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September/October 2007

women & WHITEWATER

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Ruth Gordon
2007 Women's World
Freestyle Champion

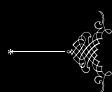


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AMERICAN WHITEWATER

A VOLUNTEER PUBLICATION PROMOTING RIVER CONSERVATION, ACCESS AND SAFETY

American Whitewater Journal

September/October 2007 - Volume #47 - Issue #5

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Ruth Gordon practicing for
perfection at the Skook
photo by Klaas van Lil



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Publication Title: American Whitewater
Issue Date: September/October 2007
Statement of Frequency: Published bi-monthly
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, Sue Taft, Ben VanCamp, Kevin Colburn, Beth Gaydos, Janet Burnett Cowie, Doug Ammons, Walt Barmmann, Thomas O'Keefe, Scott Weems, Kathleen Burruss, Clay Wright, Martin Talbot, Dave Steindorf, Andrew Guldman, Eugene Buchanan, Scott Winkelman, Mike Buckley, Hank Klausman, Ambrose Tuscano

Photo Contributors

Bruce Cowie, Wolf Bauer, Rob Lesser, Ted Acton, Brandon Knapp, Rich Bower, Thomas O'Keefe, Portland General Electric, Scott Weems, Kathleen Burruss, Jeff West, Jonathan Shanin, Christiane Van Dyke, Charles-Etienne Tessier, Martin Talbot, Sam Drevo

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

Stewardship 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

Sutton Bacon
sutton@suttonbacon.com
Atlanta, GA

Chris Bell
chris@boatingbeta.com
Asheville, NC

Rich Bowers
nwdrivers@comcast.net
Bellingham, WA

Dave Cernicek
cernicek@cluemail.com
Jackson, WY

Adam Cramer
cramera@gmail.com
Washington, DC

Liz Ferrin
lferrin@deckers.com
Goleta, CA

Jennie Goldberg
jennie@nwwhitewater.org
Seattle, WA

Kristine Jackson
kristine@jacksonkayak.com
Rock Island, TN

Andrew Jillings
ajillings@hamilton.edu
Clinton, NY

Tim Kelley
tim.kelley1@us.army.mil
Potsdam, NY

Don Kinser
dkinser@ediltd.com
Marietta, GA

Mark LaCroix
mwlcx@hughes.net
Thorton, NH

TOLL FREE NUMBER
866-BOAT4AW

Evie Locke
evelynlocke@verizon.net
Charlottesville, MA

Eric Nies
nies@runbox.com
New Paltz, NY

Aaron Pruzan
aaron@jacksonholekayak.com
Jackson Hole, WY

Norwood Scott
wms111@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
oakeefe@amwhitewater.org

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

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

Nathan Fey
Colorado Stewardship Director
Ridgway, CO
nathan@amwhitewater.org

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

The Journey Ahead

By Mark Singleton

In the very first issue of the *American Whitewater Journal* (May 1955), on the very last page, Joe Lacy wrote the following words:

You are reading the first issue of America's only magazine dedicated to the furthering of the River Riding sport in the United States and Canada.

The people who started this movement, Bruce Grant, Eliot DuBois, Bob McNair, Clyde Jones and others, have spent hundreds of hours writing and answering letters to get the ball rolling for the magazine. Everyone concerned has contributed his time, knowledge and even a good deal of money to make this magazine a reality.

It remains now for all of us to keep up the enormous amount of interest shown in this venture by urging everyone interested in boating to join American Whitewater Affiliation [now American Whitewater]. Through the AWA we hope to bring this exciting, healthful international recreation to all who love life and adventure out-of-doors.

Material of all types has been pouring into the AWA headquarters to publication in the magazine, and at least part of every bit of it will see the light of print eventually. Perhaps you think you have some rather odd or radical ideas on the subject of traveling down a river.... let me assure you that someone else in this far-flung network of "river

rats" is thinking the same thing or looking for the idea you have. Please contribute everything you have on the subject of boating so that we all may share the things you have learned about the rivers themselves or the craft you use in traveling them.

While some things have changed, much remains the same. The *American Whitewater Journal* is still a volunteer driven publication. The contributions to this magazine come from paddlers who are passionate about boating and want to share that excitement with other like-minded individuals. One area that has changed significantly is the number of threats to our country's whitewater rivers: development, inconsistent river management, energy demands, water allocations, water quality and declining federal dollars for river protection all place demands on non-government organizations to play a larger role in the stewardship of natural resources. Yesterday, the American Whitewater Affiliation filled important shoes as the outspoken advocate for river conservation, access and safety. Today American Whitewater is well positioned to connect science-based methods for improved river stewardship of our unique whitewater resources and to provide a balance to these pressures.

Over 50 years ago, American Whitewater was established as one of our nation's first river conservation organizations. Our founders had the following objectives in mind when they saw an opportunity to unite paddling clubs across the country for the common purpose of preserving the integrity of our nation's whitewater rivers:


- Encourage the exploration, enjoyment, and preservation of American recreational waterways for human-powered craft;
- Protect the wilderness character of waterways through conservation of

water, forests, parks, wildlife, and related resources;

- Promote safety and proficiency in all aspects of white-water activities
- Promote appreciation for the recreational value of wilderness cruising and of white-water sports.

Today our work continues and we occupy a unique role in the national river conservation movement, connecting those who enjoy recreational opportunities with river conservation and stewardship goals.

Your support as a member of *American Whitewater* makes this effort possible. Going back to the mid 1950s, our founders could not have predicted the path that lay ahead. Yet boaters have been active supporters and voices for the rivers they cherish. While the times change, the call to adventure out-of-doors and the wilderness qualities of rivers remains as strong as ever.

See you on the river. 

