



AMERICAN WHITEWATER

Conservation • Access • Events • Adventure • Safety

BY BOATERS FOR BOATERS
September/October 2006

Adversity on the River

Resourcefulness Trumps Bad Luck

Shattered Bones in a Sheer-walled Canyon
Why River-Wide Logs and Rafts Don't Mix

Padding the Ocoee on Halloween:
You'll Have to See It to Believe It



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AMERICAN WHITewater

A VOLUNTEER PUBLICATION PROMOTING RIVER CONSERVATION, ACCESS AND SAFETY

American Whitewater Journal

September/October 2006

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The New River Gorge
Photo by Katie Johnson



Printed on Recycled Paper



Publication Title: American Whitewater
Issue Date: September/October 2006
Statement of Frequency: Published bimonthly
Authorized Organization's Name and Address:
American Whitewater
P.O. Box 1540
Cullowhee, NC 28723

Purpose American Whitewater

River Stewardship: An Integrated Approach

Our mission: "To conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely," is actively pursued through our conservation, access, safety and education efforts under the umbrella of River Stewardship. The only national organization representing the interest of all whitewater paddlers, American Whitewater is the national voice for thousands of individual whitewater enthusiasts, as well as over 100 local paddling club affiliates.

AW's River Stewardship program adheres to the four tenets of our mission statement:

CONSERVATION: AW's professional staff works closely with volunteers and partner organizations to protect the ecological and scenic values of all whitewater rivers. These goals are accomplished through direct participation in public decision-making

processes, grassroots advocacy, coalition building, empowerment of volunteers, public outreach and education, and, when necessary, legal action.

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

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

EDUCATION: AW shares information with the general public and the paddling community regarding whitewater rivers, as well as river recreation, conservation, access, and safety. This is accomplished through our bi-monthly AW Journal, a monthly e-news, americanwhitewater.org, paddling events, educational events, and through direct communication with the press.

Together, AW staff, members, volunteers, and affiliate clubs can achieve our goals of conserving, protecting and restoring America's whitewater resources and enhancing opportunities to safely enjoy these wonderful rivers.

AW was incorporated under Missouri nonprofit corporation laws in 1961 and maintains its principal mailing address at PO Box 1540, Cullowhee, NC 28723; phone 1-866-BOAT-4-AW (1-866-262-8429). AW is tax exempt under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Service.



American Whitewater Journal Staff

Editor

Ambrose Tuscano
14076 Northwoods Blvd. Truckee, California 96161
e-mail: editor@amwhitewater.org

Assistant Editor

Tim Catalano

Graphic Design/Production/Photo Editor

Christie Dobson

Contributing Writers

Ambrose Tuscano, Mark Singleton, Charlie Walbridge, Sue Taft, Kevin Colburn, Tom O'Keefe, Dave Steindorf, Chuck McHenry, Mark Travis, David Margavage, Kerry Walsh, Wesley R. Bradley, Richard Mauser, Eric Nies

Photo Contributors

Thomas O'Keefe, Dave Steindorf, Di McHenry, Kelly Kline, Katie Johnson, Dave Haynes, Renne Fawcett, Mike Holmstrom, Jed Weingarten, Dunbar Hardy

Events / Advertising Coordinator

Ben VanCamp
P.O. Box 1540, Cullowhee, NC 28723
phone 828-713-5825
e-mail: ben@amwhitewater.org

Safety Editor

Charlie Walbridge
Route 1, Box 329F, Bruceton Mills, WV 26525
e-mail: ccwalbridge@cs.com

Stewarship Reports Editor

Kevin Colburn, kevin@amwhitewater.org

American Whitewater Magazine Task Force

Jeff Espy, Dunbar Hardy, Dale-Marie Herring, John Mason, Tanya Shuman, Ambrose Tuscano

Missing Copies and Address Changes

carla@amwhitewater.org

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The Printing House in Quincy Florida
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Board of Directors & Staff

**TOLL FREE NUMBER
866-BOAT4AW**

Sutton Bacon
sutton@suttonbacon.com
Atlanta, GA

Chris Bell
chris@boatingbeta.com
Asheville, NC

Rich Bowers
nwriters@comcast.net
Bellingham, WA

Dave Cernicek
cernicek@cluemail.com
Jackson, WY

Adam Cramer
cramerica@gmail.com
Washington D.C.

David Ennis
enndo@aol.com
Bryson City, NC

Steve Exe
steven.j.exe@boeing.com
Mercer Island, WA

Liz Ferrin
lferrin@deckers.com
Santa Barbara, CA

Jennie Goldberg
jennie@nwhitewater.org
Seattle, WA

Joe Greiner
joekayak@worldnet.att.net
Raleigh, NC

Kristine Jackson
kristine@jacksonkayak.com
Rock Island, TN

Andrew Jillings
ajilling@hamilton.edu
Clinton, NY

Tim Kelley
tmkelley@clarkson.edu
Potsdam, NY

Don Kinser
dkinser@ediltd.com
Marietta, GA

Mark LaCroix
mwlcx@worldpath.com
Thorton, NH

Evie Locke
evelynlocke@verizon.net
Charlemont, MA

Eric Nies
ernicies@mac.com
Morgantown, WV

Aaron Pruzan
aaron@jacksonholekayak.com
Jackson Hole, WY

Norwood Scott
wns111@sbcglobal.com
San Francisco, CA

Charlie Walbridge
ccwalbridge@cs.com
Bruceton Mills, WV

BOARD OFFICERS

President: Sutton Bacon
Vice President: Don Kinser
Secretary: Norwood Scott
Treasurer: Chris Bell

AW STAFF

Laura Blalock
Bookkeeper
Cullowhee, NC
laura@amwhitewater.org

Kevin Colburn
National Stewardship Director
Missoula, MT
kevin@amwhitewater.org

Carla Miner
Membership Manager
West Valley City, UT
carla@amwhitewater.org

Thomas O'Keefe
Pacific NW Stewardship Director
Seattle, WA
okeefe@amwhitewater.org

Mark Singleton
Executive Director
Cullowhee, NC
mark@amwhitewater.org

Dave Steindorf
California Stewardship Director
Paradise, CA
dave@amwhitewater.org

Ben VanCamp
Outreach Manager
Cullowhee, NC
ben@amwhitewater.org

Executive Director The Journey Ahead

One of the most common questions I get from boaters all across the country is, “Where does AW’s money come from?”

American Whitewater has three primary revenue streams that support organization work:

- Membership dues and member contributions – These are the dues each member and club pays, plus additional contributions made to AW throughout the year.
- Foundation support – Grants play a significant role in helping to fund the specific projects our stewardship team takes on.
- Business partnerships - These partnerships represent mutual agreements for support of our River Stewardship Program.

I want to focus my comments this month on the businesses that help support AW’s River Stewardship Program. Back in the mid 80s, when AW was just beginning to tackle Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) relicensing, a contribution from Patagonia jump-started what was to become AW’s most successful means of protecting our treasured national whitewater assets. Since those early partnership beginnings, other businesses have stepped up to the plate to help support our river restoration work. A complete list of current business partners can be found on our website: <http://www.americanwhitewater.org/content/Wiki/aw:sponsorship>.

Our business partnerships have grown both in number of participants and dollars invested, which helps AW “conserve and restore America’s whitewater resources, and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely.” These visionary

companies recognized that giving back to the environment is both good for their businesses and benefit the places we all treasure. As a regular feature in the *AW Journal*, we have created a partner spotlight column, see page 66 for this issue’s featured partner.

What do these businesses get for helping to support our stewardship work? Well, they do gain exposure to paddlers and outdoor enthusiasts that use their gear and services. For some businesses this is enough to motivate them to help support our work. Other businesses have a philosophy of giving something back to the environment and the places on this watery planet where we seek both recreation and connection to the world around us. Other partners are sincerely trying to shape new business models where through corporate profitability, they can reinvest in core organizational environmental values.

Each of you as boaters makes purchase decisions regarding the gear you use. There are many factors that go into these buying decisions; performance, fit, value and now add one more – business partnership support of the places and environment you cherish.

For American Whitewater, business partnership support is critical to sustain our river stewardship program. Participating business partners are helping to assemble a new corporate ethos, where the lines between profitability and environmental responsibility are closely interconnected. This ethos is good for our partner’s business interests and is helping to protect the places that you, as a boater, value and appreciate. 

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Safety First

The GPS Project: Taking the “Search” out of “Search and Rescue”

By Eric Nies

Here’s the scenario: You and your buddy have just blitzed out the last eight miles of the upper Gnarly Fork, leaving Sketchy Fred at Liquidator, the big drop on the run. True to form, Sketchy Fred has managed to break both his ankle and his arm on the portage, and is now sitting at the bottom of the drop with two wet PowerBars, an expired Percocet, and a lighter that doesn’t seem to have any butane in it. None of you have a clue about the hike out from Liquidator, other than it is terrible, and that somebody said you definitely don’t want to hike out the wrong side. In other words, Sketchy Fred is, once again, screwed.

At the takeout, you find, to your surprise, that your cell phone has two bars. Reluctantly you call 911 and give them the lowdown. Their half of the conversation goes like this: “The Gnarly Fork? You mean Silver Creek, or Oak Creek? Is that on County 28? Liquidator, you say? Is that by the Crystal Hole? China Bar? Jumper’s Glory? Big Bend? Wobbly Rock? The Wiggles? Is there a big stump that looks like Elvis?...” As the conversation deteriorates, you realize that Fred will have a long, lonely night, sucking on a Percocet and flicking his Bic.

What is needed here is a way to translate what we know about rivers—the rapid and camp names, road and trail crossings, side creeks, etc.—into something that emergency and rescue professionals can use. And no doubt about it, what they like best is a nice set of GPS coordinates.

For those of you unfamiliar with GPS, it stands for Global Positioning System. This system consists of a few dozen expensive satellites (thank you, President Reagan) and widely available, hand-held gizmos that interpret signals from those satellites and calculate their position on the ground with an impressive accuracy. The usual \$99 K-Mart units can be accurate to



Jed Weingarten, miles from nowhere. When Jed broke his ankle on the NF Mokelumne, his buddies recorded his position with a GPS, paddled to their car and called in a heli-vac for him.

Photo by Jed Weingarten

a few meters, and high-dollar models are now capable of locating within the centimeter range.

Over the next decade, AW hopes to serve as the collecting point for GPS data on whitewater rivers for the purpose of aiding rescue professionals. We hope to create a set of GPS data for river runs listed on AW’s website, starting with the coordinates of the put-in, continuing with info on the major rapids and landmarks, and finishing with the numbers for the take-out. This data would be freely available to anyone visiting AW’s website, and would have any number of potential uses. Foremost, though, it would allow search and rescue folks to translate the kind of info boaters give them (“Liquidator, Gnarly Fork”) into a known point on the map, with just a few mouse clicks.

How will this happen? To be honest, we will need your help. AW is calling for you, the boating community at large, to start packing your GPS units on the river and collecting waypoints. Collect what you think is useful—put-in, take-out, rapids, camps, side creeks, places that a helicopter can land—and maybe take a few photos of each waypoint as well. In the months to come, AW will provide a place on its website to enter this data for all to see and use.

In a perfect world, the GPS project would grow into the comprehensive and definitive go-to database for rescue folks, so that the person answering your 911 call will know about and use it. Until that day, it will be our responsibility to grow the site, make it work, and then get the word out to EMS services. This can even

happen in real-time: “Hello, 911? My buddy’s stuck at Liquidator on the Gnarly Fork. Where’s that? Well, go to ‘www dot americanwhitewater dot org’ ... not ‘dot com’—sorry, that’s a rafting company.”

Right now, though, this project is just a dream. So start collecting those waypoints, and keep your eye on the AW website in the months to come. We’ll have a place to put your data, and we’ll even try to give some swag (or at least some credit) to the folks who contribute. And thanks in advance. Together we can make sure that Sketchy Fred doesn’t have to find out the useful life of a PowerBar or the nutritional value of Percocet. 

A handheld GPS unit can record positions to within a few meters

Photo by Mike Hoffman



Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Sue Taft did her usual fine job in the history article in the May-June "Women in Whitewater" issue. However, there is one person that I would like to see added to that list: Peggy Nutt. When I was racing in the years between 1969 and 1971, "Pnutt" stood out as the first woman kayaker who was not only "good for a woman," but a very fine paddler in her own right. I was paddling with a group in California that thought we were hot stuff. Peggy had no trouble beating us with her runs at the national championships at the Wenatchee in Washington and the Arkansas in Colorado.

Peggy married David Mitchell, the English K-1 champion, and has been helping him with Mitchell Paddles in Canaan, New Hampshire.

Regards,
Charles Martin



Dear Editor:

While I appreciated Kevin Colburn's article on poo ("When Nature Calls," May/June 2006), he completely fails to address the toilet paper issue. It's the paper, not the poo, which has the more detrimental effect on the experiences of fellow boaters. While Kevin's suggestion regarding the use of catholes is well founded, we all know that the six to eight-inch depth usually remains an unattainable ideal. Often the pressures of nature's call, compounded by the race to unfasten one's drysuit, force us to settle for a less than ideal depth. While the resulting exposed excrement decays just as quickly as that left by other animals, the paper remains as an unsightly scar. In some climates, paper can survive for several seasons. Burning can help, but burning is often incompatible with the wet environments preferred by boaters, especially in winter. A better solution would be to eliminate the use of paper altogether and follow the water-based practice used by many cultures across the world. Water is readily available in boating environments and leaves no unsightly trace. Why not do us all a favor? Leave the paper at home. When nature calls on the water, heed the call with water.

Sincerely,

Gary Holton
Fairbanks, Alaska

Dear Editor,

The following letter references the "Women in Whitewater" piece from the May / June 2006 issue of American Whitewater. From page 43, out of context: "When was the last time you stopped by a local put-in ... and saw a group that consisted of 40% women?"

Well, it happens to me often and it suits me just fine. Anna, Risa, and interviewees, where have you been paddling? Anyone worried about not enough women in whitewater in whatever regard please feel invited to hang out with us. Here are a few little statistics for you. I'm a member of the Carolina Canoe Club whose listed membership is more than 50% female according to a recent newsletter. Our current Board of Directors is over 50% female. I'm also a member and Cruise Chair of the Coastal Canoeists in Virginia. Our current Board of Directors is also over 50% female. I've been on a few of the nominating committees for these clubs and gender has never been a consideration.

As to jobs, well, they seem to be pretty rare all through the whitewater industry, but it seems to me I see plenty of female raft guides these days. I don't hang out much in outfitter stores but my latest visits to NOC at the Nantahala and Mountain Surf at the Upper Yough felt like about 50-50 both in terms of gender-specific gear and in terms of staff ratios.

As a little side jab, I know a little group of bomber whitewater female open boaters who weren't too thrilled to see that the "Women in Whitewater" issue included maybe one photo of a canoe but that's a separate topic.

Boats? Seems to me women are finding boats that fit.

Maybe I'm missing something, but from over here women in whitewater seem to be doing pretty well and having a great time at it.

Ken Dubel
Elkton, VA

History

McHenry...where?

One of Our Best-kept Secrets

By Sue Taft

At the beginning of the year, I was asked to take on the role of Executive Director of the International Whitewater Hall of Fame (IWHOF). Fortunately, because I have been involved in various aspects of it since its inception, I know what it is about. But, I also know that it is one of the best-kept little secrets in whitewater.

If you can think of a sport or an activity—or practically anything for that matter—there is probably a hall of fame for it out there. Just google “hall of fame” and you will find tons of them. There are “American,” “Canadian,” “Japanese” and “International” halls of fame, as well as halls with no territorial or geographical references. Some are actual “halls” with physical buildings while others are “walks.” Still others are virtual halls, with inducted “hall of famers” but without a building to house memorabilia and the like. IWHOF is in this latter category. It is virtual for the time being, but is also working toward a physical “hall.”

So, why a hall of fame for whitewater? Why call it international? Why, or what, determines that a hall of fame is appropriate? I guess it has to do with “history” and whitewater certainly has “history” – it has come a long way since folding kayaks and wood canoes were used to explore whitewater more than 100 years ago.

Whitewater has always been a sport without borders at least as far as the pursuit of it is concerned. And, because whitewater paddlers are relatively small in numbers, we have been—and continue to be—influenced by what goes on elsewhere, irrespective of borders. Hans Klepper of Germany, with the first commercially available kayaks (folding kayaks) at the turn of the last century, certainly affected the development of the sport everywhere. Herbert Rittlinger, also of Germany, had an impact on the development of the sport with his world-wide explorations which included among others, the first de-

scent of the Amazon from its source to the ocean (1936-1937) and the first descent of the Blue Nile (1953). In another vein, Milo Duffek of Czechoslovakia (and later of Switzerland), left his mark on anyone who has ever paddled a whitewater kayak with his namesake stroke, the Duffek, at the World Championships in 1953.

As American paddlers, we also owe considerable debt to visitors and immigrants who left their mark during the sport’s early years, paddlers like Walter Kirschbaum, Paul Bruhin, Eric Seidel, and Roger Paris in the 1950s and 1960s who inspired us and were our instructors. After them came Stan Chladek, Mike Neckar, Peter Kauput, and Joe Sedavic, and even more recently, Corran Addison, who all left their mark on the industry. Is it necessary to assign them to a particular country in order to recognize their contributions or do we look at those contributions irrespective of where they were born or lived?

So yes, an international hall of fame is certainly appropriate for whitewater.

Last year was IWHOF’s inaugural year. At this writing, elections are underway and by the time you read this, we will know who the inductees are for 2006. I won’t go into how the whole process works (but you can read about it at www.iwhof.com) but an integral part of the success of that process is getting nominations from national and international organizations and media—the Affiliates—who signed up to provide nominations. Coming up with a name is

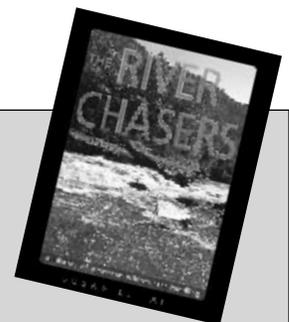
only part of providing a nomination. The other part is providing information that supports the nomination. IWHOF encourages the worldwide whitewater community to help their organizations with this important part of the process. By the way, AW is an IWHOF affiliate and probably would not turn down help in drafting nominations. AW also provides a great research source with its on-line archive of *The American Whitewater Journal*.

So where is this little secret being kept? In McHenry, MD. McHenry ...where? 

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Sue Taft is the author of *The River Chasers*, *The History of American Whitewater Canoeing and Kayaking*. If you have a topic or question you would like answered, e-mail it to editor@amwhitewater.org and look for its answer in an upcoming issue.



Stewardship Updates

Negotiations Leap Forward on Susquehanna River (PA)

By Kevin Colburn

Interest expressed by paddlers in the proposed amendment to the license for the Holtwood Hydro Project on Pennsylvania's Susquehanna River has led to a fast-paced summer of analysis and negotiations. The dam owner and state agencies both rallied to conduct boating studies that began only two weeks after AW requested them. Regional paddlers volunteered to participate in the studies and actively engaged the dam owner in negotiations. Together, stakeholders explored ways to support the amendment while mitigating the proposed impacts on Holtwood's many play waves. As of press time, several promising alternatives have emerged, and a final agreement is expected by late September.

Catawba Dam Relicensing Settlement Agreement Signed (NC/SC)

By Kevin Colburn

On July 26th, 2006, American Whitewater joined dozens of other groups in signing a settlement agreement that recommends sweeping new environmental and recreational enhancements for the Catawba River. The settlement comes after more than three years of studies, monthly meetings, negotiations, and proposal development. Paddlers' efforts were led by AW volunteer Andrew Lazenby, and Carolina Canoe Club reps Maurice and Motty Blackburn, with support by AW staff. Together, we were able to negotiate significant enhancements throughout this huge watershed.

Our efforts were focused on the Great Falls of the Catawba, which have been dried up and submerged for 99 years. Thanks in part to our efforts, 101 years

after the falls were rendered silent they will begin flowing again. Beginning in 2008, the Great Falls will receive a new continuous base flow, and higher flows that will foster whitewater boating on weekends throughout the year. New river access areas and flow information will welcome paddlers to the falls, and a new state park will offer superb hiking and historical tours of the islands and river corridor. Land protection will ensure the remote and wild feel of the falls is maintained. We are proud also that the planned recreational amenities will offer new prospects for the town of Great Falls, South Carolina. Look for new awesome Class II and III playboating opportunities in the deep south in the spring of 2008!

Just upstream of the Great Falls we have secured 72 days of guaranteed releases through Landsford Canal State Park, as well as new and enhanced base flows and river management assistance. This is a great reach that many people from the Charlotte area tour in canoes and on guided trips led by park officials. Closer to the headwaters, a new flow regime has been negotiated below Lake James that will provide 93 days annually of releases suitable for whitewater boating on the Bridgewater reach. With the new flow regime, new planned access areas, and significant land protections, this underutilized reach should blossom into a popular Class II fishing and beginner whitewater run.

