacuare.

Once you pass the alternative put-in on river left, several Class III rapids remain. Depending upon levels, there are numerous surfing waves and play holes as well. You can play to the point of exhaustion, or just sit back, relax and try to spot the birds chattering in the dense rainforest canopy.

Costa Rican Kids are fascinated by Kayaking and many have become expert boaters.



COSTA RICA ON YOUR OWN

COSTA RICAN WHITEWATER
A TURRIALBA
SAMPLER ▶

Since I wanted to explore Costa Rica on my own, as opposed to going on a prepaid trip with an outfitter, I did a bit of research before flying south. American kayakers have been visiting Costa Rica for at least twenty years, so it wasn't hard to find folks with experience. I once paddled the Middle Fork of the Salmon with Mike Mayfield, a professor at Appalachian State College. Years ago Mike had co-authored a whitewater guide book to Costa Rica with Rafael Gallo. I supplemented Mike's beta with information gleaned from websites posted by the Costa Rican government, rafting and kayaking outfitters and hotels. Lee Eudy, who will soon be publishing a new guidebook to Costa Rican rivers, provided additional beta for my most recent trip.

Several general travel guides to Costa Rica are available; the one published by The Lonely Planet is probably the most useful, since it is geared toward adventurous, budget-minded travelers... cheap, scroungy kayakers like me. The Lonely Planet Spanish/English phrasebook and dictionary also proved indispensable.

Flights into Costa Rica from the United States land in San Jose, the bustling capital city located near the center of the West Virginia sized nation. Most flights from the states arrive early in the afternoon.

We left Pittsburgh at 7:30 am, made a single connection in Atlanta, and arrived in San Jose at 1:30 p.m. This gave us ample time to reach our final destination, the whitewater town of Turrialba, by evening, and we were paddling the next morning. (This does not seem to be the case with Chile or Ecuador, where most kayakers report "losing" two days en route at the beginning and at the end of their trips.)

Delta, Continental and Northwest all have flights into Costa Rica. Flying to Costa Rica with a kayak is an iffy proposition. Continental reportedly has a firm "no kayak" policy. The situation at Delta is less clear. Several young boaters told me they had packed their rodeo kayaks into canvas bags and managed to check them in the morning of departure as "surfboards," paying excess size baggage fees ranging from \$25-50 each way. Others had not been so lucky; they had been told that their kayaks needed to be shipped airfreight, an expensive process that takes several days. All of this seems to be subject to the unpredictable interpretation of the airline agent on duty at the city of departure. New airport security precautions have only added to the uncertainty.

Considering the potential hassles, you might want to rent boats in Costa Rica. They are generally available for \$15-25 per day. Expect to pay more for hot new models, particularly rodeo boats. (See contacts and phone numbers below.)

Turrialba, located in the central highlands, is the predominant hub of whitewater activity in the country, though the regions surrounding the Siripiqui and General rivers are also popular. Runs on two of Costa Rica's premiere whitewater watersheds, the Reventazon and the Pacuare, can be accessed as day trips from Turrialba, reliable local shuttle drivers know how to get to the various put-in and take-outs, and a reasonable assortment of kayaks is available for rent. It is also fairly easy to find boating companions at the local hotels.

It is easy to reach Turrialba from San Jose, since Turrialba is only 36 miles to the east of the capital city. If you are traveling on the cheap, you can take a bus or taxi into the bus station in San Jose (make sure you go to the correct bus station, the one that serves the Turrialba route), then catch the bus to Turrialba for a couple of dollars. Taxis from the airport to the bus station cost about \$10, the local airport bus that covers the same route costs less than a dollar. The busses to Turrialba run almost every hour. The busses are comfortable and clean, but there are disadvantages to taking the bus to Turrialba, particularly if you are tired, don't speak Spanish and are traveling alone with a lot of gear and boats.

Sadly, petty crime is not uncommon in Costa Rica, especially in San Jose. During my last trip to Costa Rica other kayakers told me that

they had witnessed three muggings of pedestrians in San Jose, one in broad daylight. There is no doubt that San Jose can be dangerous, especially for naive visitors. I have been to Costa Rica twice; both times traveling with friends big and rough looking enough to scare off would be assailants. All things considered, San Jose probably isn't any more dangerous than New York or Los Angeles. Beach towns along the Caribbean coast can also be dangerous. So use common sense; don't flash large sums of money, keep your wits about you, and act like you know what you're doing, even if you don't.