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I found the July/August issue quite informative and entertaining. I always look forward to Sue Taft's contributions, but I will assume I am not the first to notice that in her column, "Roof Racks: They've Come a Long Way" the 1956 date of the photo on page 11 may be in error. The line-up of the shuttle vehicles is interesting to me because the third car in line is 2 years ahead of its time. It appears to be a 58 Chevy station wagon in a photo from 1956. The quad headlights gave it away. (A prototype perhaps?) Also, that last vehicle in line sure looks similar to the vehicle on page 15, but the kayaks have changed a bit. Long live the Microbus! *AWW*

Sincerely,

Don Hornberger
Fairfield, Ohio



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History




Sue Taft after a solo canoe weekend
on the Algonquin

Dropping Down to the Next Play Spot

Editor's Note: *Earlier this summer, we got the sad news that our longtime History columnist, Sue Taft, would be ending her tenure with American Whitewater. Over the past five years, Sue has written with great vitality and insight about topics of historical interest to whitewater paddlers. As one of the few true historians of whitewater, Sue possesses a wealth of knowledge that will be irreplaceable. We'll miss her, but we know that she'll add wisdom and value to any and all of her future projects. Best of luck Sue! We hope to hear from you again soon.*

Since 2003, I have regularly contributed articles to *American Whitewater* about our sport's history. But – borrowing on a river metaphor – I have played on this wave long enough and it is time to drop down to the next play spot. It has been fun for

me as a writer and I want to thank all of AW's readers for allowing me to indulge in this bit of river play. 

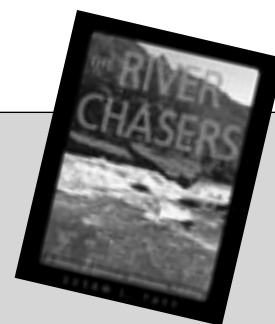
Thanks again,
Sue Taft

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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.



Safety First

Getting to the Take-out Fast

By Eric Nies

The epic night out on the river—maybe it starts with a mix-up on the shuttle, so your group gets on the river a little late. Then the water's a little higher or harder than advertised. You find yourself taking some long scouts and maybe a portage or two that you didn't expect. Maybe the group's bigger than it should be, and a few of the boaters are a bit over their heads.

The next step towards fiasco is usually the unexpected mishap, like a broken paddle or a swim (or two) that scatters gear all over the river. By the time your group gets it back together, the shadows have started to get pretty long, and you wonder if you have enough daylight left to get to the take-out.

Now is the time to turn on the group's collective afterburner and boogie for the take-out. Do this right, and it will be your salvation. Do this wrong, and you'll be taking the final steps towards your next river epic, with a scattered, disorganized group blundering around in the dark.

Have the Talk

The first step in dealing with a problem is recognizing it. The next step is saying it out loud. If you think it's time, then gather up the group and have the two-minute talk. This usually happens when you've just gotten over the last mishap, and your swimmer has just gotten back into their boat. It goes like this: "Hey, I'm thinking that unless we want to get stuck out here tonight, we need to change modes a bit and just motor to the take-out. We can't afford any more trouble." No panic, no blame, just a simple statement of fact—the take-out is still within reach, but our current pace is too slow to get us there, especially if we have any more unplanned adventures.

The next part is the plan: "So I'm thinking

we should stick together, paddle the pools, and get anyone who's having a rough day today up in the front of the pack. If anything is longer than a two-minute scout, I'm walking it."

The last part of the talk might be a collective deep breath: "So why don't we just take five minutes now to get it together, have a snack, dump our boats, take a leak—whatever. And then let's go."

I've had the short version of this talk many times: my buddies and I make eye contact across the river, somebody taps their watch, raises their eyebrows, and leans their head downstream. We all nod in agreement. Someone holds up their hand in a "stop," flashes a peace sign, and taps their watch: "I need two minutes to fix my boat." Everyone else chills out, maybe dumps their boat or drinks some water. A few minutes later we are peeling out in formation, good to go.

Stick Together

The best river fiascos often involve the group splitting up. This can happen intentionally ("Fred took off to catch that other group, but then he thought he passed the takeout, and so he started hiking..."), or by accident ("Fred didn't realize we were scouting, so he just kept going, and when he ran that stuff blind and almost swam, he really got freaked. So we're waiting for Fred, while he's sprinting away trying to find us...").

When you are tired, up against a hard run, and running out of time, take extra care to keep track of each other, especially at the harder rapids and at portages. And don't intentionally split up unless your reasons to do so are deeply compelling, and EVERYONE knows that this is the plan. Think long and hard about splitting your group. Too many epic river stories

involve the phrase: "So then we decided to split up...." It never works in horror movies, and it usually screws things up on the water too.

The one exception to this can be when part of a group opts for an early take-out. Say you're just above Lost Paddle (long and dangerous rapid of legend) on the Upper Gauley, and your buddies, who haven't hit a roll all day, have had enough. They can hike out at the nice fat jeep road to Carnifax. This kind of move can save a trip, so long as EVERYONE KNOWS THIS IS THE PLAN, and there's a rock-solid plan for meeting up later.

Slow Boaters Up Front

In any group, there is always a natural tendency for the stronger boaters to get ahead and the weaker boaters to lag. Weaker boaters get tired, they paddle slowly, and psychologically they are less aggressive. This isn't a moral failing, it's just the way things are. We've all seen it; we've all been there. Float around a corner, hear the next rapid or see the horizon line, and the ninjas sprint downstream to see what's what, while the rookies and hackers instinctively hang back.

A hurried and tense group dynamic only serves to amplify this effect. The ninjas cluster at the head of the pack, charging into the next drop blind, anxious to get to the take-out, while the weaker boaters are so far back they can't even see the line they took (let alone whether it was good or not). They basically become their own trip, and this really slows things down for everyone.

The solution is simple. The stronger boaters need to slow down and shepherd the rookies, keeping them towards the front of the pack and well-informed about what's coming up.



A bivy sack, a lighter and some good luck with the weather made this night out a lot nicer than it could have been

Safety First

Remember, a group moves at the pace of its slowest member. If you are fast, your job is to help the slower folks paddle at their best.

There is a fine art to spoon-feeding a river to weaker boaters, especially if they are already having a bad day. In general, the best way is to give them a chance to watch another boater run the rapid. Keep the verbal instructions simple and pertinent to what you both can actually see, on the order of “go where Fred went,” or “this looks big, and it’s good down the middle,” or “we’ll bump through this top stuff and then there’s a big eddy on the left.” More than one or two steps, and your message probably won’t get through.

Fast Scouts

Scouting can kill the pace of a trip. If you are in hurry-up mode, you need to learn to make scouts go quickly.

