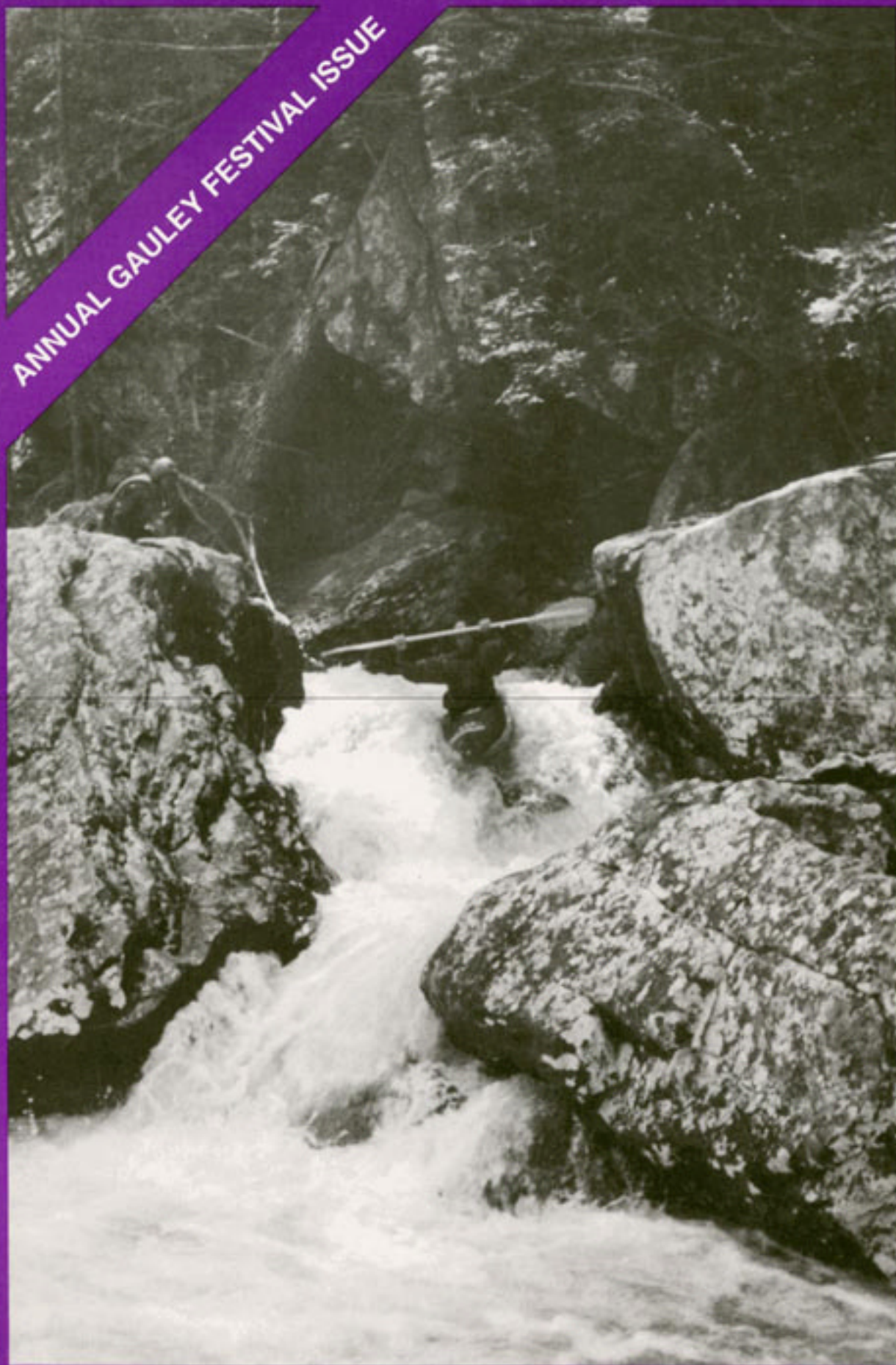


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american whitewater

September/October 1991



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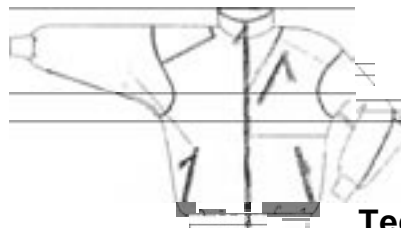
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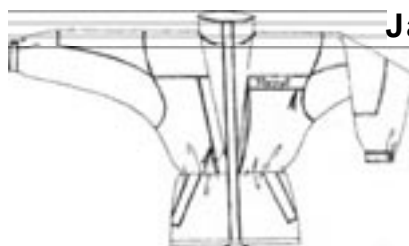
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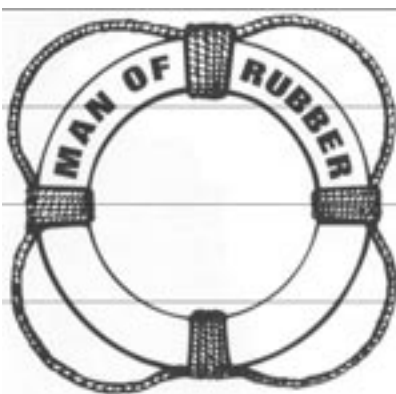
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Larry Wernstrom running Tangle Falls, Gore Canyon, Colorado. Photo: TIM BROWN.
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american whitewater

September/October 1991

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AMERICAN WHITewater
AFFILIATION

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FORUM

Clearer vision

This may come as a surprise to many of you folks who know me--but I am **not** actually a modest kind of guy.

Now ordinarily, a lack of modesty wouldn't distinguish me from a thousand other whitewater personalities--all of whom possess an inflated opinion of their boating skills, physical appearance or overall value to society. That is except for one key factor: I'm also as blind as a bat.

I've always avoided wearing glasses on the river--mainly because I never liked the way they looked. And because I also can't wear contacts, I've often flirted with near-disasterous situations that a clearer vision could have helped avoid.

Boating seems a little more exciting when you can't tell whether that line of foam is a breaking wave or a pour-over...or if that dark hump is a submerged rock or maybe a turtle floating just beneath the surface.

No wonder to this day there are a lot of paddlers who refuse to follow me down a river.

But this year I bought a pair of perscription sunglasses--and for the first time in 10 years I can see what's going on around me and still look cool.

I'm especially looking forward to this year's Gauley Season and subsequent Festival. Even for a person with limited vision, the scene at the Gauley is a handy barometer of what's happening in our sport and organization.

Future trends in boat design, paddling technique and equipment styles always seem to make their first public appearance at the Gauley. It's probably because the Gauley attracts a heavier concentration of high-end boaters to a single location at any one time than at any other place in the country. Maybe the world. I'm glad I have glasses so I can see what's going on.

The Festival has also emerged as an annual event of national significance. Next year's hot videos always seem to be premiered; prototypes of the next popular boat design seem to always be on display; and of course, information regarding the latest threats to our whitewater resources is there to be shared.

I hope to see you there. Especially this year now that I can recognize people standing more than 10 feet away.

Of course, if you can't make it to the Gauley--you can almost get the same benefits from reading the pages of *American Whitewater*--the world's best semi-professional whitewater magazine.

But personally, I'd rather be at the Festival. You can drink beer there.



STAFF

Managing Editor: Chris Koll, 25 South Street, Apt. 67, Marcellus, NY 13108

Editor: Bob Gedekoh, Box 228, RD 4, Elizabeth, PA 15037

Advertising Director: Phyllis Horowitz, Box 85, Phoenicia, NY 12464; (914) 688-5569

Conservation: Pope Barrow, Mac Thornton, Peter Skinner

Safety: Charlie Walbridge

Address Changes: Keith Morgan, 2601 Tanglewood Dr., Durham, NC 27705

Missing Copies: Contact Phyllis Horowitz

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PURPOSE

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

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

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

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

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

ORGANIZATION AND PURPOSES: AWA was incorporated under Missouri non-profit corporation laws in 1961 and maintains its principal mailing address at PO Box 85, Phoenicia, NY 12464. AWA has been granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954. The charter includes the following purposes: encourage the exploration, enjoyment, and preservation of American recreational waterways or man-powered craft; protect the wilderness character of waterways through conservation of water, forests, parks, wildlife, and related resources; promote appreciation for the recreational value of wilderness cruising and of white-water sports.

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



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Dan Givens
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66 Deer Run
Glenwood, NY 14069

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Chris Koll
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Sara Lawrence
6660 Bacchi
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Tom McAndrew
5535 Ridge Ave.
Philadelphia, PA 19128
John Porterfield
RR2 Box 669
Orrington, ME 04474

Pete Skinner
Box 272, Snyder Rd.
W. Sand Lake, NY 12195
Keith Thompson
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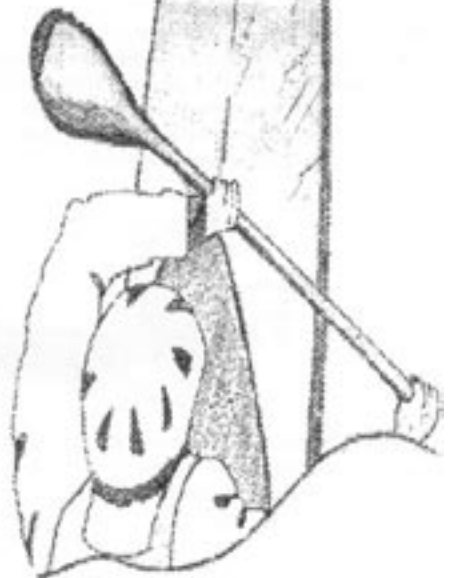


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Ender shirt

Dear Chris,

Just wanted to thank y'all for the opportunity of joining the Ender Club. I apparently sent in the right amount of contribution money but quickly forgot about it, not realizing the change it would effect in my life.

On the day before stopping mail delivery and leaving on our honeymoon (I married Karen, a river nymph) we received a package from AWA which contained an official "Ender" T-shirt and membership in the "Ender" Club. Oh! That I could but touch the hem of their robes, let alone stand in their lofty company. I donned the gnarly garb for our two-day drive to the S. Fork Payette in Idaho, exposing my person to its then unknown properties.

Upon arrival and after a mandatory hot spring soak, I jumped into the kayak for some surfing on "the play wave." Being rusty and losing my ferry angle (or being drawn by an unknown hand) I landed unintentionally in "the pop-up hole" next to "the play wave."

"What do I do now?" I sez to myself as I'm sucked into the frothy maw of diving current. My skin crawled and the wet hair rose at the back of my neck as I plunged forward and was shot vertical as if from a cannon. Aarrgg! I was airborne. Rising above the mists of the earth with nothing between me and the high heaving heavens but a determined and stubborn gravity sucking me back down, down, down

to flop ungraciously upside down in the cold sobering river water.

"Wwaayy coool," yells my wife by way of encouragement. "Can you do it again?" she asked as she armed herself with a camera.

The rest will be history if you reprint this, for I not only did it again forward, I did it backward, and half pirouetted, and rode the wheelie, grinning that carefree grin of a kid with a new game to discover. And the proud parents were lurking nearby with a camera to catch the moment for posterity. Karen consumed three rolls of film and my only regret is that the "Ender" T-shirt that launched my new passion lay hidden under layers of spray skirt, jacket and vest, not being prominently displayed as it rightfully should.

So I ask you...do you have any Polish Ender T-shirts? I want to keep my styled pompadour dry. How about a Mystery Move T-shirt for the budding squirtist who hasn't joined a lounge lizard act? Neeley's (not Bill) doesn't it get us deep enough. I'm sure my friends Larry and Pat want an Ender/Mystery Shirt for their Whitesell paddling.

What's that you say? "It ain't the shirt?" Blasphemer! Anyway, the moral of this story is...if you wanna play the blues you gotta live 'em, and if ya wanna ender-ya gotta join the "Club."

Thanks for the shirt and all that came with it.

Most Sincerely Yours,
Rick and Karen Norman
Pasadena, CA

Hair today

Dear Editor,

Hair today, gone tomorrow. NO WAY!!! That's all we need is another pond paddling magazine. Keep printing those hair boat'n articles. This is my response to a letter entitled "No more hair" that appeared in the May/June issue.

I'll never consider myself to be a hair boater, but I sure enjoy reading those artides. And do you think that just because I read these artides, I'm going to grab my boat and run out to do mystery moves at the bottom of Niagara Falls? Naaah, I don't think so.

I think the AWA, ACA and other whitewater organizations do an excellent job of educating and informing the paddling community on safety and the dangers of river running. All we can hope for is that each individual paddler can judge his own skills, abilities, and limits properly.

Hair boating has been around a long time. I would guess those paddlers who first paddled the Colorado, Gauley or Upper Yok could be considered hair boaters. These paddlers have years of experience and are well seasoned. They know the dangers and risks involved and accept them. There will always be boaters pushing the limits. It's like that in any sport. Not to glorify them or anything, but the sport wouldn't be what it is today if someone hadn't kept pushing to do more challenging rivers. Heck, we'd still be paddling seal skin kayaks. The sport has come a long ways over the years. A lot of safe and durable equipment has been developed. And we've learned a lot about safety and rescue techniques.

I agree with Mr. Siposs, hair boating is **not** for everyone. But that is no reason to censor it from the AWA Journal. As for myself, if every kayak trip was a quiet and safe enjoyment of our waterways, and I didn't have just a little adrenalin pumping through those veins, well, I guess I'd take up a new sport.

Sincerely,
Donald Gens
Zoar Valley Paddling Club

(Editor's note: Take a look at this month's *lineup*, Don. There's enough expert-level whitewater reported in this issue to raise the hackles of the most experienced paddler.)



CONSERVE



By POPE BARROW
AWA Conservation Editor

AWA conservation volunteers have been hard at work across the nation, struggling with a tangled assortment of whitewater river issues. Concerns range from the ever-present threat of hydropower development to the fastest growing menace, river passage and river access restrictions.

Recently, Conservation Chairman, Pope Barrow, surveyed AWA regional coordinators and river conservation groups throughout the nation to identify the top 40 whitewater river issues alive in 1991. Here's the list.

1. Kennebec, Dead, and Penobscot Rivers, Maine

Issue: improving flows for whitewater in hydro relicensing
Current Status: John Porterfield is working with Central Maine Power and Georgia Pacific, with help from the National Park Service River Watch Program, to improve whitewater flows when projects on the Penobscot, the Dead and on the East and West outlets of the Kennebec are relicensed. John desperately needs volunteers to help negotiate flows on the Dead. He is also
Contact: John Porterfield, AWA (207-825-3566)

2. Saco River; Maine

Issue: flows for whitewater
Current status: National Park Service is looking into the possibility of obtaining whitewater releases in relicensing. Releases would permit boater to use a reach of the river which is now bypassed.
Contact: Dan Haas NPS (215-597-6477)

3. Pemigewasset River, New Hampshire

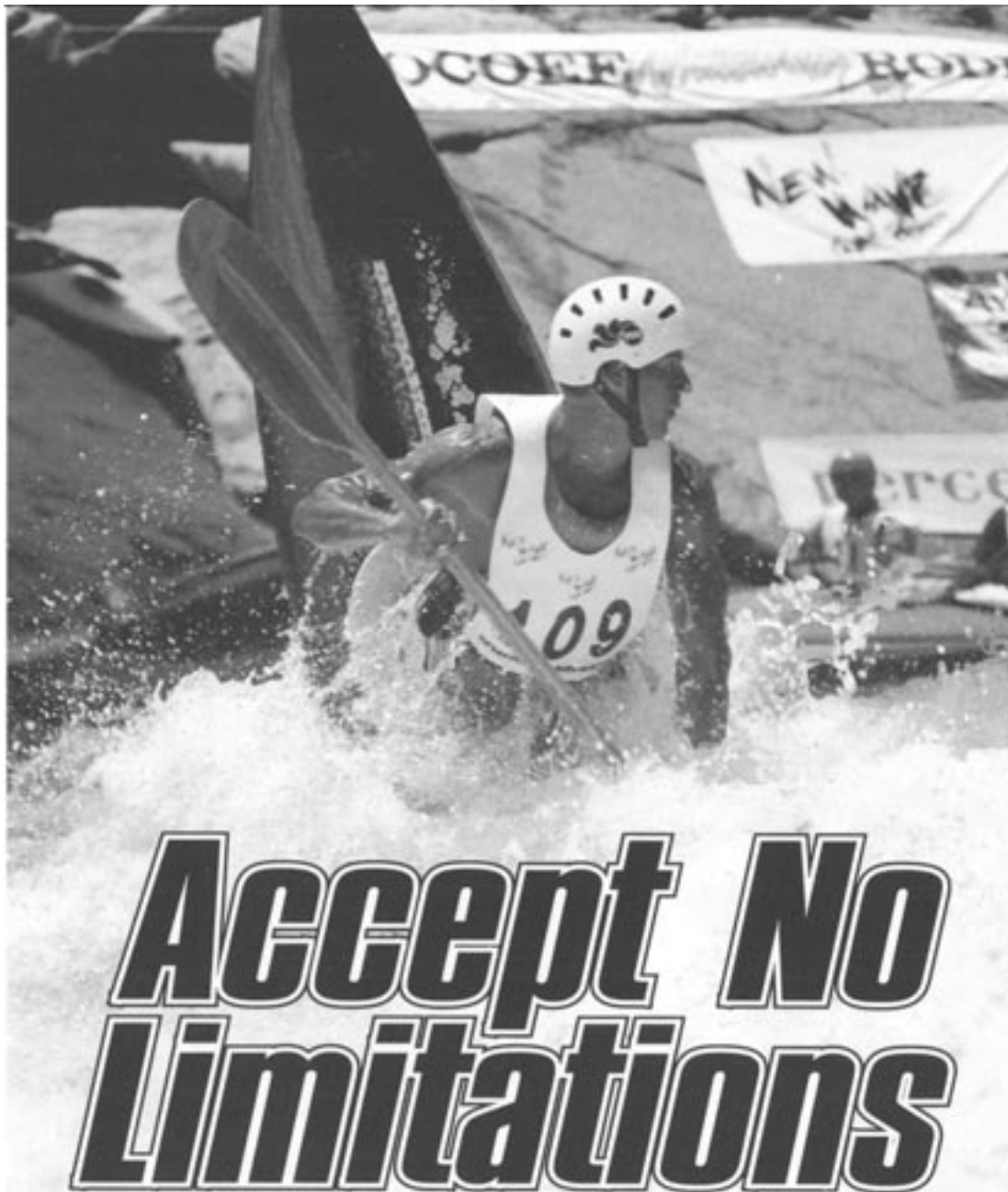
Issue: Hydro relicensing; possible wild and scenic designation.
Current Status: A 30-mile section of the Pemigewasset River from Plymouth to Bristol (above the whitewater section and above the proposed Loon Mtn diversion) is being studied for possible inclusion in the national wild and scenic rivers system. AWA is working on relicensing of the Public Service Co. of NH Ayers Island Dam Project in order to obtain summer flows in the class II-III whitewater section. Contact: John Porterfield, AWA (207-825-3566), also Phil Huffman, NPS (612-223-5013).

4. Deerfield River, Massachusetts

Issue: Relicensing of existing hydropower dam.
Current Status: whitewater groups, organized as New England Flow and aided by American Rivers, are seeking improved flows and possibly the removal of one of the many dams on the No. 5 section of this popular whitewater run. Test flows for whitewater were attended by a huge turn out. Contact: Bill Hildreth, AWA and New England Flow (617-383-2785)

5. Little River, Massachusetts.

Issue: Limited access and poor flow information.
Current Status: AWA regional coordinator E.J. McCarthy continues to press the Town of Springfield to allow private boaters access through Springfield Water Dept. property to this class III-IV run in Massachusetts (just east of the Farmington). Contact: E.J. McCarthy, AWA (RR 380-A, W. Cornwall, Ct. 06796)



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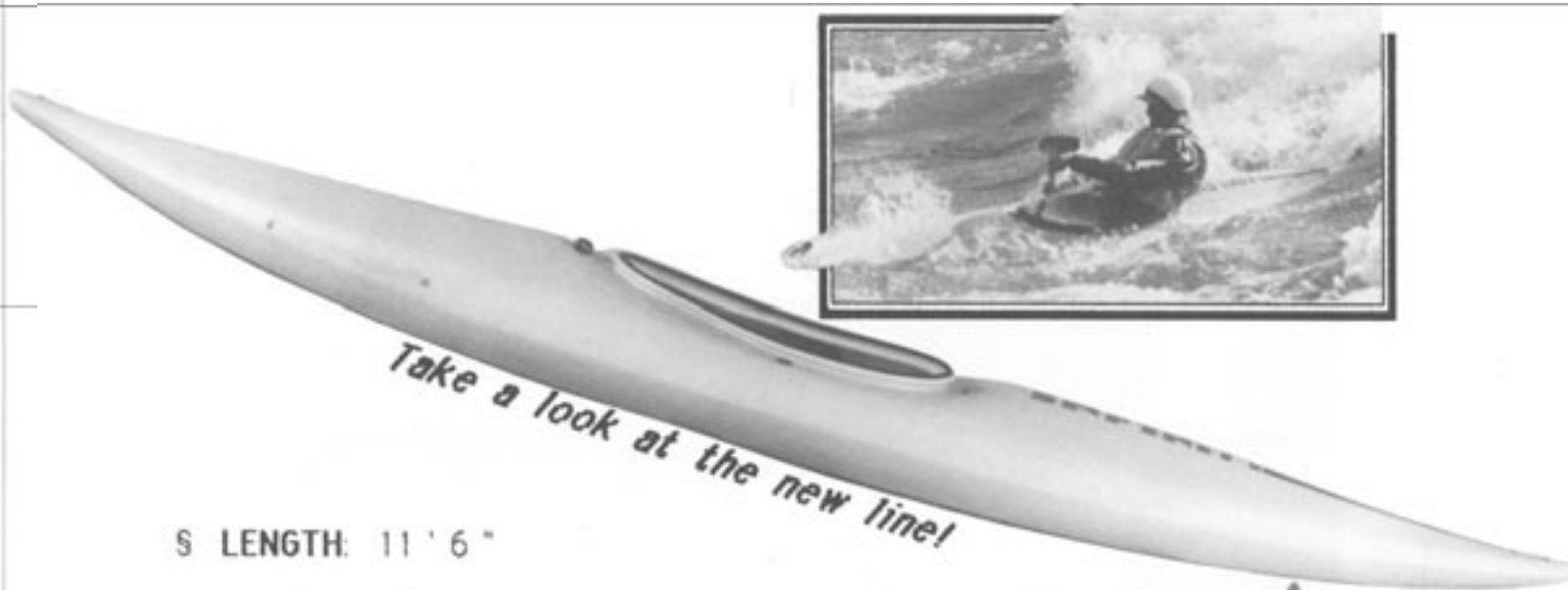
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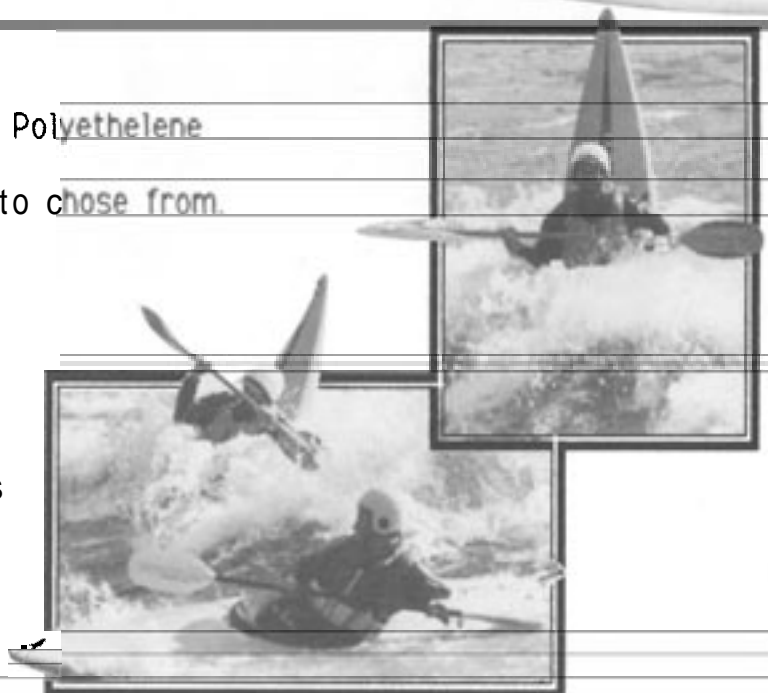
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6. Moose River, New York.