If you want to avoid the hassle of catching the bus in San Jose, it is possible to hire a taxi at the airport that will take you directly to Turrialba for \$50-60. If you are traveling with others, you can share the expense. Although Turrialba is about forty miles from the airport, it will take the driver at least an hour and a half each way to complete the serpentine journey through the mountains. Make sure to negotiate this and any other taxi fare with the driver before you climb in. Taxis in Costa Rica are equipped with meters, but by custom these are almost never used.

It is possible to rent vehicles in Costa Rica, but unless you plan on doing a lot of sightseeing, renting a car is more trouble than it is worth. Rental vehicles are expensive and seldom equipped with racks adequate to carry kayaks. Besides, unless you have a driver, it would take two vehicles to run the shuttles. And many of the shuttle roads are obscure and very rough, even when it hasn't been raining. Reportedly the automotive rental agencies in Costa Rica bill visitors exorbitantly for damage such as minor damage and scratches.



Dad: "Timmy, do you know what to do if a stranger offers you LVM?"

Timmy: "Yeah Dad, ask that cheap @#\$ if he paid for his copy"



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Break-ins to unattended vehicles present another potential problem.

And then there is the matter of the gonzo driving style universally adopted by Ticans. Many roads are narrow, with hairpin curves and steep pitches perilously carved into the face of rugged mountains. These roads almost never have painted lines. Despite this, Ticans speed merrily along, passing whenever the spirit moves them. Bottom line is if you plan to drive in Costa Rica, you had better bring your machismo with you.

Meanwhile busses in Costa Rica are ubiquitous, cheap and reliable. Besides, traveling by bus will give you an opportunity to practice your Spanish and meet some Ticans. Most Ticans are very friendly, understandably proud of their magnificent country and very accommodating to travelers. Why rent a car when you can travel from one end of the country to the other by bus for five or six bucks and when reliable river shuttles can be arranged for less than \$15 a day?

Several residents of Turrialba offer river shuttle services for boaters. We have used the services of Diego Rodriguez-Solano, who is an accomplished boater and knows the local rivers well. Diego is friendly, reliable, economical, and his vehicles can accommodate larger groups. (506) 556-6393 at home, or 363-4538 via cell phone. If Diego can find a shuttle driver, he might even boat with you. Another popular shuttle service is provided by Jacobo Mendez (506) 556-1213.

It may be possible to purchase shuttles from the local rafting operations depending on their schedules; check with Phil Coleman at RainForestWorld (506) 556-2678, Lee Poundstone at Rios Locos (506) 556-6035, Ray McClain at Costa Rica Rios Aventuras (506) 556-9617, or Ticot (506) 556 1231. They may also be able to supply an on-river guide, if you want one. (Not a bad idea if you are planning to run the Reventazon high or the Upper Pacuare. Of course, you should expect to pay extra for that service.) It is possible to rent boats from most of these operations.

There are 3 number of hotels in Turrialba, but the Hotel Interamericano is the most popular with budget-minded whitewater enthusiasts. Travelers from all over the world congregate here, so the lobby is a great place to meet people and swap stories. The Interamericano is located near the heart of the bustling town. The rooms are simple but always clean, and the price is right—it varies depending on whether you are willing to share a bathroom with other hotel guests. Owner Blanca Rosa Vasquez Aguilar and her daughter run a tight but friendly ship, with good security. They even provide a place to store gear and kayaks. The desk staff speaks English and can

help you find and negotiate shuttles, etc. They can also tell you about other attractions and recreational opportunities around Turrialba. (506) 556-0142, hotelint@racsa.co.cr

Also popular with boaters are the Terrialtico (506) 556-0111, located on top of a spectacular mountain several miles from town, and the Pochotel (506) 556-0111, near the village of Pavones. These are said to be a bit more expensive, but in a beautiful setting. The downside is that they are located several miles from Turrialba, so eating, partying, meeting other boaters and arranging shuttles might be more difficult.

In the evenings you can go girl or boy watching at the town square, or catch a flick from the U.S. with Spanish subtitles at Cine Norma. During my last visit we spent several evenings shooting pool at one of the local pool halls. They looked a little rough, but the folks inside were fine.