The fastest scout is the one that keeps you in your boat. If something is reliably boat-scoutable, even for the weakest boaters in the group, then boat-scout it. Again, if all the ninjas are clustered in the front, and all the weaker paddlers in the back, this is hard to do. If you are the weakling, you need a ninja to be your wingman. If you are a ninja, you need to lead your weaklings eddy to eddy, showing them lines that they can pull off reliably.

If the group needs to scout, the first step is

to pick the right eddy. Use some judgment here, and get the group to stop as close to the scout as can be done safely. Stopping prematurely is a huge waste of time, and if you’re not careful it will recur time and again.

If a rapid is blind but easy, the lead boat may be able to scout for the group, then either lead the group through or direct traffic from shore. If this is iffy but the rapid is still clearly a go, the weaker boaters can hop out and watch the stronger boaters run. Again, if the stronger boaters just bomb through without waiting to show others the line, this slows things down for the whole group.

Next, if you are short on time, you may need to lower your threshold for portaging. This is tricky—sometimes portaging is slow, and sometimes it’s hard. Usually, though, the most time is wasted by boaters who spend 20 minutes on the scout, and then decide to portage anyway. This is silly. If it’s late, the line is sketchy, and the portage is easy, just pick up your boat, walk around, and get on with your day. The same thing goes if you’ve got an easy cheat line. If you’re tight on time, just put away your ego and take the sneak route.

I have portaged and snuck many, many rapids in my time. Usually it’s because I wasn’t up to the task, but sometimes it was to set the tone on something I would have run on a different day: “We don’t


have time to screw around now, let’s just keep moving.”

Paddle the Pools, Rest in the Rapids

This is a huge way to save time. I’m not talking about sprinting, I’m just saying that you can pay attention in the flatwater, keep your boat in whatever current is there, and keep paddling at a solid, comfortably sustainable pace. When you get into an easy rapid with good current, that’s your chance to take a break before the next pool. Start to pick it up again as the rapid dumps into the next pool, and make sure to position yourself on the best stream of current that carries farthest into the flatwater.

Plan B

If you are running out of daylight, have a plan B in the back of your mind as well. Plan B might happen at the put-in: “It’s too late, let’s go to a movie,” or it might happen halfway down the run: “it’s late, we’re screwed, let’s leave our boats and hike out now before the snow gets deeper.” If you have a lighter, headlamp, space blanket, wool hat, etc. then plan B can be a lot more palatable.

Have fun, and may your epics be safe and worthy. 



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Stewardship Updates

Colorado to Build More Reservoirs to Meet Increasing Water Demand

By Nathan Fey

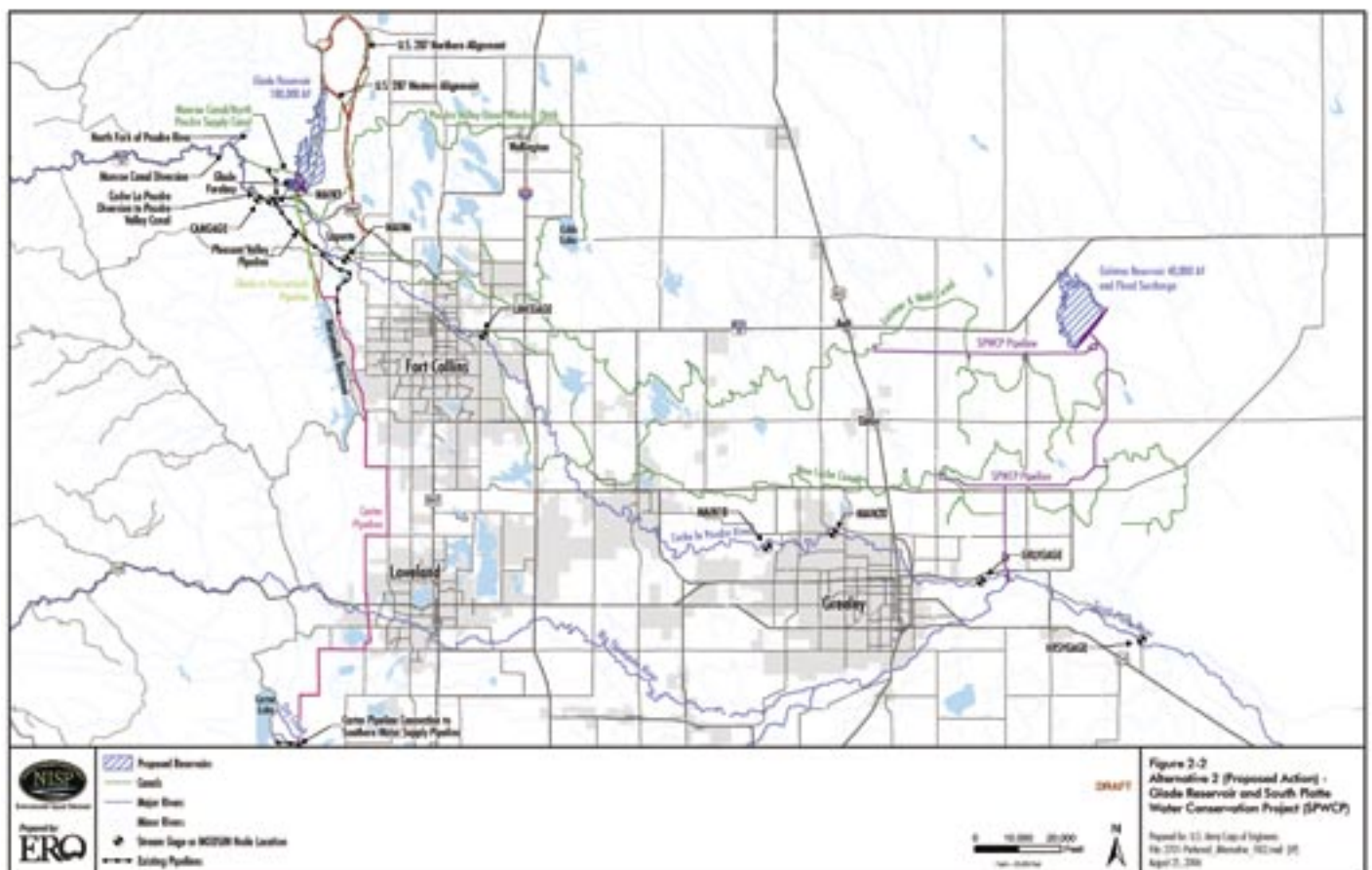
In response to the ever-increasing demand for water in Colorado, water managers are moving forward with projects aimed at developing new water supplies for Denver and the Front Range.