In addition to these target reaches, significant gains were made throughout the watershed. All told, over 7,800 acres of wildlands will be protected from development as a result of this project. Base flows will be restored to every reach, and public access will be enhanced throughout the watershed. Of special interest for many paddlers, the settlement agreement includes funding of a new USGS gauge for the classic Wild and Scenic Wilson Creek.

The agreement is not perfect (none are), and some groups we hold in high regard have chosen not to sign it. We recognize that it may not meet everyone's interests at this point, but are confident that the

agreement is a strong step toward a fair and comprehensive license for the Catawba Project. We'll continue to work with all the stakeholders in the coming months to shore up agreements and to meet additional interests. For us though, the agreement is something we are proud to sign. It meets our stated interests in river conservation and access, and contains significant benefits for the Catawba River and those who enjoy it.

Milltown Dam is on its Way Out

By Kevin Colburn

In June of 2006, dam operators began to draw down the reservoir behind Milltown Dam on the Clark Fork River. The lower water levels are exposing and flushing relatively clean sediment downstream. Soon the underlying sediment that is contaminated with heavy metals from upstream mining operations will be mechanically removed, and then the dam will be removed. American Whitewater strongly supported the removal of Milltown Dam and we are very excited to watch its removal progress. Currently the confluence of the Clark Fork and Blackfoot rivers is beneath a reservoir and layers of sediment, and upstream fish passage is blocked by the dam. Soon however, the two great Rivers will once again reach a natural confluence with fish moving freely upstream – and boats moving freely downstream.

AW to Consider Stronger Colorado Presence

By Kevin Colburn

American Whitewater is planning on holding a meeting later this fall with various Colorado groups working on issues that affect whitewater rivers and their enjoyment. The goal of this meeting will be to develop a common vision for improving the public's rights to enjoy

Stewardship Updates



*Above: Access at the Dryden Weir
Left: Steve Exe on the Wenatchee River at the base of
the Dryden Weir*

photo by Thomas O'Keefe



Wenatchee River Access Restored

By Tom O'Keefe

whitewater rivers and for protecting those rivers from environmental impacts. The nexus between recreation and conservation is very strong in Colorado, and the opportunities for paddlers to protect rivers is equally strong. Together we hope to explore ways that American Whitewater can enhance our ability to play a strong role in river stewardship in Colorado in 2007 and beyond.

The Wenatchee River is one of the most popular in the Pacific Northwest, serving thousands of visitors who come to enjoy the whitewater every year. Despite the quality of this resource, public access to the river is limited to a few public parcels owned by agencies that do not traditionally serve whitewater recreation. Unfortunately these public agencies have been quick to close access sites when problems develop. Thanks to the efforts of local volunteers, Dick and Kathy Spencer, however, we have successfully restored access to two parcels that were recently closed: the Sleepy Hollow Bridge on the lower section of the river, and the Dryden Weir which is the lowhead dam just below Rock and Roll. In both cases the

Spencer's were able to present persuasive arguments to local agency staff and elected officials for the benefits of recreational opportunities the river provides and open positive dialogues with members of the community. The Spencer's have gone on to catalog access points along the entire length of the Wenatchee River. This effort serves as a great starting point for community discussions on how to protect and enhance public access to this great resource.



Sultan River Study

By Tom O'Keefe

After strong sets of comments from agencies (NPS, USFS, State of WA, and FERC) and testimony provided by several local paddlers, Snohomish PUD has agreed to conduct a study of whitewater resources and flow needs on the Sultan River. The study is currently scheduled for sometime in late 2007 and AW is working collaboratively with the utility to develop the study plan. We are also participating in aquatic resources meetings where we have advocated for studies that will provide direction for a new river management plan that will improve overall river health and benefit aquatic resources. We thank local volunteer Andy Bridge and our friends at Werner Paddles for their ongoing support of this great river.

Cispus River Access

By Tom O'Keefe

In late June we received a ruling from FERC requiring Lewis County PUD to implement a plan for public access to the Lower Cispus. The PUD was required to provide this access before construction of their dam, which was completed in 1992, and they have been out of compliance with their license for well over a decade. The project was constructed with narrow physical boundaries that did not include the lands necessary to meet the license requirement for public access. Although the utility acquired the lands to build the dam, flood the reservoir, and build transmission lines, they did not acquire the land necessary to meet the requirements of their recreation plan. The situation finally changed when Port Blakely, a private timber company, purchased the necessary

Andy Bridge on the Sultan River

photo by Thomas O'Keefe

lands and offered to come to the table and find a solution. Addressing their liability concerns has been an ongoing issue but we are optimistic that we will find a way to make things work.

We have learned important lessons with the Cispus access issue and we believe FERC needs to take a more critical look at their obligation to serve recreation needs when establishing project boundaries. We are still seeing significant inconsistencies in how this issue is handled at different projects across the country. Project boundaries should be based on the resource and not on an arbitrary line.

Stewardship Updates



Whitewater Witch Hunt: Releases on the North Fork Feather Under Attack

By Dave Steindorf

Once upon a time, irrational fear and belief in unsound science led otherwise reasonable people to burn innocent victims at the stake. This may be more dramatic than the scenario playing out on the Feather River, but the same unsupported reasoning and paranoia is present. What is at stake for whitewater paddlers are the opportunities to use and enjoy regulated rivers across the country.

Restoring the North Fork of the Feather as a recreational resource has been one of AW's biggest successes in the West. Over the past five years, thousands of paddlers have enjoyed the fabulous whitewater that has occurred one weekend per month throughout the summer. AW is also very proud of the fact that the increased base flows have rejuvenated what was essentially a dry riverbed and helped to restore the once great fishery on the Feather. To us, the years of negotiating were well worth the rewards of seeing this great river restored.

What most paddlers don't realize is that AW has been in a battle to keep the releases on the Feather ever since they started five years ago. At the root of this debate are individuals, organizations and some scientific experts that philosophically believe these releases are wrong. The key complaint is that summer releases are an unnatural assault on the ecosystem. Given that PG&E's project removes 90% of the water from the river, it seems hard to believe that putting 1% of the water back in the river would cause harm to the river's ecosystem.

Top: Grizley Dome Rapid

Left bottom: Bump and Grind rapid on the Cresta run

Right bottom: Cresta Put-in trail. Boaters are still awaiting trail improvements to the Cresta put-in

photos by Dave Steindorf

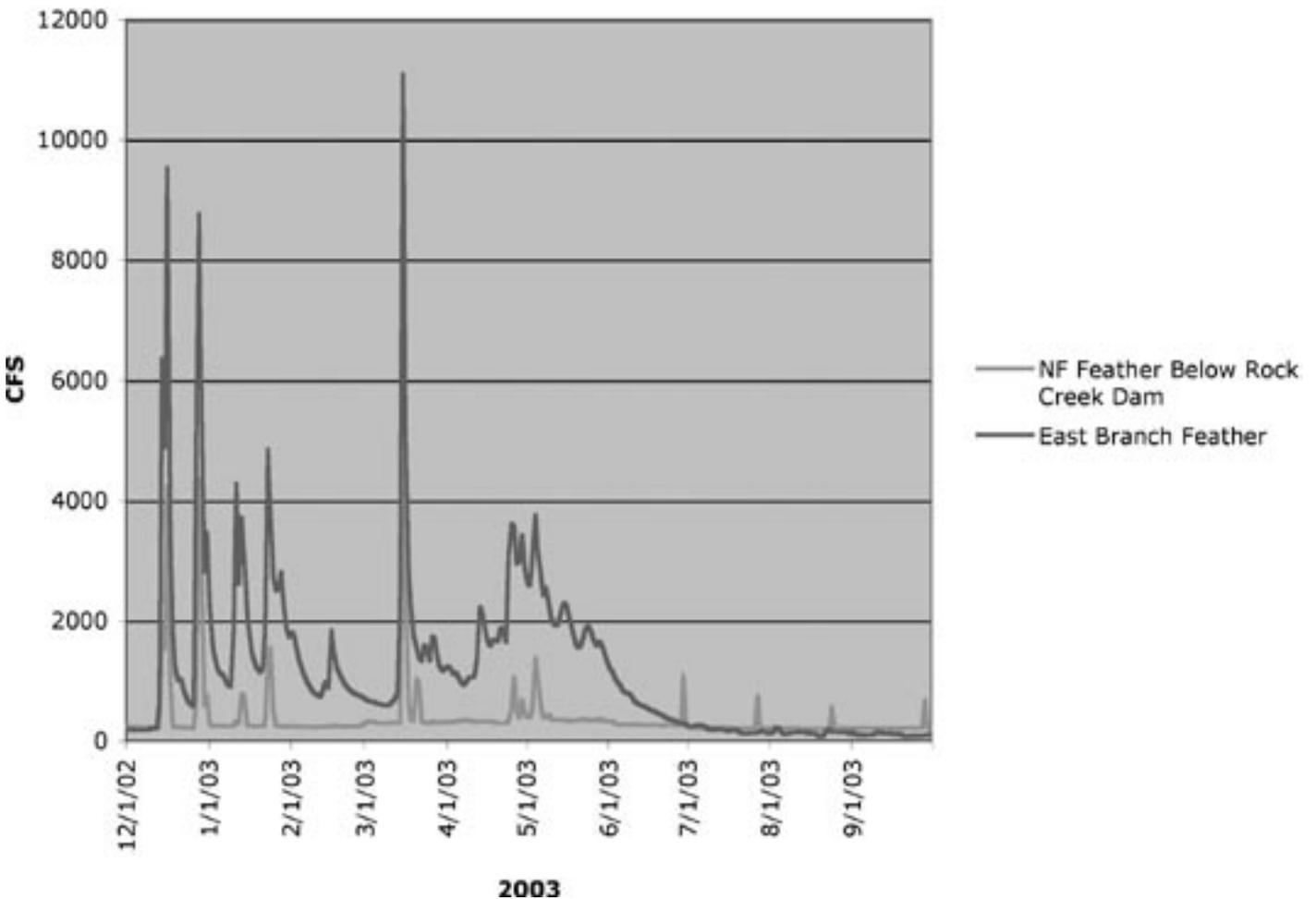
A quick look at the Feather hydrograph shows that below the dams are essentially a series of spikes throughout the year. The graph clearly shows the impact of removing most of the water from the river, (see graph). However, some “experts” continue to claim that a significant impact is occurring from the relatively small whitewater releases. While AW respects their right to their beliefs and philosophical differences, we prefer to base our interests on sound science. At this point it is quite clear to us that the scientific data has shown no ill effects as a result of recreational releases. Despite the volumes of data that document the lack of impact some of the consultants

and “experts” working on this project continue to make conclusions to the contrary. However, in 2001 we agreed to a three-year study period to document any potential impacts on fish, insects and frogs. Even though we did not believe that these flows would have any negative impact, we felt that it was important to respect the concerns of others and their need to confirm that these recreational releases had no detrimental effects to the riverine environment.

Before the first year of flows in 2002, opponents of these releases predicted the flows would wash out all fish, insects, frogs, and even birds and bats and render

the river a barren wasteland. We knew that these accusations were baseless because release flows were actually the same as the natural base flows that all of these critters had evolved with for a millennia, and significantly less than peak flows that occur in high water years when runoff exceeds the capacity of the powerhouses. After collecting the first year’s study data we found no evidence of significant stranding or displacement of fish. However, we did find that one frog egg mass was dislodged during the flow event. Because AW felt that even this limited impact was too great, and to demonstrate our commitment to protecting the sensitive aquatic species, we agreed to cancel future

Regulated Flows vs. Natural Flow on The North Fork Feather



Stewardship Updates

June releases that coincided with frog-breeding season. Unfortunately, rather than being applauded for our conservative approach we found ourselves under siege in the technical report, where recreational flows were accused of having wiped out 50% of the frog egg masses. While the consultant was technically correct—of the two egg masses present at the time of the release one stayed and one was gone—we feel this conclusion was intentionally misleading and inappropriate. Particularly in light of the fact that all of the other egg masses that were found that season had already hatched into tadpoles. AW

stated repeatedly that this was a biased presentation of the data. This became a common theme over the next five years.

Also that year, this same team of consultants misrepresented the facts stating that “Tadpole numbers fluctuated during surveys, but were also reduced significantly by the June flows, when hundreds of recently-hatched tadpoles seen during the pre-flow period dwindled to only about two dozen post-flow”(GANDA 2002). After examining the data more closely, it became clear to us that while the reduction in the

number of tadpoles happened, it actually occurred before the recreational flow event. We believed this reduction was likely due to predation from fish, snakes and crayfish. The following year a predation study confirmed our suspicion. With no recreation flows, we found the same declining trend in the numbers of tadpoles. Underwater video caught the culprits—crayfish, snakes, and bass—all having a field day on the immobile egg masses and slow moving tadpoles.

In 2003 these same consultants conducted a study on the macroinvertebrates (insects) before and after releases on the Feather to see if the additional water would somehow change the number or composition of the bug community. The study found no significant change in the macroinvertebrates before and after the flow releases. Unwilling to accept this result the consultants broadened their time frame of the study. They then found that the numbers of bugs, or densities, decreased over the season and concluded that this must be the result of the whitewater releases. AW pointed out that it was more likely that this change was part of the natural lifecycle of the bugs on the Feather and that they had no data from other rivers to support this conclusion. Unfortunately, some people already accepted these baseless conclusions as fact. The next day’s newspaper headline read: “Bugs in Chaos.” We began to hear in meetings across the country how whitewater releases were killing bugs, fish and frogs. The following year a study showed the same trend in the bug densities on a control reach that did not experience whitewater releases. Again we were vindicated, however getting the consultants to send out a retraction was not realistic and, to a large degree, the damage had already been done.

This year we received the most devastating attack on whitewater releases to date. The



John Gangemi surfing on the Cresta. John spent eight years working the Feather River.

photo by Dave Steindorf

flows in the Feather, and most other rivers in the state, had elevated flows throughout most of this winter and spring. Once spill flows came under control, dam operators abruptly reduced flows in the North Fork Feather River. The consultants found that many of the frogs' egg masses became stranded when dam operations dropped flows rapidly at the end of the high water period. The unfortunate result was that 50 percent of the egg masses were stranded and desiccated on the Cresta and Poe reaches. The loss of these stranded egg masses has significantly reduced the number of tadpoles this year. Only four egg masses were found on the Cresta reach; 22 had been found the previous year. The team of consultants and other experts immediately made the unsubstantiated conclusion that recreation flows in previous years was the reason for the low egg mass numbers on the Cresta reach. The consultants leaped to this conclusion while totally ignoring the documented impact of the project stranding 50 percent of the egg masses. This finding was particularly disturbing given that egg mass surveys on the Cresta were delayed until late in the laying season. Yet, based on this information the decision was made to cancel the July and August releases on the Cresta reach, and potentially all of the rest of the releases this season.

One of the biggest concerns from AW's perspective is that many of these unsubstantiated conclusions are now being quoted in other studies. What is remarkable is that many "experts" are seizing on these studies' baseless conclusions while totally ignoring studies from other rivers that fluctuate on a daily bases. Some of these rivers including, the Klamath, the Pit, and the Middle Fork American, all support robust fisheries and the macroinvertebrate populations that are their food supply. Even the Feather, which was considered one of the best trout fisheries in the West, fluctuated throughout the summer before the Rock Creek and Cresta projects were built in the 1950s. The fluctuations caused by Caribou powerhouse upstream could raise the river five feet in 90 seconds, a much greater rate than the ramping rates we negotiated in the new license that take place over several hours and are designed to prevent stranding. It can only be assumed that the frog populations on the Feather also survived the constant and dramatic fluctuations of the past. Given all of this information, the idea that having five releases per year has somehow upset the delicate balance of



Boaters line up for the Cresta shuttle

photo by Dave Steindorf

the Feather River ecosystem seems absurd. More importantly this conclusion is not supported by any of the data that we have gathered on the river.

American Whitewater has always prided itself on being a very pragmatic environmental organization. We try and approach all of our projects with the basic premise that it is possible to find a balance that can benefit all stakeholders. We do not believe in attacking the legitimacy of any other beneficial use of the river. This would include the power companies that often take 90 percent, or more, of the river's water for their beneficial use. After all we do like our lights to go on when we get home from paddling. This is why it is so difficult to hear others, including scientific "experts" who do not feel that the needs of whitewater recreationists should be viewed as equal to other uses. While they are willing to look the other way when these projects completely rearrange flows to provide power production, they

somehow consider flows for whitewater recreation unnatural—ironic since these very flows were designed to restore elements of the natural flow regime to the river. It is our intent to appeal these unjustified conclusions to the state and federal agencies that regulate the Feather and to the FERC, which regulates this project.

In order to do this we will need your support!! Please send us a letter in support of keeping the Feather releases; explain why whitewater should be viewed as a legitimate use of the river and what it means to you to see a river with water in it! With your help, we will continue to fight so that whitewater enthusiasts have fair access to water in their rivers. 

Adversity on the River

Misadventure on the Black Canyon

By Chuck McHenry

This is a story that should start with a bunch of people sitting around the back yard barbeque drinking beer and shooting the bull. Somebody mentions the Black Canyon of the Gunnison, and everybody forgets how old they are, and about arthritic joints and hours spent in air conditioning ... and the beer talks. “Hell yeah, I could do that no problem ...” or “Used to do stuff like that all the time.” And the next thing you know we’re out there giving it a go.

That’s the way it should start, but instead it started with e-mails, and opinions, and reading descriptions (we were told it was a portage with a few rapids in between; “naw, that can’t be right”), and each of us deciding, after our personal muse or fury whispered in our ear, that we would like to give it a try.

The Black Canyon of the Gunnison River, in the Gunnison National Monument, is famous for being the deepest, sheerest, canyon in North America. The kayak run is 14 miles long. The first three or four miles are just fun, boatable Class III-IV water; in this section some difficult trails lead from the canyon’s rim to water’s edge. However, once you enter the narrows part of the canyon things get serious. You are now on your own, faced with Class IV-VI rapids. In this section there are no trails as the walls are completely vertical; almost every rapid is punctuated by undercuts and sieves where the water slams against boulder piles and disappears. There are undertows where the water quietly, and without warning, can suck kayaks under water.

The Black Canyon features a combined mile of backbreaking mandatory portages, trail-less and over the roughest terrain imaginable. Sharp rocks that look like they just fell from the rim yesterday, large boulders and ledges, and the famous dense thickets of head high poison ivy bushes stand in your way. It is also a

desert climate, hot and dry, with a sun that beats down like an out of control laser, intensified as it bounces off the rock walls. It can be lethal. Unencumbered by pollution or clouds, the sun can rob you of precious body fluids in hours and burn white skin to pain in 30 minutes.

Even though it is clear and clean, the water of the Gunnison has a strange oily feel. This is the result of the particularly abrasive sediment carried by the river. As the mountains rose all about the plateau this sediment allowed the river to slice into the rock like a diamond drill, cutting out plumb-bob vertical walls.

So why do it? All I can say is this: There is an extraordinary beauty in this world—the Buddhists say that there is beauty all around us if we just take the time to notice it—but being accustomed to our daily routines, we feel the need to travel great distances and go to great lengths and hardship to find beauty. Is there some quality, some gathering of personal power that occurs when we achieve the great heights, the canyon floors, the far-flung places where few have gone? The answer is quite simply, yes. There is exclusive beauty in the wild places, in the mountains and the cracks in the earth. It is the same for all adventures of this sort: to gain a place rarely visited and to marvel at stunning scenery and vistas few will ever see. The Black Canyon is extraordinary for just that reason. Standing on huge bare-rock boulders on the canyon floor beside the clear water roaring in my ears, looking straight up at the jagged zigzag of the sky a half-mile above me, I was awestruck.

The trip began for my fiancé, Diane “Di” Duncil, and I in Idaho on the Middle Fork of the Salmon, with a six-day, 106-mile float. We then made the drive through Utah, stopping only to do a steep creek run on the Price River in the mid-eastern part of the state.