There are several more expensive restaurants in Turrialba, but what would I know about them? Good restaurants include La Garza, several Chinese places and a new operation featuring Peruvian food. Poppo's and Mama Mia's, located side by side on the village square, serve pizza topped with local cheese and other specialties at a very good price. These are favorites with boaters. Poppo himself holds no-nonsense court behind the counter of his operation, much like Seinfeld's Soup Nazi. There are also countless small "sodas" in town where you can get plenty to eat for two or three dollars.... Soda Marcy is a current favorite. 10% tips are automatically added on to bills at most restaurants.

If you need a break from boating, consider taking the bus to the Guayabo National Monument located about 20 km from town. It features stone ruins which date from 1000 BC to 800 AD as well as a nice trail through the rain forest. On clear days it is possible to visit the top of the dormant Turrialba volcano, elevation 10,900 feet. Or ask about the hike through the coffee fields to a pretty waterfall a few miles out of town. No matter where you go, keep an eye out for wildlife.

It is hard to imagine a place with more exotic fauna than Costa Rica. More than 850 species of birds, 200 mammals, 150 amphibians, 200 reptiles, and 35,000 insects call Costa Rica home.

Consider the Three Toed Sloth, a butt ugly critter which spends its time hanging upside down in trees, sleeping more than eighteen hours. An animal so lazy that it only bothers to take a crap once a week!!! Or the Jesus Christ Lizard, which scampers across the surface of ponds on its hind legs when disturbed. Or the emerald green, crimson, white and blue Resplendent Quetzal, an elusive pheasant



School kids surround boaters at the Upper Pacuare put-in.



COSTA RICAN WHITEWATER A TURRIALBA SAMPLER



A fearless teen demonstrates proper snake handling at the serpentarium.

sized bird whose beauty is so outrageous that bird lovers from all over the world flock to Costa Rica, hoping to catch a glimpse of it.

No visit to Turrialba can be considered complete without a visit to the Parque Vibrona, a serpentarium located in a hamlet near the Terrialtico Hotel, five miles from town. More than twenty species of native snakes, most of them poisonous and all of them beautiful, are on display here. For a few dollars the owner, or his fearless teen-aged daughter, will give you an informative talk and allow you to get up close and personal with the boa constrictors and eyelashvipers. They actually get the snakes out of the cages to provide photo ops and to demonstrate proper handling. (Sneak up behind one of your friends and pinch their ankles while this is going on... it really is great fun!!!)

One more thing... don't spend all your money on beer... there is currently a \$17 departure tax that you must pay at the airport before you fly back to the States.

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PACKAGE DEALS OR ON YOUR OWN... THE PROS AND CONS

GUIDED TRIP ADVANTAGES

Fewer hassles. Most outfitters pick you up at the airport, provide ground transportation, lodging, food, boats and guides. They usually provide a trip leader fluent in the local language. Based on their expertise and their assessment of your ability, they select the rivers you paddle. They negotiate the intricacies of the shuttles and provide on the water safety and leadership. They choose the hotels where you sleep and the places where you eat. (Air transportation is usually your responsibility, though some outfitters will help you book flights from your home city.)

*Boats will be provided, though your choice of models may be limited.

*Traveling with a large group and an experienced leader may be safer, both on and off the river.

*Requires less planning and research.

*Traveling with an insulated group of like-minded people may reduce the risk of culture shock. (Many inexperienced travelers become anxious and depressed when they are immersed in a culture with different customs and language... this is known as culture shock.)

*May be the best choice for travelers with good financial sources but limited free time.

DISADVANTAGES

*More expensive. You pay for your outfitter's expertise and your convenience. Prices will vary depending upon the level of service provided. Most clients on guided trips report spending about twice as much as those economy minded individuals who choose to travel on their own.

*Diminished exposure to local culture. Being surrounded by fellow travelers and relying upon the outfitter to negotiate the details of travel with the natives may dilute your personal exposure to the people, language and culture of the nation you are visiting.

*You will not get to choose your companions. You will be spending an intense week or more with boaters that you have never met. They may be excellent on the water or they may have overestimated their skills when booking the trip. They may be party animals or they may be loners. They may be happy-go-lucky, or they may be whiners. They may be nice, or they may be nasty. Bottom line is... traveling with strangers can be a great way to make new friends... or enemies.

*Choosing an outfitter or guide whose philosophy matches your own may be difficult. Some expensive operations provide deluxe food and accommodations and mollycoddle their clients every step of the way. Other less expensive alternatives provide basic fare and encourage their clients to be more self-reliant.