Several of the proposed projects involve billion-dollar schemes to move water across the continental divide, from the Upper Colorado River Basin to the South Platte Basin. While these larger proposals are several years from realization, smaller water projects are moving closer to implementation.

One such project, the Northern Integrated Supply Project (NISP), will provide 16 Front Range cities with 40,000 acre-feet

of new water to meet increased demand over the next 50 years. NISP, coordinated by Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, must undergo an environmental review by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act.

After review, the US Army Corps of Engineers identified three potential alternatives to no-action. Of the three, the 16 NISP participants preferred the Glade




Reservoir and the South Platte Water Conservation Project. The preferred alternative includes building a new reservoir to store water underutilized in the Poudre River, a larger tributary to the South Platte River Basin.

When instream supplies are legally available, NISP will divert water from the Poudre River, near the mouth of Poudre Canyon, into Glade Reservoir, inundating the valley one mile north of highways 287 and 14. NISP's conditional water right for Glade Reservoir will usually be in priority in periods of peak spring run off or large rain events, and will divert a maximum of 1000 cubic-feet per second. Water stored in Glade Reservoir will be delivered to the 16 participants via new pipelines or water exchanges.

In addition to Glade Reservoir, NISP will create Galeton Reservoir, northeast of the city of Greeley. For NISP to take full advantage of Northern's year-round water rights and meet consumptive needs, both reservoirs are necessary. Over the winter and spring, Northern will fill Glade and Galeton Reservoirs with water from both the Poudre and South Platte Rivers. In the summer months, Galeton Reservoir will release water to meet agricultural needs in the South Platte Basin, while Glade

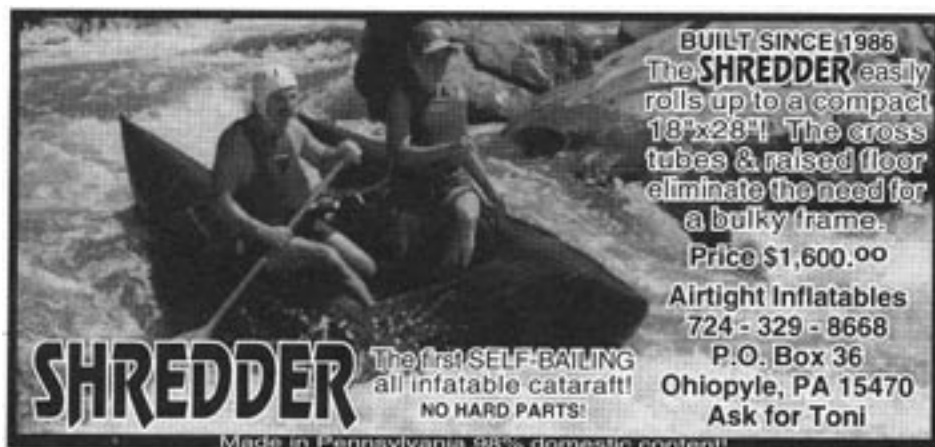
Reservoir pulls the same amount of water from the Poudre River, delivering it for municipal and industrial needs.

Complex water delivery systems can have multiple impacts on recreational and environmental attributes. NISP will certainly impact the Poudre River, as water that historically flowed down the system to points of diversion both upstream and downstream of the city of Fort Collins is diverted into Glade Reservoir. While Northern does not plan on de-watering the Cache La Poudre River, significantly less water will be flowing through the city of Fort Collins. The Poudre River is Colorado's first congressionally designated Wild and Scenic River. Almost 90% of the Poudre River's mainstem, above the mouth of Poudre Canyon, is protected from new development. The Poudre River Canyon is one of Colorado's most popular rivers for private and commercial boating. Impacts to the recreation economy from the Northern Integrate Supply Initiative are speculative at this time.

Late this year, the full Environmental Impact of NISP's Glade Reservoir and South Platte Water Conservation Project will be published for public review. Watch www.americanwhitewater.org for updates and additional information in the coming months. 

The project option preferred by the NISP participants.

photo courtesy of Nicole Seltzer at Northern Colorado Water Conservation District



Stewardship Updates



Marmot Dam Goes BOOM!

By Thomas O'Keefe

July 24th, 2007 was a great day for rivers as we witnessed the beginning of the end for Marmot Dam on the Sandy River, just 40 miles from downtown Portland. While the dam and power plant originally provided electricity for a trolley system, they had outlived their purpose. By this fall, fish and paddlers will have access to a restored river.

I came down from Seattle for the show and brought along Rebecca Sherman, former coordinator for the Hydropower Reform Coalition, Rich Bowers, former Executive Director of American Whitewater and our new coordinator for the Hydropower Reform Coalition, Sam Drevo from eNRG Kayaking, and Matty Moreland, a local American Whitewater volunteer who lives near the Sandy River. A few more paddlers found their way to the show including Nick Jacobs from Alder Creek, Ben Liotta from eNRG kayaking, Dave Hoffman

from eNRG kayaking, and Ferdinand Steinvorth, manufacturer of Blue Pool Paddles, from Costa Rica. Bern Romey and Tim Shibahara were also present.

The utility had limited invitations for the event so it was great to see all the paddlers who had managed to talk, bribe, or sneak their way in. All our friends from the Hydropower Reform Coalition who worked on this project were there too, including folks from American Rivers, Oregon Trout, Trout Unlimited, and WaterWatch of Oregon. It seemed every other group that does river advocacy work was there as well, along with many of our agency partners.

As we arrived, PGE staff led tours of the dam site. One of the most striking images of the day was the Chinook salmon leaping into the air at the base of the dam. It was clear that paddlers weren't the only

ones waiting in anticipation for a dam-free river.

After short remarks by Portland General Electric CEO Peggy Fowler, she waited for the "all clear" and then pushed the plunger to detonate the charge that blasted off the top few feet of the dam.