Issue: Right of passage through canoeable segment.

Current status: A \$5,500,000 trespass action has been brought against 5 boaters who paddled a section of the South Branch of the Moose which flows through posted property owned by the Adirondack League Club. The boaters are being defended by the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund. This will be a precedent-setting case. Contact Tom Kligerman (518-457-5920) or Bob Srier, SCLDF (202-667-4500)

7. Sacandaga River, New York

Issue: Access to the river.

Current Status. The Niagara Mohawk Power Company (NIAMO) continues to exclude private boaters (but not commercial outfitters) from this popular run. Whitewater boaters are trying to bring the company around through negotiations. Contact: Carol Liebfarth AWA/ACA 518-279-3989

8. Salmon River (Pulaski), New York

Issue: Access, improved releases from unlicensed power project.

Current Status: FERC has declared that the Salmon River is not a navigable waterway. The old existing hydropower project, owned by the Niagara Mohawk Company, is not subject to Federal jurisdiction if this ruling is upheld. The State of New York is appealing the ruling and AWA has filed a friend-of-the-court brief supporting the navigability of the stream. Without FERC jurisdiction, it will be extremely hard to persuade NIAMO to provide whitewater releases. Contact: Jerry Hergrave, AWA 716-663-3888 or Bob Glanville, AWA, 716-847-7019

9. Beaver and Raquette Rivers, New York

Issue: Relicensing of power project upstream of whitewater run.

Current status: Negotiations are underway between the utility and whitewater boaters to insure access to the river and improved recreational releases. Contact Pete Skinner, AWA 518-585-7580

10. Mongaup River, New York

Issue: Unlicensed hydropower without recreational benefits

Current Status: Boaters have been excluded from using the whitewater of the Mongaup by the present owner of this old unlicensed power project, Orange and Rockland Utilities. An independent developer want to take over the project and provide better recreational benefits. Orange and Rockland is trying to get Federal legislation to allow them to keep their monopoly without a license. Contact: Ken Fishman, KCCNY (212-228-5753)

11. Genesee River, New York

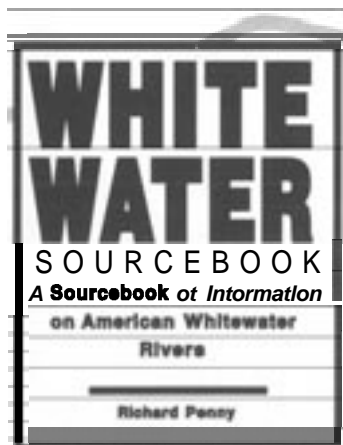
Issue: River Access Restrictions

Current Status: NY State Parks authority has outraged paddlers by requiring that they sign up 2 days in advance of paddling the river and pay fees to boat the whitewater section. Contact: Jerry Hergrave, AWA 716-663-3888

12. Upper Youghiogheny River, Maryland

Issue: Relicensing at FERC.

Current Status: AWA is seeking to continue whitewater releases from the Penn Elec Company's Deep Creek Project. Boaters are also asking for better advance notice of flows. Maryland State fisheries agencies are looking into flows to protect fish habitat which could cut back on water availability for boating. Meanwhile



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the power company has asked FERC to declare the river non-navigable and, therefore, not subject to FERC jurisdiction. Contact: Pope Barrow, AWA (202-546-3766)

13. Blackwater, Williams, Cranberry, and Shavers Fork Rivers, West Virginia

Issue: Possible Wild and Scenic designation for 13 rivers in the Monongahela National Forest, including excellent whitewater. Current Status: A coalition of 21 groups formed by AWA is building a political consensus for wild and scenic designation and for restoration of damaged water quality to keep the trout healthy in several of the streams which are impacted by acid rain. The Forest Service had completed the first phase of its study. The only opposition so far has come from the State Department of Natural Resources which has adopted a hostile and antagonistic attitude for reasons which are still unclear. Contact: Roger Harrison, WV Rivers Coalition (304-472-0025)

14. Gauley River, West Virginia

Issue: An agreement has been reached between AWA and other concerned groups and the National Park Service to permit private hydropower development at the existing Summersville Dam. The project will not adversely affect whitewater recreation in any way although it will use releases from Summersville Dam for generation. Another proposed project (the Parcoal Project) upstream of the dam near Webster Springs would divert water from the Gauley into the Elk and could severely cut back on whitewater flows at the Gauley. AWA and American Rivers are fighting the Parcoal Project. Contact: Anita Adams, AWA (304-574-0482)

15. James River, Virginia

Issue: Possible wild and scenic designation

Current Status: The city of Richmond is considering asking the Governor of VA to designate the falls of the James as a wild and scenic river under section 2(a)(ii) of the Federal wild and scenic rivers law. This would eliminate the persistent threat of hydropower development at various sites on the James in Richmond. Contact: Charles Ware, AWA (804-231-0118)

16. Johns Creek, Virginia

Issue: Access Problems

Current Status: An almost legendary battle continues between boaters and a landowner (John Looney) who owns land on both sides of the river near the take-out. This is Virginia's best whitewater creek, but Mr. Looney claims ownership of the stream and promises to take trespasses to court. The State Attorney General's office is currently investigating the rights of public passage through Virginia rivers like Johns Creek. Contact: Pope Barrow, AWA, 202-546-3766

17. Russell Fork, Virginia/Kentucky

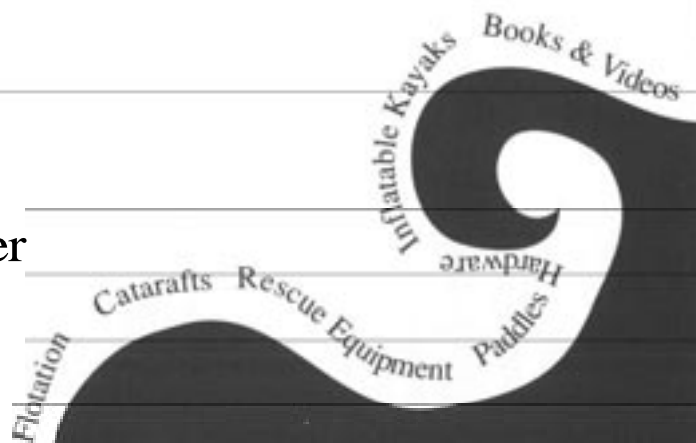
Issue: Releases for whitewater

Current status: Negotiations between fishery interests and the Army Corps regarding Russell Fork releases may lead to less whitewater — or none at all. AWA is trying to work out a compromise. Meanwhile hydropower developers are planning to install a power project at Flannigan Dam; AWA and EPRO have intervened at FERC to oppose anything which would make whitewater less available. Contact: James Stapelton, AWA (606-754-9779)



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18. Armuchee Creek, Georgia

Issue: River access problems

Current Status: The Georgia State Supreme Court will hear arguments in October in a trespass case brought by a river-side landowner against kayakers and canoeists who paddled down this creek. The lower court has ruled against the boaters in a very discouraging decision which suggest that no whitewater river in Georgia would be considered legally navigable and open to recreational boating. In a prior case, the popular Chatahoochee River was found non-navigable. Similar cases are pending in New York and California. Legislation to change State law has virtually no chance of passage. Contact: Andy Warshaw, AWA (404-373-6683)

19. Little River, Alabama

Issue: Possible designation as a new National Preserve

Current Status: Prospects for designation look good although some opposition has developed. AWA Regional Coordinator, Ken Burst is working with Congressman Tom Bevill to have the Little River Canyon protected as a national preserve. The Park Service has completed a new area study of the area and found it qualified. Recently, environmental groups were able to have the river designated under State law as an Outstanding Natural Resource Water under the Federal Clean Water Act. This will protect water quality. The Alabama Power Company (which owns most of the land) is cooperating with environmental groups and Congressman Bevill. Primary opposition has come from an out-of-State rabble rouser opposed to the establishment of all new parks and other Federal land areas. Contact: Ken Burst, AWA/Friends of the Little River (205-977-5063)

20. Ontonagon, Manistee, Black, Pine, Presque Isle, Sturgeon, Paint, and Brule Rivers; Michigan

Issue: Possible wild and scenic designation (also hydroelectric relicensing at the Ontonagon)

Current status: Legislation to designate these whitewater rivers with 7 other rivers in Michigan in a single omnibus bill has been pending in both the House and Senate since early 1990. A stall continues although the Forest Service supports designation. A few private landowners, stirred up by the National Inholders Association, continue to fight the legislation. Contact: American Rivers (202-547-6900)

21. Pine River, Wisconsin

Issue: Hydroelectric relicensing

Current status: Boaters and river conservationists are trying to improve the recreational opportunities at the Pine River in the FERC relicensing process. Dam removal is an option at this point. Contact: Angie Tornes, NPS (402-221-3481)

22. Clear Creek, Colorado

Issue: New dam and quarry under consideration.

Current Status: The Colorado Water Resources Agency is studying a new water supply dam which could destroy this popular whitewater run just northwest of Denver. A proposed quarry could increase noise, traffic and pollution in the canyon. Contact: Ric Alesch, AWA (303-985-8620)

23. Yampa River, Colorado

Issue: Cross Mountain and Juniper Mountain Dams



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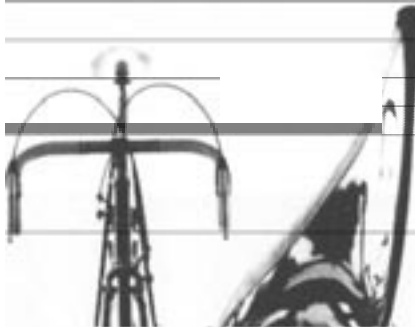
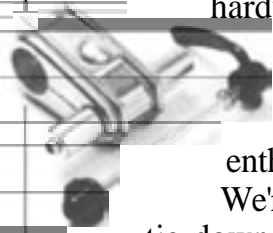
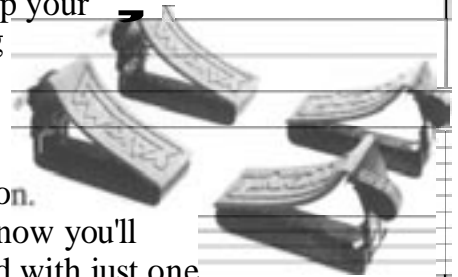
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Current Status: The Colorado River Water Conservation District continues to push for these 2 dams in northwest Colorado for hydropower and water diversion. Meanwhile the BLM is studying 83 miles of the river above Dinosaur National Monument for possible wild and scenic status. The **Yampa** is the last undammed river in the Colorado Basin and has excellent whitewater in Cross Mountain Canyon. Contact: Ric Alesch, AWA (303-985-8620)

24. Arkansas River, Colorado

Issue: Possible dam, flow and access problems, **wild/scenic study**
Current Status: As appropriate for the nation's most heavily used whitewater river, the Arkansas has almost every river problem in the book. Although the whitewater run is now under State management, nothing in the plan prevents dam construction. The city of Colorado Springs has proposed 2 different dams (the Mount Princeton and Elephant Rock dams) above Buena Vista, each of which would divert up to **1/3** of the river. The **BLM** is studying the river for wild and scenic status, but is ignoring the incredibly scenic Royal Gorge section. Meanwhile, there are access problems galore. Worst of all, in August, Trout Unlimited obtained an injunction in a local court which stopped summer whitewater flows. A major mess!!! Contact: **Ric Alesch**, AWA (303-985-8620)

25. Gunnison, Colorado

Issue: Possible water diversion
Current Status: The AB Lateral Project proposes to divert water from the river near Montrose for hydropower and Arapahoe County proposes to divert water from the upper Gunnison to the front range for municipal water supply (lawn sprinklers). Contact: Ric Alesch, AWA (303-985-8620)

26. Animas River, Colorado

Issue: Possible irrigation diversion
Current Status: The proposed Animas La Plata **Project** would divert water from the river to provide **agricultural** water to farmers south of Durango and for the Ute Indian **Reservation**.
 Contact: Ric **Alesh**, AWA (303-985-8620)

27. Colorado River, Arizona

Issue: Environmental damage downstream of Glen Canyon Dam.
Current Status: AWA has joined with numerous other river groups and environmental organizations to back legislation requiring changes in the Glen Canyon Dam flow regime to reduce environmental damage downstream in the Grand Canyon. A bill has passed the U.S. House of Representatives and is now pending in the Senate. Contact: Kevin Coyle, American Rivers (202-547-6900)

28. East Fork of Owyhee River, Idaho

Issue: A proposed Air Force bombing range supported by governor Cecil Andrus would dose down 150,000 acres between Deep Creek, Battle Creek and the East Fork Owyhee. The East Fork has been found eligible for Federal wild and scenic status, but would be disqualified if it was bombed into oblivion.
Current Status: Local groups are opposing the Air Force plans, but the outcome is uncertain. Contact: Wendy Wilson, Idaho Rivers United (208-343-7481)

29. Falls River, Idaho

Issue: Hydro development in progress



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Current Status: A proposed hydropower project would dewater 7 miles of class III whitewater (and trout habitat). Whitewater groups were caught off-guard by a quiet developer, and the project has already received a FERC license. But the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has not yet issued the required 404 Permit. Boaters were able to get a stop work order issued against continued construction until this permit is filed. Meanwhile another developer has applied for a preliminary permit to build a second project about 5-7 miles upstream. Contact: Wendy Wilson, Idaho Rivers United (208-343-7481)

30. South Fork Salmon River, Idaho

Issue: Over zealous regulation

Current Status: The US Forest Service is requiring private boaters to obtain permits to float the main Salmon after running the South Fork. This is a noncommercial river which offers an overnight kayak trip with no jet boats or commercial raft zoo. But only those with lots of \$\$\$ can fly out or take a jet boat when they reach the main Salmon. Private boaters want the Forest Service to lighten up. Contact: Wendy Wilson, Idaho Rivers United (208-343-7481)

31. Lochsa River, Idaho

Issue: Possible new highway could degrade environment.

Current Status: Retiring U.S. Senator Steve Symms got \$12 million placed in a Senate appropriations bill to enlarge Highway 12 along this popular whitewater run (a national wild and scenic river). If the money is also approved in the House of Representatives, the enlarged road will bring more traffic, congestion, noise and scenic degradation. Contact: Wendy Wilson, Idaho Rivers United (208-343-7481)

32. Elwha River, Washington

Issue: Possible removal of 2 existing hydropower dams

Current Status: Numerous environmental groups are asking that 2 existing hydropower dams (Glines Canyon and Elwha) on this fabulous whitewater river be removed. The park service has studied the removal option and found it feasible. This would set an exciting national precedent which might be followed elsewhere. Environmental groups and the park service argue that one project cannot be relicensed by FERC since it is inside a Olympic National Park. But, FERC is clinging to its reputation for hydromania, and refuses to cede authority to the park service.

Contact: Carol Volk, AWA (206-876-6780)

33. North Fork, Middle Fork Snoqualmie Rivers, Washington

Issue: Access problems

Current Status: Stormy relations between boaters and the Weyerhaeuser Company have led to access problems for boaters at the put-in and take out on the North Fork. Another private landowner temporarily blocked the take-out for the Middle Fork run. Boaters are looking for a new take out to avoid future problems. Contact: Sandie Nelson, Northwest Rivers Council (206-547-7886)

34. Klamath River, Oregon

Issue: Possible hydropower development (Salt Caves Project)

Current Status: The City of Klamath Falls continues to push ahead with this heavily contested project. Numerous environmental groups continue to fight on all fronts. The State has denied a 401 water quality permit on technical grounds, but the FERC may



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ignore this. Federal Wild and Scenic status is still a possibility.
Contact: Bob Doppelt, Oregon Rivers Council

35. American River, California

Issue: Possible construction of Auburn Dam

Current Status: The Auburn Dam proposal is still alive in the form of a **430** foot high expandable flood control **dry** dam with gates. The dam would periodically flood large 35 miles of the North and Middle Forks of the American, and could be converted to a permanent reservoir by merely dosing the gates. Conservationists are backing an alternative river-based national recreation area (like West Virginia's Gauley River NRA) and less expensive and less environmentally damaging methods to solve the flood control problems which do exist with the American River. Contact: Ron Stork, Friends of the River (916-442-3155)

36. Merced River, California

Issue: Possible wild and scenic protection for Lower Merced

Current Status: Designation of the Lower Merced as Wild and Scenic (in addition to the existing 71 miles on the main stem and 43 miles on the South Fork added last Congress) is still being pushed by river conservationists, but is being resisted by the Merced Irrigation District. Meanwhile a giant new dam which would drown the river up to Briceburg has been proposed. Contact: Friends of the River (916-442-3155)

37. Yuba River, California

Issue: Proposed **hydroelectric/flood** control projects

Current Status: The Yuba County Water Agency is collecting

funds for ambitious **hydro/flood** control projects on the North, Middle, and South Forks of the Yuba. Contact: Friends of the River (916-442-3155)

38. Mokelumne River, California

Issue: Proposed hydropower projects.

Current Status: **Amador** County's license application before FERC to build the Devils Nose Dam is still pending and San Joaquin County has obtained a preliminary permit to investigate construction of a Middle Bar Dam. Both dams are environmental nightmares. Contact: Friends of the River (916-442-3155)

39. N.Fork Stanislaus River



Issue: Possible hydropower project

Current Status: The Calaveras Co. Water District and Northern Cal. Power Agency have applied for preliminary permits to build the Ramsey-French Meadows hydro project which would eliminate the Boards Crossing Run on the **N.Fork** of the Stan. Contact: Friends of the River (916-442-3155)

40. Tatshenshni River, Alaska (and Canada)

Issue: Proposed huge copper mine

Current Status: The mine would severely impact the wilderness quality of this amazing wild and beautiful river by dynamiting the top off Windy Craggy Mtn, creating a huge open pit mine, storing 18,500 tons of highly acid waste rock each day in a 4 1/2 mile long reservoir with an earthen dam located on 3 earthquake faults, construct 65 miles of road and two pipelines in a wilderness. Contact: Jack Hession, AWA & Sierra Club (907-276-4048)

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Gauley Season sparks old stories

Compiled by **LEE BELKNAP**

Around boaters' campfires you hear stories--lots of them. In the East, one river keeps turning up: the Gauley.

The Gauley is many things to many people. To many it is a place to prove themselves against the next level of difficulty. To others, it's a place to find an adrenalin rush or two. And then there are others who just come to be entertained both on and off the river.

To me, the Gauley is a magical place. For one thing, everything about it is big. From the East's largest earthen dam rising 500 feet above the river to the mansion-sized rocks with potholes in their tops as if to say "Look how much water regularly went through here before the dam."

The rapids on the Gauley are big--yet not so unforgiving as some other Appalachian rivers. Still, they demand a great deal of respect.

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The Old Days

Back in the old days there was more adventure to a Gauley trip than there is today. In a way, today's paddlers are a little deprived when they are able to make Sunday runs in warm weather and then hop in the car and drive the interstates

home.

Part of the adventure once included getting there. For Southerners, there was the West Virginia Jobs Program--recently renamed the West Virginia Turnpike. This perpetual non-motion machine was started in the 50's and slowed Gauley season traffic through the mid 80's. We didn't really mind though, as a friend once overheard on his CB, "You should have seen the old road."

I can't remember who's campfire I was at in the early 80's when I heard a story about a group who allowed a fellow passenger to navigate a shortcut to the river. "I've got the greatest shortcut" he says. "Just get off the interstate here." The van left the four-lane and went up and over the mountain, down a valley or two, up over another mountain, and then after an hour or two, they crossed another interstate. So far so good.

A couple of more hills and another hour brought them to still another four-lane highway. The shortcut came alongside of it, then went back up the hill. They waved at a hitch hiker up on the four-lane as they sped by.

Twenty or thirty minutes later, they came back down from the top of yet another mountain and saw another four-lane. They waved to the same hitch hiker... Then they tore up the map and banished the navigator to sit in the boat tied to the roof for



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the rest of the November drive. (I'm not sure, but the boats may have been stacked on their sides).

The Shuttle

Back then, river success was even more difficult than it is now, especially if one wanted to take out of the Upper at the end of the day. Back then, Peters Creek was one of the few available choices.

The railroad tunnel at Peters Creek was always a treat, especially when you hadn't planned on using it and had thus left your waterproof flashlight in the car in November, after 6 pm. The five guys carrying a raft ahead of you, and the dozen other boaters in the tunnel were never enough to diminish even the greatest train lover's fear of trains. Nobody's ever told me firsthand what it would be like, but apparently it has happened sans raft.

One sunset, after safely completing the mile-long hike at Peters Creek, a work train came creeping by. I'd never seen anything like it. This train was grinding the tracks to that proper 'round' shape that railroad rails are supposed to have. A shower of sparks sprayed from the wheels. There was an engine and two cars with 26 grinding wheels each. A tank car with two men on the back, hosing down the brush, completed the procession.

Only weeks later did I remember that the tracks from Peters Creek led down to the tunnel by the river and I wondered if the shower of sparks helped illuminate the tunnel for any straggling paddlers.

On my very first takeout up Panther Creek, I would have laughed at anyone who foresaw its present popularity. But a couple of years later, it became a normally acceptable access point to the river.

Stunts, the cable car, and other horrors

Back before the Government would admit to the existence of a "Gauley Season" for whitewater boaters, there was more room for occasional extra-legal activities. One story I heard from reliable witnesses was that of someone who called himself "Danger Bob". This guy had the ability to ignore common sense and do alligator entries above the jets of water being released from the dam. The results were apparently spectacular, and he repeated the stunt several times before Danger Bob faded back into the crowd.