*Some worry a great deal about safety and may refuse to take guests on certain rivers if they do not believe they have the requisite skills. Others take a casual approach and allow their clients to make their own informed decisions and to accept responsibility for themselves on the river. Some outfitters stick to a fixed itinerary; others are more flexible. If your expectations do not match the philosophy and services provided by the outfitter you choose, you may be disappointed.

*Unforeseen circumstances. Unexpected frustrations occur on any trip. Vehicles may break down, rivers may be too high or too low, and the weather may be unseasonable. A good outfitter will do his or her best to circumvent these annoyances, but no one can guarantee a flawless trip.

The view from the balcony of Turrialba's Hotel Interamericano.

COSTA RICA WITH THE PROS!!!!

The following outfitters provide a variety of guided services and packages to Costa Rica. They have all been loyal supporters of American Whitewater and they all have excellent reputations for reliability. Look for their ads in this issue of American Whitewater.

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PRIVATE TRIP ADVANTAGES

*Personal choice and greater flexibility. You are free to set the dates and to plan your own itinerary. You decide where to go and when. You decide which hotels and restaurants to patronize.

*Allows for more spontaneity. If you want to change your plan, you can.

*Financial savings. Travelers from the United States are often surprised at how cheap taxis; accommodations and food are in third world countries, especially at facilities that cater to locals as opposed to tourists.

•You choose your boating companions. Ideally you will find safety conscious like-minded individuals with similar boating interests.

•You choose the rivers. Taking into consideration the weather, water levels and the strength of your party, you will be free to decide which rivers to paddle and when.

*Greater exposure to the local culture by virtue of the fact that you will need to negotiate food, lodging, transportation and shuttles.

*Sense of satisfaction of having done it "on your own."

*May be the best choice for self-reliant, adventurous travelers with limited finances and plenty of time.

COSTA RICAN WHITEWATER A TURRIALBA SAMPLER

PRIVATE TRIP DISADVANTAGES

*Flying with canoes and kayaks is filled with uncertainty and never easy. Arranging rentals may be difficult.

*Added stress may lead to contention and test friendships, particularly if you are not traveling with like-minded individuals.

*Advance planning is a must and can be time consuming. Anticipating the details can make or break the trip. If you don't have the time or inclination to do this, expect surprises and frustrations.

*More likely to miss days on the river because of screw-ups.

•No one else to blame if you screw up.

*Language difficulties may be insurmountable, particularly if you tend to be timid.

*Potential for culture shock.

•If you don't use good judgement there may be an increased risk of getting into trouble, both on and off the river.

A FEW HINTS FOR BOATERS TRAVELING SOUTH OF THE BORDER

At this time some countries including Mexico and Costa Rica waive their passport requirements for U.S. citizens traveling with an original birth certificate and a photo ID, such as a driver's license. But these regulations are subject to change. Traveling abroad is always easier if you have a passport. Currently U.S. passports cost \$60 and are valid for ten years. They are routinely processed within 6-8 weeks. "Rush" service is available for an extra fee. Information regarding passports is available at the U.S. State Department website at http://www.travel.state.gov/passport_services.html

If someone asks where you are from, don't answer "America." Remember that Canadians, Mexicans and those from Central and South America rightfully consider themselves to be American, too. Travelers from the United States who inadvertently imply that they have a monopoly on Americanism are considered arrogant.

- Use the local currency as much as possible, even if U.S. dollars are widely accepted. Insisting on using U.S. dollars might be interpreted to mean that you think that our money is intrinsically worth more than theirs. Ask yourself this, if a Costa Rican tried to use colones in your local Wal Mart, how would he be treated? Using the local currency shows that you respect their country and are willing to play by their rules. Besides, it makes it easier to be certain that you are receiving the correct change.
- Latin American women are among the world's most beautiful and many dress provocatively. Flirting may be a national pastime in some Central and South American countries, but it is a sport with clearly defined rules. An appreciative glance is considered appropriate, but getting fresh is not. In spite of appearances, most Latin Americans are Catholic and conservative. So behave.
- Familiarize yourself with local customs, religious beliefs and etiquette before you leave the States so that you will be less likely to inadvertently offend.
- Try to speak the local language, even if you only know a few words or phrases. It's the only way to learn, and the fact that you are willing to make the effort will endear you to the natives. If you don't know the right words, improvise. Besides, asking your waiter for a glass of the white liquid that comes out of a cow or some of the little round balls that pop out of a chicken will make his morning.