Cheers went up and the champagne came out—enough for a quick round before security confiscated the bottle—and then we all hustled up to witness the carnage. Within a few moments a line of heavy equipment moved into position and began scooping up the rubble and loading it into a truck. Removal of the 47-foot tall dam will make the Sandy River free-flowing from Mount Hood's glaciers to its mouth at the Columbia River for the first time in 95 years. After more than two decades of waiting to remove half a dozen outdated hydropower dams in the region, removal

Left: Dust and debris fly as explosives are set off on the Marmot Dam and the removal of Marmot Dam is underway.

photo by Associated Press, Don Ryan

of the first was finally underway!

Paddlers owe a debt of gratitude to Keith Jensen who, as former owner of Alder Creek and American Whitewater Regional Coordinator, represented paddling interests throughout the negotiations on this project. We also need to thank PGE, a utility that understands that rivers are a public resource and came to a decision that balances our need for power with the value that free-flowing rivers provide.

Our next project will be to work with the Bureau of Land Management on developing a vision for the future of the Sandy River that preserves the resource value of lands along the river while providing opportunities for river-based recreation. We are seeking local volunteers to help with this effort, so please contact AW if you are interested in helping. www.AmericanWhitewater.org

For more information and to follow the progress of Marmot Dam removal and river restoration check out MarmotDam.com.



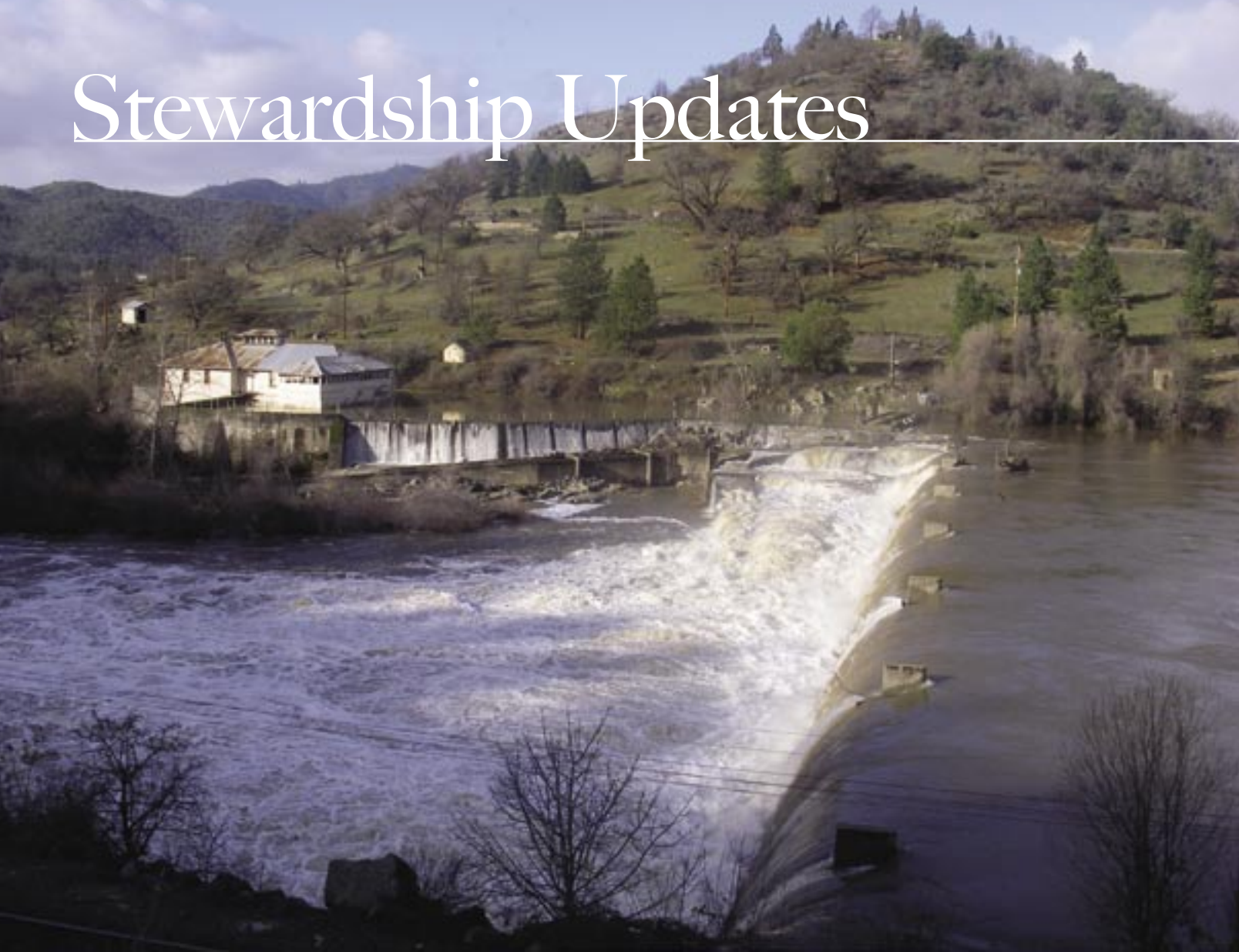
Top: A look at Marmot Dam with the river diverted around one end a few minutes before explosive charges blast off the top off.

Bottom: Heavy equipment moves into position and removal is underway

photos by Thomas O'Keefe



Stewardship Updates



Another Dam on the Hit List

By Thomas O'Keefe

While the Rogue River represents one of the original Wild and Scenic Rivers and remains one of the greatest multi-day boating opportunities in the country, a series of dams upstream have impacted recreational opportunities and disrupted fish passage.

Serious discussions are now underway to examine the future of Gold Ray Dam, a hydropower dam on the Rogue River that has not produced electricity since 1972. The outdated structure is a liability and with work underway to remove Savage Rapids Dam and Gold Hill Dam on the Rogue River, it became a logical step to evaluate the future of Gold Ray Dam. As

reported in a July 20th, 2007 editorial in the *Medford Mail Tribune*: "The Rogue River is a jewel in our midst. Removing a dam that serves no real purpose seems like an obvious step toward making that jewel shine even more brightly."