Another story came to my attention while working on this piece, but none of the personalities involved would own up to their participation--presumably to avoid incarceration or commitment.

Lacking a willing source, I'll recount the episode second-hand as it was

told to me to preserve the character's anonymity:

"Just out of college and in my first real job, I had been bitten by the Gauley bug a few years earlier and had returned each year to enjoy the challenge of the Upper Gauley, the serious party that always occurred at the Gauley River Festival, and the easier day of play boating on the Lower Gauley and on the New River Gorge. Vacation planning had turned vicious that year, with my plans shifted by a boss that didn't understand that I had to

have the week off that the Gauley Festival was on.

"I found myself on the road alone that year, with no plans but to head to the Gauley and find someone to paddle with. I arrived late that night to camp in the dam parking lot, a campfire glowing with a dozen or so hard core river-rats guzzling whiskey and swapping stories in a serious Southern drawl. Preparing for the worst, I pulled a fifth of Jose Cuervo and a fifth of Jack Daniels from the trunk and headed for the commotion, fully aware of what I thought

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would be the peril of being a Yankee in the southern West Virginia court of the Gauley.

"I took a swig of the tequila and passed it along. Where you from? Connecticut, I belched. Hmmm. You smoke the good stuff, I asked, preferring a dull glazing to a hangover. Yep. The ice was broken, the gifts of good smoke and hard liquor bridging the gap across the Mason-Dixon line. I was in.

"I paddled that week with some of the finest paddlers I had met anywhere. They were in boats that I thought radical at

the time, a Millennium Falcon and a cut-down Prijon '82 and other exotic river craft. I was in a beat-up [Dancer. A lot of great things had happened on the river that week, including a scary trip up behind the tubes. But the two things I remembered most were incidents that occurred off the river: the tour of the dam tubes and the cable car ride.

"It was late at night. Our attitudes were properly adjusted for adventure, and we quickly scaled the fence next to the thundering tubes, vaulting the barbed wire

with the Mission Impossible theme song whistling through our heads. We crept low towards the ladders and open air intakes atop the outlet tubes. There were no signs of Rangers, Army Corps officers, or of anybody. We had the place to ourselves.

"The air was rushing headlong down the intake shafts, my knuckles gripped white against the weathered iron ladder rungs. I felt my feet touch cold concrete; I held onto the ladder rungs to avoid being sucked into the fan-shaped aerators that mixed air with the water sucked out of Summerville Lake. We took turns touching the fan jet of water with our fingertips, surprised at the heat and friction burn that resulted. It was a deafening, wild place and we each wondered how many bits our bodies would be blown into if we let go of the ladder rungs. I climbed out before I had the chance to find out.

"We were all pretty wound up when a couple of guys decided to let us all in on a little secret: there was a cable car and wire that spanned the river just beyond the parking lot, and they had succeeded in freeing the cable car earlier and had taken a test ride. How about a spin? We scrambled down the rip-rap to the river left side of the cable, strung 60 feet above Entrance Rapid. Four of us climbed in, the safety chain was fastened, and we pushed off, the cable screaming through the pulleys. Yelps and yahoos met the G-forces at the bottom of the cable, and we glided through the darkness close to the other end of the cable, ratcheting the car up the remaining slope with the hand bar. Swoosh!

"We screamed back and forth a few more times, adrenaline junkies fixed on fear, white knuckles gripping the safety rail. And like any junkie, we wanted more excitement, more fear. Soon, we were beginning to bounce the car as we sped back and forth. "What is the cable breaks!" my alter ego screamed across my synapses.

"The next plateau was reached when we began bouncing and swinging the car during our low orbit flights. It was like a religious experience: instead of fearing and dreading the fact that I was definitely going to die as the cable broke to scatter us 60 feet over the Entrance Rapid rocks, I began to say, "Screw it, if I'm going to die, I might as well enjoy myself on the way."

"To this day--I have yet to have a similar experience in which the threshold of abject fear was reached and broken in the name of pure screaming fun."

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Information needed for river plan

NPS to conduct Gauley paddling survey

The National Park Service will be conducting a river use survey on the Gauley River this fall. The purpose is to determine patterns and levels of commercial and private use at all existing river access points.

This information is needed for the General Management Plan and the accompanying Environmental Impact Statement being prepared for the NRA. These documents will guide NPS planners and managers in determining what development and land acquisition alternatives to consider for this new unit of the NPS (established in 1988).

Each Saturday during the six consecutive Gauley weekends, NPS personnel will be stationed at Summersville Dam, Panther Creek, Woods Ferry, Bucklick, Koontz Bend, Peters Creek, Swiss and Jodie. Each launching craft will be assigned a number attached to a wrist band worn by one person per craft. The wrist band will be collected wherever the craft takes off the river. This will provide an accurate method of determining trip length

and tracking entry and exit points.

Three questions will be asked at the launch site:

1. Is the trip commercial or private?
2. If commercial, what is the company's name?
3. What is your zip code?

Three questions will be asked at the take-out site:

1. Where did you eat lunch today?
2. If you camped overnight, where did you stay?
3. Where would you prefer to see

public launching and take-out facilities located in the Middle Gorge?

The last question is particularly important for private boaters to answer. Except for the public access located immediately below the Summersville Dam, all other existing access points in the Middle Gorge and near the town of Swiss are owned by the commercial outfitters. Acquiring one or more of these sites is a priority: the situation is particularly critical

because there are no public roads that access the river anywhere between the dam and Swiss.

Commercial companies who do not own land in the NRA pay access fees to landowners. Private boaters who put on or take off the river in the middle section are trespassing as they climb extremely steep slopes or walk along railroad tracks or trails carrying kayaks and related gear to their vehicles. Conflicts have occurred between the private and commercial boaters over vehicle parking and use of the private access areas.

Although the NPS has no regulatory authority over the numbers of people using the Gauley (the enabling legislation directed that the state would regulate all commercial watercraft services), it does have responsibility for land based services, such as providing public access to the river, changing facilities, etc.

If you are paddling the Gauley this fall on a Saturday the Park Service asks that you cooperate with their personnel



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doing the survey and take the time to give thoughtful answers. The Park Service is trying to streamline the survey so that there will be no launching delays and only 60 seconds should be required to retrieve the wrist bands and ask question 4, 5 and 6.

If you will not be on the Gauley, the NPS would still like your input regarding the development and facilities that you feel should be considered for the Gauley. Written comments should be sent to the Superintendent, New River Gorge National River, P.O. box 246, Glen Jean, West Virginia 25846.

Another avenue for input is via the noncommercial whitewater boating organization representative on the Gauley River NRA Advisory Committee, Kim Castro. His address is Route 2, Box 280, Fayetteville, West Virginia 25840.

The enabling legislation for the NRA directed that an Advisory Committee be established to consult with the NPS on "matters relating to development of a management plan for the recreation area and implementation of such plan". This Committee is expected to have its first meeting late this fall or early in 1992.

AWA Safety Survey identifies Gauley boating hazards

By DAVID WALLACE

The AWA "Close Calls and Serious Injury Survey" included 17 reports of separate non-fatal accidents which occurred on the Upper Gauley between 1980-1990. No reports were received on the Lower Gauley. Most of the Gauley reports were filed by "experienced" paddlers, though many were unfamiliar with the river itself.

Vertical and horizontal pins accounted for almost half of the incidents (8), while entrapment in rock sieves accounted for three more. Sixty-five percent of the Gauley accidents fell into these categories. The rapids most often named were Initiation (4 people), Lost Paddle (4 people), Conestoga (2 people) and House Rock (2 people). No deaths were reported to the survey, but in the past, deaths have occurred at Initiation, Lost Paddle and Conestoga.

The most typical scenario reported

was a paddler attempting the river for the first time and following a more experienced boater without scouting. The victim either 'lost their way' or was not aware of the safest line. Almost half cited 'unseen obstacles' and 80% cited 'bad judgement' as contributing factors.

Reviewing the data suggests that the Gauley is no place for swimmers, boaters out of control or off their line. The rapids mentioned here are particularly unforgiving and paddlers would make sure they know the correct routes before they attempt these rapids. Many advanced and expert boaters are reticent to get out of their boats and scout and prefer to play follow-the-leader, but receiving detailed routing instruction and/or scouting before tackling these rapids would seem prudent.

Full results of the national survey with a detailed analysis will be included in an upcoming issue of American Whitewater.



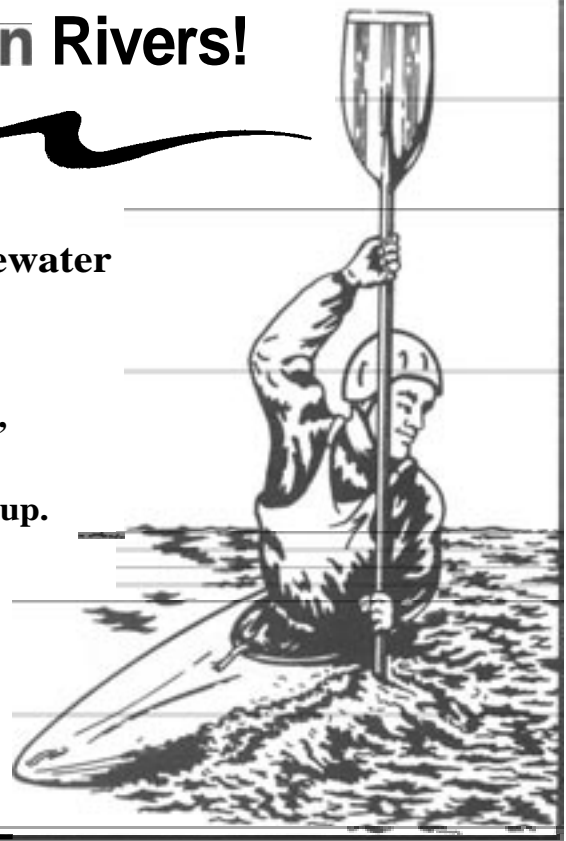
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Great Fall race: a class VI sprint

By BISHOP WHEEL

Great Falls of the Potomac. It's a site of spectacular beauty, the kind of place that shows up on the Sierra Club Calendar. But scenery is not what interests the whitewater maniacs who specialize in running the amazing cascades of whitewater which crash through this rocky gorge. This is class VVI whitewater within a 1/2 hour drive of more than a million people.

There is a lot of whitewater on the Potomac Falls line, even at low water. It all starts with a bang, right at Great Falls National Park. There are four runs right here: the Virginia side, the Maryland side, the gorge through the island, and the "fish ladder". The water level is critical for each of these runs, and in normal late summer flows (between 3.1 and 2.7 on the Little Falls gauge) it's the Virginia side that really attracts the hard core whitewater maniac.

The Virginia side of Great Falls is exciting whitewater in an incredibly beautiful setting, but a lot of ugly things could happen to a paddler here. The total drop is equivalent to a 5-story building (more than 55 feet), broken into roughly 3 major rapids. The two upper rapids (U Hole and S Turn) are complex class V drops. The finale is an almost sheer 22-foot falls (the Spout) which tilts imperceptibly to the right.

Unfortunately for the hapless boater who fails to power out far enough to the river-left side of this monster, most of the water crashes down on to a massive boulder thrusting out from river left. Another rock protrudes slightly out from the wall behind the center of the drop, hidden by the liquid white veil crashing noisily over the falls. Boats have been broken in half here when their stern hits this hidden rock.

NO PLACE TO SWIM

Terrifying swims- mostly through subaqueous darkness- have been known to occur, both in the bottom falls and in the drop above the falls. Swims are especially dramatic at high levels (above 3.1 on the Little Falls Gauge).

Photos always show boaters dropping dramatically off into space from the bottom drop (the Spout), usually with very intense expressions. The Spout is a classic photo opportunity, but the upper two drops are more complex, if less dramatic, whitewater.

The usual route through the top drop is a tight, steep, rocky, winding stair-

cuse barely wide enough for a kayak. It requires precise moves at every stage. Pins are a definite possibility. The exit is so narrow that kayakers have to lift their paddles vertically to avoid being hung out to dry with a paddle hooked on the left and right rocks. Some boaters (and ALL open boaters- even Nolan Whitesell) sneak the top drop by taking a less confined route around the far right which drops into a big soft foam pile. This takes longer and usually results in a flip and roll in aerated water at the bottom.

The second drop (S Turn) is long, wet, and complex with holes, pillowed boulders and a slightly unpredictable character. No one seems to run it the same way twice. Low volume boats do exquisite pirouettes here on their tails. Failure to brace hard at exactly the right moment could lead to a dump and MANDATORY roll not many yards above the 22 foot Spout.

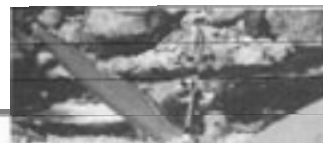
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BRIEFS

fear is so strong you can almost smell it. It all looks more or less reasonable scouting from the shore, but when you finally **clamber** up the Flake, past the hornets nest, to the top, get in your boat, and look downstream, all you can see is the lip of the top drop, big rocky walls, and blue sky. The maelstrom of white froth downstream is entirely out-of-sight.

ITS NO FUN IF YOU AREN'T SCARED

Why would anyone want to boat in this frightening place? Is it really fun? Or is there some strange perversion which causes us to be attracted to hostile places like this with danger written all over them?

These are the kinds of thoughts that go through your mind—at least they go through your mind before your first or second or third run. After 3 or 4 runs, you are more or less brain dead and no questions come to mind.

SHRINK EXPLAINS BEHAVIOR

Psychiatrist Park Dietz, an expert on sado-masochism, explains that what makes whitewater boaters tick is more or less the same thing as what makes someone a sex killer. According to Dietz, 'people who do dangerous sports, like **bungee-jumping** or sky diving, will tell you that they are really quite terrified when they first do it.

But quite rapidly, the experience changes fear into ecstasy, often all at once, and you get hooked. A totally averse reaction becomes an addiction."

Although no one has yet detected a statistical link between whitewater boater and ax murderers, there probably is something to Dietz's theory. The number of Great Falls addicts has been growing. So many are now addicted that a race has to be held to sort out who is who and establish a pecking order. This year 23 addicts showed up. Some **compulsive** veterans had more than 50 trips through the falls under their belt.

RACE ATMOSPHERE INTENSE

Even with a very high level of expertise (and testosterone) in evidence among the participants, the race atmosphere added an additional element of intensity. The need to go fast. It cuts out the eddies, the rest stops, and precise gauging of each stroke. Predictably, there were a few exciting moments.

One veteran C-1 paddler (a survivor of several exciting high water swims in the spout) hit a **rock** at the top of the second drop and lost his grip on his paddle. He then proceeded to run the entire drop in true Boater-Out-of-Control mode: Look Mom-

No paddle!

Another Great Falls addict (known locally as "Copter Man" because of his frequent flyer status with the helicopter rescue squad on the Potomac) blew his spray skirt in the second drop. Unfazed by this catastrophe, he was so fired up he nearly ran the Spout with a boat full of water. Fortunately, Tom **McEwan** (one of the safety boaters), quickly and forcefully injected a dose of sanity and prevented that particular interesting event from taking place.

Then there was a well-known C-1 racer (many times world champion slalomist) who attacked the top drop **so fast** and furiously in a low-volume race boat that he slammed into one of the upper rocks and pinned forcefully against it. Fortunately, after a few moments of anxiety and some peculiar paddle work, he managed to pry himself **free** and fired off downstream, none the worse for wear (physically at least).

CROWDS PRESENT PROBLEMS

Having a boat wreck in Great Falls of the Potomac is the worst nightmare for many D.C.-area boaters. Still the biggest **worry** D.C. paddlers now have at the falls is a universal nightmare: river access **restrictions**.

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According to Great Falls Park spokesperson, Jane Anderson, the 1991 race attracted a huge **crowd** of over 300 people to the adjacent national park on the Virginia shore. The view was outstanding, but probably as dangerous for the spectators as for race participants. Hundreds of spectators were perched all over rocks that national park service would like to see no one ever get near. Needless to say, the park service officials were NOT happy campers. Their tempers were not improved by the **fact** that they learned about the race through an **article** published 3 days ahead of time in the Washington Post.

Park service personnel complained that there was no permit for the race, commercial hucksters were selling T-shirts in the park without permission, and numerous park service regulations were openly flaunted by race organizers. Expecting a low-key event, virtually no park service personnel were on duty at the early morning race time to handle the **crowds**. By the time the park opened and was fully staffed, everyone was on their way out.

The big worry here is that the park service will press for more restrictions on boaters running falls. Even now, boaters are not permitted to put in from the Virginia

shore above the falls. Everyone is forced put in down stream and climb over treacherous rocks in the center of the river or enter from the inconvenient **Maryland** shore. More than one **boater** the author included has been injured by falling from these rocks on his way to the top.

In addition, under an informal agreement between the park service and local boaters, running the falls is off limits between 9:00 AM and 6:00 PM. Moreover, each person running falls must be registered with the State of Maryland Boating Administration so that his organs can be donated should he fail to successfully navigate the course.

Hopefully, the race next year- if there is a race- will be more of a low key event at least so far as spectators are concerned. Otherwise a major park service **crack** down is inevitable.

RACE RESULTS

1st: Nelson Oldham, Washington, D.C.

2nd: Billy Bob Taylor, Falls Church, Va.

3rd: Allen Roberts, Great Britain



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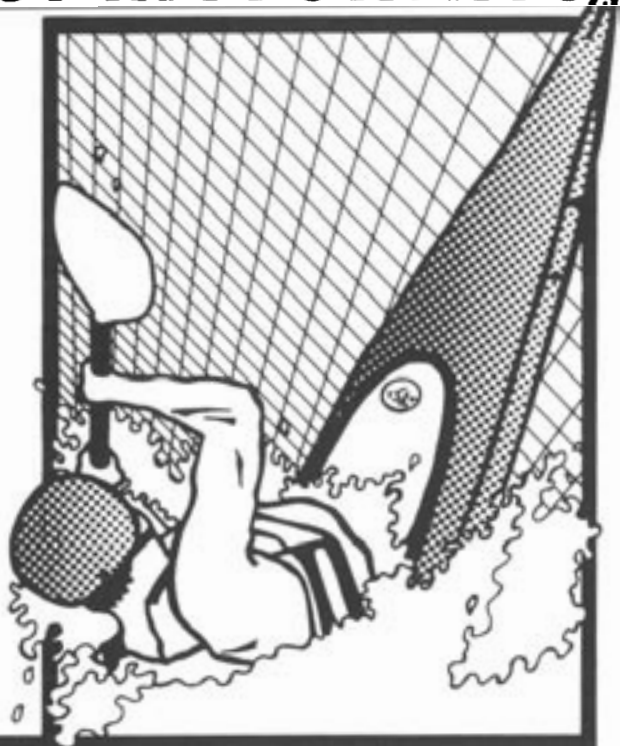


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What is a boater to do?

At first, I chased all the sputtering swimmers, towed out the stranded tubers, and gave ropes and directions to unpin boats. After a while, I began to realize that most people would survive without me...I developed the under-12 rule.



River mayhem! *How much* assistance should boaters render to out-of-control whitewater novices in marginal equipment?

It is true that being a Texas **kayaker** is somewhat of an oxymoron. Most of **Texas** is flat, and what isn't flat is usually dry. We rely mostly on out-of-state adventures and a few really good floods to sustain us. Needless to say, most Texans have little familiarity with whitewater. I have concluded that, by and large, the two don't mix well.

My favorite **playspot** is a little side-surf hole below Waco Falls on the Guadalupe River. It's not much, but it's the best we can do. The Guad is narrow and cold at that point, fed from the bottom of the dam-made lake a few miles upstream. The river release rates are determined by a formula guarded with the same secrecy given the recipe for Coke and with no regard for recreational use. Suffice to say, with some rain, demands from the rice farmers, and the proper alignment of the planets, the dam release will get up to a whopping 550 cfs and my **playspot** will appear. And so do the whitewater wannabees.

On the whole, central Texans are wonderful people, but they have no idea what to do in moving water. Their whitewater experience is limited to Astroworld. Herds of Bubbas and Bubbettes, soon to be drunk and painfully

sunburned, descend on the various river vendors for tubes, canoes, duckies, and rafts. K-Mart is probably the most popular supplier of private river craft. Life jackets are rarely seen and swimming abilities, especially after numerous Lone Stars, are generally limited.

Waco Falls has taken a number of lives. Most survive the wrapped canoes and pinned rafts, although rescue techniques used are hair-raising. The swimmers, whether in tubes or flushed out of their **canoes/rafts/duckies**, get hammered. On river right, they go down the main chute over a four-foot drop, get flushed to the bottom, and eventually pop out to float out the rapid or, worse, get **recirculated into the eddy**. There they cling to the big rock in the center of the river, shivering, coughing, stripped of their shades (retrieval of which is a **cottage-industry** among enterprising scuba divers), beers, **gimme-caps**, and cigarettes, unwilling to jump back into the current to flush down stream. If they end up on river left, they go over the drop into the rocks and then, bruised and disoriented, float into my hole for a spin. Of course, they all try to stand up as soon as possible. **Foot-entrapment** is usually responsible for the fatalities at this spot.

By **CAROLYN PORTER**

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What is a boater to do? At first, I chased all the sputtering swimmers, towed out the stranded tubers, and gave ropes and directions to unpin boats. After a while, I began to realize that most people would survive without me and I wasn't getting to play much. Overwhelmed by the hourly pinnings and deluge of tubers, I developed the under-12 rule.

How does the under-12 rule work? Unless you are under 12 years old, you probably will not be chased by me. I might scream suggestions to you (which you usually ignore anyway), but I'll wait until you are in real danger to intervene. I'll also try to move out of the hole as you float into it. I hate the thunk of someone's head on the underside of my boat.

If you are under 12, I will do my best. I am angry that parents put their kids in frightening and dangerous situations. I want kids to enjoy their day on the river, not have nightmares about it. Two incidents come to mind and are all too typical.

While happily surfing on day, I looked up to see two kids in a K-Mart coffin drifting sideways towards the Falls. The little girl and slightly older boy were far ahead of Mom and Dad. As the kid's raft flipped at the bottom of the drop, the

little girl went right to the bottom and, without a life jacket, stayed a bit before popping up. Her brother was dunked too and struggled to reach his sister in the shockingly cold water. I got to her and, as so many kids do, she climbed on top of the boat and held my waist. She would have stood on my head if she thought it would help her escape the cold water. A friend gave the nose of his boat to the brother and we got them to shore for a family reunion. Mom was hysterical, having taken a swim of her own, but seemed most concerned about locating the family's toy poodle which had washed to the opposite bank.

Another day saw a father and his son, about 8, flip their aluminum canoe above the Falls on river left. Over the drop they went, onto the rocks, the heavy canoe landing on top of the boy. At least they had life jackets on. I scraped the boy off my boat and onto the shore, where he stood shivering and crying, his legs bruised and scraped. His father never thanked me or the other kayakers who retrieved his child, boat, paddles, and possessions. Instead, he berated his son to "stop bawling" and get in. They paddled off towards Slumber Falls...but that is another story.