In Colorado, we drove to a place called Pleasure Park, which is a BLM takeout for the Gunnison Gorge Section, an additional 13 miles of river we intended to do past the National Park boundaries. There we hooked up with Slim Olson,



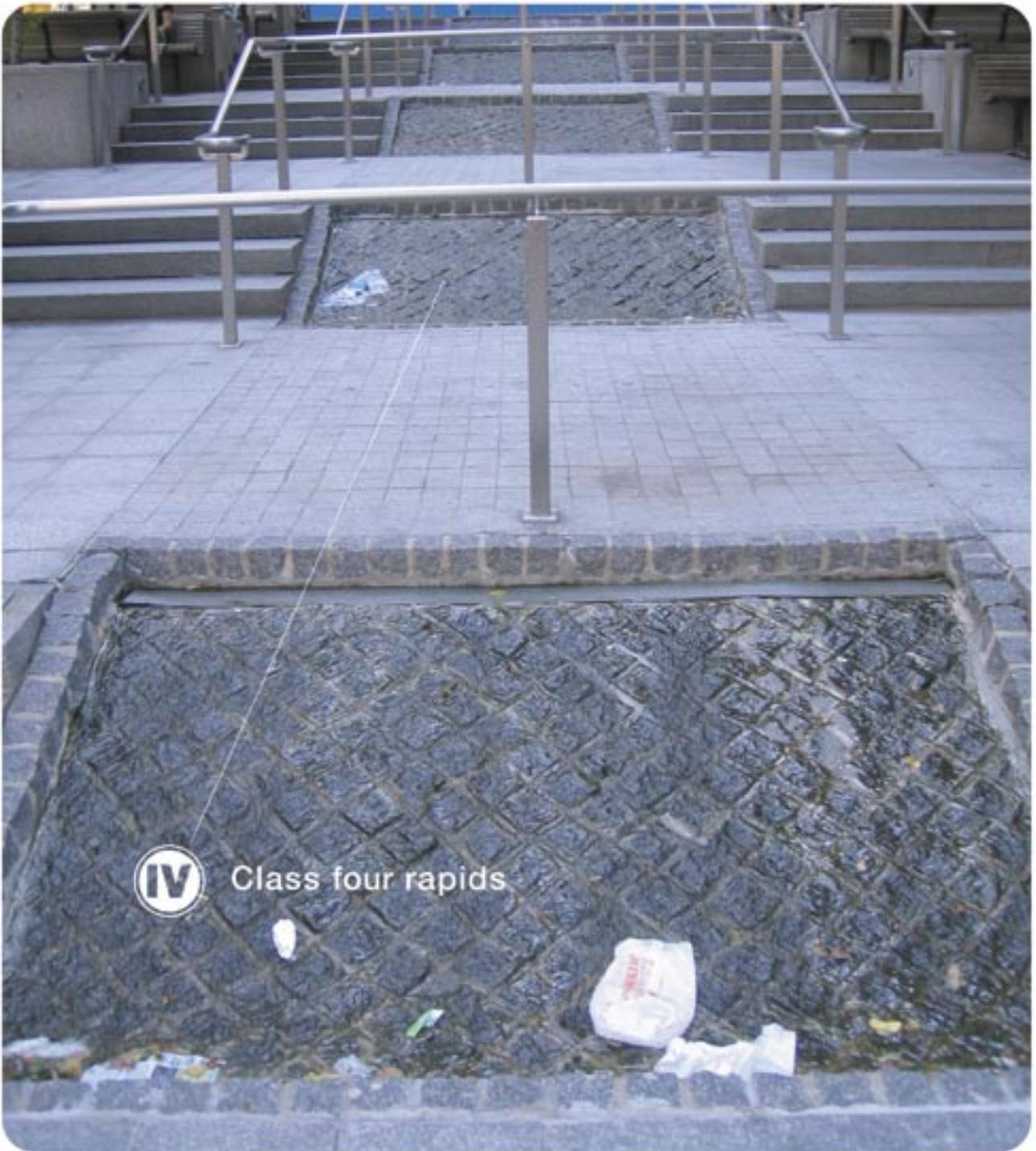
Chuck McHenry entering the narrows of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison

photo by Di McHenry

Sergey Malchenko, Dustin Marquart and Curtis Elwood. Slim was a veteran boater, 40+ years old, with a lot of Class V under his belt, and excellent river judgment. I’d seen Dustin (19 years) progress from a 12-year-old beginner into an expert boater and I was confident he had all the skills necessary for a trip of this sort. I hadn’t boated with Sergey as much, but we’d spent two weeks in Colorado doing moderately hard water together and he’d done just fine. Curtis, 25, was our trip organizer, and the one who had studied this run intently. He was also wilderness first aid qualified. Di, my girlfriend, was a wild card. I almost asked her to stay behind on the day we departed, but she and Sergey had both promised to walk anything that I asked them not to run. She was EMT trained, and had run quite a bit of Class V.

The night before we spent four hours packing our kayaks for a three-day self-support trip. We took the lightest equipment possible, making sure no gear was duplicated. The way the extra gear affected the kayaks’ balance was particularly important. Doing a Class V rapid in an empty boat is dicey enough. A fully loaded boat (with 30 extra pounds) just ups the ante.

I was in a longer old-style kayak so that I could carry the lion’s share of the weight



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Adversity on the River

between Di and I. The rest of the group paddled newer, shorter creek boats with less storage space.

We put in at East Portal around noon, a late start but I figured we could cover eight miles fast enough (hmmm). Our destination was Painted Rock Beach, the only beach in the narrows, at the bottom of a sheer black wall laced with white intrusions that make huge outline figures that look like animals.

The first three miles of river was delightful boogey-water. The sun was beating down hot, the water was in the mid-50s, deliciously cool, clear and sparkling in the noon-day sun. The Class III rapids invited surfing and eddy-hopping, and gave us a long, invigorating warm-up. We made the three miles to the entrance of the narrows below the South Rim Ranger Station (and the last access trail out of the canyon for eight miles) in just over an hour. The canyon walls quickly closed in on us about the time we noticed heavy clouds rolling in above us, blotting out the sun. We had been told it only rained about once per month in the canyon so we didn't think much about it. The intensity of the rapids immediately began to pick up.

Normally a Class IV rapid wouldn't warrant too much attention for a group like ours, but we quickly realized that swimming was unthinkable; the odds of encountering a sieve or undercut were unacceptably high. My kayak had about 70 gallons of volume, but in one eddy I was driven into a wall and watched as my boat started sinking quietly and without warning. It was eerie because there was no visible reason for it. After this wake-up call we started scouting rapids that we'd normally just eddy hop, slowing our progress considerably.

Two miles into the narrows, the canyon funneled down to only 50 feet wide, while 2700 feet above us it was only 300 feet across. The sky became darker and more ominous. Light rain began to sprinkle. We ran a few Class Vs, and then met our first portage. It was much tougher than I had imagined. Shouldering our loaded ungainly boats, we had to boulder-hop

and negotiate loose scree, climb fairly high up the canyon wall to get around and then drop back down loose debris and cat's claw to get back to the river. It wasn't 4 pm yet, but the light overhead made it look more like dusk. Thunder started rolling down the canyon, echoing off the walls, reverberating and growling as it passed, only to bounce off cliff faces and roll back up, diminished and muted. I could feel it in my chest, and the hairs on my neck and arms seemed charged with the static in the air about us. I wondered if thunder could knock rocks loose from the cliffs; I thought about the damage even a walnut-size rock falling 2600 feet could do to a helmet.

We rounded a bend and there it was a mile down the canyon, rising up in front of us where the river made a 90-degree bend, the Painted Wall. Huge stick figures of animals—serpents, dogs, deer—magnificently spanned its whole breadth and height. We had done three disproportionately tough, short portages. That was when we came to “18-foot Falls.” Imagine 2600 feet of sheer canyon walls coming down to both the left and right edge of the river and then meeting at a horizon line at river level all the way across. There was a roar of water pounding on rocks and spray washing up from below. To portage this one required major work—some flat out mountaineering and rope belays.

On the other hand, to run this waterfall required 100% precision and split-second timing. If you went straight over the horizon line you would land on rocks just under the water. The safe line required starting river right, then paddling hard to build up your momentum to river left, hitting the left side of the middle spout of water with your boat angled to the left. You then had to lean back and kick out at just the precise moment to lift the bow up so that your boat entered at a 45-degree angle. Not enough uplift and the boat would pencil in and hit rocks that were about six feet under the water. Lean back and kick too much and the boat would land too flat and vertebral compression became a concern (at least for my 54-year-old back). We had no way of climbing down to test the pool to determine if

indeed, there was a portion free of rocks. Nor did we even know for sure we had the right middle spout (I counted four spouts!).

Curtis showed tremendous bravery by going first, depending only on what others had told him about the method of running the rapid, and made a beautiful 45-degree entry, disappearing in the foam for a scant second before popping up again. I went second, and Slim third, all with good results. Looking up I saw Di come over and knew immediately that something was wrong. She was too far in the middle of the spout and her boat was off angle to the right. She hit the rocks at the bottom with a horrible thud. The next thing I knew, I heard her screaming that her ankle was broken and that it was pushed beyond, and trapped under, the bulkhead. The first six inches of her bow was curved upward at a 90-degree angle. I was screaming, “No, no, no” I felt like this couldn't really be happening, that we'd been shoved for a moment into an alternate, horrible universe, and in seconds we'd snap back to the safer reality. I kept hoping she was wrong and that it was only a bad sprain. I knew we were in deep trouble.

We all rushed to her. Curtis got out of his boat on a moss-covered rock, and we guided her over to him. We could not get her boat safely out of the water, the rock being too steep and slippery with the water-soaked moss. Slim got out of his boat and he, like Curtis, had trouble not sliding back into the water. My mind was racing: How we were going to get a broken ankle out from being wedged under a bulkhead? How much pain might that cause? Was it even bearable? It occurred to me that we might have to cut the boat open. It was hard to push back my anguish at seeing my fiancée in so much pain, and in such a horrible location. I kept thinking it had to not be as bad as it looked.

It turned out that the foot trapped in the bulkhead was not broken, and we managed to slowly wiggle it out. When we got her other ankle out it looked as if someone had just slid her foot laterally two inches out from under her ankle. It had not punctured the skin, but I could

feel and hear the crepitus of multiple broken bones. Her ankle dangled.

Curtis had his med kit out and produced a SAM Splint that we immediately taped on. We quickly realized that we were not in a safe spot for Di. The rocks were too steep and too slippery for us to climb with her. She had to paddle. We put Di in Curtis' boat as his bulkhead was further forward. This gave Di room to slide her feet in without pressure. I unlocked Di's bulkhead, put my legs inside and pushed with everything I had, cramming it as far forward into the bent bow as I could get, and squirmed my way into her boat. Curtis got in my long boat.

It was then that we discovered that we were in a "forever eddy." The wall of water separating us from the current made it extremely difficult to get out. All the water from the waterfall wanted to pour into this eddy where it calmed down before sieving out under rocks on the downstream edge. If you tried to paddle out, the incoming water just pushed you back in. I had to paddle very hard to get out, which left me feeling hugely concerned for Di's escape. Di paddled out into the current, only to get pushed right back into the eddy, scrambling hard not to get washed into the sieve. Curtis tried in my long boat and got washed back as well. Di tried again with no success. I came back into the eddy, exited and came back in to show her it was very possible and to give her a pep talk. She tried again and failed. Curtis finally got out, which I think gave Di a lift. I told her to concentrate just on the water downstream, not to look at anything else, paddle hard on both sides at the exact angle I showed her and under no circumstances give up. She paddled with everything she had and, undoubtedly with a shot of adrenalin in her system, barely slipped out, skirting by the undercutting sieve by a few inches. I was amazed by and thankful for her toughness.

There was more thunder from the storm gathering overhead as we negotiated the last of a Class III rapid and got out of the river above a mandatory portage. We found a tiny little level spot, fairly soft with dirt, right next to the cliff wall and carried Di to

it. I immediately started building a shelter for her as little intermittent raindrops started to fall. Slim and Curtis found a cave higher up and a ledge under an eave that would be dry. Sergey and Dustin, still above 18-foot would have nothing of the waterfall after seeing Di's piton and started a grueling portage. Sergey wrote me later and explained:

"When the whole thing happened with Di, Dustin and I were thinking that all of you guys would be stuck in that corner, under the 18-footer—that there was no way Di would be able to ferry across the pool. For us to run the 18-footer was not an option. If something would happen to one of us the whole situation could become even worse. So we were thinking that the only option would be to ferry across, take a few things from our kayaks and run through the night to get rescue (Now knowing what needed to be done to get to the trail, I know that it would be an impossible thing to do). The rain started right after we got on the other side of the river and it became dark, so the whole situation was really grim from our perspective (thinking about hypothermia, pain, and everything else that would come along for Di). So you could imagine our relief when we met Slim sometime later and he told us that all of you guys were already on our side of the river, you made a shelter for Di and her pain was under control ... I still cannot imagine what it took for Di to make that ferry below the 18-footer ..."

I had a space blanket and a small parawing tarp which I got up and, after an

hour of tweaking, finally guaranteed her a dry spot. I gave her all the padding I could find to lay on. We had brought powerful pain meds in our first aid kit and I got her started; neither one of us felt like eating anything more than a snack.

We slept fitfully, Di waking about every two or three hours in need of pain medication. I couldn't keep my mind from racing, trying to formulate a plan, and periodically trying to prevent my down bag from getting wet in the now continuously falling rain. I was awake and cold, deep in the full darkness of night, trying to find a dry spot in my bag, when I heard it—the sound of water and debris rushing down the canyon wall high above us. It was a weird sound, far away, but somehow I knew it was directly overhead. I climbed out of my bag and stood miserable in the black night's rain, shining my tiny headlamp straight up, as high up the canyon wall as it would reach, waiting as the sound grew nearer. I prayed to the canyon gods, to any spirit that would listen, "Haven't you done enough to her ... can't you just give us one break?"

The sound was getting very close, almost on top of us, and I thought of pulling her away from the canyon wall and into the rain when suddenly, about 30 feet down canyon, water suddenly spouted out from a crack like a fire hydrant. The next day I would see that about 40 feet above us was a two-foot wide ledge, angling down and away from us. It had diverted the water. Prayers answered! For some reason, I looked to Painted Rock Wall, a full mile

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Adversity on the River

away, and thanked the huge figures sprawled across it.

A few stray clouds still lingered the next morning, but the sun quickly burned them away. Everything dried and the night's rain was a swiftly fading memory. I had a strange sense of confident purpose, that all was in order, and that we would get out. We weighed our options and decided on a hike out.

Curtis was very insistent, to the point of argumentative, that he be the one who made the hike, and would consider no alternatives. I thought this strange; he was our best-trained first aid person and we knew nothing of his outdoor skills. It was my poor judgment not going myself. I have extensive desert skills and experience. But I selfishly did not want to leave Di, even though I knew she'd be in good hands.

It was decided Curtis and I would hike the portage, about 2/3 of a mile, over to the first of two river crossings. After he got help for Di, he would hook up with Jerry, a Missouri boater who had planned to paddle the easier gorge with us. The two of them would return, cross back over the river and we'd kayak all six boats out. It was suggested we portage two boats with us for the river crossings. I thought this was a good idea, but again Curtis adamantly refused, saying he wanted to get out as quickly as possible; he would swim the ferries. This decision would ultimately cost us a day.

The two of us had a quick breakfast and set out. There were only bits and pieces of anything you'd call a trail, and rightly so, this was not an area hikers got to, and the few kayakers who did it had not established any permanent routes. It was slow going and the heat was already starting to build. After about an hour we were at river's edge, where a large eddy afforded an easy swim to the left side of the river. I promised to portage two boats to the beach for the return ferries. There was also a large cave, which I immediately recognized as a haven from the sun. I watched Curtis swim over, waved goodbye and wished him luck. He would have to make one more river crossing in an area we had not seen. Then

he would have to climb up and out of the canyon via a trail called SOB Gully, to the North Rim Ranger Station.

On the way back to our camp I marked a trail as best as I could by taking several detours and side-hikes, scrambling over sharp rock and loose debris boulder fields and piling small rock cairns in easily visible places. I did manage to find a few hundred feet of smooth going, worn trail, but it quickly disintegrated into rock-jumbled chaos. This took me the rest of the morning, but ended up being the trail we would use for our portaging.

Back in camp all was not well. Di was in great spirits but the others were tired, listless and vomiting. It had taken Sergey and Dustin most of the morning to get their boats portaged around the falls. Thinking they may be suffering from bacteria, I checked their filters. Even though they looked fine I begged them to iodize their water instead. But the others objected to the taste and kept drinking filtered water.

The right call was to assume they were suffering from heat exhaustion. I was very familiar with its effects from time spent prospecting the Arizona Superstitions, and knew it could progress to heat stroke, a snowballing, life-threatening degradation of body responses. Di, although an EMT, was in no position to help. Curtis was gone and I knew nothing about heat stroke, so I just recommended that the sick group members stay cool. I shouldered my

boat and started the portage. The others could go only a few hundred yards before returning to shade.

I made another gear portage and by about 3 pm the sun disappeared behind the rim and we were bathed in cooler shadows. The others rallied a bit, and around 5 pm decided to carry their gear to a nearby cave and spend the night there. I would stay behind with Di. Another plan had formed. If we got no help by morning they would boat through the narrows and hike out at Chukar trail for help. Once Di was safe, I would solo out—a plan I was totally comfortable with. Sergey and Dustin left first, followed by Slim. I lagged behind, tending to Di and making sure she was as comfortable as possible before I left her alone for the next two hours.

I grabbed Di's boat and was about to begin another portage when I saw these guys running over the talus and through the brush. Slim was with them. It was three rangers from the park, highly trained paramedics who had done a three pitch rope rappel down the side of the canyon to get to us. They were moving fast, like adventure racers, despite what looked like heavy packs. Ranger Jo went straight to Di as I filled her in on Di's health, for the first time mentioning that Di's urine had been reddish-brown since the accident (bruised kidney? I hadn't told Di this). Jo commented on what great spirits Di was in and how they'd imagined the situation to be much worse.

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Brent, the team leader, told us a helicopter was available, today only, but we had to find a 15' by 15' flat landing place. There was only one place like that anywhere in the canyon—Painted Rock Beach—two river ferries and three portages away! So we had to build another one. For well over an hour we frantically moved river rocks into a depression atop a huge boulder/slab of rock. Willis, the other ranger, was smaller than all of us, but extremely wiry and kept us supplied with rocks to carry. I can't begin to estimate how much we moved, but about the time we heard the helicopter we had finished.

I could hear the buzz over the radio; the pilot was saying there were people and gear strewn out all over the canyon, but he didn't see our yellow landing marker. Brent told him to keep going. When he did find us he made several passes, and then made

the first of about eight attempts to land. Every time he'd start to set down a rock would shift and the copter would start to tilt causing the pilot to lift off again. His rotors were only about five feet from rock, but he kept trying and finally settled down on a very tenuous landing. One rail was balanced on a sharp point of rock. I thought any second it would slide off, tilting copter and rotors into the ground. The copilot gingerly climbed out of the precariously balanced copter and prepared the way for Di. Di and Brent crawled to the bubble and they lifted her, buckled her in, and took off. I was immensely relieved. A huge burden was now off my shoulders; Di was safe!

The rangers decided to climb on out, even though darkness would overtake them, because their ropes were already in place. Brent asked me for an assessment of our situation, and I told him I sincerely thought we could continue without assistance. With the trout Slim caught we could extend our food supply.

Slim, who had helped with the landing pad, was now totally exhausted and it was not long to darkness. We decided to spend the night right there. He would use Di's sleeping bag, as most of his gear was halfway to the cave. We had trout and dried food for dinner. Sleep came easily. In the small zigzag of space above us the night sky was brilliant, and had not an occasional spider or Dobsonfly crawled across our faces, we would have slept soundly.

The next day I made three more portages: Curtis', Di's, and my gear, and Di's boat. Sergey and Dustin portaged their boats, but Slim didn't have the strength. On my last portage I saw Slim waving toward SOB Gully, motioning for Curtis and Jerry to come over. Curtis was high on a ridge below SOB gully motioning for us to come to him. Something was wrong, but I was nevertheless relieved; help had arrived. Now we could portage everything, and I'd have help if the others were too sick. I went across the pool, hiked high over the talus and scree while the others, still sick, stayed in the cool cave.

When I came over the second portage ridge, I could see Curtis standing high up the other bank. He was making hand signals, all of which had no meaning to me whatsoever. I waved for him to come over. He shook his head no! I signaled to go down to the river where we could talk. He shook his head no again! This really threw me for a loop. I wasn't sure what to do so I just simply went down to the river and waited. Perhaps 20 minutes later he appeared by the river.

He said he'd had a very tough time of it, both doing the second swim ferry, and climbing out SOB Gully. He'd failed to scout, and instead of crossing at the calm water of the second ferry pool, he crossed at a much more dangerous place and almost drowned. He mentioned how tough and scary SOB Gully had been (he must have missed the trail). He wanted us to bring all the boats to him. I had a rope and made several suggestions, including the second pool, but he refused to even look at it.

Curtis then told me if we hadn't moved everything to Painted Rock Beach by 4 pm, he was going to call air vac in on us! I was stunned, and told him he was absolutely not to make that decision for us since he had no idea how we were doing. I told him the logistics of us moving all that gear without his and Jerry's help was undoable as sick as the others were.