Local volunteer Bill Cross has stepped up to represent AW in discussions over the fate of Gold Ray Dam and our interest in restoring the Rogue River. [AW](#)

While Gold Ray Dam no longer produces hydropower, it continues to negatively impact fish and represents a barrier to river navigation..

photo by Thomas O'Keefe

Dillsboro Dam Removal

By Kevin Colburn

On Thursday, July 19th, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) released a decision that will allow for the removal of Dillsboro Dam. The 12-foot tall, 310-foot long hydroelectric dam is located on the Tuckasegee River in Western North Carolina, and is a significant barrier to fish, mussels, and other aquatic organisms. It is also a barrier to paddlers on an otherwise popular and accessible Class II river. With this nod of approval from FERC, dam removal activities will begin as early as this January, and should be completed within three years.

The removal of Dillsboro Dam is the result of over three years of collaborative studies and negotiations that addressed all of Duke Power's dams on the Tuckasegee and Nantahala rivers. These negotiations were part of a dam relicensing process that culminated in a settlement agreement, which was signed in the fall of 2003. The removal of Dillsboro Dam is one key part of the comprehensive settlement agreement, which also calls for enhanced dam releases on the Tuckasegee and Nantahala rivers, the creation of new river access sites, and significant riparian land conservation.

This decision comes over a year late. The requested new licenses for the other dams on the Tuckasegee and Nantahala (also late) have not yet been issued by FERC, however, the Dillsboro decision is certainly a good sign that FERC is moving forward with their analysis of

the settlement agreement and the other licenses. Earlier this year, American Whitewater sent FERC a letter stressing the ecological and recreational impacts of their delay, highlighting an apparent miscommunication or standoff between FERC and a state agency that may have been the cause of the delay, and requesting prompt resolution of these issues and prompt action.

American Whitewater staff participated in the three-year negotiations and significant post settlement efforts leading to this decision, and we fully support the decision to remove Dillsboro Dam. We worked closely with the Carolina Canoe Club, Duke Power, other environmental groups, and many other stakeholders in reaching the settlement and are excited to see it being implemented.

The dam removal will:

- Restore upstream access to roughly 10 miles of the Tuckasegee for fish and mussels
- Restore roughly 4000 feet of lakebed to riverine habitat
- Restore critical habitat for the endangered Appalachian Elktoe Mussel
- Provide recreational passage for boaters
- Result in a new park with river access in the Town of Dillsboro

- Expose bedrock shelves that may form small rapids.

American Whitewater has seen countless examples where healthy rivers, healthy communities, and healthy economies go hand in hand. The removal of Dillsboro Dam is good for the river and good for the citizens of Western North Carolina—especially when considered in the context of the landmark settlement agreement that will create public benefits throughout the watershed. Implementing the settlement agreement will protect the quality of life—and way of life—of Western North Carolinians through enhanced public access to healthy rivers for fishing, swimming, hiking, and boating.

This FERC order is a major milestone in our efforts to restore ecological and recreational values to the Headwaters of the Little Tennessee River. American Whitewater would like to thank the many individuals and organizations who worked tirelessly to make this landmark dam removal possible. We would also specifically like to thank our members and several foundations that made our involvement possible. These include the Conservation Alliance, Keen, Mott, Patagonia, and the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundations. www.americanwhitewater.org



Stewardship Updates

Catawba Relicensing

By Maurice Blackburn (Carolina Canoe Club) in cooperation with AW's Kevin Colburn

For paddlers, dams can be both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, dams have covered up many wonderful rapids, which are lost for generations. In addition, many dams dewater river sections, or release water at flows and times that are unpredictable and/or undesirable to paddlers. On the positive side, paddlers have been able to negotiate flow schedules with some dam operators so that they provide recreational opportunities. In those locations, where scheduled recreational releases have been gained, as is the case here on North Carolina's Tuckasegee and Nantahala Rivers, dependable paddling is available throughout an extended season. In some cases, depending on prevailing weather conditions, the paddling season may be longer than would naturally occur, while in other locations the negotiated recreational benefits do not equal those which would have occurred in the absence of the dam.

The purpose of this article is not to debate whether dams are good or bad—that has been debated elsewhere and will probably continue to be debated as long as dams exist. This article describes what has happened in the Catawba/Wateree basin in North and South Carolina and discusses what actions can be taken in similar locations.

Here in the Carolinas, the Catawba/Wateree basin has 13 dams with 11 hydroelectric generating stations. The first dam was built early in the 20th century and the last one was built in 1963. These hydroelectric generating plants are now owned and operated by Duke Energy. The lakes that have been created by these dams do not run directly into the next lake in all cases. In fact, there are five distinct river sections in the basin. It has been possible to paddle four of the five river sections when Duke has been generating. However, hydro generation is primarily used by the power companies for peak loads, which normally means they run for a comparatively short period in the early morning and late

afternoon. Power companies will also release water during periods of heavy rain and shortly thereafter, to control flooding. The river sections can be run at that time, but the increased flows could present problems for inexperienced paddlers. The fifth river section in the basin, and the one of greatest interest to whitewater paddlers, comprises the two bypass sections at Great Falls in South Carolina. These two bypasses have, with the exception of floods and dam leakage, been dewatered for 100 years.

Most corporate-owned hydroelectric dams are licensed and regulated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). All the Catawba/Wateree dams are covered by one license, which expires in 2008. Our legislators, in what some of us cynics might describe as a rare moment of wisdom, directed the FERC, in the mid-80s, to consider not only the power generating side of these projects, but also a wide range of other interests, including the area which affects us most—recreation.

Duke Energy (it was Duke Power then) began its preparation for submitting its license renewal application in 2002 by calling together a large and diverse group of stakeholders to negotiate a mutually agreeable settlement. In all, there were more than 160 individuals representing about 80 organizations. These stakeholders represented federal and state agencies, local governments, municipal water users, homeowner associations, NGO's such as American Whitewater and American Rivers, land conservation groups, environmental groups and recreational interests of various types, and of course Duke Energy. Many of the stakeholders attended in their professional capacity, however, there were a significant number of stakeholders who attended on a voluntary basis.

Because of the size of the project and the large geographical area, the stakeholders were split into four Advisory Groups:

Foothills, covering Lake James, Lake Rhodhiss, Lake Hickory and Lookout Shoals; Metro, covering Lake Norman, Mountain Island Lake and the North Carolina half of Lake Wylie; Piedmont covering the South Carolina half of Lake Wylie, down to Fishing Creek Reservoir; and Lower Catawba, covering Fishing Creek, Great Falls and Cedar Creek Reservoirs and Lake Wateree and the river section below the dam.