Shoulder dislocations: painful injury

By STANLEY B. BURBANK

When I first started paddling I heard that shoulder dislocations were one of the more common injuries in our sport. Fortunately, I have yet to see one on the river, but I've handled enough to know how serious and difficult they can be to treat in the field.

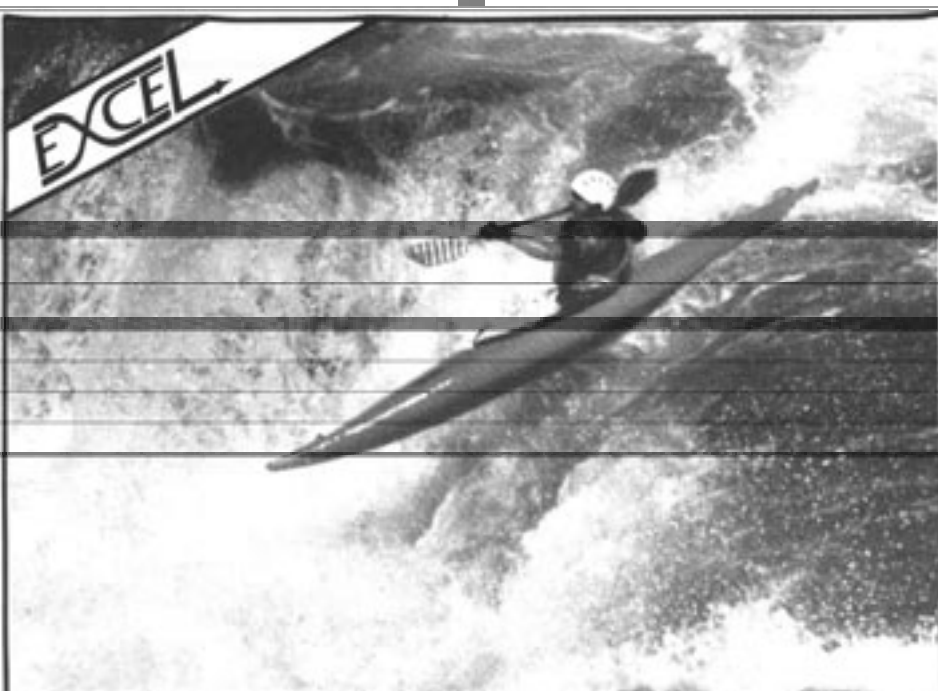
If you have a choice, a good broken bone is preferable to a dislocation any day.

A simple fracture is easy to move into splinting position and when splinted, the patient's pain is significantly reduced. Dislocations, on the other hand, usually can't be moved at all and the patient is in intense pain during transportation.

A shoulder dislocation is the displacement of the bone end from the joint, usually as a result of a fall. The head of the

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humerus levers out of its socket, stretching the joint capsule. I kayaking I would expect, a fall on an over extended high brace would do the job nicely.

Some paddlers have recurrent shoulder dislocations. Each time it dislocates it stretches the joint capsule further, making it easier to dislocate the next time. One of my paddling buddies has the surgeon's scars on both shoulders where they had to take a couple extra tucks to prevent further problems.

The signs of a dislocation are obvious deformity and severe pain. The dislocated head of the humerus can sometimes be felt in the patient's arm pit. The shoulder will look more square than round and the patient will definitely not want you to touch him or move him.

Emergency care consists of stabilizing the injury in the position found for transportation to the hospital. If there's anything about dealing with dislocations that can be described as remotely enjoyable, it would be the challenge of finding a way to immobilize the usually outstretched arm so as not to let it bounce and sway.

One of the neatest methods I've

seen is to bend the lower arm (if possible) so that the hand can be tied to the patient's head or helmet with some padding between the upper arm and the body. This works well but such positioning isn't always possible.

A canoe paddle can also be used to support the arm but this is usually a little too straight for most dislocations.

I carry a six-inch wide roll of 4x4 hardware cloth which can be molded to almost any angle, padded and affixed to the body and arm.

Each dislocation presents its own different immobilization challenge. The important thing to remember is the slightest movement of the extended arm will induce severe pain and possibly do further damage. For that reason, whatever method you devise must be secure and it should be simple enough so as not to do further damage while the arm is being mobilized.

Before beginning immobilization make sure you have a pulse in the wrist below the injury. If none is found, press on the thumb nail until it turns white and release, if it takes more than just a couple of seconds for normal color to return the dislocation is causing a circulation prob-

lem which must be corrected immediately. This can usually be corrected by rotating the hand and wrist only enough to renew circulation. If this proves unsuccessful you may need to take more drastic action as explained in this article.

Once the injury has been stabilized, treat for shock and transport to the nearest hospital as soon as possible. The patient is usually more comfortable in a sitting position rather than prone.

This is the standard procedure for dislocations but when a dislocation is splinted in the position found circulation is often impaired so when medical help is more than a few hours away there can be justification of attempting to realign the dislocation. Alignment usually provides significant relief from pain and may prevent future disability.

Realignment works best when attempted immediately after the dislocation.

The following two methods for realignment are suggested in the National Sci. Patrol's Outdoor Emergency Care Manual.

1. Have the patient lie prone on an elevated platform such as a large rock.



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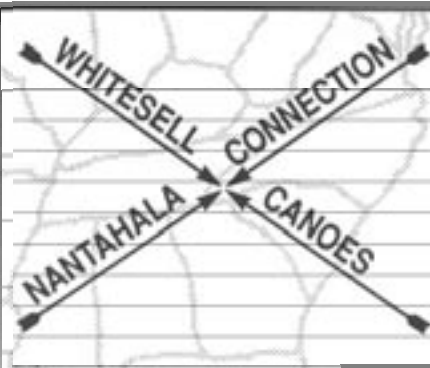
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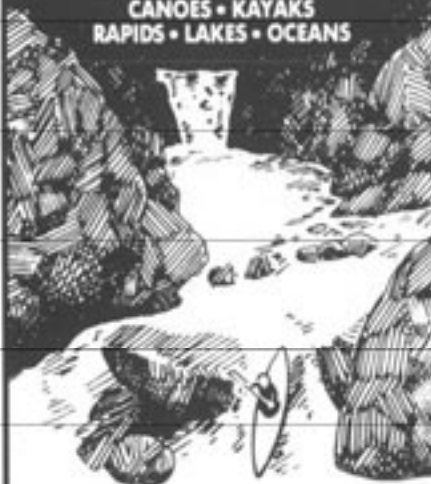
or log, high enough to allow the injured extremity to hang free. Tie a 10-pound weight to the patient's wrist. The gradual pull usually will relocate the shoulder within one to one-and-one-half hours.

2. The patient sits on the ground with the rescuer kneeling, facing the patient's side. An assistant sits behind the patient opposite the rescuer and anchors patient by wrapping both arms around the patient's chest. The rescuer ties two cravats together to make a large loop and slips the loop around his or her waist. The loop should be large enough so that it can be pulled out in front of the waist about a foot. The rescuer then grasps the patient's injured arm in both hands and flexes the patient's elbow to a right angle. The loop around the rescuer's waist is slipped over the patient's hand and worked down to where it is just below the elbow. Keeping the patient's forearm bent with both hands, the rescuer slowly leans backwards while the assistant applies countertraction in the opposite direction. The shoulder should slip back into place.

Remember this is for emergency use only, the best first aid is accident avoidance. Practice your low brace and I'll see you on the river.

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Not as smart as the average bear

By RICK DAVIS

Like a pet that resembles its owner, Scuzzy and his raft were **spittin'** images of each other.

Many years ago, when it was new, Scuzzy's craft was a proud, bold vessel. But, like everything that passes through Scuzzy's hands, a subtle metamorphosis had taken place. Now, it was a battered, tired, amorphous, motley mass of **decay-**ing rubber afflicted with a **festering, terminal** rash of **multi-colored** patches. And yet, despite the countless hours Scuzzy had spent performing painstaking shadetree surgery, his raft still had a leak or two.

"I think I found them, though," he said. "Now, if that window caulk holds up like it should, we'll be alright."

Whether or not it was Scuzzy's idea to organize the Pilgrimage down the Snake river was never **determined**. Certainly everybody blamed him for it.

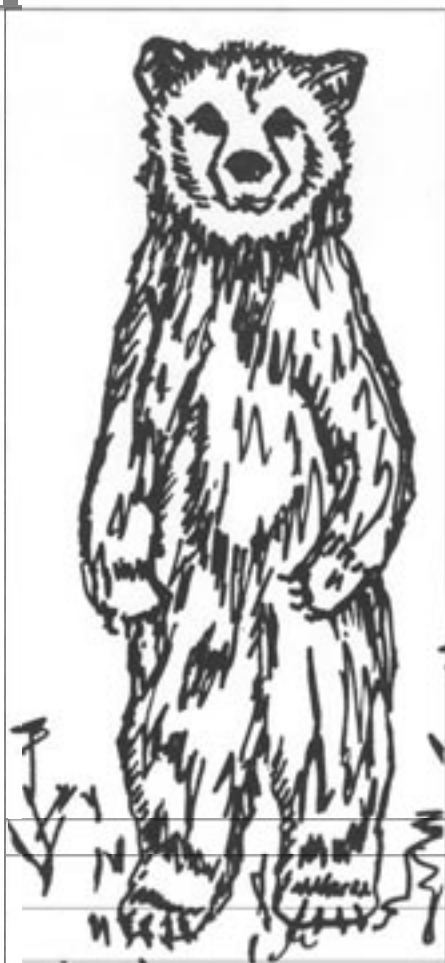
Scuzzy's real name was Steve Miller, and he hailed from **Chillicothe**, Ohio. For the record, Scuzzy was a **carpenter**, not that it's **important—at least as far as he was concerned**: **Scuzzy** subscribed to a simple, subtly profound philosophy of life.

"My idea of a greedy man," he said, "is somebody who goes to work on Monday morning with five dollars in his pocket."

There was nothing subtle about Scuzzy, who didn't get his nickname by chance. He was six feet tall with a **scraggly** reddish brown beard and an ever expanding beer belly. He kept his long hair matted haphazardly beneath a greasy baseball cap, and when he was on the river his usual attire was cutoff blue jeans (no belt or underwear), a moth eaten T shirt and a pair of old, **wornout** tennis shoes, held together by several rotting layers of duct tape.

He loved to smoke plastic-tipped **El Stinko** cigars, though sometimes he chewed tobacco, and he constantly spat and **swore**. He had no faults that I could ascertain.

Having made hundreds of trips down all **kinds of** rivers through the years, Scuzzy had become an expert at loading his raft. In fact, he was **so** good at it that it hardly took him ten minutes to "arrange" all the equipment our eight man party would need for our two day expedition through Hell's Canyon.



art by Nancy Sklavos

When all was said and done, **we** could only stare speechlessly at what **surely** had to be **the Eighth Wonder of the World**, **what** with all the ropes crisscrossing haphazardly over the teetering haystack of gear, lashed down with dubious looking **"expert seaman's"** knots. The whole rig looked more like a garbage **scow**, with an ever so slight list, than a support raft. **Sobek...eat your heart out!**

"We're going to have to **watch ourselves** going through Wild Sheep and **Granite**," Scuzzy said, "but I think we'll be alright." And **so**, with a hearty cheer and several hastily concocted prayers, three **kayaks**, one canoe and a four man **raft** peeled out from under the looming **monolith** of Hell's Canyon Dam and **started** down the infamous Snake River.

Now, before one **begins to question** the sanity of those who chose to **participate** in this venture, captained by **aging river rat** named Scuzzy, we must **remember** that there is truth to the old

adage, "Birds of a feather, flock together." **Collectively**, this was as zany a **bunch** of dodoes I'd ever had the pleasure of paddling with.

Meet our next character, Slick. Known as Mike **Hottinger** outside paddling circles, Slick was the one who had **conned** me into this trip. At the time I didn't really know Slick very well. I knew he was originally from **Chillicothe** and that he had been good friends with **Scuzzy** for years.

We'd met several months earlier at a kayakers' clinic in North Carolina. But, being as we both resided in Jacksonville, Florida, an area not renowned for whitewater, I knew **that we were both** ab initio. And so it seemed we had enough in common to warrant a three thousand mile journey to Hell's Canyon.

I still don't know how Slick got his nickname, but I started to understand why he had it when he pulled his rust eaten van into my driveway, three hours late, to pick me up for our trip.

"We might have a little problem," he said casually, as we began loading my gear.

"Problem?"

"Yea My gas **tank** started leaking last weekend. I think I fixed it, though. I wedged a beer can tab in there and it stopped—more or less."

It turned out to be more than less. In fact, about \$200 more, which is how much extra we spent on gas than anticipated.

Then there was John Bolger. Rounding out our triumvirate of kayakers and another Ohioan, he had no need of a nickname. I had no reason to doubt John's credentials, especially after Slick assured me that John was an excellent paddler who routinely tackled **the Gauley** and New rivers and had participated in several Canadian expeditions.

I had never met John before, but one look at his kayak told me he was a no-nonsense kind of guy. The first thing I noticed was the absence of grab loops.

"Hey Slick," I whispered. "Why doesn't he have any grab loops?"

"I don't know. I guess it's because he doesn't want anyone grabbing his boat."

"Oh."

The next thing I noticed about John's boat was his unique "flex" outfitting. Every time he emptied the boat of water, the seat, pillars (styrofoam, no less)

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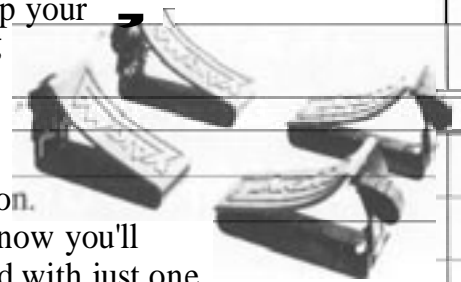
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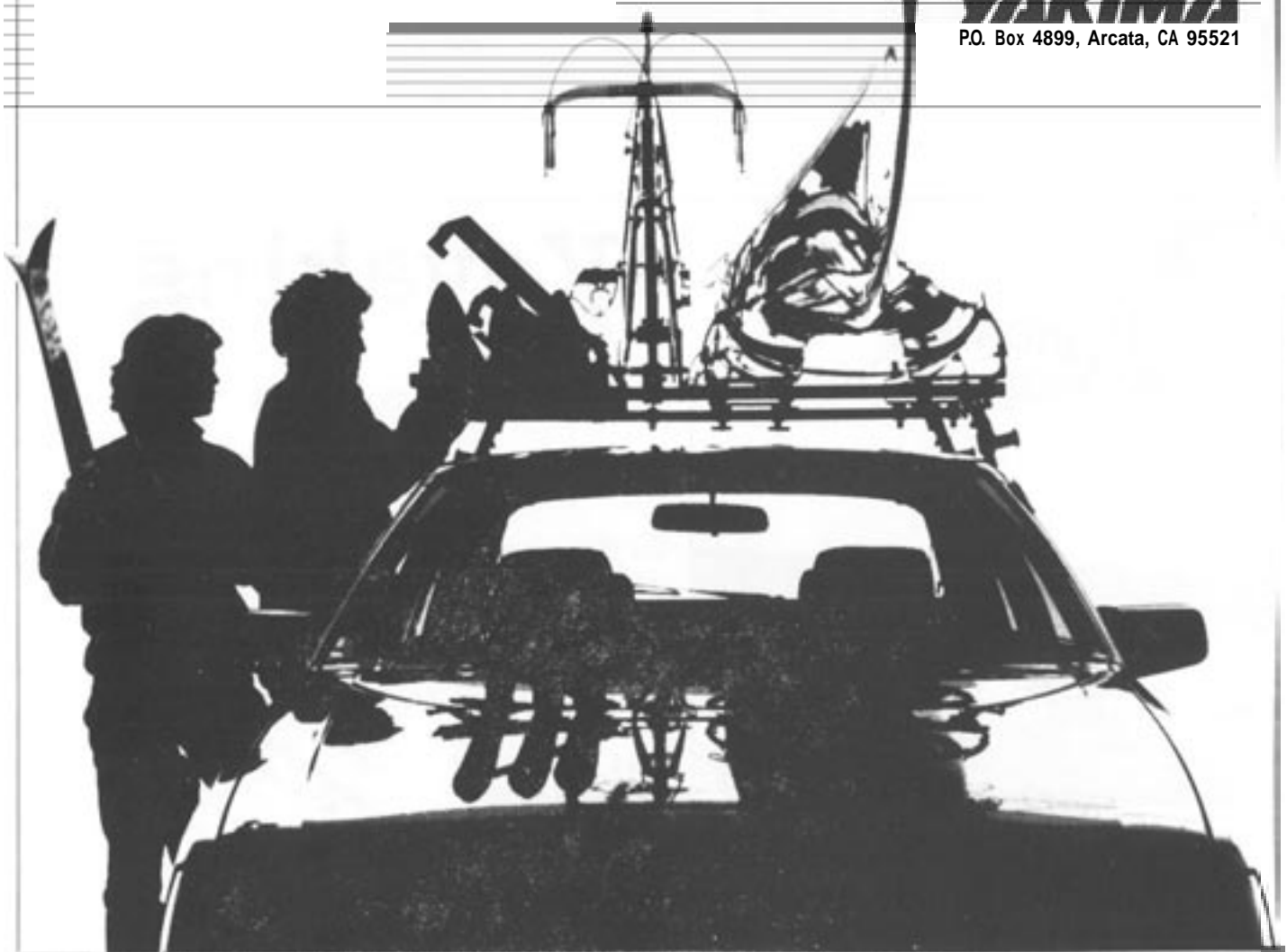
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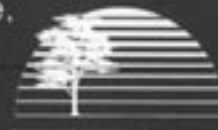
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and anything else he had packed away tumbled out.

"Hey, Slick How can he paddle with everything loose in there?"

"I don't know."

Now meet Hank **Lewis**. Another Chillicothe inhabitant, who commandeered the canoe.

Hank was a **tall, lanky** man, given to beer drinking and cigar **smoking**. I had seen him in action on the New, where he was known for screaming things like, "Sweet, Jesus... here I come!", when he swamped and swam rapids **like** Double Z. Sometimes, when he was feeling extra frisky, he would just **run** rapids backwards.

Manning the raft with Scuzzy were brothers Jim and John Cox of Connecticut and New York, respectively.

Rounding out the party was **Rags**, an Ohio prison guard. He was a mountain of a man, at least **6'3"** and 225 pounds, and a menacing figure, as Slick would soon find out. **Unwittingly, the eight of us were** about to test the limits of our courage, endurance and will to survive.

For all we **knew**, we were embarking on a 48 hour joy ride down a river that carved its way through the deepest gorge in North America, a beautiful, rugged canyon, teeming with wildlife. And the scenery was magnificent. The steep, brown, eroded walls of the canyon towered majestically over us. The deer and the bear foraged along the shore. Hawks and other fowl cruised leisurely above us, silhouetted against the blue sky above the canyon's high line.

But the sun doesn't long shine in the **7,000** foot deep canyon and it wasn't long before the cool, lavender shadows of evening began to lengthen. After paddling about seven miles, we decided to eddy out above Wild Sheep Rapid.

We elected to cook dinner on the rocky bank on the Oregon side and **set** up camp in a gently sloping meadow about **1000 yards** inland. We'd seen several bears that day and this seemed the prudent thing to do.

"Don't want to be sleeping where you're **cookin'** in bear country," Scuzzy lectured, puffing on his ever present **El Stinko**.

Scuzzy appointed himself camp cook, and dedicated himself wholeheartedly to the task. It wasn't long before we were all savoring the intricate delicacy of **Scuzzy's** culinary delights.

Suddenly, **Jim began choking** and his eyes started bulging out of his head.

"H-h-h-holy Jesus," he gasped, beanie weenies cascading over his lips.

"What, too much pepper?" Scuzzy asked.

"No," Jim gagged. "It's a **friggin'** bear!"

All activity in the camp came to a sudden halt. Eyes peered across the river, straining to see the beast.

"Not there," Jim said, frantically shaking his plastic spoon at the nearby bushes. "Here. Right here!"

Not twenty feet away, a large black bear lumbered nonchalantly out of the brush and stood on its haunches, snout skyward as he savored the enticing aroma of freshly charred food.

Now, the first rule of survival when encountering a dangerous wild animal in the middle of nowhere is not to panic. Nobody knew this better than Scuzzy.

"Uh... don't n-n-n-nobody move," he instructed.

But Jim and I had already broken rank and were scrambling up the bank towards camp, crashing headlong through the bushes, Slick hard on our **heels**. Jim quickly grabbed his foot long GI Joe survival knife, complete with fishing line and hooks, compass, secret decoder ring and a variety of other nifty survival do-dads, all of which fit neatly into the handle. Hefting it confidently and setting his jaw, he prepared himself for hand to hand contact with the deadly monster. I admired the steely courage of this carpenter from New York.

Slick quickly rummaged through his gear and produced a 9mm

semi-automatic pistol and checked the clip. Whatever misgivings I might of had about Slick were now erased by his foresight in having brought a form of protection.

"**I guess** I won't be needing this," I said, sheathing my trusty little river knife with the three inch, semi-serrated blade that hadn't even cut a rope or whittled a stick since the day I'd bought it.

"No need for overkill."

Warily, **we crept** back to the camp site. The bear, which Scuzzy had already nicknamed "Yogi", was right where we left him, standing his ground in bold defiance of our five petrified partners.

"What should we do?" I asked nobody in particular. "I mean, I don't think we should shoot it. Then again, if it charges, I'm gonna be standing right behind Slick."

All eyes turned toward Slick and everybody casually started shuffling in line behind him.

"Maybe we can scare it," Rags said, hoisting a paddle.

"Wait a minute" Scuzzy advised, looking over his shoulder. "Let me get a head start in case you tickle Yogi with that thing and he decides to play with us."

We all chuckled nervously.

"How can you make jokes at a time **like** this?" I asked.

"Who's **joking**?"

Suddenly Rags bellowed a war cry and charged the bear, waving the paddle wildly. It was a bold show of courage, but I had to wonder if he would have done it had not Slick been there, ready to back him up. Nonetheless, the startled beast turned and bulldozed its way back into the underbrush.

We quickly picked up some rocks and let fly with salvo after salvo, chasing the creature further and further until our weary arms hung limp at our sides.

"Okay. Okay!" Scuzzy said. "Cease fire. He's gone... for now. Let's finish eating and get this site cleaned up. I think old Yogi smelled our food. He'll be back for his **pic-nic** basket later tonight."

We contemplated loading up the

gear and moving downstream, but it was too dark to run Wild Sheep, the biggest, surliest stretch of whitewater in Hell's Canyon. Besides, we had no idea where the next good campsite would be and the next major rapid, Granite, was only a mile or so ahead. We decided to stay put and post a sentry throughout the night.

We stuffed as much gear as we could into a large, watertight feed barrel that John, the Ohio farmer, had brought along. He tied a line to the barrel and the other end to a large rock and heaved it into the river. The barrel floated out to the middle of a giant eddy.