Curtis pondered this a moment and then pointed out a notch in the rock further down-river which I could not scout from my side. He said bring two life jackets, two ropes, and he could get across. I told him I would send Sergey and Dustin as I needed to rest. Up to that point I'd been on my feet since daylight. I went back to the cave. The communication with Curtis had gone very badly.

Back at the cave I appraised Sergey and Dustin of the situation. I said it was probably just me being super tired and that they'd probably do better.

An hour later they came back, mad and disgusted. They did exactly what Curtis said, and instead he went running down to Painted Rock Beach, waving his arm



Adversity on the River

for them to follow. Communication had completely broken down, and we had wasted four or five hours. It was time to switch gears.

Slim still had not portaged his boat, Curtis' boat was also at base camp, as was gear non-essential to us. I was happy for Slim to take Di's boat, and he agreed. We also decided to wear the best gear out, the best helmets, paddles, life jackets, etc as we figured we'd never see the rest of it again.

We loaded our boats, made the crossing, landed and portaged up and over the ridge to pool number two. We ferried across it, and landed. By now it was getting dark and we unloaded our gear and carried it the last quarter mile to Painted Rock Beach, leaving our boats behind.

Had we just been able to stick to our original plans, without Di getting hurt, this would have been an enjoyable trip, but now I couldn't help thinking about her and wondering how she was doing. I was ready to rest.

Painted Rock Beach was magnificent and comfortable, being the only sandy beach and the only substantial flat area in the whole reach of the narrows. It had trees for shade, and a quarter acre of beach open to the sky. The river took a 90-degree turn here and although you couldn't see the sun itself, beams of reds and oranges flooded into the canyon's mouth as if in a Max Parrish painting. Directly up above the beach, on the southern wall, like some huge billboard drawn by the gods, were the stick figures in the rock. This was sacred territory for the Indians, and it was for me as well. Sergey complained of a constant feeling of negative energy, not only in the canyon itself, but especially here—of having his energy sucked from him. Perhaps it sucked my energy as well, but it did not matter. It was a sacrifice I'd gladly make, just for the privilege of being there.

We ate our freeze-dried food supplemented by Slim's trout. Tomorrow we would eat the last of the food we had brought: multigrain bars for breakfast, and PowerBars for lunch. I had the feeling

that it was over, that we could easily accomplish the last eight miles of the canyon. Beyond that was the 13 miles of the Gunnison Gorge, but we knew it had only Class IV water without portages.

We slept on the open beach in the cool, night air. I lay on my back, looking up at the zigzag crack of sky, now bright with stars. I saw the hazy outline of the Milky Way along the canyon rim, and parts of the Big Dipper, and as it grew darker, more and more stars popped out until even the Dipper disappeared amid all the profusion of bright points. This chasm, this abyss—torn apart by nature and gods—that we lay at the bottom of looking out ... it was overwhelming. And just like the canyon opened up above me, so too did the universe open up.

I felt secure resting upon my back, spinning through the universe at insane speeds ... and all to the white noise background of water chaotically dashing upon and through rock. Starlight twinkled, dancing everywhere. I thought of photons, leaving their source millions of years ago, crossing the vast reaches of space with only one destination—to make a tiny splash of energy in my retina. How fortunate I was to be there at that exact moment to receive it.

Then a thief came out of the darkness and stole my consciousness, and I slept that deep, dreamless sleep of ultimate exhausted rest ... "Di is safe, Di is safe, Di is safe."

We awoke refreshed and ready for the day. Everyone was still feeling the effects of their exhaustion, but the vomiting had stopped. Strangely enough, before we left, two middle-aged, paunchy trout fishermen came sauntering into camp with rods, picnic lunches and packs. They had just come down SOB Gully and declared it a moderate hike. Welcome back to the real world!

We departed and went perhaps a mile in fun Class IV water. The sun was up and shining early into the canyon, and the sky was cloudless. In no time at all we came to the last mandatory portage. It involved a

climb 100 feet almost straight up a ridge on loose dirt and scree, so we roped the boats up. Once on top it was a fairly easy carry across a saddle, and then an easier descent down to the river. The last rapid was an easy Class V-, and we negotiated it with a minimum of trouble, Sergey had to roll three times but he came through unscathed. From here the river gradually eased and the canyon walls started lowering and opening up.

By about 4 pm we were at Chukar Trail. There we met Brent, who had been watching our progress from the rim, two BLM river rangers, Clint and Peter, and Curtis, who had brought a few snacks. The river rangers invited us to boat five of the last 13 miles with them and camp at their Teepee. By about 6:30 we were at their camp. They cooked up a great meal of rice and beans and magically produced a few beers.

We awoke the next morning, bid goodbye to the rangers and headed down the last eight miles of Class IV, then Class III, and finally a few miles of flatwater to Paradise Park. Curtis was there and we had two cars. I loaded up my gear and made a bed for Di in the back. At the hospital I discovered that Di had external fixation on both her tibia and fibula, which had been splintered by the impact.

At the time of this writing, two operations later, she should be able to carry on normal activity, but marathons and adventure racing will probably be impossible ("Hmmm, we'll see. They don't know Di.").

In retrospect, I think that without our mishap at 18-foot Falls, we would have had an easy time on the river. Personally, I'd like to try it again. It would be easily doable in a day (however, I might bring a sleeping bag for another night at Painted Rock). I am still amazed by Sergey and Dustin, who I thought showed amazing grit and determination in overcoming their sickness and continuing. I also cannot imagine how I would have acted if it had been me with the shattered ankle

continued on page 65

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Thomas Roggenesser, Venezia Riva, Italy Photo Tanya Shuman

Ocoee Halloween Head Hunt Scare Yourself Silly

All photos by Kelly Kline





As Ocoee locals know, the annual Head Hunt Party, usually falling on the last weekend of October, is one of the best whitewater events of the year. Watch as freelance photographer Kelly Kline takes you on a tour of last year's Head Hunt

Nate Mills, organizer of the Ocoee Halloween Head Hunt, stands with skull and pirate ship. The ship was the location of the 7th annual post-headhunt party, October 29th, 2005; this year there was a pirate theme. Mills organizes everything with no budget—it's all for his love of the sport.





Costumes and crazy characters are common sights during the Head Hunt.



The Dark Strider paddles standing upright in an inflatable kayak and throws skulls into the rapids. Several hundred kayakers and rafters follow him down the river in hopes of catching a coveted skull.





Jason Wilson captures a skull. The skull is redeemable at the Head Hunt Party for a prize. Fifty-plus companies donate equipment and kayaking products to be given away.





Paddler gets flipped in a hole at Broken Nose while chasing a skull ... but comes up with an impressive roll, still clutching the loot!!





Kayakers and rafters, all waiting for a chance to catch a skull, mob the Dark Strider.







Four paddlers battle it out for a skull in Table Saw, a long Class III rapid. The competition gets a little intense (note the boater in the red kayak being pinned underwater) but no one was injured—only some egos were bruised.









Scenic views of the Ocoee during the Halloween Head Hunt.



A kayaker with envied skulls heads to the party to exchange them for prizes.

Events



Blue Angel action at NAWFest

Photo by © 2006 by David Haynes

North Alabama Whitewater Festival (aka NAWFest) a Hit

By Mark Travis

NAWFest is a festival put on by some Good Ole' Alabama Boys. Our mission is simple: To bring people together in a festival that encompasses the outdoors, specifically paddlesports. We want to bring an atmosphere to the paddling community of outdoor awareness coupled with good music, great festivities and a healthy dose of competition.

NAWFest is the brainchild of several Alabama kayakers who wanted to create an annual gathering for boaters and outdoors people. Their goal is to have fun and cel-

ebate the rivers and outdoors of Alabama. Never before has Alabama seen the quality or quantity of paddlers as it did at the 2005 and 2006 NAWFest events. In 2005, NAWFest drew about 300 competitors and spectators. Last year, NAWFest saw a huge increase in participation and we estimate that over 1000 people attended the festival in 2006. This is a testament to how the event is designed for maximum fun. We schedule the festival for the second weekend in March to ensure the best water Alabama has to offer. NAWFest offers two days of competition, including a waterfall freestyle, boater cross and hole

riding / big trick event. The crowd reviews the video on the night of the waterfall competition to determine the waterfall champ. On Saturday night we have a party with live music and games while kayaking and camping gear is raffled off in addition to our silent auction. As the party draws to a close, results are announced and a new NAWFest King and Queen are announced not to mention the cash and prizes awarded to our competitors.

To learn more about what NAWFest is all about please visit www.NAWFest.com.

National Paddling Film Festival 2006 Review

By David Margavage

The old adage, "You should have been there!" couldn't be more applicable to this year's 2006 NPPF. Filmmakers, supporters, volunteers and guests were treated to a marvelous "dinner theater" atmosphere. With the help of the Bluegrass Wildwater Association's volunteers, everyone ate and drank to their hearts' content as they indulged themselves in the finest paddling films of the year.

The 24th National Paddling Film Festival boasted several major changes, including an updated judging format and a new location. The latest Film Festival venue provided an outdoor courtyard for socializing, and a full kitchen area to help with the complimentary food and beverage service. The Festival also transitioned to a two-night format, in order to avoid viewers having to sit for a single long session. The two-day schedule allowed for a day of paddling local runs, or hiking and climbing in the renowned Red River Gorge. Over 260 people attended the Festival, with volunteers and sponsors

bringing the final numbers to well above 300. Simply put, two nights of films brought about over eight hours of film footage, 30 pounds of popcorn, 19 gallons of chili, 120 liters of soda, and eight kegs of cold Kentucky Ale brew, topped only by fine Kentucky bluegrass music by a local favorite, Bluegrass Collective.

This year's guest host, Eric Jackson, presented the audience with a paddling perspective that only he could provide! "Raise your hand EJ." Eric displayed unique film techniques, using a photo slide show from the Jackson's winter in Africa. He capped it with the trailer for their up-and-coming instructional film that was shot on location during the trip.

On Friday night, the NPPF hosted a special preview for Polly Green's new film *Nomads: Wandering Women of the Whitewater Tribe*. This film was introduced by its co-producer/director and past NPPF artist, Chris Emerick. We were fortunate enough to have one of the stars, Emily Jackson, on hand to excitedly report on the school she helped to refurbish while paddling in Africa.

Congratulations go out to long-time BWA and NPPF volunteer, Barry Grimes. The



NPPF committee presented Barry with the William Nealy Award, given in honor of the great artist and NPPF volunteer. This prestigious title is awarded to an individual that has demonstrated extraordinary distinction in lifetime achievement, exceptional contributions to paddlesport arts and imagery, or outstanding service to the National Paddling Film Festival. Thanks, Barry! You are most deserving!

Finally, after five years as Director, I have announced that I will step aside and will be handing over the reigns. In true BWA fashion, another volunteer Todd Garland, has stepped up to accept this important role. Per Todd, "The NPPF is one of the greatest and most innovative ways of supporting our rivers. I'm excited to have the opportunity to be carrying on the NPPF tradition for years to come. I'll see you at the show February 23 & 24, 2007."

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Events

2006 NPFF WINNERS

Influx - David Arnaud - Best of Festival
- *Influx* transports you to places seldom seen, extreme rapids or aerial freestyle sessions; it gathers together all the different aspects of kayaking in an epic trip around the world.

Wet House - Ammen Jordan - Paddler's Choice Award - *Wet House* is the story of six fiercely independent boaters from the four corners of the planet; united by their shared thirst for big water and high adventure.

Dakib - Joel Decker - Accomplished General
- *Dakib* is a film about kayaking the steep, cold rivers of the Lake Superior Region. The film puts a central focus on the fun aspect of the Minnesota paddling season.

Cheoah - Rick Gusic - Accomplished Documentary - During September of 2005, American Whitewater would score a huge success by gaining access to the Cheoah River. AW would get the water

flowing on a section of river that had been dewatered for decades. This documentary captures the turbulent and tension-filled day that sparked weeks of arguing on Boatertalk. Sit back and watch exactly what happened!!!

Lemonade - Jeffrey Hazboun - Amateur Division - A story of three kayakers on their first out-of-country expedition and the problems they overcome to find 1st descents.

Where The Sun Never Sets - Rob Coffey - Professional Documentary - First descents and wilderness expedition kayaking in the Arctic Circle area of Norway.

Kayaker's Toolbox - Joe Holt - Instructional
- *The Kayaker's Toolbox* is an intelligently designed, fully comprehensive instruction DVD for the novice whitewater paddler. With more than 2.5 hours of instruction shot entirely in vivid High Definition, it teaches boat control, water reading, river maneuvers, rolling, and safety plus much more.

We would also like to recognize the efforts of all the filmmakers and still photo artists who supported this year's event. It was a very competitive field and they also deserve recognition for their wonderful entries. The list of other films is:

Appalachian Uprising by Jay Ditty
Whitewater Wishes by James Capozzi
Retrospectacle and Blazing Paddles
by Dan Fowler

Whitewater Fun by Kyle Nicholson
West Fork of Little Mill Creek
by Steven Runnels

Paddling with the Red Maple
by Vittorio Pongolini

Cross Creek: The Standard Section
by Matt Solomon

H2HO by Ben Aylesworth
Dynasty by Young Guns Productions
The Pororoca Experience
by Corran Addison

Tasmania Circumnavigation and This is the Sea II by Justine Curgenven 

Sturgeon Falls - 2006 Still Image Winner

Photo by Renne Fawcett



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Adversity on the River

Marsh Creek Strainer: How To Drain The Testosterone Out of Ten Men in Three Seconds

By Kerry Walsh

Bed-lam (n) – chaos; a state of extreme confusion and disorder

Standing atop this green, rolling hill on the outskirts of Garden Valley, Idaho, I couldn't help but recall the events that had unfolded two days before while running down Marsh Creek on what was to be day one of an eight day rafting trip. My friend, whitewater stallion Steve White, and I were on our way home to our families. We were a little light on gear, but grateful to be alive.

Standing on this peaceful hilltop, looking across the green valley toward the steep canyon of the South Fork Payette, we were struck by the fact at our feet was the final resting place of Dr. Walter Blackadar. During the 1970s Walt, as he was known to most folks, became a whitewater legend when, in his mid 40s, he took up the sport of kayaking and, at the ripe old age of 49, made a solo kayak descent through infamous Turnback Canyon on the Alsek River in southeastern Alaska. As a doctor based in Salmon, Idaho, Walt traveled around serving his patients and used the opportunity to run all the whitewater that Idaho had to offer—and then some.

Walt's life ended in May of 1978 when he and some friends kayaked the Canyon section of the South Fork Payette. About 1/2 mile below "Big Falls," a mandatory portage even today, he rounded a bend and encountered a log strainer where he was snagged and drowned. Today the rapid is called "Blackadar's" or "Walt's Drop" and is marked by a brass plaque attached to a rock just above the drop. The man now rests in the Garden Valley Pioneer Cemetery beneath a beautiful river rock headstone, facing toward the river that claimed him.

I had a hard time reconciling the fact that



Preparing to swing Mike Howell's cat across the river

Photo by Mike Holmstrom

we had been here just three days ago with Mike Howell, another boater on the trip, unsuspectingly on our way to the Middle Fork of the Salmon. Steve, having recently read the Blackadar biography by Ron Watters, had been recounting some stories about the man. We made several stops and looked down on the river, reconstructing the chain of events that ended so tragically. Little did we know that we would soon have our own story to tell.

For several years Steve has rafted with a great group of very experienced whitewater boatmen from around the West. The de facto leader of this group was Mike Holstrom, a northern California boater with an impressive rafting resume. This year Steve tossed my name in the ring and Mike had invited me to join the group on an early season Middle Fork trip.

The only person in the group that I knew going in was Steve, but as the trip was organized and things gelled, I'd come to realize that Mike was likely the single most organized trip leader I had ever met. He had a firm and impressive grip on the people, the skills, the gear allocations

and the trip itself. Things came together smoothly as we moved toward our launch date of May 20, 2005.

Marsh Creek serves as an early season put-in when road conditions do not allow access to Boundary Creek, the usual put-in. Many boaters prefer to launch on Marsh Creek if the water levels are high enough just because it adds another order of magnitude to the already spectacular Middle Fork. Putting on at Marsh Creek also offers one the unique chance to run a river from beginning to end. A little more than seven miles downstream, this little meandering creek, barely wide enough to float a boat, becomes the Middle Fork of the Salmon which, on its journey to the Main Salmon River, is the crown jewel of whitewater rivers.

In the days leading up to our launch, Mike had monitored the river and road conditions closely, updating us daily. The Boundary Creek road reports were pretty



Marsh Creek surging into the upstream side of the log

Photo by Mike Holmstrom

grim as our date approached. With the snow having just melting off the road, thick mud blocked access to all but 4-wheel drive vehicles. Towing a trailer to the put-in was reportedly impossible. Since our group had at least one 2-wheel drive rig and several trailers, we opted to go for the launch on Marsh Creek and agreed to meet there the day before to get organized.

At the put-in I met some of the team and we quickly turned to rigging boats. I was happily rigging my newly-acquired 14-foot Sotar cat and was shuffling the gear around on the aluminum frame working toward that perfect arrangement. Looking

around I was pleased to see that everyone was taking the run seriously, which was a good sign. Despite its mellow appearance at the put-in, the creek is fast, steep, technical and prone to wood. Everyone was carrying two spare oars—highly recommended for a Middle Fork trip, absolutely required for a Marsh Creek launch. Mike had divided up the group gear among the boats equitably. With the boats soon rigged and ready, most of us headed into Stanley looking for a warm room, cold beer and a hot shower. Mike stayed behind and camped with the gear.

Among the group were several boaters with multiple Marsh Creek launches under their belts. This trip would be Mike Holmstrom's seventh launch. Another guy had four, another three, so there was no shortage of experience. It was my first and I was looking forward to it.

From the put-in Marsh Creek runs approximately seven and a half miles to where it is joined by Bear Valley Creek entering from the left. The confluence of these streams forms the Middle Fork of the Salmon. From there, 10 exciting river miles lay between the confluence and Boundary Creek, the summer put-in for the Middle Fork.

In the morning Mike drove into town where we all met for breakfast and a mandatory pre-launch meeting. High on Mike's agenda were the safety aspects of running Marsh. His concerns were well founded because two years before, almost to the day, two men from different groups had died on Marsh Creek when they failed to negotiate a log spanning the stream. This fact had personal meaning to me since I had been invited on a combined Marsh/Middle Fork/Selway trip that

Adversity on the River

launched the same day as the two men who died. I had opted out of the trip as the launch approached due to high flows. So group safety was a big topic and we all took it seriously. Just before we left for the river Mike called the ranger station and received the current conditions. The flow on the Middle Fork was around six feet and there were no reported hazards. We were a go!

We drove out to the Marsh Creek put-in, set up our trucks for the shuttle and hit the river around 9:30am. We passed the Marsh Creek gauge about half of an hour later and noted that the creek was running at 4.55 feet. Weather conditions were good—dry, cold and overcast. There were patches of snow along the banks and the icy water was running fast and technical. It was definitely creekin'—tight, twisty and steep. Trees and bushes grew right down to the bank and many were leaning out over the stream.

Marsh Creek quickly picks up steam. At the flows we had the run is considered Class III-IV with the well-known Class V Dagger Falls thrown in as a bonus near the end, just above Boundary Creek. The first seven and a half miles, the true Marsh Creek, is almost continuous Class II-III. Our plan was to run down to camp at Gardell's Hole at river mile 2.4, measured from the Boundary put-in. Our only planned scout was at Dagger Falls.

Mike was in the lead and he had designated Steve as sweep. Steve, running his 14-foot Achilles round boat, was making too much speed to maintain the sweep spot and he quickly moved up through the line until he was pretty close behind the leader. I ended up assuming the sweep spot when it became obvious that Steve would have to back row the entire trip in order to maintain his position.

At our morning meeting we had planned to maintain spacing to always keep two boats in sight. It was a good plan and we tried hard to follow it but sometimes the creek was so tight it was all you could do to keep one boat in view. We had a system of whistle and visual signals worked out in case anyone ran into difficulty. Things were going smoothly. I was feeling pretty comfortable, even warm, in my new drysuit.

Somewhere around three miles in Richard Terry, rowing a 16-foot cat, caught a crab and broke an oar. It was good to see the safety plan come into play. Everyone stopped almost immediately. Eddies were slim pickings but there was no shortage of brush to grab onto. After five minutes of messing around we were back under way. Around the next bend Mike and Steve were patiently waiting, alerted to the stop by the



whistle signals. It was a good drill and we had executed it perfectly.