Because the basin covers two separate states where different regulations may apply, there were in addition, two separate state teams, which were comprised mainly of federal and state agencies, The Catawba Indian Nation, plus representatives from each geographical Advisory Groups.

All of these teams met once each month (towards the end, sometimes more frequently) and were led by a professional facilitator—Kearns and West.

During this period many technical studies were carried out. From our perspective, the most interesting ones were the comprehensive recreational facilities study and the recreational flow studies in all five river sections, where we ran the rivers at different flow levels. We also studied the effect on lake levels and river flows of various scenarios using a software model designed for the basin.

Sub-committees were set up to analyze the results of all technical studies and prepare presentations to the rest of the stakeholders. To formulate a schedule for recreational flows, we held discussions with many interested parties including local governments, fishermen, state agencies and various paddling interests. We also looked very carefully at the effects of these flows on other people's interests. The selected flows were made so that there would be no adverse effect on lake levels, water supply, or aquatic life, etc.

A major complicating factor in all our

discussions relating to flows—whether for recreation, aquatic habitat or any other purpose—is that flows from individual dams cannot be considered in isolation. What happens with flows out of Wateree, at the bottom end of the basin, has an effect all the way up the top of the basin at Lake James and vice versa.

The Final Agreement (now called the Comprehensive Relicensing Agreement) was signed by 82% of the participating groups, in July of 2006. Duke submitted their license application to FERC on August 29 2006.

The Final Agreement includes the following recreational flows:

Bridgewater, below Lake James – approximately 85 days per year. This section has several Class II rapids in the first seven miles below the Powerhouse, including some small play waves, but mostly it is moving flatwater with Class I riffles and small waves.

Oxford below Lake Hickory – approximately 50 days per year. This section is mostly moving flat water with Class I riffles.

Fort Mill below Lake Wylie – approximately 70 days per year. The section below Fort Mill is mostly Class I riffles and small waves. The rapid below Sugar Creek is Class II, if run on river left, and probably a long Class I if run on river right. The mile or so of rapids at Landsford Canal State Park, famous for its magnificent spider lilies, is fairly continuous Class I to II.

Great Falls Bypasses – 28 days per year on the short bypass and 20 days per year on the long bypass. The short bypass has excellent Class III rapids with some great surfing waves and holes. The long bypass is Class II and Class II+. The scenery includes hilly islands, large boulders, spanish moss, and lots of birds and wildlife. It is truly a special place, which will soon be a new state park, based on the relicensing agreement.

Below Lake Wateree – approximately 45 days per year. The rapid to the left of the Island about two miles below the Wateree Powerhouse is Class II. To the right of the island it is Class I. Most of the trip is moving flatwater.

As described previously, these flows have to be compatible with many other interests. A significant factor is drought. The Final Agreement contains a section dealing with



Motty and Maurice Blackburn on the Catawba below Lake Wylie Dam.

photo by Jack Horan

drought conditions. This is known as the Low Inflow Protocol. This Protocol sets out actions to be taken to conserve water under various degrees of drought. For example, in the early stages of drought Duke is limited in their generating ability. Recreational flows are cut back and, as drought conditions worsen, recreational flows are suspended. The parameters for defining the degree of drought are not arbitrary, but are spelled out clearly in the Agreement.


In addition to the recreational flows, we also negotiated successfully for new canoe/kayak access areas on the various river sections. The Agreement also includes a much-improved Public Information System. This Public Information System, which will be available by phone and Internet, will include a wide variety of information. For paddlers, in addition to the regular recreational schedules being posted, Duke will also give projected generating schedules with three days notice at Bridgewater and two days notice at the other locations. The Public Information System will also show any flow cut backs required by drought conditions.

The Agreement does not require implementation prior to the issue of the new license. We have, however, negotiated with Duke for a partial early start to these recreational flows for 2007.

The Final Agreement contains many other negotiated features and facilities, such as land conservation, water quality improvements, minimum flows to improve aquatic habitat, trails, etc., but I have concentrated here on those areas of particular interest to paddlers.

Full details can be found on the Duke Energy Web Site at: http://www.dukeenergy.com/pdfs/comp_relicensing_agreement.pdf

What are the lessons to be learned here? There is a process to negotiate for recreational flows from hydroelectric dams when their licenses are up for renewal. FERC requires that recreational requirements be given full consideration. It will not happen to your satisfaction, however, if you do not participate in the process. We were fortunate that Duke Energy chose the consultative process in the preparation of their license application. If it had not been for the very active participation of American Whitewater (represented by Kevin Colburn and Andrew Lazenby) and Carolina Canoe Club (represented by Bob Benner, Dennis Huntley, my wife and me), I am convinced that the end result would have been nowhere near as good as it is. I was fortunate that, being retired, I had time to attend a multitude of Advisory Group and state meetings as well as many sub-committee meetings.

If your local hydroelectric dam is operating under a FERC license and is not up for renewal in the near future, you can always petition FERC for recreational releases. It will not be an easy process, but that is no reason for not trying. Remember, for many paddlers, the difference between a “good” dam and a “bad” one is whether or not it releases boatable flows. You can help make that difference. 

Women & Whitewater

My Metaphorical River

By Sarah Branigan

My recent introduction to whitewater paddling happened at what could be deemed an appropriate time of my life. I'm 27. This past year I began yet another new job, moved to yet another new town in another new state and generally felt that my life was moving me along without my consent, against my will, and all too swiftly. Most close friends and family members prefer to point out that I am, in fact, the only one responsible for continuously jumping into the metaphorical deep end. Nevertheless, over the past year there have been months at a time when I've wished my daily life resembled something more like a parking lot rather than a free-flowing river.

The thing about being caught in a current is that, if you don't know how to maneuver yourself in it, you will constantly feel that

you are struggling, fighting and failing to make what you want to happen a reality and you may even spend the entire time frightened and unsure.

This is a story of metaphors.