"Hope that barrel don't come loose," John said, gazing downstream. "If it does, we'll never find it."

Fifty yards below us Wild Sheep Rapid roared in hungry anticipation.

Most of the food was packed into a cooler, which Scuzzy stowed in the bushes.

"OI! Yogi won't find it there," he said.

"What about the garbage?" Rags asked, holding a large plastic bag filled with empty cans of beanie weenies, beer, paper plates, plastic forks and other refuse.

"Can't hide it on the raft," John said. "If the bear finds it there, he might tear everything up. And if we hide it in the bushes, he'll be sure to smell it and then we'll have a huge mess on our hands."

"Maybe we can sink it," Scuzzy said.

"I don't think that's such a good idea," Hank said. "I don't like the idea of putting trash in the river... even temporarily. What if it floats away?"

"How's it going to float away?" Scuzzy asked. "I'll just take this dirty iron skillet, put it in the bag to weigh everything down, and drop it in the water... thusly." Kersplash! "Besides, I need to let the pan soak to loosen up the char."

We looked at each other dubiously, hoping Scuzzy was right. John, Slick and I hid our kayaks high up on the bank, as did Hank with his canoe. Scuzzy, Rags, Jim and John dragged the raft downstream to get as much of our gear away from the cooksite as possible.

That night, we took turns standing watch in case Yogi decided to pay a little visit. The man on watch was armed with Slick's gun.

It wasn't long after we'd turned in when Yogi returned. For hours he raised a ruckus down by the riverbank, looking for his pic-i-nic basket.

"Anybody want to go down there and watch him?" Scuzzy mumbled. But

we were all too tired.

It was about 4 a.m. when Rags assumed the watch. Yogi had evidently grown weary of rummaging through our gear and all had been quiet for an hour or so. But, for some reason, Rags did not feel comfortable with Slick's gun, so he decided to give it back.

Creeping silently to Slick's sleeping bag, Rags gently tried to wake him.

"Slick," he whispered, shaking his shoulder. "Wake up."

"Ummmmmm."

"Slick," shaking him a little harder. "Wake up."

"Ummmmmm."

"Slick," Rags roared, shaking Slick like a paint mixer. "Wake up!"

Slick's eyes snapped open and he tried to focus on the large, hulking shape bending over him.

I'll never forget the hair raising, blood curdling shriek that followed. I imagine it is still reverberating through Hell's Canyon.

"Aaaaagggghhhhh! He's got me!" Slick screamed hysterically, kicking and flopping on the ground like a pro wrestler in training.

We all had a good laugh over that one.

"Har, har, har. You might as well stand watch now, Slick," Scuzzy said. "I don't imagine you'll be getting much sleep tonight. Har, har, har."

"Yea, Slick. You don't want ol' Yogi sneaking up on us while we're trying to get some rest," Hank added. "Har, har, har."

But the joke was on us, or, more precisely, on me. As dawn broke, we staggered bleary eyed down to the river. The damage was incredible. Just as we feared, Scuzzy's idea of sinking the garbage bag had failed. We had forgotten one important detail—Idaho Power stops releasing water through Hell's Canyon at night, and the river level drops several feet.

The plastic bag of garbage was high and dry when Yogi found it. The site looked like a goat had exploded.

Trash was strewn everywhere. The water cooler, which held our breakfast provisions, was gone. We did eventually locate the lid, which had several teeth marks gouged into it. Yogi had apparently had quite a party.

"Well, let's get going," Scuzzy said. "I think we have some food in the barrel. I'll cook breakfast while you guys clean up this mess. I'll just clean out the skillet and..."

But the skillet was gone too.

"You don't reckon ol' Yogi took it

home with him? You know, to lick it out for an after dinner snack?" Scuzzy asked.

"Geez, I hope not," Hank said. "Ain't a creature on God's earth deserves that kind of punishment."

"There it is... I think," Scuzzy said, squinting and pointing at a black, pie shaped object on the bottom of the river, which was on the rise again. "Somebody waded in there and got it."

"Why don't you?" Hank asked.

"Because I'm the cook."

We were getting nowhere and I was getting hungry.

"I'll get it," I volunteered, wading chest deep into the bone chilling water. Taking a deep breath, I dove and began groping frantically for the skillet. I opened my eyes and saw it.

"Got it," I sputtered at the surface, holding it over my head in triumph. The fellows just stared at me in stony silence, then broke out laughing.

I slowly craned my head up at the large, flat, pie shaped rock. Defeated, I slogged back to shore and sat on the bank, shivering in the brisk, September morning air.

"W-w-w-well, ain't y-y-y-you g-g-g-gonna l-l-l-light the c-c-c-camp stove so I can g-g-g-get warmed up?" I chattered.

"No sense in that," Scuzzy replied, torching up his first El Stinko of the day. "Can't cook without a skillet. We'll have to eat breakfast cold."

But the only food that we found in the feed barrel was three raw potatoes and a half a box of cereal. Breakfast for eight was consumed in contemplative silence.

And so we left. Because we had gotten such a late start the day before, we had only paddled seven miles. Now, with only a gallon of water and a half a box of cereal to go around, we were facing a gut wrenching 26 mile paddle through relatively flat water to the take out.

It was nearly sundown when we wearily paddled up to the boat ramp at Pittsburgh Landing. Surprisingly, a group of Forest Service personnel was on hand to greet us. They surveyed us warily.

"Are you guys experienced paddlers?" one asked doubtfully. "I mean, that raft looks like shit! Think ya got enough patches on it?"

Too bone weary, hungry, wet and cold to talk, we just looked at Scuzzy, who wasn't the least bit insulted.

"Evidently not," he smiled, puffing contentedly on a fresh El Stinko. "It still leaks."

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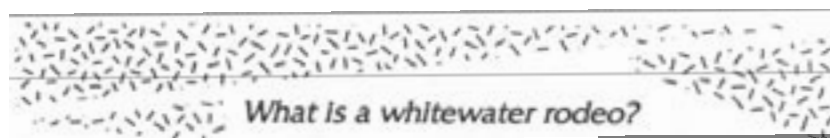
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Get Lost!

(on a crowded river)

Practical tips for avoiding the crowds on the East's popular whitewater runs

By DAVE BASSAGE

A few days before the Memorial Day weekend I was **talking** to my buddy Joe on the phone.

"Boating on the New this weekend?" I asked. "Should be a great play level!"

"No way, man!" came the reply. "With the Cheat and **Tygart** dried up it's going to be a **zoo** out there."

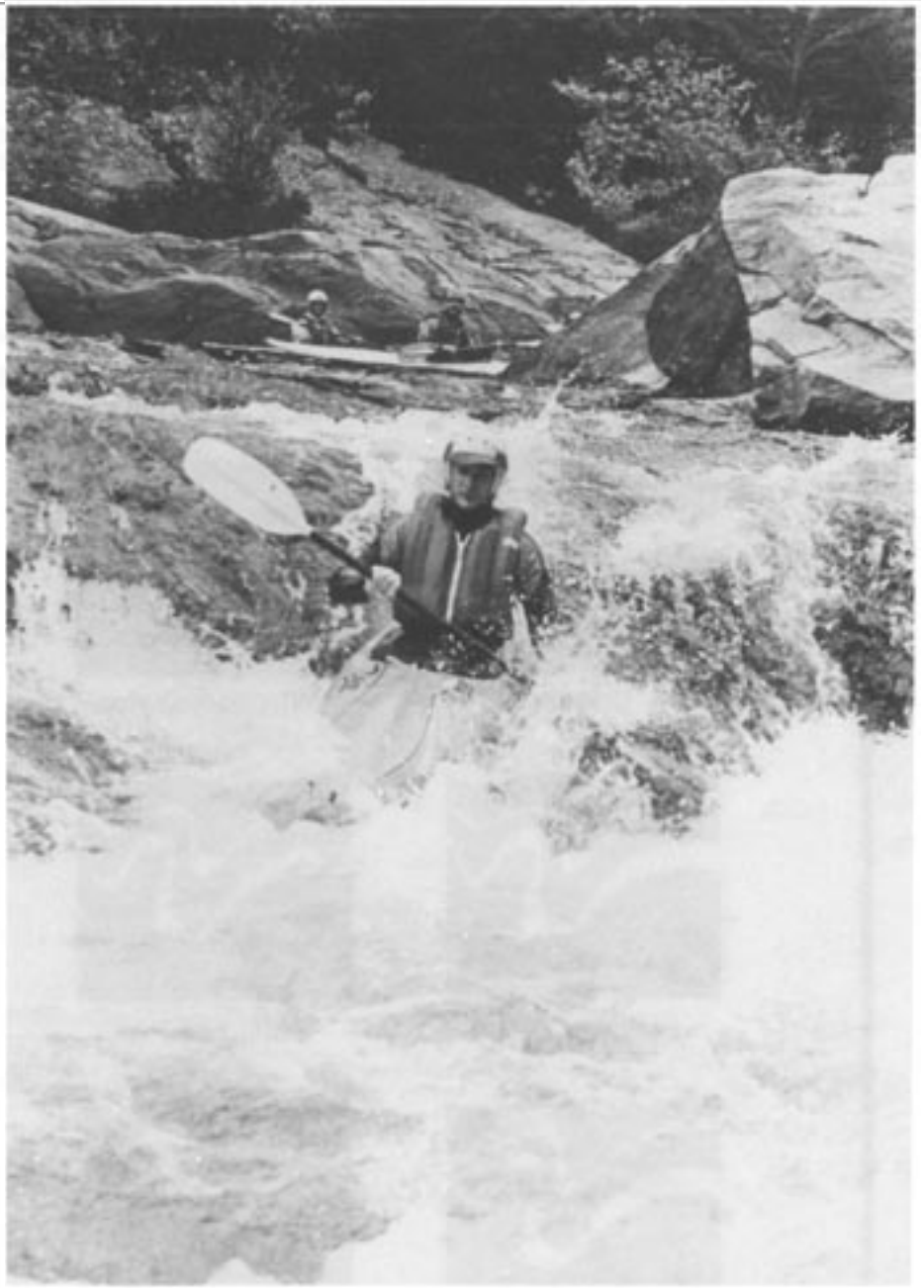
I was forced to agree. After eight years as a **full** time raft guide on the New, **Gauley**, Cheat and Upper Yough, I knew that this Memorial Day weekend, traditionally the most crowded weekend of the year on the New and Cheat rivers, would be especially **jammed** as rafters and hard boater converged upon the Gorge.

Sunday ran true to form. Although I was **lucky** enough to be on the first raft trip on the river on this busiest day of the busiest weekend, the scene as we passed Cunard was downright comical. Kayaks and canoes of every style and color dropped **like** lemmings into the water.

Ender waves looked like a department store the day after Christmas. There must have been 100 boats in the eddy waiting their turn to exchange safe haven for a chance to dodge rubber in search of the ultimate surf and **maximum** air. I was surprised to **see** Joe eddied out in the next **rapid** in **his** squirt boat, looking tired but happy.

"Decided to join the **zoo** after all?" I asked.

"We put in at the crack of dawn," he beamed. "We've had Ender Waves to ourselves for the last four hours! Everyone **else** just showed up. We're outta here!"



Paddler descends through top drop of Lost Paddle on the Gauley while other boaters wait in crowded eddy above.

Rule #2 Go early and beat the rush.

What about rule #1? Keep reading!

Eight years ago I quit my teaching job and adopted the raft guide/kayaker/canoeist/river fanatic lifestyle

full time. Since then I have logged 160-600 whitewater days per year, almost half of them "play days", and I have never looked back. On most of my "play days", even on popular rivers at the height of the season, my friends and I have had the rivers to ourselves.

These same friends, including Joe, have threatened bodily injury, or, worse yet, boat sabotage, if I divulge our secrets. But, I retain my faith in humannature, i.e. the forgiving attitudes of my friends and the tendency of the masses to remain the masses.

And so, I will share some of our secrets with you. Not all of them, mind you, just the ones that would be labeled "common sense" if common sense were a little more common.

General Principals

Rule #1 Avoid Peak Days

Peak season on year-round rivers starts Memorial Day weekend and ends Labor Day weekend. Saturdays are busi-

est, often twice as busy as Sundays. Fridays are almost as busy as Sundays. Next is Monday, Thursday, Tuesday and Wednesday in descending order of crowdedness.

So much for normal weekends. On three day weekends the middle day always has the most rafts. The first two days have the most private boaters. On the third day everyone drives home and hardly anyone goes down the river. The holiday itself is generally the least crowded day of a three day weekend, ie. Memorial and Labor Days and the Fourth of July.

Rivers with limited releases have their own peculiar traffic patterns. More on those later.

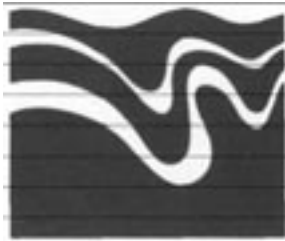
One more note. Hardly anyone rafts or boats on Mother's Day. I suppose they all stay home to take Mom out to dinner. Next year give Mom a real treat—tell her you're going to leave her with the house to herself, or extol the beauty of a nice drive through the country as she runs your shuttle.

Rule #2 Go Early—Beat the Rush

Come on now. You get up early to go to work, don't you? Isn't a river trip just as important? I thought so. How early?

The first rafts usually hit the water at 8 a.m., but the real rush starts around 9:30 and continues for a couple of hours. Combine this rule with #1; don't worry

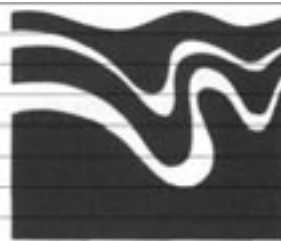
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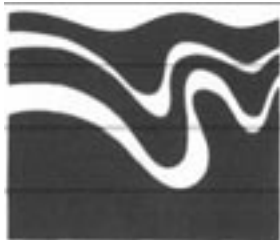
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about the timing on a Wednesday, but beat the sun up on a peak day.

Rule #3 Go Late—Sleep Through the Rush

This is my favorite trick. For years I've enjoyed the luxury of living in Whitewater Mecca... a short drive from countless great runs. Thus was born the "Crack of Noon Club". Party hearty, sleep late, meet for a leisurely brunch, pick a river, call gauges, switch rivers, and put in during the heat of day behind everyone else.

Of course, this technique can not be recommended for virgins making their first descent down any river, but if you know the run, it's the easiest way to dodge the crowds.

It's even possible to combine rules #2 and #3 and go early and go late. **How's that?** Start early and pack a lunch. Play until the crowds arrive, then find a nice sunny perch overlooking an entertaining hole or tough rapid, and sit back and watch the show for a few hours. Relax. Enjoy. You're on vacation. When the numbers dwindle you'll have the river to yourself again.

Rule #4 Consider Alternate Runs

Most good rivers are located near other good rivers that don't run as often or are lesser known. Trade your place in the masses for an opportunity to expand your horizons and add another run to your river resume. Study your guidebooks and consult an outfitter or knowledgeable local boater for best options and pertinent information about levels, shuttles, etc...

Special Tricks for Special Rivers
The Cheat

The commercial Cheat season starts with a whimper in early April and builds steadily through Memorial Day. Go on any other day besides the last five weekends (that's 353 opportunities) and you are unlikely to see much traffic. If you must go on a busy day, go early or late in the day. The first rafts leave the Campground at 8:30 a.m. with the big rush an hour or more behind.

If it is wet there are countless alternatives. Check the natural flow on the Top or Upper Yough, try the Big Sandy, Little Sandy, Tygart Gorge, Tygart-Middle Fork or any of the steep creeks nearby.

Keep in mind that although the Cheat is traditionally a spring river, it drains the largest undammed watershed in the state of West Virginia and it doesn't take much rain to bring it up in summer. It



On busy release weekends, the Lower Gauley can often provide an uncrowded alternative to the popular Upper section. Here, AWA executive director Phyllis Horowitz launches into a dynamic ender,

runs even more often in the winter.

The Gauley

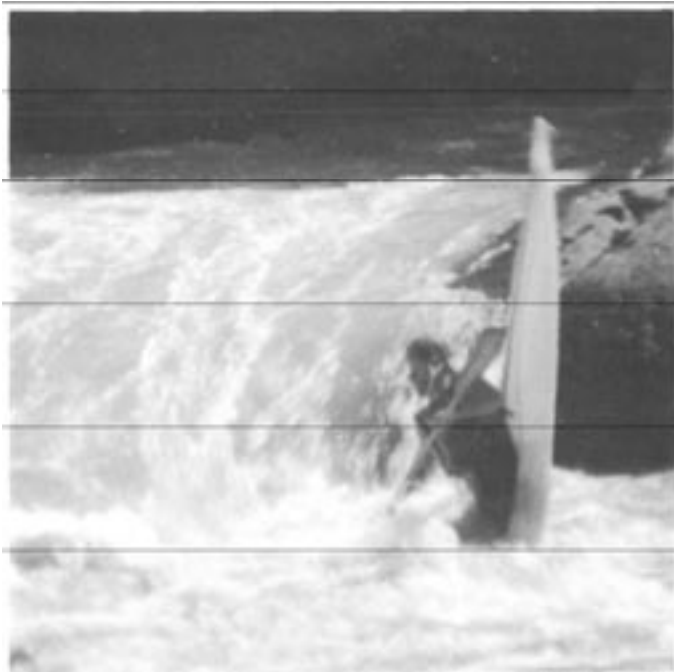
Dam release rivers offer special challenges. Put in too early or too late and you'll not only miss the crowds, you'll miss the water too. The Gauley is not as bad as most in this respect.

Unlike the Upper Yough and the Ocoee, the flow from Summersville Dam is adjusted gradually. Unless there is an extreme emergency the Corp will not raise or lower the river level more than one foot per hour, which translates to about 1000 cfs at normal, runnable levels. So if the phone message at 304-872-5809 says that they will release 2600 cfs from 8 a.m. until 2 p.m., you can safely put on at 7 a.m. or 3 p.m. and have 1600 cfs—an excellent kayaking level

This raises an interesting point. The first descents of the Gauley were done at the 1000-1800 cfs range. Since then boaters have become accustomed to the 2200-2800 cfs range that the Corp usually releases during the 20 day fall Gauley season. Many boaters have come to believe that this is the only time that one can run the Gauley.

Not true! I have run the Upper Gauley as low as 370 cfs in fiberglass without portaging or patching. At the other extreme, the Lower Gauley has been run as high as 40,000 cfs on the Belva gauge. That's a fairly wide window of opportunity. Some years the river stays above 500 cfs all year.

Of course the river is different at these levels. At lower levels Pillow and



Playing at the bottom of Pillow **Rock--Gauley River**. Another trick at avoiding crowds is to remain at one big drop until the brunt of the masses of passed leaving the river to you.

Iron Ring become more difficult and should be scouted or portaged. Running the river at higher levels requires knowledge of the river, expert skills and a strong group of companions.

Other **fun** facts—The 20 day fall Gauley season does not draw the lake down to winter pool. After the traditional 20 day season, the flow is reduced for three weeks while the tailwaters are stocked with trout. Then the Corp opens the gates again and completes the drawdown, usually around Halloween. Flows of 1500 or better may continue through the early winter.

Drought years sometimes bring summer water! Although the main priority of the **Summersville Dam** is flood control, a second priority is maintaining the quality of the water through Charleston, a function of the oxygen content of the Kanawha River. So, when the New drops below 2200 cfs, the flow is supplemented with water from the **Gauley**. In a really dry season this can lead to releases of 1500 cfs from the Dam.

If you must go during Gauley season, Monday is the best day. Fridays are pretty busy, Sundays are busier, and Saturdays are packed with rubber, especially during the first four weekends. Your best bet is to put on early and sprint down the river to the big drop of your choice. Then stop and enjoy the show for a few

hours. If you find yourself in the middle of heavy traffic, be particularly careful in the eddies at Insignificant and Lost Paddle, where rafts may invade your personal space.

Local alternatives to the Gauley include the New, Cranberry, Cherry, Williams or Meadow, depending on natural flow conditions and your abilities.

The New This is the easiest river to miss the masses on. Since the flow is consistent, you can put on at any time of day. If you find yourself in the middle of the rafting rush hour, you have no one to blame but

yourself. On a typical Saturday the first rafts hit the water at 8 with a **peak** beginning at **9:30**. After **11:30** the numbers dwindle again.

Most hard boaters put in at Cunard. At higher levels the raft companies put in upstream at Thurmond, **so** a Cunard put in **will beat** the rush. Some raft companies shorten their trips and put in at Cunard when the river drops below two feet. **This creates a real zoo**; a shuttle bunny can be a real plus in dealing with this situation.

Sometime soon, perhaps by the time you read this, the Cunard put-in will be closed temporarily by the Park Service. They plan to install a ten stall bathroom, improve the road and create better and separate parking areas for private boaters, commercial vehicles **and** fishermen. Local hard boaters have very mixed feelings about this. While this work is underway it will probably be necessary to put in at Thurmond.

The Upper Yough

This is a tricky river to get to yourself, but it can be done. Weekend releases have become more common during the past two years, but they are still rare and are usually crowded. Friday is clearly the busiest day during most of the year. On Fridays commercial outfitters run full tilt and lots of private boaters join the fray. Mondays are the next busiest days.

During midweek traffic is minimal, but in midsummer, when the lake starts to get low, there may not be any releases on Tuesday through Thursday at all.

The duration of the release and the amount of natural flow control the length of time you have to paddle the river. An exquisite study by hydrologist Steve Taylor has shown that when there is **minimal** natural flow and a two hour release, it takes so long for the front of the release to fill up the pools and eddies, that the "bubble" of peak flow shrinks from about 40 minutes at Gap Falls to nearly a point at Lost and Found. This means that on the lowest sections of the river the flow starts to drop as soon as it peaks.

Rafts are usually found near the front of the release, especially on the lower section of the river, **so** a good strategy is to hang back a bit. The river rises quickly, but tapers off slowly, and most of the lower rapids are still okay at flow equivalent to 1.7.

Since most **companies** are now using self bailing rafts, **confrontations** between hard boaters and rafts have diminished. Nevertheless, a prudent hard boater **will** keep an eye upstream and will not dally in crucial eddies, like the ones below **Hinzerling** or National Falls.

When the natural flow is greater than **1.8** there **is no** need to worry about the release at all, unless you want to avoid a high water run. This is also a great time to head upstream to Swallow Falls State Park for a run **on the Top Yough** (the water from the power plant comes in at the bottom of the Top Yough).

Other high water alternatives include Bear Creek, which flows into Friendsville, the Big Sandy, the Cheat and the Blackwater.

So there you **have it**—a few simple strategies that just might improve the quality of your next boating trip. I hope I was of some help... but not too much. After **all**, my paddling buddies and I still intend to stay a stroke or two ahead of or behind the masses.

Editors note: Dave Bassage is a raft guide and kayak instructor for North American River Runners who can be found either on the back of a raft, or not at all, unless you know the rest of his secrets.