Around 11am and about six miles downriver, we came into an area that Mike later described as “lake-like.” Thinking back on it I recall the creek widening into a sort of pool, not really slow, with a pretty nice eddy and what appeared to be a camp on river right. As I came around the bend into this section I could see all of the boats in our group stretched out in front of me. I was in sweep position with the exception of Rick Hill who was behind me in his kayak.

I watched as the trip leader at the far end of the “lake” was carefully looking downriver around a right hand turn. The word spread boat to boat that this was the location of the fatal log encounter two years before. Even from my sweep perspective I could see that both Mike

and Steve were eyeballing the exit from the “lake” pretty closely. I watched as Mike settled back in his seat and pushed forward around the bend. Steve held back a few seconds and followed him around the bend in his red Achilles.

As I drifted closer I watched as each boat rounded the corner. Ready myself for my approach I could see that the exit from the “lake” was a steep, narrow chute that made a right hand bend after about 100 yards. It was about 30-35 feet wide and wall to wall whitewater all the way down. Everything looked OK and I made the move and was on my way.

I was running straight down the middle enjoying the clean, fast run. I came to the bend in the channel and suddenly spotted two blue cat tubes sticking up into the air hard on the left bank below me! A second

later, trying to figure out what I was seeing, I spotted Steve’s red Achilles bouncing around in the middle of the river with no one in it! Within a split second I saw a flipped catraft further downstream! HOLY CRAP! I was in some of the fastest water we had seen all day with nowhere to go but downriver.

Then I saw the log

From the time I saw the beast, I estimate that I had three seconds to react. It was an old log—solid and heavy—maybe three feet in diameter on the left side and 12–15 inches on the right. It had no bark, just solid looking, shiny brown wood with sharp broken branch stubs all along its length. It was about half in and half out of the water and stretched perfectly perpendicular to the river with each end resting firmly on shore. Waves surged



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Adversity on the River

against it and there was NOWHERE to go! What happened next was very quick

I recall pulling hard on the oars in a left ferry attempt. But I was just too close and going too fast. I remember dropping the oars and pushing up from my seat to

jump forward over my cooler and dry box. I would try to jump over the log and take the swim. In my 20 years of boating this was my first encounter with a strainer and I knew that, given a choice, always go over the top! I probably made it one step when I hit the log. I never had a chance.

I believe the boat impacted the log pretty much head on, maybe cocked a bit to the right due to my ferry attempt. My left tube went high and on top of the log. My right tube dove under the log. The boat instantly twisted to the right and the stern was immediately submerged. I was thrown into the river head first. I can recall very clearly what happened next. I entered the water head downstream and on my back. I was instantly swept under the log, with its broken branches inches above my face. The brown log was clearly in view less than two feet above me. Very quickly I saw the sky above me through the water and knew that I had made it under the log cleanly. Within seconds I started to hit boulders with my shoulders and back. I rolled over and assumed the classic swim position with my feet at the water line facing downstream (nod to my swiftwater instructor Jeff Kronser).

I was in a real pickle. Below the log the river widened out while the whitewater grew shallower and seemed to pick up speed. I was taking a pretty good drubbing from the rocks. Looking downstream it didn't get any better as the river made a hard right and disappeared with no visible let up in speed. I needed to get to shore. A logjam quickly loomed in front of me. It looked like I would miss it to the right so I made for the brushy bar behind the logs. Clawing and scraping I scrambled to shore and crawled out onto a pile of logs in the middle of the river.

I looked back upstream. I just knew that there had to be people seriously injured, or worse. There HAD to be! Suddenly Steve's red Achilles screamed by upside down. Where is Steve? What is happening? Where is everyone?

Looking around I saw a guy climbing up through some brush on river right. There was a guy—no two guys—on a stump in the middle of the river upstream of me. There were some guys at the log on river left.

Do a head count ... one, two, three...

BAM! My boat slammed into the logjam right in front of me! MY BOAT!

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Count heads ... One, two, three, four, five My boat was coming loose from the logs. I jumped forward, grabbed one of my throw bags and quickly tied it off. Oh crap, it only has one tube. The entire left tube was missing. The left oar was snapped off clean. The frame, a stoutly built Sotar Predator, was snapped along the entire left side. It looked like all of my gear was still there! Yahoo for taking the time to rig it right! There's my other tube ... under the log upstream! YOW! The tube, clearly visible in the water under the log, was getting seriously worked. The broken branches had snagged the rescue rope along the tube!

I did another head count, actually making it to nine this time—only one man was missing. Then I spotted trip leader Mike hoofing quickly up the right bank with a rescue rope in hand. Ten people (thank God)!

Looking around we started to exchange hand signals. It was good to see a whole lotta' helmet tapping going on! I came to realize that one fellow on the right bank had a badly injured foot. There were three men midstream, four on the right bank and three on the left.

Looking at my own situation I realized I was in pretty good shape. I had two good throw bags and a complete set of rescue gear. I was warm and dry and had all of my personal gear, food and water.

The carnage over, my first train of thought was: "I'm camping here and waiting for help!" That was quickly squelched when I spotted Steve on the left bank climbing through the brush working his way down river obviously intent on doing some rescue work.

Steve stopped abreast the two men trapped on the midstream stump. They were directly upstream of my location, about 20-25 feet away. While watching Steve set up a rope between the stump and shore I started unloading my gear. The boat, with only one tube, was underwater for the most part but I was able to get my drybags and some smaller things off safely.

Once the rope was established upstream, one at a time the men on the stump carefully walked to shore through the swift current of Marsh Creek. One lost his footing but managed to hang on to the rope and hand-over-hand himself to shore. With the guys safely ashore Steve turned his attention toward me.

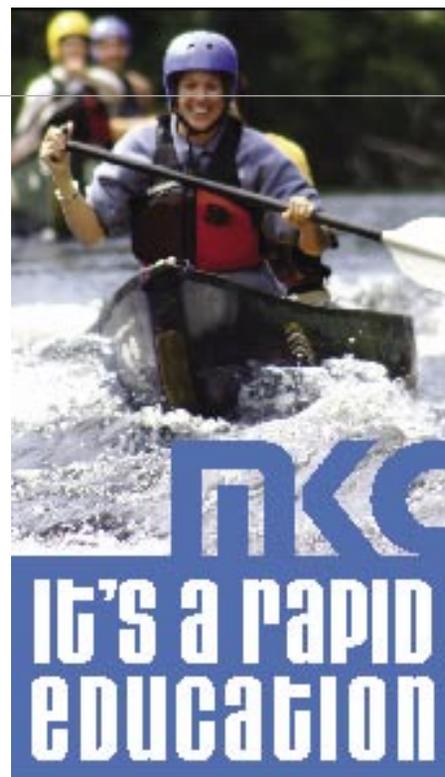
The roar of the river eliminated any hope of verbal communication. Steve came down through the brush immediately to the left of my location and raised his hands in a questioning way. What do you want to do? is how I read it. I readied a throw bag and tossed it to him. He caught the toss and I motioned him to move downriver. He understood my plan and soon we had a zip line established.

Working with Steve I got as much of my gear as possible on the beach. Still on the boat was my cooler, dry box and Big Top outfitter tarp. Since these items were under swift moving water, rather than lose them to the current, I opted to leave them and my three remaining oars on the boat and hope to recover them later if the opportunity arose.

During this exercise, kayaker Rick Hill suddenly appeared on my island! "Hey! Nice zip line!" he said, followed by the obvious "What do you have in mind for getting off of here?" That was a good question! After sending several drybags to shore and watching the beating they took I wasn't in any mood to use the same method of getting myself ashore.

Rick had an idea. He would kayak to shore, hike back upstream and kayak back to the stump where the rope to the left bank was still attached. There, he would throw me a rope and I would walk upstream to him, staying in the "eddy" created by the stump while he belayed me. Once at the stump I could cross to the left bank using the same rope the other guys had. The immediate danger in this plan was that if I lost my footing I would be directly upstream of a log sieve. Weighing the options (and not seeing any helicopters hovering), it sounded like the best plan to me.

Shortly after Rick left in his boat I heard a



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Adversity on the River

whistle. Mike Holstrom was on the right bank with a rope. Using hand signals he indicated that he wanted me to tie the rope off to the remains of my boat. His plan was to swing the boat to shore using the rescue rope attached to a tree. It was worth a try but I wasn't too sure how it would go in the shallow water with just the one tube, and the frame dragging.

I tied the boat off to the line from shore and untied my throw rope, which was holding the boat to the logs. The guys on the beach started to work on getting the boat moving and I started securing my zip line gear in preparation for my departure.

I heard another whistle and Mike was signaling that they wanted me to move the rope to a downstream position on the frame. I climbed out onto the frame, untied the line and barely had time to jump off as the wrecked boat sailed off down river with no line attached! Oh well ... it was worth a try!

About this time Rick appeared on the stump above me, tossed me a line and we made our move. After just a couple of minutes of wading, I walked ashore through the brush next to Steve. At this point I realized I was suffering from a serious case of post-traumatic, post-mega-adrenaline rush fatigue and was feeling pretty wiped out. We all were. When I looked back at the stump, Rick had replaced the ropes and was getting back in his kayak. Rick is a keeper!

While Rick, Steve and I were dealing with getting me and my gear off the island, some of the guys had unloaded Mike Howell's 17-foot Aire cat which had been pinned against the log on the left bank, his left tube in the rocks and his right under the log. These were the first tubes I had seen as I rounded the corner a lifetime ago. After unloading the boat the men had pulled it out of harm's way, humped it over the log and reloaded it! Not only that, they had also recovered my tube from under the log! There it was, neatly deflated and folded on the boat! Mike's boat now sat

bouncing in the current just downstream of the log, hard on the left bank.

When we reached the boat, the guys gave me a quick replay of what happened at the log before I came around the corner:

Mike Holstrom, being in front, had come across the log in complete surprise. He tried to warn the other boatmen but there simply wasn't time. He tried for the right bank but only made it to midstream before he impacted. Somehow his boat surged over the log and landed unscathed on the other side. He eddied out on river right at the first opportunity, which was several hundred feet down river and around a bend. He watched anxiously with a throw bag in hand as five empty boats floated past. Seeing no swimmers he quickly hiked back up with rescue gear.

Just seconds behind Mike, Steve crashed into the log and managed to jump out of his boat and onto the log. As he scrambled toward the left bank, he kept a tight hold as the log shuddered under the impact of five cat boats slamming in, each and every one instantly crushing under the log. He had just made it to the bank and was on the rocks immediately downstream of the log when it suddenly shifted hard, nearly rolling over onto him. Later we figured that it was most likely my boat hitting and my tube getting ripped off that had caused the dramatic movement.

Mike Howell in the 17-foot Aire had been running left of center and was against the bank when he impacted the log. Being so close to shore prevented the boat from smashing completely under and his boat suffered minor damage. He was able to quickly scramble for shore

Chris Hewitt, our other kayaker, was trying for the left bank but impacted the log sideways. He just managed to grab onto the frame of the pinned Aire and, pulling with what must have been extraordinary strength, he was able to pull himself and his kayak free and to safety.

In his 14-foot cat, Jim Rolf hit the log and somehow managed to scramble off his boat and onto the log. He was crawling toward the right bank when another boat hit, impacting and breaking his foot. Running on adrenaline Jim made it to shore safely. Even though he was largely out of commission, he still managed to help out with ropes and would play a large role later as we moved downriver.

Jim's son Hamilton, rowing a 14-foot cat, Richard Terry and Ken Peters, each rowing 16-foot cats, impacted and swam. All were swept under the log. Hamilton and Richard ended up on the stump in the middle of the river and Ken scrambled to shore through the brush on river right.

Only kayaker Rick Hill, running behind me, managed to grab a small eddy and stop himself short of impact with the log.

As we loaded the Aire with my gear, the fellows on the right bank were busy setting up a rescue line to our boat. The plan was to swing over to the right bank using the rope as a pendulum. When the time came for this maneuver we had six guys and almost two boats worth of gear piled on a 17-foot cat! We disconnected from shore and, using a rope brake, swung quickly and cleanly over to the opposite shore. Finally, we were all united once again.

I have to say that I was more than impressed with the way things had progressed to this point. Within minutes of the accident everyone was moving forward with the goal of getting people to safety. No one flipped out, no one made any moves that exacerbated the situation. Everyone had proceeded competently and calmly. It was a testament to the value of swiftwater rescue training and the expertise of the boatmen in the group.

We still had major obstacles in front of us and we wasted no time getting moving. We had two rafts, two kayaks and 10 people. We needed to get moving downstream. The weather was deteriorating and cooling

off. We were all suffering from the shock of the situation but we were still 11 miles from help and the safety of Boundary Creek. Steve, Mike Howell and I piled onto the already overloaded 17-foot cat and took off while Mike Holstrom and the others started to hike downstream to Mike's boat. Just downriver we spotted the carcass of my cat stranded midstream with all of the remaining gear still intact. We had no chance of making it to the boat before we blew by, but I hoped Mike might be able to get to it.

Just ahead was a tight left-hand turn. There, stuck in a logjam, was Jim's 14-foot cat, right-side up. Mike maneuvered in close to it and I jumped aboard as we passed by. They eddied out below me on river right. I looked at the situation; it was pretty grim. Both oars were gone. Both spares were still attached but one was bent. Both oarlocks were bent over flat. The rower's seat was smashed flat. I was exhausted and needed a nap but I knew that Steve and Mike would take exception to that!

So I set to work straightening the boat enough to get the oars in and row it. About then I heard a yell, looked up and saw my boat come sailing around the bend followed by Mike Holstrom and the rest of the gang on his boat. They had managed to ram my boat, knocking it loose in the process.

The cooler had come free and was floating away from the boat and directly toward me. It floated within reach and I grabbed for the handle, which immediately broke off, the cooler screaming away downstream. My boat floated by and stopped on river left. Steve and Mike Howell ferried over, tied up and scrambled through the brush to get to the boat. Holstrom and the others on his boat continued on downriver in search of more gear.

I turned to making repairs. I needed something to act as a fulcrum so I could pry the bent oar locks back into shape. I

spotted a perfect rock lying ON TOP of a log right next to the boat. It was the only rock within reach and I had to wonder how it came to be there on the outside of a logjam. I used it and one of the oar shafts to pry the oar locks up, grabbed the tractor seat and bent it back into something close to a seat shape. Now I thought I could row the boat but before that was possible I had to get it out of the logjam.

The logjam was mostly smaller logs and branches. Being on the outside of a tight turn the water was rushing through the logs. Falling into the river from here would be a very bad thing. To get the boat free I would need to get off the boat and balance on the logs to lift and push the boat clear.

It was a pretty nerve-wracking experience. I looked at Steve and Mike for help but they were on the wrong side of the river and, standing in waist deep water, were busy stripping the remains of my boat. Soon enough I had the boat free and was able to get it to shore on the left bank just below Mike's boat. I joined Mike and Steve in hauling gear back to the boats where we loaded up both with even more gear.

Suddenly we had company. A group of three men in kayaks came bombing in to the beach. They were professional guides who had been waiting for people at Boundary Creek and decided to make a day run down Marsh Creek while they waited. They had narrowly avoided the log and managed to stop above it. Now they were rushing to Boundary to get the word out to stop launches at Marsh Creek. We told them the situation with our group and, seeing that we had things well in hand, they moved on downriver to catch up with the guys and help out as they could.

Mike's 17-footer was at capacity carrying his gear and most of the gear from my boat. We left my torn and twisted frame in the brush alongside the creek and set off downstream. Steve was rowing Jim's 14-footer that I had recovered and Mike



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Adversity on the River

and I were riding on his boat. Rowing the overloaded boat was a real chore and Mike was beginning to show the strain.

It was not long before we passed Bear Valley Creek where the river doubled in size and volume. We soon spotted some of the guys, as well as the new kayakers, on river left working to right a capsized cat. Steve pulled in to help out. Mike and I continued downstream looking for more boats and gear.

We spotted Mike Holstrom's cat and another boat on shore on river right. People were waving and Mike reached deep and began pulling hard for shore. It didn't take long to figure out that they were actually waving us off due to some

really shallow surface rocks. While trying to maneuver back into deeper water Mike Howell snagged a rock and broke his oar. Somehow he managed to get us into an eddy where we swapped the broken oar for our only option: an oar with no handle. The handle had been broken off in the impact with the log.

Holding the slippery, plastic-coated oar shaft with gloved hands was not easy. Mike runs with open oarlocks and no Oar Rites to keep the oar in a vertical position. In the heavy water we were running, and with the heavy boat, the oar spun in his hand at almost every stroke. I watched Mike struggling with it as he maneuvered through some pretty heavy Class IV drops, working hard to stay out of holes and

avoid waves.

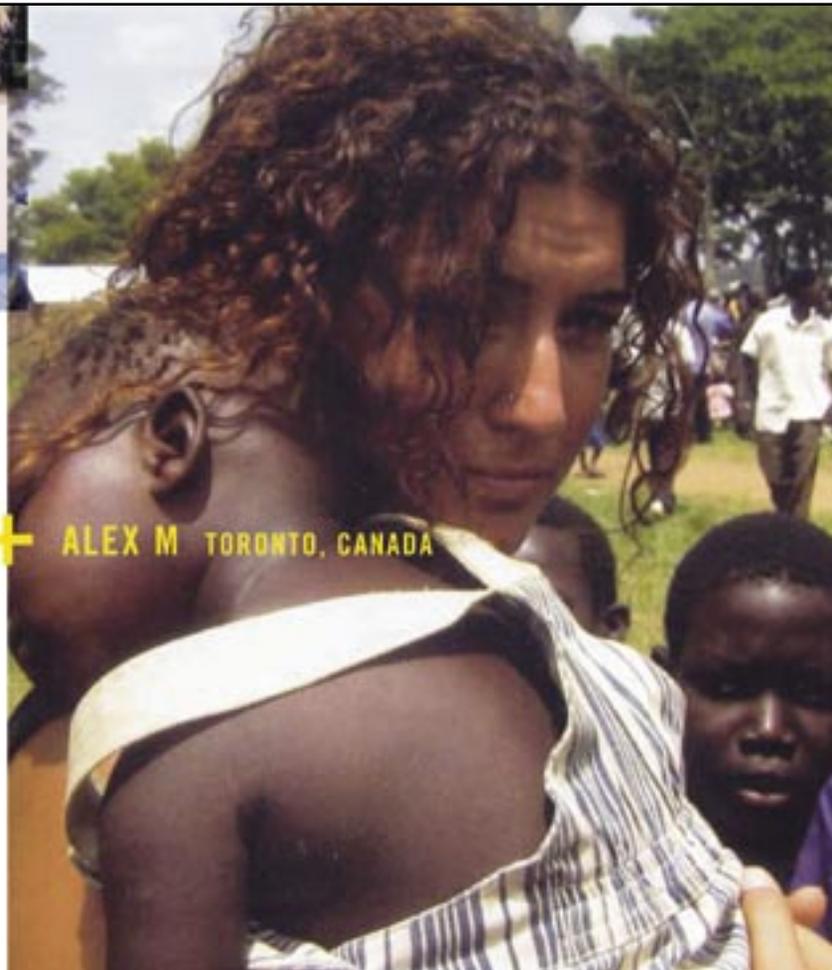
Suddenly, in the middle of it all, he hit the wall of exhaustion. He jumped forward and I jumped on the oars. The broken handle was really a problem. Holding the fat, slippery plastic shaft with my gloves was next to impossible. I peeled off the glove and it was still a problem. Looking downstream I saw a giant hole directly in front of us. Since fighting to avoid the danger wasn't working for either of us I pointed us into it and started pushing forward. The big, overloaded cat smashed through the holes and waves like a snowplow.

The weather had turned. It was getting colder and to make things worse it had



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started to sleet and rain. Even in my new drysuit and fleece I was feeling the chill. Mike and I swapped off rowing just to stay warm. We pulled to shore and waited for our guys to catch up. The guide kayakers came by first and gave us the news that everyone was OK and that they would be along shortly. We waited, getting colder by the minute. Soon the boats came into view and we pulled out into the stream. All of the boats were accounted for with the exception of Steve's Achilles. Now we were aimed for camp and help.

Moving downstream we approached a braided area. Mike and I followed Mike Holstrom down a tight right-side channel only to watch in disbelief as he encountered another log completely spanning the

channel! We watched helplessly as he slammed to a stop atop the log with us close behind him! We could do nothing but avoid hitting his boat as we also swept on top the log. This situation was a lot less dire than our previous encounter, not life threatening anyway. Both boats were stuck but the weight of our boat and the current worked in our favor and both rafts soon slipped free and we were on our way.

Soon the Dagger Falls scout beach came into view and we all pulled into shore, cold, sore and VERY tired. As the boats came in I did a double take when I spotted my cooler strapped on top of Mike Holstrom's gear. Somewhere along the way Mike and Jim had recovered it. Even though it was not secured by straps it was

still full of food and ice!