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■ Do not give money to the local kids, even if they ask for it. Odds are their parents don't want their children to beg. If you feel the need to be beneficent, take some inexpensive toys with you... balloons, balls... nothing that costs more than fifty cents. If the parents are around, ask permission before giving their child a gift. Even in poor countries most kids have toys of their own, but they appreciate the novelty of receiving one from a visitor.

■ Don't allow shady characters to engage you in conversation. Say no forcefully and move away quickly, just like you would on the streets of any city in the U.S.

■ Don't assume that it is okay to use illegal drugs, even if they are widely available. Buying drugs in a foreign country will inevitably bring you into contact with potentially dangerous individuals. And many Central and South American countries have strict drug laws, and foreign visitors may be targets for selective enforcement. Take note, drug-sniffing dogs patrol the airport in Costa Rica.

■ Don't assume that the staff of the local U.S. Embassy will bail you out of trouble. Unless your father is a republican Congressman or an Enron executive, it probably won't.

■ Don't be surprised to be singled out for a very detailed vehicle search by U.S. Customs when you drive back into the States from Mexico or Canada with kayaks on your roof. Whitewater enthusiasts must have a bad reputation with U.S. Customs, because it happens all the time.

■ Health and vaccination guidelines for overseas travelers are available at the United States Center for Disease Control (CDC) website or through most county health departments. The CDC provides specific information for visitors to countries all over the world regarding potential disease risks and region specific vaccine and prophylaxis recommendations. Visit their site at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/destinat.htm>; the same information is included in the CDC publication *Health Information for International Travel*, also known as "the Yellow Book."

A 1 1 travelers (and outdoor enthusiasts) should make certain that they have received a tetanus booster within seven years.

■ Since many tropical illnesses, including Malaria, are transmitted by insect bites the use of 30-35% DEET and protective clothing and netting when mosquitoes are out is recommended.

Check the CDC site carefully for specific information regarding the prevention of Malaria and other diseases. For instance, Malaria prophylaxis is recommended for some parts of Costa Rica, but not all. Be aware that there are four different strains of Malaria in the world, as a consequence different medications are recommended depending upon where you are traveling. Some of these medications can have unpleasant side effects and most must be continued for several weeks after you return to the States. Your doctor will need to prescribe these medications, discuss the pros and cons of taking them with him or her.

■ Two hepatitis vaccines are currently available in the United States, one to Hepatitis A and one to Hepatitis B. Hepatitis A is a very unpleasant illness, but rarely lethal. It can be transmitted through improperly prepared food, particularly shellfish, and through water contaminated with sewage. Hepatitis A is common in third world countries. A single injection of the Hepatitis A vaccine 30 days prior to your departure should provide protection. To achieve permanent immunity to Hepatitis A, a second dose should be given six months to a year after the first. The practice of administering a pre-trip gamma globulin injections to travelers has largely been replaced with the Hepatitis A vaccine.

■ Hepatitis B and its frequent companion Hepatitis C are transmitted through sexual contact, blood transfusions and by sharing needles. Hepatitis B and C can be fatal. If your life-style does not place you at risk for these diseases here at home and you behave while you are away, your risk of acquiring Hepatitis B should be minimal.

■ While in third world countries avoid uncooked vegetables and fruits unless they can be peeled. Bottled water and bottled sodas are usually safe. Water from the tap may be contaminated. Even ice cubes in drinks can transmit disease.

Antibiotics and other medications that require a prescription in the United States are often available over the counter in third world pharmacies. However, antibiotics often cause minor effects, and they sometimes cause serious ones, so do not use them indiscriminately. A common side effect of some antibiotics, particularly tetracyclines, is a dramatically increased susceptibility to sunburn.

Greg's Video Corner

Thunderballs Features Usual Rick Gusic Carnage and Mayhem

Reviewed by Greg Akins

Buzzellmania Productions and Rick Gusic have done it again. Their first commercial production, *Silent Thunder*, imitated the freewheeling video style of Ski video legend Warren Miller. It definitively reversed the trend toward ultra-serious, we're on the edge of extreme, 25 left-cartwheels in a row fanaticism. Granted, watching moderately talented, off-season raft guides getting in a little over their heads isn't going to satisfy the adrenaline junkie's gradient inspired dementia. But for now, Gusic's filmmaking is a welcome diversion from the "oh so serious" attitude rampant in the kayaking film genre.