West Virginia Rivers Coalition Fights Dams in Cheat Watershed

It's the year 2004. You have been enjoying a marvelous whitewater adventure on the gorgeous Laurel Fork of the Cheat. Suddenly, the pristine, laurel-choked forest gives way to scrub and mud flats. You turn a bend and you are confronted with a monstrous earthen dam, over two football fields wide and as high as a 12-story building! (The dam is kept without a reservoir most of the time to be able to absorb flood water.) Fences and buoys block your path and you face a bone-crunching half mile portage up the mud flats and over the crest of the dam.

Dam advocates want to build five of these boondoggles in the upper Cheat watershed. They would justify this proposal by invoking the fear engendered by the Great Flood of 1985. Only one catch: the dams would protect downstream communities only from a 100-year flood. The Great Flood was much larger than that.

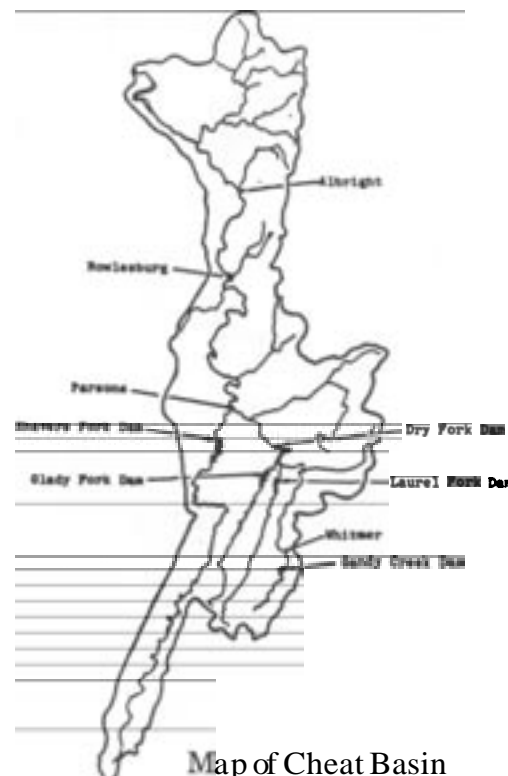
The **West Virginia Rivers Coalition** thinks there are better ways to handle floods, like early warning systems, limits on construction in the flood plain, par-

ticipation in the Federal flood insurance program, and perhaps levees in the towns.

Founded by the AWA in 1989, the West Virginia Rivers Coalition has a concrete goal: **to guarantee the future of thirteen West Virginia "crown jewel" rivers in the Monongahela National Forest** (see next page). Included on our list are whitewater classics like the Smoke Hole Canyon, Blackwater, Shavers Fork, Laurel Fork, and the Cranberry. We are now conducting an intense grass roots political campaign in West Virginia for designation of these rivers under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Designation would mean:

- no dams or hydropower projects.
- improved water quality.
- better management of mining and timbering.
- enhancement of river access and river recreation.

Our campaign is gaining momentum, but it is expensive. If **you have not already joined WVRC, we need your help!**



Map of Cheat Basin from state-sponsored dam study.

Please Help WVRC Save West Virginia Rivers!

Yes, Count **me** in with over 240 AWA members who have already joined WVRC! Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution of \$____. Donors of \$20 or more become WVRC members (\$10 for West Virginia residents).

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Make your check payable to "**AWA/West Virginia Rivers Coalition**" and send to WVRC, Box 606, Buckhannon, WV 26201.

Please let me know how else I can help!

She broke my head...
She broke my boat...
She broke my ankle...

She broke my ...



By CHRIS KOLL



"She broke my dick..."

"She broke my dick!"

We glanced toward the bar where four rangy timbermen slouched over their beers. One elucidated on an affliction that sounded singularly painful.

None of the four looked particularly damaged—except for the effects of a six-pack or two. They were tall and raw-boned with thick, ropey arms still marked by the grease from a day in the woods.

The four were similarly attired in high-water blue jeans supported by wide red suspenders, t-shirts minus sleeves, and thick steel-toed boots. Although their hard hats remained back in their trucks, their hair was still contoured to the shape of a helmet.

But perhaps I should explain how four Eastern whitewater boaters found themselves in a saloon in Lowman, Idaho at eleven o'clock at night...

We had arrived 48 hours earlier with the intention of spending eight days running the North Fork of the Payette River—one of the most challenging sections of continuous class 5 whitewater in the United States. But after scouting much of the 16-mile run during our first morning in Idaho, we kept finding excuses for delaying the inevitable.

The afternoon of the first day we had run only the comparatively easier lower five miles of the North Fork a couple of times. We needed to get a feel for the continuous and pushy nature of the river. At least that's what we told ourselves.

And on the second day, we chose to run the Deadwood—a beautiful wilderness tributary of the South Fork of the Payette. The Deadwood's 26-mile length coupled with its continuous class 3-4 rapids would further prepare us to tackle the guts of the North Fork.

At least—that's what we rationalized. But if the truth be known, we were probably just afraid that the North Fork would break our dicks.

So that's how we came to be in Lowman, sitting as quietly as possible in a corner table, observing the local color out of the corner of our eyes.

We didn't get off the Deadwood until 7:30, then the shuttle back to the reservoir lasted over two hours, so by the end of the day the saloon in Lowman offered the only promise of a hot meal.

Our pizzas had not yet arrived



when the timbermen rose unevenly from their stools and staggered toward us. We shared looks of apprehension and I calculated the odds: four tired and hungry paddlers against an even number of inebriated timbermen.

But the four halted on the dance floor before our table here they joined hands, raised up on the tippy-toes of their steel-toed boots, and lurched into a backwoods Idaho rendition of ring-around-the-rosy.

"Look—we're the cloggin' loggers," hooted the one with the broken dick.

Suddenly, two loggers facing each other leaned outward—using their weight to swing the other two links of the

circle violently together.

"Wham!" Their chests slammed together with a resounding thud. Then the other two leaned back, repeating the process for the benefit of the other two.

"No head buttin', now," warned broken dick, as if repeating rules of an oft-played game.

Our pizza had arrived and we wolfed it down. Just because we were hungry, of course. But in the back of our minds, we were a tad concerned that the "clogging loggers" might decide to become the "flogging loggers" and invite us for the next dance.

They needn't have bothered. During the next five days the North Fork Payette would batter and bruise us plenty.



Opposite: Scenes from the carnage—re-pairing bodies and boats on the North Fork.

Coming out to Idaho was Bob Gedekoh's idea. Or, if you wanted to be formal, Doctor Bob Gedekoh's **idea—see-**ing how Bob is head of obstetrics for a major Pittsburgh hospital. Bob has probably boated more class 4 5 runs in North America than any other person with a "normal" nine-to-five job, and we were damn glad to benefit from **his** practical river experience (not to speak of **his** expertise with needle and suture).

But what made the trip effortless was the inclusion of Tim Kelley. Tim is an engineer captain with the U.S. Army. **Hav-**ing missed the spring **boating season** while completing the **Army's** Ranger course, Tim was enjoying a whitewater summer of fun paddling virtually every day of his two-month leave.

He'd started in June, squirting on the **Ocoee** and hair-boating on the Green before working north to the Upper Yough, Black and Ottawa.

Of course, in the Army, a two-month leave has its price. Tim was scheduled to leave in mid-August for assignment in Korea. A week on the Payette would cap his vacation and provide a dose of whitewater **to carry him through months** on the DMZ.

Anyway, the plan was for Tim to leave his truck at his family's home in Colorado before shipping out. So Bob and I would simply throw old boats on top of his truck and we'd fly in to Boise to meet him. Equipment hassles would be avoided.

Charlie Pettigrove, a developer from Washington, D.C., would not be as lucky. He'd have to fly in separately, rent a boat and car, and meet us at the river.

As editors of American Whitewater, Bob and I communicate constantly. And through the early summer, Bob provided frequent updates on the status of the trip:

"They're predicting flows in the 1,200 cfs range—a good first-time level..."

Then later:

"There's a good chance the Deadwood will also have water..."

And later still:

"The river's up to 2,000 cfs. That's supposed to be a good level. I just hope it isn't too good..."

To be honest, I didn't pay much attention to Bob's increasing level of excitement over challenging **the North Fork**. I figured—a boating trip is a boating trip. You put-on...you paddle...you take out.

Actually I was more looking forward to seeing **the Idaho** scenery and drinking the local beers.

So the warning bells never rang in my head when they should have **been** clanging a five-alarm.

After boating some of the continent's toughest whitewater, if Bob was growing antsy about the North Fork—maybe this river was just a little unusual.

I confess I'm like a lot of Eastern boaters. There's always a silly game being played about the size and composition of the boat you paddle.

Hell, some paddlers I could name would never be caught dead in a plastic boat unless you intended to **plummet** down some extreme 500-foot-per-mile cascade like the Green.

Now, I'm not quite that self-conscious. I like keeping a plastic boat around for when my glass boats are cracked or leaking—which is pretty much **all** the time. But I've always bought small plastic **boats—**like the Perception Sabre and later the Reflex. And I figured, hell...if a Sabre will work on the Upper **Yough** or Gauley—I'll be okay on the North Fork.

So I loaded a battered Sabre on Tim's racks. I'd just leave it in Idaho.

Tim has a similar mentality. He doesn't even own a plastic boat. So his **Screamin' Meanie** sat up there beside my Sabre. Of course, after years of squirting, Tim better understands the dynamics of making small boats perform under trying conditions. And **so** he figured he'd be alright on the North Fork.

Bob, more familiar with Western water, brought an old Dancer he didn't mind leaving out there. And that's the model Charlie rented.

But the wisdom of my choice of boat was immediately questioned during our initial day on the Upper North Fork.

We encountered a group of local boaters led by a paddler named Guy:

"Do you mind if we tag along, just to **see** the lines?"

"You aren't paddling any of those tiny boats?" Guy asked, as he unloaded his Aeroquatic. "A group of Easterners tried paddling the North Fork in those last year...and they got munched."

"Well...ahem...ahem..."

Let me tell you about the Payette River:

Forty miles north of Boise at the little crossroads town of **Banks** (that's pronounced Boy-see by the natives), the three forks of the Payette come together to form the main stem of the Payette.

The main Payette is a **critical**

source of water for Idaho's vast irrigation system **so** flows on the upstream branches are regulated to insure an adequate downstream level.

During the early summer, natural flows from the South and Middle Fork are sufficient to maintain adequate levels on the main Payette. But as the summer progresses and water in the **two** branches diminishes, flows are augmented with releases from reservoirs on the **Deadwood—**which flows into the **South Fork—and** from Cascade Reservoir on the North Fork.

The Deadwood Reservoir is smaller than the expansive North Fork impoundment, so as autumn approaches and the lake is pooled down—most of the Payette's flow comes courtesy of the North Fork.

The end result is a variety of whitewater runs with dependable flows on the Payette system—all within an hour's easy drive from Idaho's state capitol.

The South Fork offers a number of spring and summer runs ranging in difficulty from class 3 to 4. The Middle Fork **boasts** a small class 4 spring run. The Deadwood provides a class 4 lower section and a class **4-plus** upper run. And the main Payette adds an intermediate section starting at Banks.

But we had traveled cross-country to sample the bad dog of the Payette system: the 16-mile class 5 section from Smiths Ferry to Banks known simply as "the North Fork".

Most of the guidebooks say you can scout **the North Fork** from Idaho route 55 which parallels the river for its entire course. But don't believe it.

What you **see** from the road is impressive: a torrent of froth and foam ascending up and out of sight. But we didn't gain a true perspective of the power and speed of the river until we scrambled 30-feet down over the steep slope of granite rubble to the water's edge.

Close to the water, I found myself walking with deliberate caution, checking to see that every footstep was **secure**. My normal scouting gait, bouncing from rock to rock, was noticeably absent.

Inches away, the river roared downhill at a ferocious clip, ricocheting off the shoreline with hissing reaction waves, tumbling over hidden ledges, rebounding off boulders, exploding into mounds of froth and disappearing into churning hydraulics.

Perhaps it was my imagination, but it almost seemed that it'd venture too

close, or perhaps slip and touch the water, I'd be instantly sucked into the maelstrom, like a moth drawn into a fan, and be flushed downstream and out of sight in the blink of an eye.

It wasn't just the gradient that energized the North Fork—though there's plenty of it. Dropping 1,700 feet between Smiths Ferry and Banks for an average gradient of 106 feet per mile, the river resembled a watery staircase climbing up into the Idaho mountains.

But what compounds the fury of the North Fork is the severe constriction of its riverbed caused during construction of the two-lane route on the west bank and the Union Pacific railbed on the east shore. Tons of granite boulders were pushed over the side of the narrow river corridor, choking the North Fork to a width of 50 feet and less.

Bob took one look at the funnel of water and said:

"Thank God they didn't build a four-lane highway."

And we also thanked God that the predicted release for the upcoming week would be for only 1,200 cfs. Because even though North Fork regulars run the river in excess of 2,000 cfs—at low flow the North Fork appeared perfectly capable of applying a beating worthy of any cloggin' logger.

"Well, I don't suppose we can put it off any longer," Bob said the morning of the third day.

"Start at the top?" Tim asked eagerly.

"Start at the top," I said with a resigned tone.

Although the North Fork is considered one run—the stretch from Smiths Ferry to Banks—is commonly defined as three sections: the top, middle and bottom.

Maybe it's because there is just so damn much whitewater packed into that 16 miles—20 named rapids and 20 more unnamed but still significant drops—that paddlers figure a whole bite of the North Fork is just too much to digest.

The Upper section contains four named rapids connected by a series of continuous class 4 spread over four miles, but it's the middle stretch where the North Fork gets down to business. Ten named drops combined with constant unnamed rapids to produce nearly seven miles of virtually uninterrupted class 4-5 whitewater.

Most local experts combine the



top two sections for a day of fun. And with some trepidation, so did we.

But we were concerned with our unfamiliarity with the river. The North Fork is simply too continuous to scout. And so we were relieved that Guy allowed us to join his group—despite the size of Tim and my boats.

There is bad news and good news in running continuous whitewater like the North Fork. The bad news is that you know you're in a physical and psychological ordeal. The anticipation is positively painful.

But the good news is—once the action starts, you don't have time to worry about it...just move, react and survive.

And so it was. We opened with a few quick warm-up rapids that left us wondering... "You mean these aren't even named?"...before the river dropped out from beneath us at Steepness, an appropriately named cascade where the river plummeted 20 feet through a series of soft, foamy holes.

My boat was tossed like a leaf, stalling perilously at the brink of every hydraulic while the larger boats crashed through.

Guy eddied on the left at the top of Nutcracker, the next named drop. Tim and I joined him while the other four members of our combined parties headed for the carry on the right.

"I like to boof over the left of the top hole into an eddy," Guy explained. "Then you run a seam through the center of the next hole and move hard



right to avoid Nutcracker Rock at the bottom. But the seam is fairly exact. You don't want to punch the meat of the hydraulic...It can push you left. And going left at Nutcracker is no fun."

I nodded grimly, and glanced enviously at the wiser people portaging.

Guy made the move into the eddy. I followed close behind, boofing a rock on the left shore as close as I thought possible. But not close enough. My tail was pulled back into the hole and I found myself sidesurfing below the ledge.

Guy sat watching impassively from the security of the eddy only five feet away and by the look on his face, I figured stuff like that happens all the time on the North Fork. But try as I might, I couldn't drive the Sabre left out of the hole. And I



wasn't enthralled at the prospect of exiting right and missing the critical seam.

Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, I pried my tail out, drove the nose forward, and exited with a perfect ender. As luck would have it, I managed to pirouette the boat while erect, slap the tail down and hit the seam on a perfect line. Nutcracker Rock flew by on the right.

Nutcracker was the last rapid I remembered that day. The rest of the river passed by in a blur of braces, last-second scrambling and windmill flurries of paddle strokes.

The river unfolded at a frantic pace. The velocity of the water forced instant decisions. Waves constantly erupted in my face and obscured my vision. I'd blink away the froth only to be confronted with another hole to punch or a piton rock to avoid.

Of course, I did remember the infamous Jacob's Ladder—mainly because I had ample opportunity to study the rapid from shore while I carried. Guy ran the drop effortlessly while Tim fought to control his *Meanie* through the pushy entry holes before successfully **boofing** into a must-make eddy on the bottom left.

I escaped the North Fork on that first day without any noticeable scars, but I still felt beaten, bruised and thoroughly worn. Horsing my Sabre through the North Fork's turbulent water had proven an arduous ordeal.

Charlie was also a little worse for wear. He had ski-jumped pour-over in Bad Jose—the second named rapid of the middle section—only to find a piton rock

waiting at the bottom. He crawled up the bank to route 55 with a severely sprained right ankle.

Even Tim endured damage. Not to his body...worse than that. He ruefully estimated his glass boat would require five hours of grinding and patching before the next day's run.

"She broke my ankle," said Charlie.

"She broke my boat," said Tim.

"She broke my body" I said.

The next day, my words would ring ominously true.

Bob Gedekoh is a handy guy to have around when you're running hard rivers.

A couple years ago, Bob was on the scene when an open canoeist was washed under House Rock on the Upper Gauley. He emerged three minutes later, blue as a pair of jeans, and Bob revived him. Saved his life.

And thanks to Bob's prescription of ice, compression and elevation along with a thoroughly professional ankle wrap of duct tape, Charlie was pronounced fit to paddle the next day.

If only he could have performed a similar miracle on my ailing muscles and inappropriate boat.

We put in towards the end of the middle section, just above Screaming Left Turn, intending to run down to Banks. But a mile into the trip at the tail end of a rapid named Jaws, my boat caught an edge and over I went.

"Wham!"

Apparently, the North Fork had no rules against head butting.

I rolled up to find a blown spray skirt, smashed glasses, and blood running down my forehead. Back on shore, Bob confirmed that the cut would require sutures.

Given the option of a physician's assistant in Banks or Bob's tender ministrations performed at riverside, I opted to get the sewing done immediately.

Even though he still wore his lifejacket and spray skirt, Bob's attitude turned professional as soon as he donned rubber gloves.

"I have some thin suture material, but I don't think it will hold up well if it gets wet," Bob said to me. "And I don't think keeping your stitches dry will be an option."

I laid across the tailgate of Tim's pickup while Bob performed the procedure. For the benefit of pictures, we stuck a stick between my teeth, but in reality, Bob was well equipped to deal with the problem, expertly placing six stitches.

A veteran of several wilderness expeditions, Bob even had a treasure trove of antibiotics in his first-aid kit and he made sure I took liberal doses.

My body was pumped full of **bacteria-killers**, for several days after the accident, I was able to cure the infirm with just the touch of my finger.

And more importantly, I was able to paddle the next day.

When you live in the East, particularly in upstate New York, it's difficult to perceive of a location where the sun shines more than 50% of the time.

And in Idaho, the sun remained bright in the sky all the time.

We camped at a Forest Service campground up the South Fork, surrounded by tall pines with a view of the river. A natural hot spring lay just one hundred yards away.

Our vacation developed into a delightfully relaxing routine: every day we'd sleep until awakened by the sun **which-being** on the western edge of the Mountain Time Zone—did not occur until a respectable hour.

Then we'd amble down to the hot spring for an hour's **soak**, casually load up the truck, then head off for an extended breakfast at a cafe in Banks or Smiths Ferry. After eating, we'd snooze for another hour—usually while Tim patched his boat—to allow our food to settle.

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noon. By that time the sun was high overhead and the temperature well into the nineties although in Idaho's arid climate, the heat felt more comfortable than oppressive.

Originally, I had hoped to sample a number of the area's ample whitewater. Maybe sandwich the difficult North Fork between a couple play days on the South Fork or main Payette. There would have been plenty of paddlers to boat with. Every day we met dozens of folks drawn to the Payette for the scenic beauty or the playing on the Staircase or Canyon runs.

But when it came time to run shuttle, invariably Tim's truck nosed north up Route 55 and we'd leave the crowds behind to tackle another piece of the North Fork.

"Some nasty dogs snap, snarl and bark..." Bob announced to us from across the breakfast table at the Cougar Lodge in Smiths Ferry.

Tim and I exchanged puzzled glances.

"It's just a method for remembering the names of the rapids," Bob explained. "You take the first letter of the rapid's name and work it into an easily recalled phrase. See—there's 'Some,' that's an 'S' for Steepness; then an 'N' for Nutcracker; 'D' for Disneyland; 'S' for S-turn and so on..."

"That's too complicated," Tim argued. "Why don't you just make an acronym—just one word—out of the first letters."

Neither process worked for me. I tried to picture Bob using a simi-

lar memory-enhancing technique in the operating room while digging out a bad gall bladder:

"Let's see—'Kind surgeons hate loathsome lawyers' guts.' That's kidney-stomach-heart-lungs-liver-gall bladder. Ahhh! This must be the sucker."

On the other hand, Tim's method didn't make much more sense. The North Fork's rapids formed an acronym that spelled "SBDSSBKCBPJG...", a combination that might mean "It's a bitch" in Russian, but draws a blank in English.

Of course, as a West Point grad—Tim is accustomed to remembering confusing acronyms like SECDEF, CINCPAC or NORAD. Hell, you might tell him "Let's mount an assault on SBDSSBKCBPJG," and he'd know exactly what you meant.

Though I doubt it. A little later, I caught him scrawling SBDSSBK... on the back of his hand with an indelible marker.

Personally, I didn't know if I wanted to remember the names of the rapids. I didn't know if I wanted to see the North Fork again.

It was a Monday morning—a couple days after I had banged my head—and Bob and Tim's memorization efforts were in preparation of our attempting a top-to-bottom run of the river. Since we had encountered a total of nine other North Fork paddlers over the previous three days of the weekend, we didn't figure we'd meet anyone to help us with the lines. Today we were on our own.

And I wasn't exactly looking forward to it.

Since I'd bashed my head, I'd agonized through a period of self doubt.

Tim dismissed my concerns as empty:

"It's the boat...you're lucky you even made it down this river alive in that thing."

But I wasn't so sure.

Maybe it was me. Now that I'm looking 40 straight in the face—maybe I no longer possessed the skills to handle a river like the North Fork. Maybe I never had the skills to begin with.

In any case, I was soon to find out the truth. Charley had left that morning to catch a flight back to Washington. But he had left me his rental Dancer. If I was trashed today—I would no longer have any excuse...

Oh, Hell—a fertile imagination can always come up with excuses. And as we slid down the bank at the put-in, I was already testing a couple promising new ones.

"You know—I've never paddled a Dancer. Ever."

"Bull shit," Tim said. "I saw you borrow one once when you didn't want to run your glass boat through the Poop Chute on the Black."

"That doesn't count. It was only one rapid," I protested.

"Well, you'll probably get used to it fast on the North Fork," Bob observed.

"I'll see how it feels on the Upper before I do the Middle..." I started to say, but Tim and Bob were already out of hearing, heading toward Some—I mean Steepness—and I had to paddle to catch up.