Several of us walked up into the Dagger campground where we were extremely lucky to find a fellow on the prowl for firewood. He was carrying a fifth of peppermint schnapps, which he was willing (lucky for him!) to share. He was camped at Boundary Creek and had driven to the falls in a big diesel pickup. We loaded the truck with gear and he drove Mike and the injured Jim to Boundary to find help and grab a camp. While they were gone the rest of us started to hump gear up to the trailhead in preparation of moving to Boundary.

Several of the boats would not be going any further. My boat was in pieces. Two

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Photo: 2006 NPFF Best Image Winner "Sturgeon Falls" by Renee Fowcett

Adversity on the River

other cats had severe frame damage and simply could go no further. Jim's broken foot put him out of commission and his boat was seriously damaged too. We still had not found Steve's Achilles, or any of his gear.

Before long a pickup truck with the Utah license plate "SOITGOS" approached. Its driver was Steve Christensen, the web master for Utah Whitewater. I knew him from my role as web master of the NWRA (North West Rafters Association), but we had never met in person.

Steve and his son Bo, a friend named Ed Blankman and another young fellow named Kellen Spillman jumped in and started hauling gear up the steep trail from the beach. Steve White used a satellite telephone to call his wife Regina. Steve asked her to immediately post the news of the log to the Idaho Whitewater email listserv which is monitored by the Middle Fork rangers and a lot of whitewater boaters. We learned later that another group had intended to launch on Marsh

Creek the following morning. Only a last-minute email check alerted them to the danger.

During our move to Boundary Creek, Steve White asked if anyone had seen a red Achilles raft sail past. Amazingly Steve Christensen said, "It's tied up in the eddy below the Boundary put-in." He told us that the boat had come floating by the Boundary ramp upside down. Someone on the beach rigging a boat jumped in and caught up with it just in time.

Once we had unloaded our gear at camp, Steve and I, still in drysuits and PFDs, walked down to survey the damage to his boat. Imagining the worst, we were surprised to find a big pile of gear on the trail. Our saviors had not only recovered the boat, they had humped the heavy gear up an extremely steep and slippery, log-strewn slope! There, neatly stacked on the trail, were Steve's kitchen box, his not-so-drybags, his cooler and ammo cans.

There were a lot of things missing—oars,

rescue gear and some other things. His frame had taken a serious beating. Some of the gear has since been collected up on Marsh Creek. We joke with Steve now about being the only guy we know to flip a boat and recover gear from four separate zip codes.

At camp we all shared our experiences over warm drinks and a campfire. It was a strange night. We were a pretty happy but sober bunch. Not a man among us was unaware that he had just had an extremely close call. I think that there was also a measure of pride in the way the situation had played out. We could all be proud of our actions and abilities.

Now, two days later, as Steve and I stood on top of the hill in the Garden Valley Pioneer Cemetery with Walt Blackadar, the quiet moments of reflection were not just spent admiring the view 

After encountering the log the group was strewn about the river - luckily no one was badly hurt. Here the author is stranded on a debris island using a zip line to salvage gear off his damaged raft.

Photo by Mike Holmstrom





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AW Annual Report

American Whitewater Demonstrates Sustainability

After years of declining income and escalating expenses, American Whitewater underwent fundamental fiscal changes in 2005. These changes had a positive effect on our program work and our financial status. As the books closed for the end of 2005 American Whitewater had a net income of \$1,493. By way of comparison, AW saw a net loss of \$24,733 in 2004. Management decisions made by the board and staff that led to this financial turnaround included:

- Relocating executive offices to North Carolina
- Implementing a new accounting and reporting system
- Committing and refocusing on a regional river stewardship model

As a result of these changes, the organization is now sustainable over the long-term with an improved business model for responsible management of organizational resources.

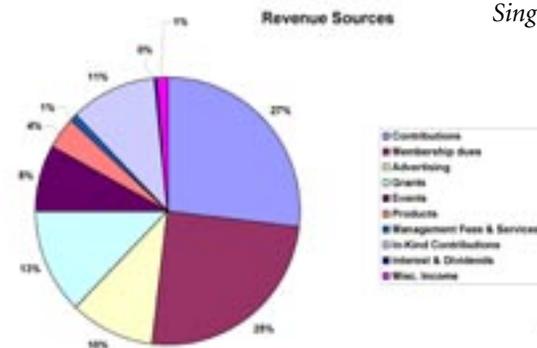
Our focus on regional river stewardship has been very well received by membership and the work products from staff are outstanding. The AW organizational chart is vastly simplified from earlier incarnations and supports our core mission to conserve America's whitewater rivers and enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely. Our financial reporting transition is complete and will provide more organizational transparency and better data to aid future decision-making.

The following information is taken from financial statements provided to American Whitewater by an independent auditor. American Whitewater wants its membership to know where our support is coming from and how we are using it to benefit rivers nationwide.

Revenue

AW gross income for the year ending December 31st, 2005 was \$982,785. In comparison, AW's revenues for the 2004 fiscal year was \$1,009,978. The gross income amount is comprised of Membership Dues, Contributions (unrestricted, and restricted), In-kind Donations, Grants, Journal Advertising Sales, Events, Management Fees & Services, Product Sales, and Other Income.

Contributions accounted for 27% of AW's total gross income. Membership Dues accounted for another 25% of AW's total gross income. The remaining 48% was generated through a combination of In-Kind Contributions (Donations of products or services) (11%), Grants (13%), Advertising (10%), Events (8%), Products (4%); and all other revenue sources (2%).

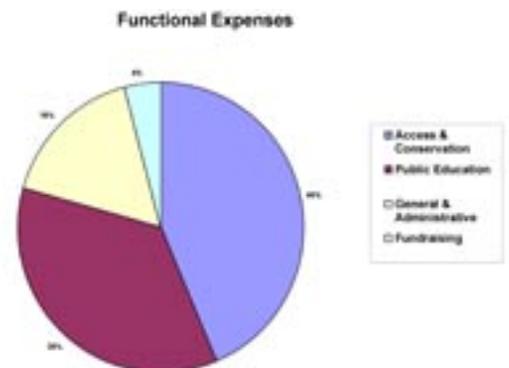


Expenses

Expenses in 2005 incorporated general operating costs as well as the costs of publications (six AW Journals per year), membership solicitations, event costs, stewardship labor, and professional fees. Those expenses, which aid AW in achieving its conservation, access and education goals, totaled \$981,292 in 2005 as compared to \$1,034,711 in 2004.

AW uses 80 cents of every dollar to serve its members by conserving and restoring America's whitewater resources and enhancing opportunities to enjoy them safely. Access and Conservation expenses totaled 429,108. This means 44% of American Whitewater's income was used to advance our conservation and access mission. The remaining 36 percent was used to promote education & safety for boaters. Management & General (16%), and Fundraising (4%) accounted for the remaining 20 percent. 

If you have questions about AW's financial statements or would like an electronic copy of the 2005 audit, please contact Mark Singleton, mark@amwhitewater.org.



River Stewardship a Success in 2005

Over 50 years ago, American Whitewater was established as one of our nation's first river conservation organizations. Our founders had the vision to unite paddling clubs across the country for the common purpose of preserving the integrity of our nation's whitewater rivers.

Today, American Whitewater has modernized its mission by introducing the concept of river stewardship. In 2005 we made some fundamental changes to our program work by developing a new regional model based on stewardship that encompasses our conservation, access and safety efforts. John Gangemi and Jason Robertson left AW after many years of service to tackle new challenges, but we were fortunate to hire Thomas O'Keefe as Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director and Dave Steindorf as California Stewardship Director, both of whom were longtime AW volunteers. Grant funding allowed us to roll out the program in these two regions and we will be looking to expand what has proved to be a successful model in the coming year. Also in 2005, Kevin Colburn, whose work had been focused on the Southeast, took on a new role as National Stewardship Director.

American Whitewater is proud to occupy a unique role in the national river conservation movement, connecting those who enjoy recreational opportunities with river conservation goals. Many of our volunteers become lifelong advocates for rivers and some have emerged as leaders in the national river conservation movement. While we have assisted our volunteers and members with more than 100 projects this past year, we want to share a few of our major successes that have national significance and serve as a model for our ongoing stewardship efforts.

River Protection and Restoration

Protecting our nation's whitewater rivers, many of which represent the intact

www.americanwhitewater.org

headwaters of watersheds with important conservation value, remains one of our most important program areas. One of our proudest conservation projects for the year was the protection of the Alberton Gorge on Montana's Clark Fork River. After more than a decade of efforts, the 320 acres of former Montana Power Company lands adjacent to the Alberton Gorge were transferred into public ownership. American Whitewater is highly appreciative of local volunteer Peter Dayton's vision and decade-long effort as well as our partners with the Five Valleys Land Trust that made this effort successful. As with the majority of our projects, building partnerships was the key to a success that the whole community can celebrate.

We are also proud to report success with our efforts and advocacy work in hydropower licensing, where we continue to restore rivers for the benefit of fish, wildlife, and whitewater recreation. We were actively engaged in more than three dozen hydropower projects, more than any other river conservation organization in the country. One of our most significant successes was the restoration of the Cheoah River (NC), where a new flow regime restored water to the river for the first time in more than 70 years. Over 500 paddlers came out to celebrate the first ecological pulse flows that also provided recreational opportunities. We expanded our portfolio to take on new projects on the Sultan River (WA) and the South Fork Feather (CA), a couple of fabulous gems where we see significant opportunities for our membership. It was a challenging year in the federal arena but we worked with our colleagues to include provisions in new energy legislation to preserve public input in hydropower relicensing.

Public Access

In addition to protecting the places you love to paddle, we worked hard to make sure you can enjoy them by protecting and



AW Annual Report

enhancing public access. In Oregon, a state with incredible year-around opportunities for whitewater recreation, we joined our partners in successfully fighting legislation that would have seriously restricted the public's navigability rights.

We worked with our partners in West Virginia to open two new access points on a couple of the state's most popular rivers. We faced an immediate crisis in July 2005 when we were informed that private paddlers would not be allowed to use the traditional take-out for the Upper Gauley at Mason's Branch. AW approached the WV Tourism Board for assistance in the improvement of the old Wood's Ferry Road, and they contributed \$5,000 to a community effort in the name of public access.

While outfitters ultimately decided to open their lands to private paddlers, this new public access provides a much-needed alternative. On the Cheat River, the Jenkinsburg access, which also serves the Big Sandy, has been an issue for years with severe resource degradation issues and ownership by a private timber company with no incentive to actively manage the land for whitewater recreation. Dave Hough of Mountain Streams and Trails, the oldest outfitter operating in West Virginia's Cheat Canyon, had the means and seized the opportunity to acquire this access point. He worked with Keith Pitzer of Friends of the Cheat and American Whitewater to restore the site and provide public access, setting an incredible example of the ways private boaters can work with outfitters to reach common goals.

We continue to work on access issues at hydropower projects where we face ongoing challenges with security and safety concerns raised by utilities. We have been highly successful in protecting public access on such rivers. In 2005, AW had a significant victory with the initiation of a study of whitewater recreation on the Ausable River (NY), a development that we expect will lead to public access for a river that has been locked away by a utility for years.

River Management

American Whitewater continues our efforts to represent private paddlers in river management plans. In partnership with the Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association we were able to successfully build bridges with the outfitter community while continuing to fulfill our core mission work in a climate of mutual respect. We worked together in providing input on a new management plan for the Grand Canyon (AZ), published by the National Park Service in November 2005. We are excited to have the Park Service finally tackle the challenging issues of managing this spectacular resource. The two most significant outcomes of this compromise for the private boating community are an increase in the number of user days equal to the number of commercial user days, and an increase in the number of launches that is closer to the number of commercial launches. In addition we have a new trip allocation system in place based on a weighted lottery that will eliminate the 20-plus-year waiting list.

On the Chattooga River (NC) we made a significant step toward securing public access to the only river on the National Forest system where boating is banned. A decision issued by US Forest Service Chief, Dale Bosworth in April of 2005 read, "After careful consideration of the record ... I am reversing the Regional Forester's decision to continue to exclude boating on the Chattooga Wild and Scenic River above Highway 28." Unfortunately the chief required additional study before the river can be opened and this work continues through 2006. In sharp contrast to the mismanagement of the Chattooga, we worked closely with Forest Service staff on developing a management plan for Wilson Creek (NC), revised public access guidelines to protect fish and paddling opportunities on the North Fork Nooksack (WA), and worked with our partners to initiate an ambitious effort to remove exotic invasive species on the Middle Fork Snoqualmie (WA).

River Safety

Over the course of the year we developed a new whitewater safety database accessible through our website. American Whitewater remains the comprehensive source for whitewater accident reporting, an important educational tool for our membership and for river managers.

Empowering Volunteers

AW has found that educated, impassioned, and well-supported individuals who spend time enjoying our nation's rivers make the most effective river stewards and advocates. In addition to effectively restoring rivers, our volunteer efforts (over 1,000 national StreamKeepers, Regional Coordinators, paddling clubs, interns, and individual paddlers and local river interests) offer hope for the changing relationships between people and the environment, as well as meeting present human needs and conserving natural systems.

To meet the needs of our volunteers and provide them with the tools to be more effective we published our River Stewardship Toolkit and made it available on our website. The River Stewardship Toolkit provides users with more than 10 years worth of top-notch expertise in river conservation and restoration and allows our membership to use the scientific and technical expertise of our staff to become more effective river stewards. The Toolkit is one of the cornerstones of AW's new River Stewardship strategy. This policy embraces a regional approach, leveraging the capacity of our membership and volunteers at the community level to advocate for the whitewater resources we all enjoy.

While we are proud of our accomplishments in 2005, the real credit goes to our nationwide network of volunteers, local paddling clubs, industry partners, public land managers, and local communities. We have all worked together to broaden our tools and strategies to "Conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely."

Locals Favorite



Why I Love Brennan's Wave

By Alley Fontenot

It is not hard to find Missoula boaters' favorite play spot these days. Thanks to Dr. David Guth, the Missoula Whitewater Association and many other individuals, boaters need only walk downtown for a lunchtime or after-work surf session. Brennan's Wave is named in memory of Brennan Guth, Dr. Guth's son who died tragically in a kayaking accident in 2001. Envirocon, the company overseeing the construction of the project, removed a dilapidated concrete diversion dam and replaced it with natural rock structures to form three features. It is hard to tell at this point exactly how the features will look, but the feature closest to Caras Park, on the north side of the river, has shaped up nicely. Eager boaters were seen playing at the spot as early as January 27, 2006

shortly after construction began. Snow and slushy water in the eddy have not kept boaters away from this user-friendly wave on the Clark Fork River near the Higgins Street Bridge. At low water levels, the spot started as more of a small hole. However, as construction crews diverted the river away from the middle to commence construction on the other features, the hole turned into more of a wave allowing as many as three boaters to comfortably ride at one time. 

For more information or to make a tax deductible contribution, please visit: www.missoulawhitewater.org.



Brennan Guth

Photo by Dunbar Hardy

Whitewater Accident Summary: January-June 2006

By Charlie Walbridge

During the first half of 2006 high water conditions prevailed in many parts of the country. While this resulted in some fine paddling, it also set the stage for a number of accidents. Reports submitted to American Whitewater totaled 37 deaths from 26 incidents, including 11 kayak, 4 canoe and 18 rafting fatalities. The numbers are slightly above average, as they often are in Western high water years. Indeed, nine of the 18 rafting deaths occurred on commercial trips down Western rivers. The leading causes were not unexpected: strainers (eight), flush-drownings (seven), dam hydraulics (seven), and lack of PFDs (six). It's unsettling for an old-schooler like myself to observe that almost half the victims were over the age of 50. The stereotypical image of accidents happening to young thrill seekers does not entirely explain the fatality numbers from the first half of 2006. Older people now remain active longer, and as we age we need to be brutally honest when assessing our capabilities.

Kayaking Accidents

On January 21st Karen Abse, a talented artist, instructor, and river activist, lost her life on the James River in Richmond, VA. The accident occurred at Hollywood Rapid at around 11 am. The river was running about 8.2 feet, a high level, but one that was well within the capabilities of the group. According to a report written by Glen Chalkley, Ms. Abse, 55, ran the rapid a bit too far right. She missed the nasty Washing Machine hole but hit a diagonal hole that forms below it at high levels. Here she spun out and flipped. A massive debris pile forms just downstream of this spot on a cluster of large rocks. She washed into the pile upside down and was pushed under. Ten minutes later her kayak and PFD popped loose and floated downstream. As paddlers searched the

massive strainer and the rapids below a bystander called 911. The Richmond Fire Department Swiftwater Rescue Team responded and a State Police helicopter flew over the river. Her body was found several hours later.

Oahu, Hawaii is not known for whitewater paddling, but this is where Tom Dallinger, a veteran New River (WV) guide, made his off-season home. A report sent by Steve Haumschild said that he and his friends had been watching the Nuuanu River for years. This tiny creek needs lots of water to paddle and on February 2nd it came up after exceptionally heavy rains. Three paddlers, all in whitewater kayaks, decided to give it a try. The creek started out Class III-ish, not pushy, but dropping steadily. Then they came upon a small gorge. There were two four to five-foot drops in quick succession followed by an eddy above a bigger drop. All three boaters ran those top drops cleanly, eddying out below. As two of them were boat-scouting the third drop, Mr. Dallinger flipped. By the time the others saw him he was floating past them, washing over the third drop. There was no sign of a roll or a wet exit attempt. The pair followed quickly, righted Mr. Dallinger's kayak, and pushed him ashore. He was unconscious and gasping for air. They pulled him from his kayak, laid him on shore, and told an onlooker to call 911. At first he seemed to be stable, but his condition quickly deteriorated. When he stopped breathing they supplied rescue breaths. Eventually he needed CPR. Rescuers arrived quickly, but he died at the hospital. His friends said that Mr. Dallinger had been boating well right up until the last moment and believe that only an unidentified health problem could account for the death. In a surprising twist, the survivors became the subject of a police homicide investigation. Not many Hawaiians are familiar with whitewater paddling and the newspapers ran several stories calling this a reckless, daredevil stunt. Sea kayakers were called upon to evaluate the risk. I was surprised that this happened in the land of big wave surfing but it certainly points out the need for the type of government liaison work done by American Whitewater.

West Virginia's Lower Cranberry River is a popular intermediate trip through a wild area. It saw its first fatality ever on April 23rd at the Cranberry Split, a Class IV rapid in the middle of this Class III run. According to a report published in *Splashes*, the West Virginia Wildwater Association's newsletter, the group decided to run a two-foot ledge before landing on an island to scout the final drop. One kayaker in the group flipped at the ledge and missed his roll. He was quickly retrieved using a throw rope and was being pulled in when Sally Nass entered the drop. Ms. Nass, 62, flipped in the ledge, rolled up, and was pulled back into the hole. After surfing for a few seconds she flipped and bailed out. She washed downstream into the main drop where a large boulder splits the current. She rode up on the pillow then slid to the right along the face of the rock, into the crease, and disappeared. Ms. Nass did not wash out until five or ten minutes later. Her group pulled her ashore quickly and three paddlers began CPR, setting up a rotation so that one person was always resting. Two other kayakers paddled to the takeout and called 911 while a third ran down a logging road to the rail trail gate at Holcombe Bridge. From here he directed rescue squad members to the scene. Arriving EMS personnel were impressed that the group had performed excellent CPR for almost two hours, but unfortunately these efforts were in vain. A paramedic pronounced her dead at the scene. An autopsy found that Ms. Nass had a skull fracture, a bruised chin, and several cracked neck vertebrae. The coroner also noted that she was missing a shoe and that her foot and leg were badly bruised. Her friends believe she was hit hard on the chin during her swim and knocked her unconscious. Then she was pushed into an underwater slot between two rocks and could have caught her leg or foot.

On May 27th conditions were right for a high water run down Southern Colorado's Vallecito Creek, a short Class V run in a narrow, sheer-walled gorge. A group of three paddlers ran the warm-up drops cleanly and arrived at Entrance Falls, a 15-foot waterfall that can't be carried. According to a detailed report posted by

Peter and Kate Roth on Mountainbuzz.com, Adam Barron, 29, was making his first run of the creek. The first member of the group ran the falls and caught a small eddy on river right at the base of the falls where he got out of his boat to set safety. Mr. Barron was the second member of the group to run the falls. At the base of the falls, he was back-ended and recirculated in the hole for several seconds before swimming out of his kayak. Once swimming, he was pushed to the river left side, which forms a strong recirculating eddy that feeds into an undercut wall / cave, and back into the base of the falls.