Rick Gusic at the Cheat Race 2002



As with the previous video, *Thunderballs*, includes a mix of skits and carnage with only brief footage of Eli Helbert and Conrad Addison to add a touch of credibility. Even during the 'Mexico' footage (AW Editor Bob Gedekoh finally achieves fame, or is it infamy?), all the 'good' lines were left on the cutting room floor.

Highlights of this video include rare footage of Floyd Turbo, the master of flatwater canoe interpretation, demon-

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strating his flexibility in whitewater. Speedo-wearing Turbo throws it down, definitively proving that rodeo open boating superstar Eli Helbert can't match the sheer elegance of interpretive canoeing. Korn Anderson finally goes toe-to-toe with his nemesis, Corran Addison. And proves that drinking beer has done nothing to slow down his record setting waterfall running career.

Gusic approaches the *hallowed* ground of steep creeking, freestyle and rodeo boating with typical irreverence. He leaves any pretense of egoism behind and shows his own bad lines as willingly as those of the rest of his paddlers. There will always be room for videos featuring serious boating, record setting feats and innovative rodeo moves. But in southwestern Pennsylvania Gusic and his buddies know that *real boaters*; the 99% that will never get a first descent, never fall over a waterfall higher than 20' and never get free boats from


a generous sponsor; still have fun... despite bad lines, old equipment and poor acting.

Silent Thunder has long been the first video I put in the VCR when I want to amuse both my paddling and non-paddling friends. Now, with the appearance of *Thunderballs*, I have a new favorite


All 42 minutes of *Thunderballs* can be purchased by calling 1-888-WHITE WT.



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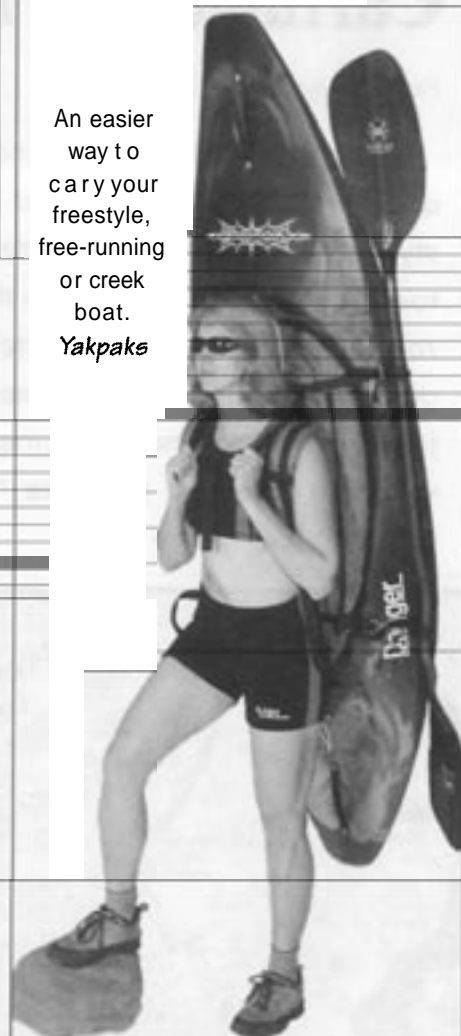
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The Art of Paddling

There is a Buddhist parable or "koan," in which a man is being chased by a tiger. He soon finds himself at the edge of a cliff. With the tiger closing in, the man grabs a vine and lowers himself over the side of the cliff, out of reach of the tiger. Unfortunately the man, dangling on the vine, soon attracts the attention of another tiger, which waits patiently below. Just when things can't get any worse, two mice begin gnawing on the vine. With two tigers surrounding him and two mice gnawing on the vine onto which he clings for survival, the man notices a strawberry growing nearby. Summoning all his strength, the man holds onto the vine with one hand and reaches for the strawberry with the other.

The crux of this koan is found in its last sentence, where the man reflects on how sweet the strawberry tastes. From a Zen Buddhism perspective, this koan suggests that regardless of the intensity of a situation, one should remain focused and experience the moment at hand. The notion of being "in the moment" is the heart of Zen Buddhist meditative practice and accordingly a key to greater personal understanding and happiness.