Once on the river, neither Bob's doggerel nor Tim's backhand shorthand were of much use. We recognized certain rapids, of course—but once in the Middle section, the action was too continuous to figure out where Bad Jose ended and where Know-Where-To-Go started. But even though we seldom knew precisely where we were—the North Fork still felt more comfortable to me...less terrifying and more fun.

Maybe it was the benefit of a boat with more volume. Or maybe it was the result of added familiarity with the river. But suddenly my dread vanished and I realized that this North Fork was going to be a good time.

It was just like that night in Lowman. The sick feeling while watching the loggers approach replaced by relief and laughter when the good old boys broke into raucous dance.

Now that I know the steps, I'd like to come back to the ball.



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Paddling Quebec's endangered Great Whale

No ordinary river trip for two pals



Charles Purvis photo

Paddling the Great Whale with Doug

Copious quantities of crimson liquid are now running down the back of Doug's neck onto the black rubber of the new dry top, mixing with the spatter of northlands rain. The black flies (a few of the 15 million crazed aerial blood suckers per acre in this northern Canadian wilderness) have struck my partner in earnest up front in the Topo-Duo - our whitewater vehicle of choice for this first descent Quebec's Grande Riviere de la Baleine - **The Great Whale**. "No wonder Doug complained that the neck gasket felt too tight - his neck has already become quite swollen from so many bites," I muse. - As the stern man, my paddle works wonders scraping off these new pests, but more blood flows as he slaps and scratches. "Ah, the sharks will be here soon..."

While battling the bugs, we are floating and gloating right now - basking in our success threading the needle on a very threatening rapid about a mile back.

While Steve Massaro (A.K.A. The Manchild) and Eric Hertz (The Organizer) both snuck the drop river right, the Duo (us) charted a slalom course down the middle among a mine field of huge hydraulics, any one of which would have turned the Topo-Duo into a pretzel, ejecting us both into 10 - 15,000 cfs of warm, but violent whitewater.

The Trip and its Raison d'etre

You see, not only is this a first kayak/raft exploratory of these rapids, this is the first time my buddy Doug and I have paddled this new 2 person kayak together and the first time in some years that Doug has plied big water. Not to worry... we did a few successful rolls in flatwater and we've seen lots together in the last decade. So, No Problem... the roar of the drop ahead **does not** threaten us - it's a 'Boat Scout,' or so it seems until we get close and beat a hasty retreat to the eddy above one huge drop.

By PETER SKINNER

The Great Whale - La Grande Riviere de la Baleine - is our present locale, the culmination of a month of frantic planning, equipment and personnel selection and site assessment. Eric, the principal of Earth River Expeditions and an ardent conservationist, really did most of the work. He flew up to the river in June, (there are no roads into this area on the eastern edge of Hudson Bay) and toured the area by float plane with the Cree Indians. He assured us that the river was only Class IV. "We would love it, he said.... and Hydro Quebec plans to dam it up and essentially all of the adjacent rivers flowing into James and Hudson Bays too!" Our visit could give us and others on the trip an intimate river level introduction to the impacts these gigantic hydro projects would wreak on one of the dozens of major rivers affected by the James Bay projects. (See sidebar)

My Relationship with Doug

'Boat Scout'... hummm that reminds me of my first river trip with Doug some 10 years earlier. He had just moved in across the street - he was an accomplished kayaker in the Adirondacks - I had ranged a bit more widely in the same craft. We immediately had a kind of man to man simpatico and I was overjoyed to find a new victim for my more assertive brand of whitewater riversport. His wife was not amused....

While an accomplished paddler, Doug had not really ever tasted real sin - BIG WATER. So sometime in 1981, we took off one day for a sampling of Canadian brand big water - the St. Lawrence at Montreal - Lachine Rapids in particular at say 300,000 cfs or so. I warned him about big holes - how you recognize them, how you avoid them, how you play them, how you escape them. He was psyched!!!! I think that maybe I failed to emphasize the 'avoid them' approach enough...

The ferry out to the middle of the river to line up took at least 20 minutes and even then we weren't sure where we were. Once we began our approach, I in the lead, the velocity increased, and presently a telltale horizon and hump of water the size of small hill appeared.... BIG HOLE no doubt. Time to take quick evasive action. **Whew, I just missed the corner of the monster. I spun around on the foam pile the size of a football field below the hole to warn Doug that this was one of those holes you play in....**



Charles Purvis photo

Michael Kennedy ballasts the front tube as his raft crashes through the Whale's enormous waves.

The Land and its Rivers

The Great Whale is one of a seemingly endless set of rivers running east to west and dumping their contents into the James and Hudson Bays. The rock over which they run is very old - about 3-4 billion years or so. Flying over the landscape in the plane, the area looks like the glacier left only a few centuries ago. Low rounded off hills stretch to the horizon, with uncountable wetlands, small lakes and rivers in between. Any unnatural landscape element like a teepee, survey line, trail, downed aircraft or other manmade structure stands out like a sore thumb.

Every river has sections of superb whitewater and exquisite scenery. The water is warm and the air temperature pleasant (even kind of hot) in August. Like so many other Canadian shield rivers, (the Ottawa at Pembroke is a perfect example) flat water separates big drops. Waterfalls abound and occasional big water wave trains can be found on the bigger rivers. We chose but one

of a number of whitewater stretches on the Great Whale alone. Each river we flew over appeared to offer a panoply of paddlable segments - from Class I - VI. A paddler's only limitations would be his or her ability to pay for the float plane and his or her resistance to the hordes of biting insects for whom you are their only hope for progeny.

While the expanse of land seems limitless, it is not really forbidding. Armed with a fishing pole and hook, a compass, headnet and a few other essentials, a savvy outdoors person could get along here, subsisting on the game and fish which call this land their home.

In fact, that's just what the Cree have done for millennia. Each family has a piece of the bush called a trapline that they use each year for food and barter goods. A small trapline would be a mere 20 miles by 20 miles - 400 square miles. Although the game is there, the density is low. This is the sub-arctic you know.



Members of the expedition watch plane depart during lunch stop on the second day of the Great Whale descent.

To late. With a look of innocent determination, he attacked and conquered the hill - only to descend into the bottomless hole out of sight. Seconds passed, boat parts appeared, then violently disappeared. Finally, the boat emerged next to mine and he rolled up - very slowly. A little wiser and much wetter, his sprayskirt askew, the boat was full of water. "Couldn't get stabilized in there," he observed ruefully.

Numerous rapids, waterfalls, individual marital and living arrangements later, we are still pals - we were even housemates for a while - 'Take Me To the River' or 'Dixie Chicken' served as the morning wake up music - rivers and conservation the glue which kept us close. Now, although we work in the same office, he the lawyer, me the scientist, our lives have separated a bit. But it is great to be back in the same boat again - a major rapid ahead - inextricably reliant on one-another's skills and determination.

No Ordinary River Trip

This is not ordinary river trip for two pals - this is really an expedition in the broadest sense. Not just that the northern lights are *so* bright that the campsites shimmer all evening in the eerie green glow of ionized fireworks; not just that the glacier smoothed hills and squat black spruce trees and lichen/moss carpet stretches hundreds of miles in all directions with almost nothing human in between; not just that we are halfway to the Arctic Circle on the 55th parallel; not just that we guests being introduced firsthand to the subsistence based human cultures of the Inuit and Cree peoples; it's that we are here to support some truly influential people from the Northeast seeking to understand the dimensions of the impacts that the world's largest hydro projects have already had and will have on the environment and human culture. Sponsored by AWA and several other groups, we are here to see what this international environmental brouhaha is *all* about - a

kind of Mission From God, only we wear helmets, not the pork pie hats of the Blues Brothers.

The Crees are consummate hosts. They fêted everyone with feasts of goose and caribou (see photo,....) and put us up in their homes in Whapmagoostui located at the mouth of the Great Whale as we prepared for the trip. They patiently and eloquently explained their culture and the impacts of the hydro projects. We were literally adopted by the tribe, no questions asked.

Meanwhile, Back at 'Boat Scout'

Doug and I are now back at 'Boat Scout,' three days later, this time with two rafts full of journalists, and other notables trying to decide whether and how to run the rapid. The Manchild pilots one raft bearing among others, New York Senator Franz Leichter and his wife Nina along with Assemblyman Bill Hoyt, the noted energy expert and Northwest Territories canoeist. Eric pilots the other with Bobbie

Cree promise to resist **The Political Milieu**

The aluminum and glass encircled Cree board room on the 34 th. floor of a Montreal skyscraper is a setting is far from the bugs and whitewater of the Great Whale. The talk is not of recreational and riversports - it's very serious. Hydro Quebec has just indicated that construction of the \$900 million road from the La Grande project northward to the Great Whale project is slated to begin September 12 of THIS YEAR - one month from now. The challenge has been issued - how will the Cree respond? How will America's consumers and/or decisionmakers respond?

The young Cree at the table are angry and resolute but so is Quebec's premier, Robert Bourassa who had called this tribe "an evil people." The talk of a physical blockade rages back and forth (a peaceful occupation—unlike the style of the Indian Warrior standoff on Montreal's Point Messier bridge which captured worldwide news attention last year). Questions pepper the debate regarding participation of activists from foreign countries and hazards of trained provocateurs. Talk is cheap now, though. In a month, all this talk will be doubtless be decisive actions heard round the world. By the time you read this, history will be enfolding.

The Great Whale project is front page news all the time now. It has become the centerpiece in the Quebec

separatist debate and the political future of Bourassa. It has fueled major energy, human rights and environmental policy debates in Northeastern states and in Europe. Montreal's Globe and Mail columnist Lysiane Gagnon summed it up in mid-August by saying:

"The project is being fought from every possible angle: in the courts, in the media, through diverse lobbies on the national and international scenes. Meanwhile, the federal government treads the murky waters with extreme caution, trying not to take sides in what is building up to be a confrontation between Canada's to historical minorities."

She even mentions the AWA trip.

"The powerful coalition of natives leaders and environmentalists has been pressuring northeastern American politicians to cancel their billion dollar contracts with Hydro-Quebec - with some success, since.... even Congressman [Sorry, Lysiane, he's not a congressman yet...] Robert F. Kennedy Jr., political heir to the great dynasty, was recently on the site on a fact-finding mission."

This titanic struggle is worthy of the heavy coverage throughout Canada and other countries. Once completed, the three James Bay hydro electric projects will encompass an area the size of France!

In a late development, the New York Power Authority has reached an agreement with Hydro-Quebec that access road construction will not begin until the project undergoes an E.I.S. stalling the project for a year.



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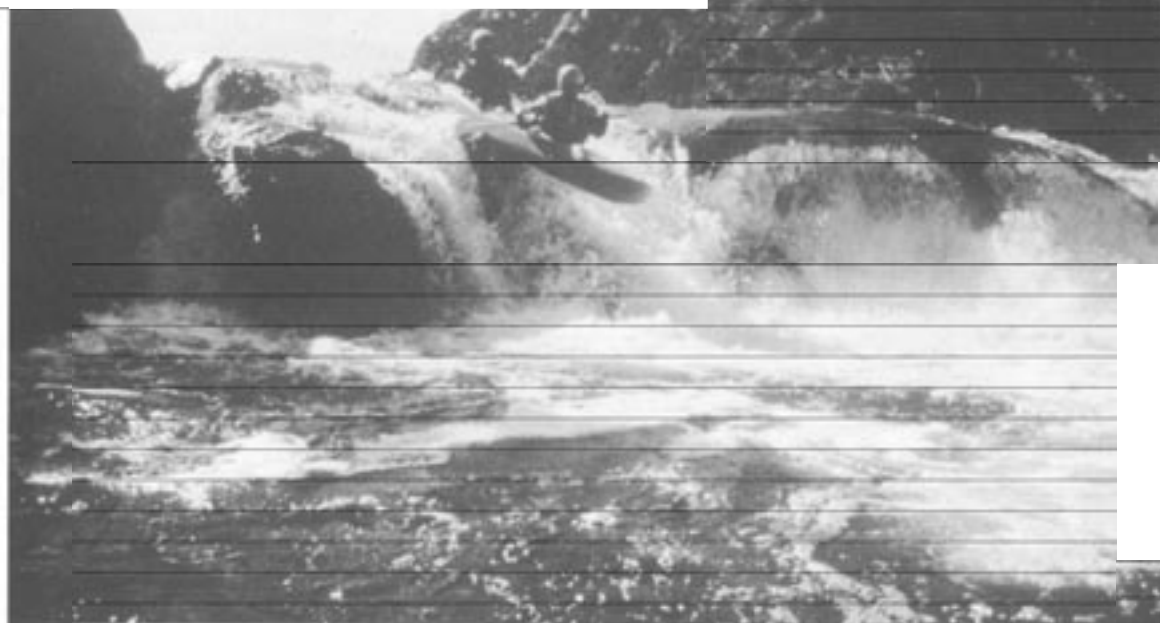
Kennedy Jr. the very effective conservation lawyer associated with NRDC and Pace University Law School, and Mike Kennedy, the CEO of the Citizens Energy Corporation from Boston and their two kids along with the Cree guides.

The Kennedy's are by the way, no strangers to whitewater. Mike used to

run one of the big rafting outfits in Maine. In fact, the whole family of the late Robert Kennedy, youngsters included, spent dozens of weekends exploring whitewater rivers across America by raft and kayak. And we, Doug and I, are the lowly safety kayakers and occasional entertainment.

The waves are huge and the next

rapid just below, a big falls - a mandatory portage. 'Boat Scout' features Wave I - a 15 foot mountain, frosted on top with a cross curler. Wave II is a hydraulic, a cross-curler and a washing machine - depending on the moment. The last Wave is a certifiable big water meat grinder. In between trips portaging our camping gear,



Charles Purvis photo



Charles Purvis photo

we peer into the guts of this rapid, plotting routes and likely boat and paddling responses. The sun is out - clear skies above. The bugs are in remission for a time as the upriver wind **keeps** them at bay. Most elect to walk - we will run it and **Manchild** will pilot empty rafts with the elder **Kennedys** aboard.

The approach is problematic - upriver rocks block comfortable access to the chosen route. The glassy smooth tongue is long and bereft of marker signs. No bubble street or anything. The speed of the water approaching the wave train is very fast. A small miscalculation would send a boat into the left hand hole where a swim would be the most likely outcome. **This** swim in turn could have most dire consequences just downriver.

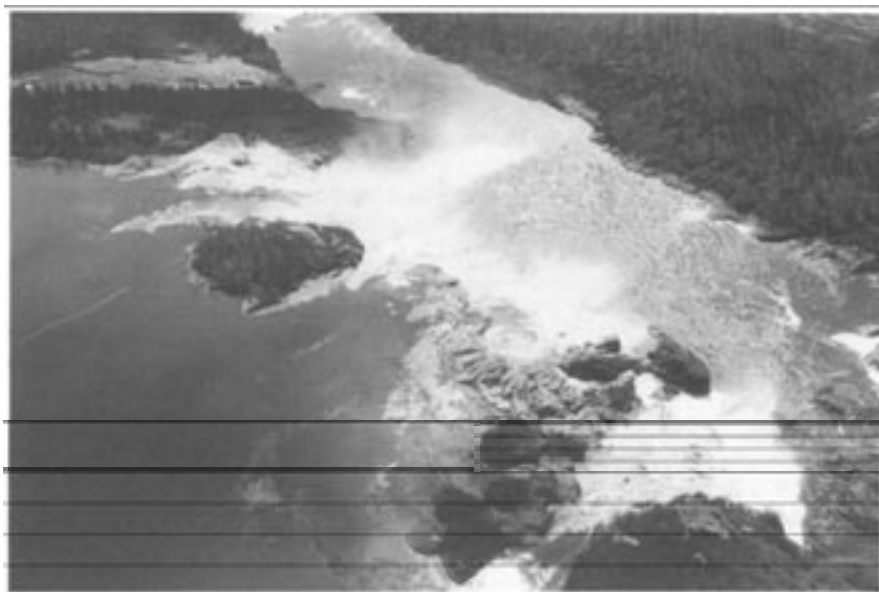
As bad as my paddling reputation may be, Doug remains blissful in the bow. Although our **eskimo** roll in the really bad stuff is untested, I think we will make it. I feel his powerful strokes **pull** us out into the river as I twist my head around and rudder the upstream ferry. Anxious seconds tick past. "We should be OK now....." I guess. We spin to face the test. "YES....." Doug exclaims with conviction when he sees our position - we are exactly on course. We pick up speed - the cameras are up - we are on the tongue.

Kayaking for Two

Piloting the **Topo-Duo** is truly fun. Since I bought it last year, I have been in the Dancer once. Instead of paddling solo, a parade of experts, intermediates, rank beginners, my wife and kids have sat upfront, all delighting in the experience of paddling - guide included. The boat is forgiving and easy to roll. As long as they help out, I can usually roll it alone. They learn to peel out and do eddy turns and brace without flipping. They get the **cheap** thrills of whitewater without the penalties we all suffered solo.

In big water the boat is fast, but it is big - kind of like a supertanker - the large surface area gives big waves a lot of chance to push it around. Right now on this tongue, the Topo-Duo feels like the Exxon **Valdez**.

Back on the water, again




We hit the first wave just right. Doug's back and helmet are silhouetted on the sky as we are launched into space. The landing in the trough is extraordinary and violent. We are first surfed sideways, then upriver, spun around and then mercifully expelled upright - but right into the jaws of

the meatgrinder. We raucously surf there in a variety of very unstable attitudes amid collapsing walls of water. Then the unthinkable - the stern - me included - gets swallowed whole.

We backender - big time!

My mind races... "Oh, Oh... this is



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it. The roll must work now or never." The turbulence wrests the paddle from one hand, but eventually I get it back onto the right hand side. I knock twice on the hull to signal the cadence to Doug. The sweep, the lean **back....** then nothing happens. Doug must have had some trouble setting up. Back into the position, again two knocks, but this time, Doug sweeps early and a violent vortex messes **my** sweep. Things **are** definitely getting more serious....

More on Kayaking for Two

Paddling double in big water or steep stuff is not for the faint of heart. It is one thing mastering **skills** solo - bracing, rolling, reading the river, choosing the

right equipment, deciding to run the drop or not. You have only yourself to consider or to blame. It is quite another to find a person whose **skills** not only compliment your own but also enhance the overall experience. If, like a close relationship or amusical duet, things work out, the result is a whole greater than the parts - the success even more worthy.

Being there when needed

As I set up once again, I recall that Doug said that he would continue to **try** rolls indefinitely - like Doc Blackadar always said. Come to think of it, Doug has always been there when I needed him and I have always tried to do the same - but somehow he has always given more **than**

I have. I hope this trip helps balance the scale. He's been my professional colleague, my confidante, my Best Man, my lawyer, etc. etc. He'll be there once more now.

Two knocks, one pause, two simultaneous sweeps and heads on the deck, and we are suddenly upright and quite smartly, thank you. Above the roar of the rapid, we hear the shoreside cheers. We spin and ferry joyfully into the big eddy above the falls. The exultation of our new friends on shore could not however, come close to equalling the pride I feel for giving my best and getting his best - both at the same time. This river - this trip has brought out the best in **all** of us. Hopefully, it **will** do the same for others to follow in the decades to come.

Social and environmental implications of the projects

Hydro-Quebec's hydro projects will change that age old lifestyle. By damming up the Great Whale and the Little Whale and diverting or reversing the flow of other nearby rivers and greatly increasing the size and storage of Lac Bienville, the company will flood vast areas of traplines and eliminate fisheries. Underwater, **bacterial** decay of the ground cover (trees, peat, etc.) forms methane which in turn creates methyl mercury, the bio-available form of this toxic heavy metal. Already the natives around the La Grand project bear dangerous levels of mercury resulting from eating the fish and other game, themselves burdened by this heavy metal.

The global atmosphere suffers as well. Already, over the equivalent of 100 million tons of carbon dioxide has been released by the decomposition. This release may have exacerbated global warming. In fact, recent analyses have shown that the carbon dioxide emissions from these hydro projects may be nearly equivalent to discharges from fossil fuel **gener-**



Phil Raphals photo

Cree people prepare paddlers feast: Inside the gigantic ceremonial teepee at Whapmagoostui, Cree Indian women roast Canadian geese as children look on from a bed of black spruce boughs,

ated electricity.

In addition, the water release flow regime dictated by power demand, not nature, will also change the character of the ecology and other hydrologic **characteristics** of the two great bays that these rivers flow into. The impacts on migratory birds hunters and bird watchers cherish are essentially unknown.

Of greatest immediate concern to the Cree at Great Whale is the nearly one billion dollar road and airport construction project which will be used to carry construction workers and supplies to the **project** sites. That road will bring hunters from the south who will foray outward from the road

and transmission rights of way to prey on the wildlife heretofore reserved for each Cree trapline. The road will also bring all the ills of modern civilization to a people whose heritage is living off and on the land, not consuming goods, services and energy. The roads to the La Grande project have already introduced all the elements of modern society down south - drugs, alcohol, rapes, **crime** etc. Gone will be the 5,000 year old heritage of the Cree - a very high price for this project. Set adrift in a sea of comfort seekers like ourselves, the Indians have really nothing left to do but hang out - for the foreseeable future.

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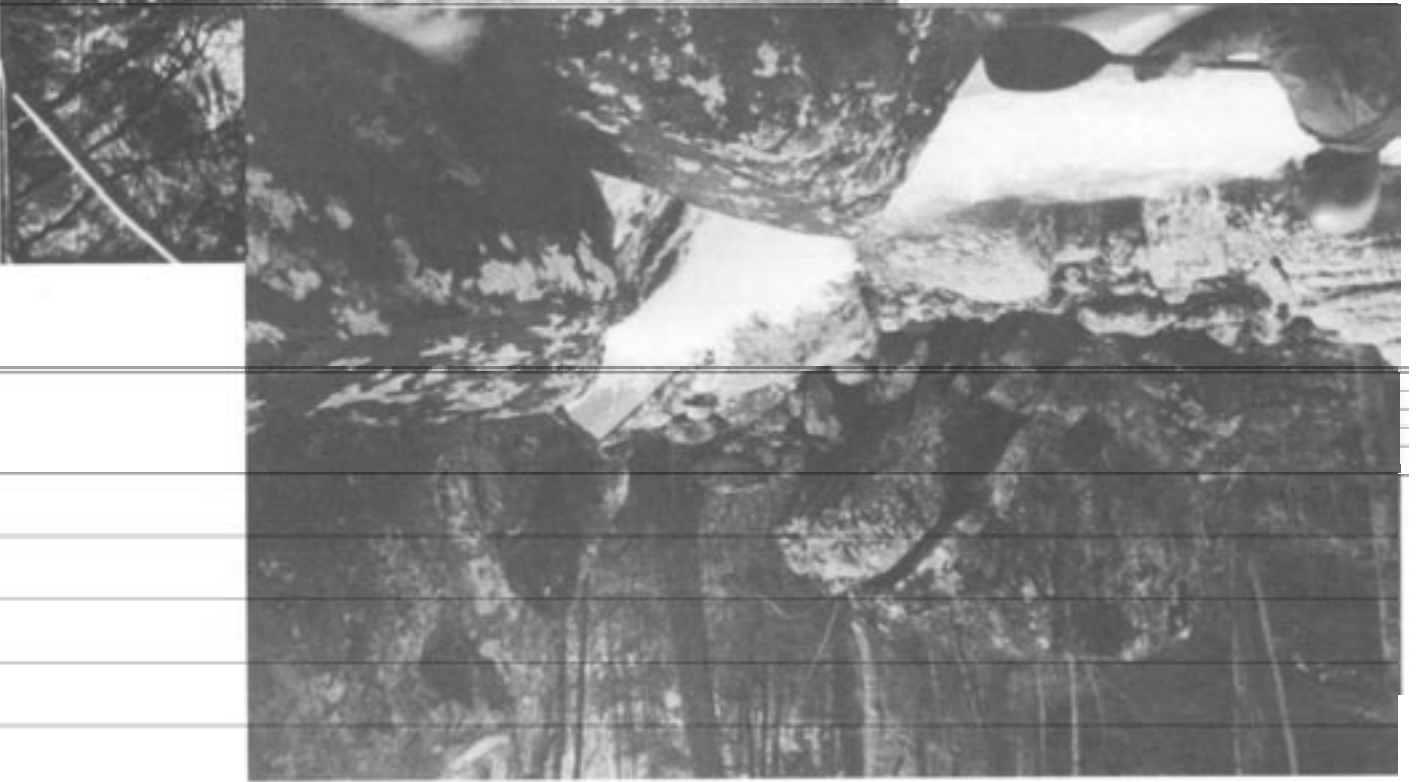
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Above: Dave Simpson runs drop on Lower Bear Creek as Doug Welman watches.
Right: Dave Simpson runs Revelations during first open boat descent of the Bear.
Opposite: Fishbowl



DANCING

with

the Bear



Scott Shoup photo

By RON STEWART

"I made some studies, and reality is the leading cause of stress amongst those in touch with it. I can take it in small doses, but as a lifestyle I find it too confining."