After running the falls, the third member of the group caught sight of Mr. Barron swimming and paddled into the cave area to attempt to rescue Mr. Barron by boat. He was unable to escape the hydraulic with him on his boat and was pulled back into the left side of the falls. Here he flipped at least once and lost contact with Mr. Barron. At that time he decided to fight his way out of the hydraulic and try to reach him with a throw rope. There was not enough rope to reach the cave from the small eddy on river right, so he paddled back past the boil and threw the rope from his boat. The throw rope reached Mr. Barron, but the rescuer was unable to paddle out and was again pulled back into the hydraulic at the base of the falls and lost the rope. Suddenly Mr. Barron disappeared for about 15 seconds and resurfaced 20 yards downstream at the entrance to the next drop, Trash Can. This is a very obstructed Class V drop. His friends got into their boats and chased him through the drop but could not find him. The group ran the rest of the river, and after finding no sign of him contacted search and rescue. An extensive search by EMS and local paddlers at much lower water levels has failed to recover the body.

Strainers are the hazard that whitewater paddlers fear the most. This danger was underscored on May 28th, when a Colorado kayaker with nine years of paddling experience was killed on a Class II creek. A Mountainbuzz.com posts said that a tree had almost completely blocked

a Class II section of Lower Anthracite Creek. It was not hard to spot, and the lead boater signaled the rest of the group to eddy out. Robert Locke, 34, was running second. He missed the eddy and pinned hard against the tree. At first his head and shoulders were above the water, but as the group worked feverishly to help him he was pulled under the tree. Eventually the rescuers were able to cut him loose and he floated downstream. Paddlers chased him a third of a mile and pulled him ashore. Here several paddlers with professional medical training started CPR but they were not able to revive him.

In a similar incident, 28-year-old Daniel Ryan was pinned in a strainer while running the St. Joe River in Idaho. Mr. Ryan, unlike Mr. Locke, had very little experience. The river was Class III and running high, not a good choice for solo paddling by a novice in a new fiberglass kayak. A friend who was following Mr. Ryan by car along a riverside road lost track of him. He searched and found Mr. Ryan's kayak wedged in a debris pile. The Shoshone County Swiftwater Rescue Team was called in to recover the body.

Jean-Francois Lepine and Olivier Tardiff, two expert kayakers from Quebec, put in on the West Branch of the Ausable River in the northern Adirondacks on June 6. Squires' New York guidebook lists the six miles above the Flume as Class IV-IV+ with several carries around big drops. The water level was medium-high. According to a report Mr. Lepine submitted to the AW Database, Mr. Tardiff, 35, flipped in a hole. He rolled up, finished the rapid backwards, and caught a narrow side-eddy along an island just below the drop. Then he drifted out the back of the eddy into a tree extending well into the main current. He flipped and pinned. His partner was on shore filming the upper run and did not see this happen. After running the drop, Mr. Lepine found his friend trapped head-down in his boat. The boat was very securely pinned with the bow wedged against a rock and the stern shoved under the strainer. Mr. Lepine waded out to the boat and tried unsuccessfully to free it. Then he grabbed Mr. Tardiff and was able

to pull him free. He swam him ashore, started CPR, and used a cell phone to call for help. Forest rangers arrived an hour later to recover Mr. Tardiff's body.

The Lower Mishawaka Run on Colorado's Poudre River is a mellow Class II-III section. It should be noted, however, that *Colorado Rivers and Creeks* warns of several large ledges. According to Gordon Rodda, who posted a full account to the AW Accident Database, Laurie Wirt was running last in a group of four. She flipped her kayak in Class II whitewater, failed to roll, and swam above Horseshoe Hole. Ms. Wirt, 48, had been paddling whitewater for 19 years and was a solid paddler, so no one was alarmed at first. But as she recirculated four or five times in the hole, her friends, who had washed downstream while she was stuck in the hole, scrambled to help her. After roughly two minutes she floated out facedown. Eventually a paddler bailed out of his boat and swam her to shore. The group immediately began CPR. A commercial guide with EMT training arrived moments later and relieved them, and a nearby motorist summoned help. An ambulance arrived about 30 minutes after the accident. Although Ms. Wirt had a regular heartbeat when she was airlifted to the hospital the damage was irreversible. She was declared brain-dead several days later.

The dangers of low-head dams are well known throughout the whitewater community, but it's clear that the message is not reaching the general public. On February 5th Timothy Tworog was caught in the hydraulic below a low-head dam on Oregon's Rough and Ready Creek. According to the Medford, *Oregon Tribune* he had been paddling for 20 years. His friends grabbed him after he washed out and attempted CPR, without success. On May 27th Craig Fliege, 38, paddled past buoys warning of the hazards ahead to run Glen D. Palmer Dam on the Fox River near Chicago, IL. *The Chicago Tribune* article quoted witnesses saying he was talking on his cell phone just before he went over! Bruce Sperling, 32, and his brother Mark, 27, saw Fliege caught in the hydraulic and ran over to help. They, too,

were pulled into the deadly backwash and killed. Another *Chicago Tribune* article said this particular dam has killed 13 people since 1960. It is currently slated for safety upgrades to provide safe passage for small boats. Lastly, on June 4th, two men in a double kayak went over the Wanawish Dam on the Yakima River between Richland and Kennewick, WA. A story on the AP wire said that Gary Dean Kirk, 46, surfaced a couple of times in the backwash before he disappeared. His partner swam downstream and clung to a snag until rescued. More information on all of these accidents can be found on the web in the AW Accident Database.

Canoeing Accidents

As in previous years, canoeing accidents most often involve inexperienced people paddling on easy whitewater without life vests. At midnight on January 11th, three men launched a canoe onto the frosty Delaware River from Stockton, NJ. The trip was to celebrate Anthony Suozzo's 26th birthday. It would prove to be his last. The boat flipped on the eddy line of a bridge pier near Lambertville, NJ and capsized, throwing everyone into the icy water. No one wore PFDs. Two of the men managed to get to shore, but Mr. Suozzo did not. His body was found almost three months later. The scenario was repeated on May 14th when Augustine Carbutare, 20, flipped a tandem canoe in a small rapid on Vermont's Winooski River. His friend made it to shore; he did not. News coverage on all of these accidents can be found on the website in the AW Accident Database.

Paddlers in other accidents did wear PFDs, but this precaution wasn't enough to keep them alive. Gary Gardiner, 26, died on April 29th after he and his older brother ran a low-head dam on the Jordan River near Murray, Utah. His partner washed clear of the drop and swam his younger brother to shore where a bystander helped him do CPR. Ed Clark, the AW Streamkeeper for

this popular Class II stretch, said that the dam formed a "river-wide, uniform hole, with a backwash extending more than 20 feet downstream from the structure." At the high levels found that day it was a dangerous place. On June 2nd a group of Boy Scouts on Arkansas' Cado River found that high water and downed trees can make a Class I river deadly. The group was making their way down the river in rented canoes when Hari Natgunasekaram, 12, and another boy struck a downed tree and capsized. Trip leaders searched for the boy for over an hour before contacting EMS. When rescuers cut the tree loose the boy floated free.

Rafting Accidents

Thanks to heavy snow pack in the Western mountains, 2006 will be remembered as a big-water year. But big runoff always brings trouble for paddlers. Nine deaths from this period are classified as flush-drownings, which occur when a person wearing a PFD drowns during a swim through continuous whitewater. Cold water, always a factor in Western runoff, adds to the risks. The problems began on April 15th, when Jason Hansen, a 30 year-old guide trainee, died on the Shoshone section of the Colorado near Glenwood Springs after swimming from a medium-sized hole. Commercial rafting guests died during big-water swims on the South Fork of the Payette in Idaho (June 10th) and Royal Gorge in Colorado (June 8th). In an especially tragic incident, three guests perished when a huge tour raft flipped against a root ball on a Class I section of the Snake River below the entrance to Yellowstone National Park. Even though it was barely Class I whitewater the guests were unable to save themselves on this wide, fast-moving river.

Flush-drowning also claimed the life of several private rafters. Robert Feltzer died on California's Eel River on April 30th and an unidentified man washed to his death in the Edwards Mile on Colorado's Eagle

River roughly a month later. Both of these were one-boat trips at high water. But the presence of a second boat does not guarantee a successful rescue. A 16-foot oar rig raft running Westwater Canyon (UT) at 13,000 cfs flipped in a big hole below Staircase Rapid and threw three people into the water. One man swam to shore safely, but a husband and wife pair washed downstream. The second boat, rowed by a BLM intern, gave chase. He rescued the husband above Last Chance and picked up his wife, Kathy Pidcock, floating facedown in her PFD five miles downstream. CPR was ineffective. James Stuart's mid-May death after a high water swim on Marsh Creek, a tributary of the Middle Fork of the Salmon (ID), was probably due to a heart attack. He died despite a fast rescue on May 21st.

A number of rafting deaths happened because inexperienced users failed to wear life vests. On June 3rd three local men put in for a high water run on the Ausable River above Keeseville, NY in cheap vinyl one-man rafts. According to Ben Bramledge, an experienced local paddler, the river here has several drops in the Class III-IV range. At 6 pm two of the rafts flipped in a Class II rapid and washed into a ledge drop with a big hole at the bottom. One of the men was able to grab his raft at the bottom of the drop and flushed out but the second swimmer, 28-year-old Mark Dragoon, did not resurface. On June 23rd Geoffrey Reynolds, 29, disappeared after falling out of his raft in a Class III rapid on Oregon's Clackamas River. On June 25th, 21-year-old Scott Schafer drowned in the Casper Whitewater Course on the North Platte River in Wyoming. According to the Casper, WY *Star-Tribune*, Mr. Schafer was tubing. He walked out into the river to retrieve his tube, lost his balance, and got swept away. Lastly, on June 30th, two students from Liberty University attempted to raft Class III+ Balcony Falls on Virginia's James River. The friend survived, but 21 year-old Aaron Cooper did not. In each of these cases there is little

doubt that a PFD would have saved the victim's life.

There were two particularly tragic events involving strainers on high-water rivers in the first half of 2006. On May 20th Jeff Driver, a 25-year veteran professional guide, washed into a massive river-wide logjam on the Klickitat River (WA). The *Portland Oregonian* reported that the river was running at 4500 cfs, which is considered a high level. Both he and a guest, 61-year-old Roland Schimmel, died. In a similar incident, a group of students from Eastern Washington University encountered a river-wide strainer just below Tumbleweed Rapid on Montana's Alibates Gorge. Strainers are quite rare on this section of the Clark Fork, but this one was deadly. In the ensuing collision Sara Varnum, 18, was killed. The *Missoulian* reported that professional river guides spotted the hazard the day before. They brought tools to the site and tried to remove it. Failing to do so, they posted signs at the put-in, but the students apparently did not see the warnings.

The Farmington, *New Mexico Daily Times* carried a story of an unexpected fatality on the Animas River during the annual Riverfest celebrations. A raft carrying major donors to a special dinner was "sucked in" to a "hydraulic dam" and capsized. This is probably the same spot that claimed the life of a Boy Scout last year. A 65 year-old man was pulled into the reversal and drowned. A three-year-old girl rescued by other rafters was later hospitalized.

Iron Ring Rapid on West Virginia's Gauley River is a tough Class V drop with an evil reputation at low water. On June 14 Glen Rogers, 50, fell out of a commercial raft and body-pinned on Woodstock Rock. According to a story in the *Beckley Register-Herald*, water releases from Summersville Dam were cut off so his body could be recovered the next day. The coroner ruled the cause of death was blunt-force trauma,

demonstrating the power of the river even at low flows.

Near Misses

On a more positive note, there were several outstanding rescues in the first half of this year. A Class III rapid showed Chris Reeves a positively evil side on "a nice low-water run" of Tennessee's North Chickamauga Creek. The trouble started on February 5th when he flipped in a rock jumble in the Bowling Alley and was pushed under a rock. He got one last deep breath of air before he was sucked into the tunnel. He bailed out and swam for his life. Although the tunnel narrowed he was able to pull himself through the opening and out the other end. In his post to Boatertalk, he talked about keeping his head under these difficult circumstances and said that if he had stayed in his boat, he would be dead. The boat remained jammed in the crack. This post is saved in the AW Accident Database and is a compelling read!

There was another very close call on the Needles section of the Potomac River near Harper's Ferry, WV on April 15th. Dawn Rueben, 39, was a first-time paddler with a college outdoor club. Below Dam #3 one member of the group swam. According to a report sent by long-time paddler Barbara Brown, the group was herded into an eddy while the instructors made a routine rescue. But while this was going on Ms. Ruben slipped out the back of the eddy and was pushed under a two-foot diameter log. She screamed for help before she was pushed under. Her group responded quickly, rushing down and pulling her from her boat. Her sprayskirt got caught on the strainer, and the trip leader used a knife to cut it free. She was probably under for about five minutes. By this time a group of paddlers from a joint Monocracy Canoe Club / Mason-Dixon Canoe Club trip arrived. They dragged her onto a flat rock, removed her helmet and PFD, and started CPR. Her color improved noticeably and after a

few minutes her pulse returned. They continued rescue breathing and shortly thereafter she started breathing on her own. Meanwhile, other paddlers asked a nearby fisherman to dial 911. After what seemed like a long time (but was probably only about 20 minutes) a motorboat carrying rescue personnel arrived, followed by a helicopter. A basket was lowered and Ms. Ruben was loaded aboard and rushed to a hospital. She was in a coma for 15 hours but miraculously came away with no permanent damage. Several people in the paddling group wrote detailed accounts of this rescue; all are available in the AW Accident Database.

Remember: the strength of our reporting depends on AW members who find these accounts and send them to us. My thanks go to our regular safety correspondents: Slim Ray, Tim Bromelcamp, Ben Bramledge, Aida Parkinson, Ken Dubel, Dane Patterson, and Matt Buynoski for supplying the backbone of this effort. But it's easier than ever to help thanks to the much-improved American Whitewater Accident Database. Simply go to www.americanwhitewater.org and click on the "Safety" link in the dropdown "Our Organization" menu to find a report form. You can then cut-and-paste newspaper stories and Internet postings or write your own account. The reports are entered into the database and forwarded to the AW Safety Committee for review. The whole reporting process can now be done online (by following the above directions). You may also correspond directly with the safety editor, Charlie Walbridge, at ccwalbridge@cs.com and I will add your material to the database myself. 

News & Notes

From Tears to Cheers

By Wesley R. Bradley

The old Willie Nelson lyrics, “Blue eyes crying in the rain” are not sad enough to describe the scene one Thursday in early August when Sam Manzer looked at the vacant spot on the roof rack and the cut straps where his precious kayak had been. His paddling friends knew what he was thinking: “How am I ever going to get another good play boat like that?” A wonderful Jackson Kayak employee had given him that boat about a year ago because he is from a low-income family, and now some misguided fool had taken it away in a busy parking lot in broad daylight. Tears would have been understandable, but they were not in evidence as Sam took the low blow from the unknown thief in stride.

Immediately the Tennessee Valley Canoe Club rallied. They posted on all the local chat sites and notified Rock Creek Outfitters to be on the lookout for the stolen kayak. Anne Robinson posted a notice of the stolen kayak on Paddlers for Christ. Stuart Everett came up with the idea to start a fund that would help buy a new boat for Sam. He sent an e-mail to Carman at Jackson Kayak on the following Saturday explaining the situation. By 9:30 a.m. the next Monday, Carman had posted the information and the address people could send their funds to on the Jackson web site, with a note at the bottom that Jackson Kayak would pick up the remaining cost for the boat after the collection.

Within just a few hours the entire paddling community seemed to come together to help Sam. This is why I think the paddling community is made up of some of the greatest people on earth! Several people who stepped up in a big way were: Jon Foulk (APES), Tony Lunt (JK), Anne Robinson (TVCC) & Stuart Gonzales (TVCC). That Monday evening, EJ himself stepped in with the decision to go ahead and send a new kayak on its way to Sam. EJ contacted Sam himself to say, “Just pick out the one you want!” When I got news of Sam’s reversed fortunes from



EJ on Tuesday morning, I quickly relayed it to everyone on Paddlers for Christ and Boater Talk. Carman and I then decided whatever money had already been sent in for the boat would go toward some additional gear—float bags, outfitting, etc.—for Sam.

The report from the factory the day Sam picked up his new Jackson Star sums it all up:

“One thing that always shines about Sam is that he really has a lot of character—today was no exception. He is very grateful to have his new green Star and found a way

to pass along the generosity. The fund that made this all possible will be more than the cost of the boat. Sam has asked that any excess go to Emily [Jackson]’s school building fund.”

Many wonderful stories have been generated out of what look liked to be a terrible situation. Thank you to everyone who helped in any way! There’s good and bad in life; let’s celebrate all the good people! 

Oil + Water Project Promotes Biofuels

Beginning March '06, Seth Warren and Tyler Bradt, kayakers on tour with the Oil + Water Project (O+WP), traveled back and forth across the USA and Canada, presented alternative energy curriculum demonstrations to 21 elementary schools (75 teachers, 1916 students, and 882 poster competition participants), attended the New York City Earth Day celebration, collaborated with farmers, visited with thousands of environmentally conscious individuals, and pooled resources with several influential environmental NGOs and businesses along the tour route; all told, the Oil + Water Project was exposed to at least 1,092,781 individuals who attended outdoor retail demonstrations and community festivals across North America.

Since their Alaska to Argentina launch July 2nd, the O + WP has performed demonstrations in North Pole, Fairbanks, Denali and Anchorage. For a significant portion of the remote Alaskan roadways,

they successfully experimented with Salmon Oil, an Alaska fishing industry byproduct, as fuel! They've driven approximately 30,000 kms on 100% Biofuel.

The Oil + Water Project is a worldwide journey with a converted fire truck that can run on 100% vegetable oil. The biofuels-only demonstration vehicle travels for up to 2,000 miles before needing to refuel the 180-gallon storage compartments. The legendary rig features an on-board vegetable oil seed press, a large demonstration window, a video presentation table, and an expandable side tent.

The inspiration behind this project came from Seth and Tyler's mutual life-long goal of doing what they love most (kayaking) while also addressing one of the world's biggest issues. "I want to help create solutions to the world's problems in order to maintain a healthier environment and a more conscious global community," explains team member Warren. Seth and Tyler demonstrate how it's practicable

to produce biofuels at a local level using locally grown crops and recourses, in addition to sharing basic alternative energy information. "Our ultimate hope is to promote a philosophy that will extend into the next generation and help preserve ecosystems around the world so that kids will be able to enjoy our planet's playground just as we have," Bradt says passionately.

With a top speed of 50 miles per hour, the O + WP is on a long, slow cruise through Alaska to Argentina, wrapping up Leg 1 of the Americas tour April 2007. 

For more information, check out www.oilandwaterproject.org/blog.



The Last Word

When it Isn't Pretty, Tell it Like it Is

By *Ambrose Tuscano*

As a child first learning to kayak, I really had to depend on others to get me down the river safely. Since I usually didn't have a clue what the next rapid was going to be like I would have to rely on someone—usually my dad—for insight. Before long I learned to read his assessment of an upcoming rapid like a book. That's not to say I always took his word literally, but rather I would interpret his meaning from his words or actions. Usually if he didn't think a rapid would be too difficult for me he wouldn't say anything, and I'd blindly follow him, scrambling to stay on his tail. Early on, I learned to tell things about the water downstream from me just by watching my dad react to it. If in the middle of a rapid he started to straighten in his boat, craning his neck, I knew something unexpected lay ahead; when he would paddle full steam ahead, I knew that I'd better start paddling like hell too; and whenever I saw him make a sudden change of boat angle, I would use the distance between us to turn my boat in preparation for the unknown moves before me.

But if there were a rapid ahead that he thought I might have a hard time with, there would usually be a verbal description. No matter what he said, if there were some words of encouragement or even a particularly upbeat tone in his voice, I knew we had some pretty serious whitewater to run: "This is Upper Cardiac Implosion. Just stay out of the big hole on the left and you'll do fine. Oh, and look out for that pourover on the right too. We'll just start left and move right—no big deal." Just once, I guess, I hoped for a totally brutally straight assessment, "Well son, if you can't avoid this hole you're going to get beat so hard you'll think you're a red-headed stepchild. Make sure you paddle hard—your mother and I would hate to have Children's Services knocking on the door after school on Monday." As you will see, it wasn't until years later that

my aversion to comforting pep talks on the river revealed itself as a small but fierce quirk embedded in my psyche.

My apprenticeship in whitewater ended fairly abruptly when I went away to college. Up until then I had paddled mainly within a hundred-mile radius of the home where I was born and raised and every paddling experience was with my dad and/or a group of his friends. Suddenly I was without my safety net, and worse yet, I soon met other less experienced boaters who seemed to expect me to lead them down rivers none of us had ever paddled. Mostly I did all right as a reluctant trip leader in those early years. I had enough skill and luck not to get anyone hurt, for which I am truly grateful.