Good athletes, such as paddlers, find energy in situations where there is a lot of pressure to execute a difficult task by focus-

ing on that task, while blocking out distractions. It is this common need to concentrate on the moment at hand that whitewater paddling shares with Zen Buddhist meditation, and so it warrants a closer look.

Anyone who has paddled whitewater has noticed the contrasts of events on a day on the river. Often at the put-in, the water is calm and the current hidden beneath the surface. Within a matter of a few hundred feet the river can change dramatically to exposed boulders, sticky hydraulics or steep drops. The same paddler that glided without much

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thought through the flat water must now focus and navigate obstacles. On a more technical section, the paddler might need to maneuver between two large hydraulics and catch an eddy in between. As the boater takes a moment in the eddy above, possibly re-checking the line around a hole, the situation is similar to that of the man hanging on the vine between two tigers. Although most rivers don't have wild strawberries growing on the banks, the paddler has something equally refreshing to consume while in this precarious situation: the moment itself.

After all, there are few moments in life like those found on a river... with its panoply of sights, smells and unique noises. However, unlike a stroll in the woods, the whitewater paddler has to remain aware of his or her surroundings and constantly monitor a number of things, such as boat angle and the intensity of the current.

It is the absolute concentration and focus of a paddler during these many "moments" where a link to the meditative practices of Zen Buddhism exists. For many, the notion of meditation seems sort of kooky. Most think the goal of meditating is to "zone out"... to go to some far away place in the mind. Actually with Zen meditative practices, just the opposite is true. The real intent of meditating, technically known as *zazen*, is to be fully focused on the moment. Basic *zazen* technique suggests counting one's breath in order to better focus the mind on the moment, instead of being distracted by thoughts of what you are going to eat for lunch or the chores on your "to do" list.

Our minds have to be trained to focus on the moment, because it is the natural inclination of the human brain to think about several things at once. Our minds' inclination to wander is sometimes referred to by Zen practitioners as "monkey mind"; a comparison to how monkeys jump around in trees and rarely seem to stay interested in anything for very long. Indeed the challenge of practicing Zen meditation is to learn how to gently deflect intruding thoughts while remaining focused in the moment.

Thus, when we are sitting in our boats perched above a rapid, we are focused in the moment of that event. We continue in this moment as we execute the required moves, trying to remain focused and not become distracted by fear or the presence of another boater up ahead. However, this comparison isn't limited to running technical or difficult water, where a paddler must execute a specific skill to negotiate a rapid without mishap. Certainly one could argue that the higher the stakes of running a certain rapid, the greater the needed concentration. But it would be a skewed representation of both

paddling and life to suggest that the only time we need to pay attention is when the chips are down. Paying greater attention to the moment all of the time has enormous benefits that can make one both a better paddler and a more aware person.

One of the benefits of whitewater paddling is learning to deal with fear and developing the skills required to safely enjoy being on a river. Learning to execute a whitewater roll is a scary process, given that you are voluntarily submerging your head and holding your breath, all the while remembering it is hip snap, not your arms, that will bring you back upright. This is just one paddling situation that requires a total focus in order to achieve success. This same ability to concentrate on what needs to be done helps a paddler nail a clean line through a difficult rapid or execute a clinch roll in a spot where swimming isn't a pleasant option.



Does the fact that in paddling we often have to deal with our fears while executing precise moves have an impact on the way we think off the river?

Does whitewater paddling increase our ability to concentrate? Looking back at your paddling career, can you see a change in your ability to focus both on and off the river?

So, you may be wondering, "Didn't we start off talking about a guy on a cliff with mice, tigers and a strawberry?" Again, at first glance that story might strike someone as sort of "out there" and not at all related to paddling. However, that koan reminds us that regardless of how desperate or tense the situation, remaining "in the moment" has its rewards. Certainly this is true in paddling. So the next time you are floating down a river, be conscious that paddling is more than just a hobby, but a chance to connect with one's self and with the moment at hand. And perhaps an opportunity to develop a mental skill that can serve you well, both on and off the river.