Lily Tomlin/Jane Wagner: The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe.)

There are many "Bear Creeks" in the southeast. This is the story of one of them.

I couldn't tell if the look on Doug's face was delight or disbelief. We were looking for the first time together at the rapid we were later to name Stairway to Heaven. This was really the reason I had dragged him here — down the steep escarpment, slipping on loose rocks, clinging to poison ivy vines — down to take a **look** at what was to be a serious encounter with gravity.

For those of us who love steep creeks, Bear Creek has been one of the most exciting finds since the Narrows on the Green. Super steep, tight **and** spectacularly beautiful — Bear

Creek is one of the outstanding runnable creeks in the southeast. It's all the more remarkable in that most of it can actually be run; and if a few trees were removed, the whole run conceivably could go—

Like many of the creeks and rivers in the area, Bear Creek begins with the confluence of several small tributaries on top of a relatively flat plateau. By most standards, Bear Creek is tiny, really tiny. But, by the time it has finished cutting through the sandstone bedrock, it has formed a spectacular deep gorge.

One day, after pouring over some tightly bunched contour lines on a map, I decided to check it out. Jeesh!! Now there was some insanity. But with a bit of wishful thinking, you could almost imagine a few routes and maybe, with some water, it would go. I took a boating friend to see it. **He began** laughing hysterically. I decided that if I wanted to have anyone to paddle with, I had better shut up about this one.

And so the boating seasons passed. Last summer we finally made it over to the Green Narrows. Now, there again was some real craziness. Hats off to **Bob McDonough**, Tom Visnius, Dave Benner, John Kennedy, Forest **Callaway** and others who pioneered that incredible run. The Green pushed back horizons for many of us; and with the marketing of some new boats, running steep creeks became more feasible. It was time to revisit the Bear.

Doug **Welman** agreed to take a look. As we crossed the bridge where we would put in, he began to curse. "This is smaller than the Overflow put-in!" (Overflow is another mind boggling creek which flows into the Chattooga.) He immediately began rummaging around for a cold beer to make the trip worthwhile. I had forgotten to bring any — **this was** definitely going to be a challenge.

Scrambling down cliffs into the middle and steepest part of the gorge, we could hear water, but couldn't see it. Finally, through the trees a steep set of closely spaced falls began to appear.

The impact of seeking Stairway to Heaven for the first time is lasting. Doug's paddling glands began to salivate; and for the next few hours we climbed over boulders, into crevices and down steep slides. We even began to name rapids — Surrealistic Pillow, Fish Bowl, Snake Pit, Cosmic Trigger, Big Bang....

In the fading light I mentioned that as far as I could recall we had just seen **the last** rapid of any consequence. But sure enough, just downstream was yet another big one. "Oh yeah, I forgot about this one. I guess it was just a momentary lapse of reason." So be it. Momentary Lapse of Reason was named.

By now it was dark. The cliffs loomed hundreds of feet above us. Having hiked with me on numerous occasions, Doug had, of course, anticipated this moment and had come prepared. Unfortunately, the batteries in his small penlight weren't feeling well. A **Bic** lighter would have been about as useful. We extinguished it to see better and decided to try a side canyon, hoping that it would



Chuck Ester photo

John Regan clears the first drop and approaches the second drop of Stairway to Heaven.

lead us out. Luck was with us. In the darkness we came upon (of all things) a set of stairs which led up, up, way up, all the way to the top. I hold with the theory that divine intervention was at play.

Walking back to Doug's truck, we again played the naming game, trying to think of something appropriate for the first big rapid — a triple set of 15- to 20-foot falls, each spaced only a boat's-length apart. We estimated the total drop to be at least 60 feet. I don't know how many times I pissed in my pants just thinking about running it. Doug thought it looked like a giant stairway. Something I had once heard began turning in my head.... Then it

hit me — "Stairway to Heaven". It was perfect. Appropriately, the rapid above it came to be known as Knockin' on Heaven's Door.

We headed to my place for dinner. My wife Lorraine said she had never seen such excited little children.

We thought we had seen most of the steep stuff. Little did we know that below the point where we had hiked out was to open a series of intense boulder drops as difficult as anything we had boated before.

We made our first attempt one relatively warm December afternoon last year. Doug, Brian Fisher and I scraped



Roger Zbel plunges into the *Fish Bowl* on Bear Creek.

John Regan photo

down Bear through a thick fog and light drizzle. Doug and I were in Corsica S's, and Brian was in a Dancer. It was really too low, and darkness caught us not even halfway through the run.

So, again, up, up and up we went, climbing over talus and slick terrain in our dry suits while lugging boats and gear into the darkness. We weren't having fun. Brian was ready to throw us both over the cliffs.

Near the top the fog grew thicker, erasing any sign of mother earth. Great. Now where to step? Talk about catching some major air time. A wrong step and this definitely would have been a major league bummer. However, after wandering around in purgatory for a while, we finally found two friends who had been awaiting us in their car (would you believe it — playing chess?). Lost on the board, they weren't interested in our tales of adventure. It was time for a major replenishment of precious bodily fluids.

About a week later we caught the Bear up again. Though still low, it was higher and more runnable. Scott Shoup joined us in a C-1. We had a reasonably early afternoon start and had good weather, but it was still after dark when we finished the run. We had placed a white paper cup in a bush to mark the take-out. You can't imagine the sense of exhilaration we felt seeing the silhouette of that cup against the night sky when we finished the run!

Bear Creek is only 3.5 miles long, but there was so much scouting, so much

deliberation about rapids and where to run them that the daylight seemed to vanish even before we were halfway into it. We've run Bear several times since and have it down to just a few hours, but that first complete descent remains as one of the truly memorable experiences in our lives.

There was one point when we were preparing to carry Stairway. The more I looked, the more it seemed feasible. After a lengthy deliberation, I said I was going to run it and, of course, immediately pissed in my pants. I tried to be stoic, but the truth was that I was scared as Hell.

What was that saying from Dune? "...Fear is the mind-killer..." But it wasn't just me up there. The future of two small children and my wife were inextricably bound in what I did. Without having a say, without even knowing what was happening, they would be running the rapid with me. There were also my boating friends whose lives could be on the line if something went wrong. It was a terrible dilemma to be caught between these feelings and the belief that the rapid would go.

Ropes were set, even though I'm not sure they would have been useful. Picking up my boat, I went to the top, pushed off and entered the realm of physics. When the first drop went clean, I felt a wave of relief. But it was the next move that really worried me. Afraid of pitoning at the bottom of the second drop, I decided to drive off the right side. Landing at an extreme angle in shallow water, I almost

flipped and had to brace hard to pull it out. But as soon as the boat was stable and back on line, I knew I had it. Coming off the final falls, a surge of adrenaline ballooned into pure exhilaration.

After several more intense rapids, we made it to the confluence with a major side creek as dusk began to set in. It's hard to explain, but there were clearly moments when something seemed to take over and just do the right thing. Doug and I were taking turns leading — leapfrogging through the eddies, coming to a technical drop (and often just going), making the moves almost as if guided by some inner sense that knew just what to do.

Scott and Brian did a great job, sometimes following our lead and sometimes making a wise decision to walk. Darkness definitely became a factor. Doug is a superb paddler, one of the best. He did a great job, not letting the darkness get us out of sync. Finally the gradient let up. We bumped off small rocks, squinting, looking for a paper cup in a tree.

Each time we run Bear I think back to that first run, not quite believing that we actually ran everything we did. If I were to do an honest critique, then I'd say we're fortunate it's a great memory instead of an agonizing nightmare. But I'm sure glad we did it.

Runnable only after a good rain, Bear Creek drops about 800 feet in its 3.25 miles, the average gradient being 238 feet/mile. It certainly seems a lot longer and a lot steeper than this. The overall gradient is a bit deceiving, particularly when you consider that the last half mile is relatively flat. The steepest section begins just over a mile into the run at Surrealistic Pillow and drops around 600 feet/mile for about half a mile.

Most of our runs have been at relatively low water, around 100 to 200 cfs. However, Doug and Terry Smith recently did a run with more water and described it as pushier and much more difficult, but by far and away a better level.

Scott Shoup is one of these up-and-coming, hot, young boaters. I first knew him as a cocky kid in my Precalculus class at the Baylor School in Chattanooga. I don't remember if he passed my course or not — something he said about not wanting to do homework and having a lousy teacher. He's becoming so good that I probably should have just failed him on general principles.

Anyway, he must have learned something because he did an excellent analysis of Bear Creek, measuring the drop between contours and then plotting a dis-

tance-versus-gradient curve with some fancy graphics. We found the information interesting, particularly when comparing Bear to some other rivers of comparable size. Often someone wants to know how this river or that river compares to some known runs. I don't think that **comparisons mean** much when you're out there on the water, but they're interesting to look at.

Roger **Zbel** and John **Regan** came down for one of the early runs. They have this habit of driving all night and then doing wild and crazy things on a river. Doug played space music for them all the way to the river to set the mood. John ran the second drop of Stairway down the middle instead of driving off the right side, as I had done. This turned out to be a better line.

As with many runs of this nature, there are several rapids that would have names on other rivers, but haven't been labeled so far. We decided to call the first rapid of any consequence Alpha. As soon as you think you've **run** a significant rapid, then you just ran Alpha. There are more than a few good candidates early in the run from which to choose.

There's a especially narrow crevice not far into the run which has always been a bit unnerving. One Crisp Saturday in February, Francis Mallory dropped into the slot. As he shot out, going over a **ledge** below the crevice, he found that his **sprayskirt** had been sliced. **Talk** about being ticked off! But, he wasn't the only one to come through and find a **sprayskirt** ripped into little ribbons. Francis christened this one Edward Scissorhands.

Not far below, a small wooden hiker's bridge marks the first mega-rapid. Surrealistic Pillow is a true mind-altering experience. An intimidating 15- to 20-foot, twisting boulder drop, it is, as yet, one of the only two **unrun** rapids on Bear Creek. (The other one could probably be done if a certain tree weren't blocking it.)

Just beneath a tight slot with a funky entrance sits a massive boulder, splitting the current. One channel leads to death and destruction; and, as one might suspect, the other side leads equally well to the same dismal fate. Surrealistic Pillow will probably have to await the invention of indestructible rubber bubble boats or someone certifiably insane. It usually doesn't take much scouting the decide to **carry on the left**. But, you know... **I do think I see a line on it**.

Most of the upper Bear run is typical tight creek maneuvering. It is narrow, yet has plenty of room for eddy **hop-**



John **Regan** experiences "Revelations" on Bear Creek.

Roger Zbel photo

ping. But you have to feel comfortable running gnarly, congested routes. And, more than anything, **you want to be able to handle the situation when something goes wrong**, because sooner or later, it **will**.

Around the corner from Surrealistic is Fish Bowl — a 30-foot cascading drop which finishes with 15 feet of great **air**. There was a badly paced tree at the entrance, so we had to **make** this fancy move at the top before taking the big plunge. I recently went hiking and re-

moved the tree at the top of Fish Bowl with the help of some locals happening through the gorge.

After some sharp turns and blind drops through the Snake Pit and **Knockin'** on Heaven's Door, the edge of the world suddenly appears. You know the one — sea monsters, more death and destruction, etc.

Stairway to Heaven is one of the most intimidating **runnable drops** I've ever seen. I don't think it's as hard as Gorilla on

the Green, but the potential for a screw-up is there, and the consequences are unthinkable.

It's really one of the highlights of a Bear trip, whether you decide to run it or not. In fact, only a handful of people have actually tried it. On one of the earlier trips a few folks ran it. There were a couple of clean runs and a few... well, thank heavens.

Soon after that, four of us ran it and had four aces. I'll never forget what Bo Eakens said after he came screaming down the center at mach speed, blasting into the pool at the bottom, whooping it up after a perfect run. "This is turning out to be a cupcake rapid." Then he smiled. Bo, one of those solid paddlers who thrive on rivers like the Green, South Sauty and the Little River Canyon at high water, has become a real Bear addict.

During a rare summer run on the Bear in late June of this year, Doug Welman and I discovered a giant oak uprooted and lodged in the middle of Stairway to Heaven, as well as numerous other new trees blocking other rapids. Hopefully, by the time this article is printed, some of the worst trees will have been cleared. But keep a good lookout!

The pool below Stairway to Heaven immediately slides off the 15-foot Cosmic Trigger and heads towards a 20-foot vertical falls known as the Big Bang. Unfortunately, most of it splats onto a rock ledge.

John Regan took a look and decided to give it a shot. He came driving over the far left edge like a maniac. The lip of the falls is shallow and scrappy, but he managed to keep enough momentum going to clear the ledge at the bottom by an inch or two.

Roger Zbel followed, but slid a bit to the side and splatted the ledge with his stern, and flipped. It was like being in a movie where the audience, gripped, suddenly gasps at a terrifying scene. He rolled up wincing, but able to paddle. The rest of us passed.

But the portage is so much fun, why miss it? The routine has become somewhat of a ritual. Someone jumps and hopefully lands in the pool on the far left. After lowering boats, the rest leap like lemmings into the clear, beautiful, freezing water. YEOW!!!!

The pace continues shelter-skelter through a complex, twisting Class V rapid called Revelations. Frankly, I don't remember why we called it that. I think Doug and I were just feeling very religious on the day of our naming mission.



After a small falls the creek narrows and one approaches Momentary Lapse of Reason. The idea is to boof right, but the narrow slot at the top of the initial eight-foot drop has a bad habit of turning boats back to the center, where an all-too-eager submerged rock lurks. Popped foot pegs, dimpled noses and other bodily insults are regular occurrences. It's getting easier and easier to decide to carry this one — especially at low water.

Doug gave a great name to this 4/10-mile section which begins at Surrealistic Pillow: The Cosmic Mile. The grand finale to this stretch is Armageddon, and it's everything the name implies. Probably the most sensible thing to do would be to carry the whole rapid on the far right and avoid a headache. But if we were sensible, we probably wouldn't be there in the first place.

So we proceed to get in and out of our boats, walk around trees, look at boulders with weird gurgling sounds emitting from their bottoms (or maybe the sounds were from our own bottoms) and exchange all this macho talk about how we would of course run the rapid if it weren't for the trees. As one would expect, it's long, congested, steep and otherwise unfit for normally sane human beings.

Following a few hundred yards of nameless Class IV water comes the confluence with a major side creek. At this point you can breathe a sigh of relief — if you make it quick. Time to inhale and get ready for the next show. The volume increases substantially as the run turns into a boulder garden with so many drops and rapids that we haven't gotten around to naming many.

It's not as steep as the previous section, but the non-stop action makes this stretch every bit as intense. Punching sticky holes, slicing across steep drops, going down blind twisting alleys is par for the course.

Dave Simpson, the first open boater to make the run, called one memorable labyrinth The Pinball Wizard. As I recall, you start right, go left, bang off rocks in the center, surf out of this hole, boof across a ledge on the right, immediately try to turn and thread through a slot against a big boulder and then hope like Hell you can make the hairpin turn at the bottom. Okay, got all that?

Gargoyle follows. And it's worse.

Somewhere below all this is the last rapid. Whichever one you decide is the last is called Omega. For me, it's the little ripple at the take-out where I try to get out of my boat without drowning. So there you have it in condensed form — the Bear from Alpha to Omega.

Okay. Now a moment of seriousness. I've no claims to being a hot creek boater — that distinction is reserved for the deserving few. But after the recent tragic events and near misses on the Green, I feel boaters need to be warned again about the pitfalls of running steep creeks.

Rivers like the Green Narrows and the Bear Creek should not become rites of passage for the boating community. Bear Creek is exceedingly dangerous and not the place for boaters who don't have the skills or don't enjoy this type of extreme, technical paddling on the edge.

Bear Creek is a true gem. But be prepared or don't come looking for Bear!

AFFILIATES

ADK **Genesee** Valley
c/o Scott Trude
 3565 N. Creek Rd.
 Palmyra, NY 14522
 Adirondack Mountain Club
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 Chickaloon, AK 99674
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Perception Kayak Club
c/o Perception Inc.
 1110 Powdersville Rd.
 Easley, SC 29640
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 4900 Ridge Ave.
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Calling 'em close

Onct I had one of them near-death experiences.

I was **gnawin'** on a hunk of venison jerky and I tried to swaller a chunk that wasn't quite masticated. I choked, coughed and wheezed but couldn't catch a whiff of breath. Finally, I passed clean out.

Lyin' on the floor, I was suddenly conscious of an intense, white light. And silouetted against the glare, two figures walked toward me.

When they got closer, I could **see** they were Elvis and Marilyn **Monroe**. And as they stood over my inert form, I heard a resonant voice command:

"To make this poor soul's passage easier—you will sing and strip for him."

Well, I thinks to myself, this shorely must be Heaven!"

But then **Marilyn** opened her beak and began to chirp out a tune while Elvis promptly commenced to pull down his britches.

I immediately gagged. Out popped that offending piece of jerky and soon after I returned to the land of the living. But I wanted no part of no more near-death experiences.

So that's whu I ain't filled out any of them AWA "close-call" survey forms. Even if I had almost seen Elvis on the river, I shorely wouldn't want to recollect the experience.

Besides, I paddle class V **water**—and every time you set out on a class V river it's a close call.

There's **been** a hundred times that I missed a single vital stroke during a crucial ferry...almost blew a "must make" eddy...or presented the wrong edge during a boof. And in every instance, there was a moment of jeopardy when I was in more physical danger than if I was out of a boat and swimming in class IV stuff.

But cuz I rassled with the Angel and the see-saw of disaster rocked down in my favor—I guess all those moments don't rate as real "close calls."

But I feel a tad guilty not contributing to the AWA's "close calls" project. So without further adieu—I'm presenting my own personal list of **real** close calls on the river. Here's **hopin'** the paddling world is safer for my efforts.

CLOSE CALL ONE — I wuz **gettin'** ready to put on the Gauley when I was accosted by a shapely female boater. "Guide me down the river?" she **asks**. "Shore," I sez.

But before I could fantasize about showing her my Dufek stroke, out of the **bushes** pops 12 members of a paddlin' club from Ohio or Chicago or Philadelphia...

"You won't mind if my friends join us, will you," sez the comely bait.

Trapped!

Fortunately, a mile down the river I spied a gentle hydraulic.

"Look," sez I, "a side-surfing hole!"

While the group took numbers and lined up in the eddy, I escaped downstream.

CLOSE CALL TWO — I signed on for a multi-day river trip out west. Unbeknownst to me, the feller in charge of procuring food—a skinny dude named Timothy—was a vegetarian.

After two days of tofu and bulgar, I was near the end of my strength.

We never did find out what happened to Timothy—but thank goodness I was able to trap that stringy rabbit to make a stew.

CLOSE CALL THREE — I swear I'll never again try to put the moves on a woman after when the **Pittsburgh Steelers** have booked a team river trip. That is, unless she's **goin'** with the place kicker.

CLOSE CALL FOUR — I figured I had fooled the airlines into transporting my kayak when I flew into Phoenix for a **Grand Canyon** trip. Told them it was a surf board.

Course, that's probably why my boat and gear ended up in Hawaii.

Things ended up OK though. My buddy had an extra squirt boat that I **bor-**rowed.

How'd my buddy get his **low-volume** boats out west? He brought 'em on the plane as carry-on luggage.

CLOSE CALL FIVE — I was out west on a paddlin' trip and walked into a **local** bar wearing a tie-dyed T-shirt.

One of the good ole' boys at the **bar** wearing a hat that read—"Loggers, an **endangered species**—turned and said:

"Lookie, here...it's **Bob Dylan**

hiz ownself."

I didn't have a second to lose. I ducked into the men's room and quickly donned three pile sweaters. As I emerged, four more members of that endangered species were **headin'** straight for me.

But those boys took one look at my newly bolstered physique (courtesy of Patagonia) and headed straight for the door!

CLOSE CALL SIX — I was stuffed into so cramped a space I thought I was already in a coffin.

Certainly, the smell in the confined space was worse than that of death.

If it wasn't for the bone-rattlin' shaking and buffeting I was receiving, I'd a sworn I'd already passed on.

But it **wuz** worse than that...I wuz in the back of a van with six other boaters on an Upper Yough shuttle.

There wuz no way I was going to survive all the way to Sang Run. So I poked up my head and hollered:

"Hey...ain't that a **mary-ju-wanna** plant a **growin'** out in that there field?"

The van screeched to a stop in an instant and the other paddlers vanished.

CLOSE CALL SEVEN — I made a real error in judgment pickin' a girlfriend whose birthday fell during Gauley season.

When September rolled around the first year, I told her a grandparent had keeled over and off I went to paddle.

I had such success that the next three seasons I used the same excuse. But I lost track of the years and when I used the same reason the fifth season, she became a tad enraged.

"You better enjoy the cockpit of your **kayak**," sez she, "cause it's the only cockpit you'll be fitting into."

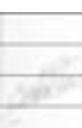
CLOSE CALL EIGHT — We wuz on the tail end of a paddling weekend and betwixt the four of us, we only had a full tank of gas and \$1.89 in loose change.

Thank the Lord for Milwaukee's Best.

By GARY CARLSON whose every contribution is considered a close call by the Editors of this magazine.

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