One day a friend from school asked me to take her down the Pigeon Dries, a Class IV+ run in eastern Tennessee that had been flowing all that spring due to construction on a water diversion system. I had been to this typically dewatered section of the Pigeon many times already that semester, but Daisy had never seen it. While Daisy was and remains a close friend, we didn't paddle together all that often, so I was a bit fuzzy about her physical and mental preparedness for a run of this nature. In retrospect, as a matter of policy (not because of anything that actually happened that day), I should have insisted we tackle an easier river before I agreed to take her down the Dries, but that is not the point of this story.

Daisy had seemed very enthusiastic to get on the Pigeon when she asked to come along, but somewhere in that first mile she realized that the run was a bit more intense that she had hoped and the borrowed creek boat she was paddling really wasn't handling very well. I don't remember the exact series of events and conversations leading up to it, but suddenly we were pulled over in a large eddy in the midst of Class IV whitewater and Daisy was having a mini breakdown, tears and all. Somewhere in the back of my mind, I recollected an eight or nine-year-old version of myself in full-scale meltdown on some river, screaming angrily at my

parents that I never wanted to paddle again. Even though she was restraining herself and speaking more tactfully, Daisy was probably having that same panicked feeling right then, but even though I could empathize, I didn't have a clue of what to do about it.

"Is it going to get any harder?" she finally asked, with just an ounce of hopefulness in the gallons of despair flooding her voice.

"Yeah, I'm pretty sure it will," I said, confident that this wasn't the right answer.

But even though this should have brought forth a renewed torrent of tears and anguish, somehow it didn't. Daisy reacted like she'd just been slapped and was now regaining her senses.

"Will you show me all the lines?" she said, in need of a final confidence booster, I suppose, before she could face the wrath of the river again. As I assured her that I would, in fact, show her the lines—even the top-secret ones—I realized that I'd gotten lucky. Some part of that younger, more frightened version of myself had stuck with me and had been there to remind me not to lie to my friend in distress. I remembered my early sheltered years of kayaking and thought about all the times I'd resorted to tantrums to satisfy the welling fear in my head that screamed, "Get me off this river—now!" That kind of persistent fear cannot be coddled or lied to because it expects this sort of treatment. As a child, when my fears boiled over on the river, my parents often told me that the hardest was behind us, that I could easily face what lay ahead. Even when this was mostly true, it didn't make the fear go away, but rather it took hold of me and turned my arms to jelly and filled my brain with a high-pitched distress signal that prevented the entry of rational thoughts. Even if all the Class III rapids were behind us, I'd find a way to upset and swim in Class II water.

Somehow in the midst of Daisy's confidence crisis, the hard truth turned out to be a reasonable answer. If I had tried

continued from page 20

at the bottom of an inhospitable canyon. Di has to be the toughest woman on earth. She kept her spirits high throughout the whole ordeal.

Curtis is a good guy. We've done our share of rivers together, and I hope there'll be many more in the future. He made some poor decisions on this trip, which led to his inability to follow through with the plan. I think the canyon walls just came crashing down on him, and perhaps his pride kept him from admitting this to us. It cost us only a day and nothing more. I must emphasize that this in no way overshadows his bravery in risking his life getting across the river, and in his climbing out of an extremely steep canyon, probably off trail. We all appreciated his support during the rest of the trip.

Lastly, we all did the best we could! We aren't kayaking stars. While Slim and I have done a helluva lot of Class V, we try not to risk our lives casually and we choose our battles carefully. Doing the Black Canyon is really no big deal. The "deal" is that out of a hundred journeys, sooner or later you're going to hit some bad luck, and that's what this story is about.

I am 55 years old, arthritic and have my best years behind me. Di is 50. Slim works 60 hours a week nowadays and doesn't have time for much else. Dustin is dealing with college, Sergey with a job transition. We're just a group who took some vacation time, wanting to answer the Black Canyon challenge, something in our own back yard, in America, and go somewhere few others will ever get to. 

Hindsights in Haiku

By Richard Mauser

Haiku is a 17-syllable Japanese verse form consisting of three metrical units of 5, 7 and 5 syllables.

Learning Respect

New to kayaking.
Big holes, haystacks and
whirlpools show me who is boss.

Blind Luck

Blind waterfall drop.
Choose the center, left or right.
Better luck next time.

Foamy Wonderland

Swimming in the froth,
tiny bubbles all around
without buoyancy.

Hindsight #1

My butt hitting rocks,
swimming a boulder garden
wishing I had rolled.

Hindsight #2

Big holes cartwheel me
tumbling over and over.
Next time you run point.

Surfing

Carving up the wave,
I face the raging torrent
with river-wide smile.

to convince her that there were no more hard rapids (never mind the ones harder than she'd seen), she would have inevitably spiraled downward psychologically as we encountered horizon line after horizon line. Instead she was able to pull herself together for a respectable first run down an intimidating Class IV+ river.

As whitewater enthusiasts, we must eventually face a basic, debilitating human fear—the lack of total control that occurs when we are on or in the river. This fear can be masked and it can be controlled, but when stress pushes it to the surface, it puts paddlers and their companions at an elevated danger. If someone in your group is having a bad day, an honest assessment of the whitewater that lies ahead and of the alternatives available to the group (i.e. hiking out) will help that person face his fear and hopefully overcome it rather than pretending it doesn't exist and allowing it to lurk just beneath the surface. Being upfront with that person will also help foster group safety—even if it means hiking off the river on that particular day.

Ultimately, one of the greatest rewards that paddling offers us is the satisfaction that comes from facing down one of our primal fears. When we recognize and admit to that fear, we become more honest with others and with ourselves about why and what we paddle and we realize that if we can overcome this, there isn't much in life we cannot do. That's the honest truth, and I'm sticking to it. 

Corporate Sponsors

Each day American Whitewater faces new challenges that threaten our whitewater rivers. To aid us in this fight, we rely on support from members, donors, foundations and partners in the industry.

Companies throughout the whitewater and outdoor industries are stepping forward to support AW's River Stewardship work.

American Whitewater urges you not to make purchase decisions blindly. When you buy your next piece of outdoor gear there are many factors to consider: quality, dependability, comfort, safety and fashion. American Whitewater hopes you will add one more consideration to this list: corporate responsibility.

Support companies that support your rivers



Keen Footwear is a Class V sponsor of American Whitewater's River Stewardship Program. This year, Keen's contributions aid stewardship projects in the Southeast and the Pacific Northwest. In the Southeast Keen's support will help American Whitewater's work restoring the Catawba watershed. Additional funding from Keen supports AW projects on the Columbia River Basin and the Cascade Range.

Keen views itself as much more than an outdoor company. They stand for a new kind of business model: As responsible as they are profitable, and committed to doing good with the resources they have. This model guides their charitable giving efforts. Keen believes that supporting good

causes is an obligation of financial success and that respecting the environment is simply a matter of conscience.

Keen is a partner with other environmental, conservation and social organizations, particularly those interested in connecting people with the outdoors. Keen's partners believe in tackling problems at the root, because that's how long-term changes are made. In addition to AW, Keen also supports The Conservation Alliance, Leave No Trace, Big City Mountaineers and Surfrider Foundation. They also support smaller local level organizations such as Friends of Forest Park in Portland, OR and the Youth Outdoors Legacy Fund. 





In 2005, and again in 2006, NRS will show their commitment to river stewardship through encouraging AW membership at river festivals nationwide.



Immersion Research led the whitewater industry in corporate responsibility. IR was American Whitewater's first industry supporter of river stewardship and remains a friend and ally today.



Clif Bar's annual Flowing Rivers campaign, that provides funding to AW's affiliate clubs for river stewardship projects, is now in its fourth year.



Fortress International Watches is new to the scene and new to supporting American Whitewater. Through creative fundraising strategies Fortress will help AW seek the funds needed to advocate for all whitewater rivers.



As part of Jackson Kayak's focus on environmental responsibility, they are supporting AW's work by encouraging membership growth in the organization.



In turning the pages of *North Carolina Rivers & Creeks*, it's easy to see how many fantastic rivers AW has had a hand in opening up to paddling. We support AW in hopes that there will be more great rivers to tell about in future editions, and more river lovers out there working with AW to preserve the rivers we all love!



Kayak Session helps American Whitewater increase membership, fund river stewardship work, and get our message out to readers here and abroad. *KS* is proud to provide AW members a discounted subscription rate.



Chaco helps set the standard for industry responsibility by supporting causes near to their hearts with 3% of after-tax profits.



We love donating to river conservation organizations like AW. Being partners with American Whitewater allows each of us to do what we do best; AW is a leader in river conservation and Werner Paddles can focus on being the leading kayak paddle manufacturer.



Girls at Play donates \$.50 to AW for each Girls at Play DVD sold and actively promotes AW membership to participants of the Girls at Play Summer Tour. Anna Levesque, the founder of Girls at Play, is proud to be an AW Athlete Ambassador.



Stahlsac helps AW make sure our lifetime members are satisfied by providing all of our lifetime members with their paddler duffel.



Kokatat remains one of AW's strongest allies by continuing support of AW's membership and river stewardship programs.



WAVE SPORT

Wavesport donations help AW have the resources it needs to conserve and restore our whitewater resources.



Throughout the history of the natural world, water sources have been the centers of life, providing habitat and sustenance for animals and plants alike. Patagonia is proud to support groups like American Whitewater that work to reverse the destructive effects of damming, development and pollution.



Outdoorplay is proud to support American Whitewater's river stewardship work and has done so for three years now. Outdoorplay.com, along with many other retailers nationwide, provides discounts for American Whitewater members on their website.



In 2004 Teva named American Whitewater as their river stewardship partner and has been one of our strongest supporters of river access and conservation since.



In 2006 Smith Optics continues its support of American Whitewater's river stewardship work and membership.

Join



AMERICAN WHITEWATER Today!

American Whitewater has been extraordinarily fortunate in our ability to leverage a strong grassroots base—members and other volunteers—to assist our limited staff with many whitewater river conservation and restoration efforts.



Over the years, American Whitewater volunteers have participated in numerous hydropower meetings as well as instream and recreational flow studies; filed comments and assisted with an uncountable number of filings; appeared as expert witnesses; lobbied; worked to fight new dams, remove existing dams, deny licenses, and improve public access to rivers and streams. In nearly every river stewardship issue AW has been involved with, the outcome has been favorable to paddlers. Not only has AW secured favorable decisions for the paddling community, but we are the only national organization representing paddlers as these decisions are being made.

A growing membership base is crucial to our ability to continue with our work. Some studies show that there are currently over 100,000 whitewater paddlers in the U.S. American Whitewater currently has 6,300 active members. When considering the amount of whitewater river miles that AW has had a direct impact on, this membership number is unimpressive. We need all paddlers to join American Whitewater. If you are a member, please

be sure that everyone you paddle with understands the work AW does, and how you, as an AW member, value that work.

Membership support is what will determine our ability to continue our river stewardship work in the years to come. Individual Annual Memberships are only \$35. If you are a member of your local paddling club and your club is an Affiliate Club member of AW, join as a Club Affiliate Individual for \$25. This is a tank of gas or an inexpensive night out. This is certainly not too much to pay to have a national organization representing your paddling interests all across the country.

Join on-line today at <http://www.americanwhitewater.org/membership>, call 1-866-BOAT4AW (866-262-8429), or fill out the form on the back of this page and mail it to:

Membership
P.O. Box 1540
Cullowhee, NC 28723

Affiliate Clubs

AW's Original Purpose

by Carla Miner

The Affiliate Club Program lies at the very heart of AW's existence. AW's original purpose since 1957 has been to distribute information among its Affiliate Clubs. AW's relationships with local clubs have provided the backbone for the river conservation and access work it accomplishes. Over 100 clubs are now AW Club Affiliates and they are all doing great work on your behalf. If you don't belong to a club consider joining one.

This is the fourth year that Clif Bar makes possible the AW / Clif Bar Flowing Rivers grants. Paddling clubs must be current AW Affiliate Clubs to be eligible for these \$500 grants. Clubs across the country have embarked on many wonderful programs as a result of this program (See Nov/Dec 2005 *AW Journal*). Make sure your club is an AW Affiliate Club and encourage them to apply for this grant for a local project important to paddlers in your area.

AFFILIATE CLUBS, we want to know what you are doing. Send your events to us at ben@amwhitewater.org and we will include them in the Journal.

The AW Journal Club Affiliates by State:

Alaska

Fairbanks Paddlers, Fairbanks

Alabama

Birmingham Canoe Club, Birmingham
Coosa Paddling Club, Montgomery
Huntsville Canoe Club, Huntsville

Arkansas

Arkansas Canoe Club, Little Rock

California

Central CA Canoe Club (C4), Nevada City
Chico Paddle Heads, Chico
Gold Country Paddlers, Lotus
River Touring Section, Angeles Chapter
Shasta Paddlers, Redding
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter, San Jose

Colorado

Avid4Adventure Inc., Boulder
Colorado White Water Association, Englewood
Grand Canyon Priv. Boat. Assn, Englewood
FiBark Boat Races, Englewood
Pikes Peak Whitewater Club, Colorado Springs
Rocky Mountain Canoe Club, Englewood
University of Colorado Kayak Club, Boulder

Florida

Project Challenge Inc., Miami
North Florida Whitewater Assoc., Ocala

Georgia

Atlanta Whitewater Club, Atlanta
Georgia Canoeing Association, Atlanta
Georgia Tech Outdoor Recreation, Atlanta
Paddlers4Christ, Ellijay

Idaho

Idaho Whitewater Assoc., Boise

Illinois

Chicago Whitewater Assoc., Chicago

Indiana

Ohio Valley Whitewater Club, Evansville
Hoosier Canoe Club, Indianapolis

Iowa

Iowa Whitewater Coalition, Des Moines

Kansas

Kansas Whitewater Association, Mission

Kentucky

Bluegrass Whitewater Association, Lexington
Viking Canoe Club, Louisville
Bardstown Boaters, Frankfort

Maine

AMC/Maine Chapter, Portland
Penobscot Paddle & Chowder Society,
Topsham

Maryland

Greater Baltimore Canoe Club, Kingsville

Massachusetts

AMC Boston Chapter, Lunenburg

Minnesota

Boat Busters Anonymous, Stillwater
Charlie Sawyer, Maple Plain

Missouri

Missouri Whitewater Association, St. Louis
Ozark Mountain Paddlers, Springfield
Ozark Wilderness Waterways, Kansas City
Kansas City Whitewater Club, Kansas City

Montana

Beartooth Paddlers Society, Billings

Nevada

Sierra Nevada Whitewater Club, Reno

New Hampshire

Ledyard Canoe Club, Hanover
Mt. Washington Valley Paddlers, Franconia
Merrimack Valley Paddlers, Merrimack

New Jersey

The Paddling Bares, Milltown

New Mexico

Adobe Whitewater Club, Albuquerque

New York

ADK Schenectady, Schenectady
FLOW Paddlers Club, Rochester
Housatonic Canoe & Kayak Squad, Ossining
Town Tinker Tube Rentals, Phoenicia
Zoar Valley Paddling Club, Dunkirk

N. Carolina

Appalachian State University, Boone
Carolina Canoe Club, Raleigh
Mecklenburg Regional Paddlers, Indian Trail
Warren Wilson College, Asheville
Western Carolina Paddlers, Asheville
Watauga Paddlers, Boone

Ohio

Columbus Outdoor Pursuits, Columbus
Keel Haulers Canoe Club, Westlake
Outdoor Adventure Club, Dayton
Toledo River Gang, Waterville

Oregon

Oregon Kayak and Canoe Club, Portland
Oregon Whitewater Association, Beaverton
Willamette Kayak and Canoe Club, Corvallis
Lower Columbia Canoe Club, Portland

Pennsylvania

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Sugarloaf
Bens Creek Canoe Club, Johnstown
Canoe Club of Greater Harrisburg, Mechanicsburg
Conewago Canoe Club, York
Holtwood Hooligans, Lititz
Lehigh Valley Canoe Club, Lehigh Valley
Philadelphia Canoe Club, Philadelphia
Three Rivers Paddling Club, Pittsburgh
Pine Creek Valley Whitewater Association, Jersey Shore
KCCNY, Philadelphia
Lehigh Valley Whitewater Club, Lehigh Valley

S. Carolina

Foothills Paddling Club, Greenville
Palmetto Paddlers, Columbia

Tennessee

Appalachian Paddling Enthusiasts, Gray Eastman Hiking and Canoeing, Kingsport
E. Tennessee Whitewater Club, Oak Ridge
Memphis Whitewater, Memphis
Tennessee Scenic River Assoc., Nashville
Tennessee Valley Canoe Club, Chattanooga
University of Tennessee Knoxville, Knoxville
Chota Canoe Club, Knoxville

Texas

Bayou Whitewater Club, Houston
paddletexas.com, San Antonio
Houston Canoe Club, Houston
Kayak 4 a Kure, Amarillo

Utah

University of Utah, Salt Lake City
USU Kayak Club, Logan
Utah Whitewater Club, Salt Lake City

Vermont

Vermont Paddlers Club, Jericho

Virginia

Blue Ridge Voyageurs, Reston
Blue Ridge River Runners, Lynch Station
Canoe Cruisers Association, Arlington
Coastal Canoeists, Richmond
FORVA, Roanoke

Washington

NW Whitewater Assoc., Spokane
Outdoor Adventure Club, Redmond
Paddle Trails Canoe Club, Seattle
Spokane Canoe & Kayak Club, Spokane
University Kayak Club, Seattle
Washington Kayak Club, Seattle
Washington Recreation River Runners, Renton
Whitman College Whitewater Club, Walla Walla
Venturing Crew 360, Snohomish

West Virginia

West VA Wildwater Assoc., S. Charleston
Friends of the Cheat, Kingwood

Wisconsin

Hoofers Outing Club, Madison
NE Wisconsin Paddlers Inc. Appleton
Pure Water Paddlers, Eau Claire
Sierra Club / John Muir Chapter, LaCrosse

Canada, British Columbia

Vancouver Kayak Club, Vancouver

Canada, Ontario

Madawaska Kanu Camp Inc., Ottawa

Discounted AW Memberships for Affiliate Club Members

by Carla Miner
Membership Coordinator

AW offers discounted AW memberships to whitewater enthusiasts who are also members of one of our Affiliate Clubs.

We supply a unique code that will automatically offer the discounted membership specific to your club allowing individuals to receive the discount on the normal AW membership renewal form or online at www.americanwhitewater.org/membership.

Both options work equally well and help make life easier for members of your club.

Discount codes are in place for all AW Affiliate Clubs and many members are enjoying the benefits of joining or renewing their individual AW membership for only \$25.

If you are interested in taking advantage of the Affiliate Club discount, please contact me and I will be happy to let you know your Club's unique code. I can be reached at: 866-BOAT-4AW or membership@amwhitewater.org.

Join American Whitewater as a Club Affiliate!

10 Reasons to Join AW as an Affiliate Club

1. Receive the *American Whitewater Journal*, the oldest continually published whitewater magazine.
2. Join the list of Affiliate Clubs noted in each bi-monthly *AW Journal*.
3. List club events in the *AW Journal*.
4. Your Club's members can become AW members for \$25. A \$10 savings!
5. Have technical expertise for your Club conservation and access committees 'on tap.'
6. Have access to technical and onsite assistance for your Club's event planning.
7. Enjoy VIP benefits for "Joint Members" at AW events.
8. Participate in exclusive AW Affiliate Club promotions.
9. Post Club information on the AW Website to help paddlers find you.
10. Eligible to apply for a spot in the AW 2006 River Stewardship Institute.

For more information,
contact Carla Miner at
membership@amwhitewater.org
or sign-up on-line at:
www.americanwhitewater.org/membership

Guidelines for Contributors



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

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

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

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

American Whitewater feature articles should relate to some aspect of whitewater boating. Please do not submit articles pertaining to sea kayaking or flat water.

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

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

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

and distances are correctly calculated.

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

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

Send your material to:
Journal Editor
P.O. Box 1540
Cullowhee, NC 28723
E-mail: editor@amwhitewater.org

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Endless River Adventures • Bryson City, North Carolina

www.endlessriveradventures.com

The logo for Endless River Adventures is circular. It features a stylized river with a kayak in the center. The words 'ENDLESS RIVER' are written in a circle around the top, and 'ADVENTURES' is written around the bottom. There are wavy lines below the circle representing water.

IF ALL EYES WERE ON YOU...



Devon Barker, Team NRS, on stage at Reno's Whitewater Festival. © Mike Hood/NRS



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the Approach



Dagger

photographic: Ammerl, Joppe (bottom view)
Corey Mendicino (top left)

Step 1:

identify the most essential needs of whitewater and recreational paddlers

Step 2:

design these needs into a single paddling platform

The Result:
the Approach

a boat that will take care of you the first time out and every time after