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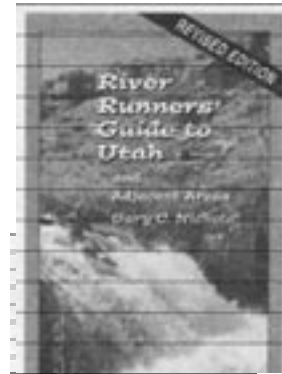


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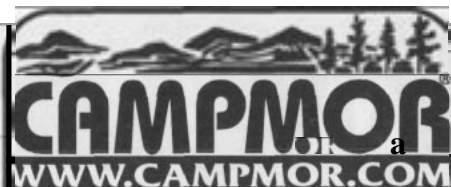
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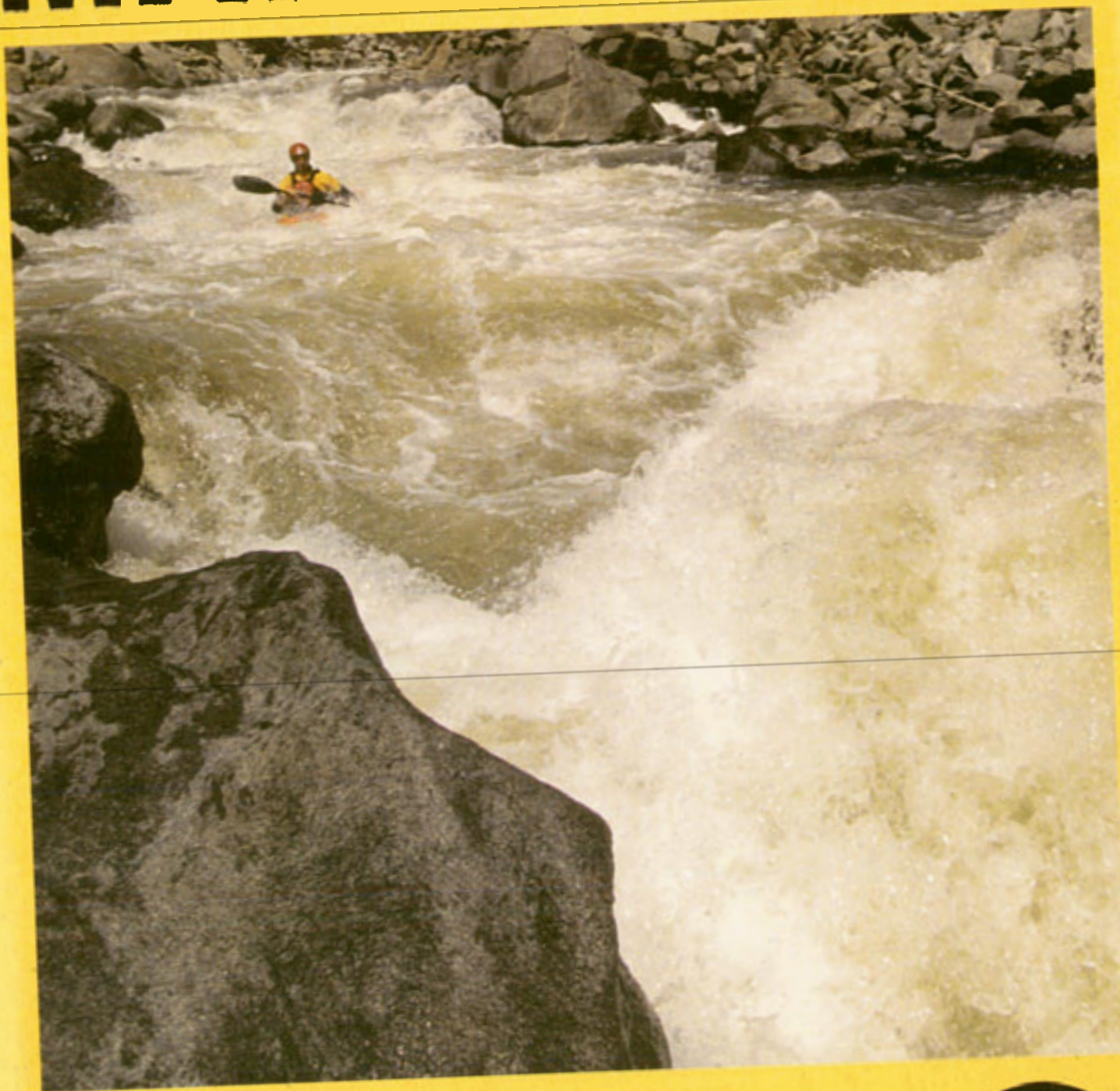
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