Three weeks after I began this aforementioned new life, I took a paddling trip with an old friend (now a best friend) from my new town. We went to Lehighton, Pennsylvania, where we planned to spend the weekend on the Lehigh River with my mom's cousin Jerry, who runs Northeast Pennsylvania Kayak School. I had spent some time during the year prior on the Haw River in the Piedmont of North Carolina, sitting in the front of a canoe, paddling when I was told to and secretly craving the autonomy of a kayak. Moving to a city with a whitewater river as its transverse seemed like a good-enough reason to pursue this felt need for independence in boating. Plus, my cousin owns a kayak school—it's a no-brainer.

The autumn is my favorite time of the year—again, a metaphor for all things beginning and ending—and the drive through the mid-Atlantic was nice, relaxing and beautiful. That is, until we

woke up this early October Saturday morning and the temperature read 45 degrees and it was overcast and drizzling. Crap.

Not exactly ideal conditions for a first-timer to get the basic instruction on rolling and paddling in a squirrely, little playboat, but honestly, I'm smart enough to know there's not a lot of room for high maintenance women in paddling. Jerry greeted us with enthusiasm and plenty of warm gear and we set off in our wetsuits, fleece layers, drytops and gloves for kayak school on the lake.

This spring, I attended an institute on teaching and learning at my university, and as participants we were asked to think of and describe a significant learning experience. I wrote about this first day on the river and learning to roll my kayak. In order to learn something new and remember it for a long time, it must make deep connections within the brain. There are certain factors that aid in making this learning deep and significant. This day was certainly unforgettable. We were freezing. A close family member, who I literally trust with my life, and who was and is thrilled to have another boater in the family, acted as my teacher. I spent the day learning next to and from a best friend, who is also a woman. Most of my paddling or other "outdoorsy" experiences have happened because of a boyfriend and through his guidance. All of these contributing factors created an emotional response to the very act of kayaking. It was a shared experience with friends and family set amidst stressful weather and physical conditions. It's the "I worked too hard to give up now" mentality that still, months later, keeps me goal oriented with regards to my kayaking.

This trip also caused me to experience an overwhelming sense of sovereignty over my own life as a (freshly single) woman and freedom from the need for permission from men.

Rolling a kayak is essentially learning to save your own skin; self-preservation in its

Sarah and Erin on the Lehigh River

photo by Tim Schwartz



most basic form. Something bad happens; you correct it and move on. The better you get at correcting, the more you let the river take you, the more you can belong to it.

Fear and trepidation have prevented my full belonging to any river as of yet. I'm getting there though. It's a process.

I got my roll that first day, and I'm told that it's a pretty one. We went home from the lake, shivering, to bowls of chili and cornbread, jalapeno poppers and plenty of India Pale Ale. We played guitar then eventually fell asleep completely worn. The next morning, it was sunny so we got right on the river. Well, needless to say, I flipped in whitewater, attempted a combat roll, failed the combat roll, pulled my skirt. I was OK. There were rescuers. But I found out the hard way; a roll on flatwater just ain't the same as one in the rapids.

I've realized that whitewater kayakers tend to be a little bit different than most folk. What sort of people choose danger over safety? What kind of people strap themselves into tiny little boats that flip over easily, where there could be hidden rocks waiting to gouge an eye or slam into a shoulder? Do these people have a few too many loose screws? Am I becoming one of these people?

Now back to the metaphor: This year, in my actual life, there have undeniably been hidden rocks and the need for a solid combat roll. But, I hadn't practiced enough, not for what came my way. I wasn't ready or prepared or willing to accept the consequences of choosing a whitewater way of living. So I pulled my skirt. Several times.

Thankfully, there were rescuers.

This year I have experienced unending self-questioning. Why am I continuing to choose the whitewater over the still waters or an even more secure and reliable place, like shore? What is it about the hidden dangers that I am drawn to? Why can't I just be like normal girls and go shopping and read magazines about celebrity gossip?

Even if I wanted to be a "normal" girl, it would never happen. I have never been and never will be content in a flatwater life. I think that is why I am drawn to the river and to river folk. They share this mentality of wanting perpetual motion toward something bigger, toward the sea perhaps. Living near a river, it's hard to ignore the call it sends out (that darn river). "Come on Girl," it says. "Jump on in" (my river has a southern accent). Truth is, I don't want the river to leave me alone.


Learning a river is a lot like starting a new relationship. No wonder I get so frightened about the possible outcomes of paddling these waters; I fear the painful and sometimes disastrous consequences I have experienced in the other realm.

Good news is, the river will always be there and has always been there. And I'm learning to love it. More importantly, I'm learning to love myself when I'm a part of it. It isn't constant in the way some would want, but it is constantly flowing. The level changes, the shape changes, the look and feel changes as it moves along, as water rains in or evaporates out.

When I'm on the river, if I need to rest, there will be an eddy. If I lose my ability to roll my boat, there are flat places to practice, and practice and practice. As it turns out, the preparation is what was missing from my year. We all need the chance to fail in a safe environment, with a patient teacher. Pulling your skirt in whitewater builds character, but who wants character when you can have a practiced and pretty roll instead? A reliable combat roll is the goal.

The James River could be called a somewhat damaged and dirty river. Luckily, there is a cleanup effort in place. My river and I share in our imperfections and in our improvement plans. We deserve each other right now. I am learning to stop fighting to get back upstream or to get out of the water altogether or to get anywhere with the illusion of safety. I am learning to let the rivers take me and teach me with or without the help or encouragement of

a man. I am learning my own strength and force of will. I am building character with every single skirt pull.

I am grateful for the time and space to practice, and practice and practice the rolling. I am grateful for my teachers and my rescuers. I am grateful for the perpetual motion. I am grateful for my metaphorical river. 



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A Female Paddler's Observations From a Decade of Paddling on Both Coasts

By Martha Herzog

Editor's Note: Back in early July, when we received this piece, we knew that it would be unique, if nothing else—not because we knew or suspected anything about Martha Herzog as a paddler or a woman, but because it came in an e-mail prefaced by this: "Could you let me know if you receive this? I am sending it from a research vessel in SE Alaska and our satellite/internet goes out frequently." Certainly, this represents one of the first times in American Whitewater's long and distinguished history that it has received content directly from an ocean-going ship and we thank Martha for helping us accomplish this remarkable feat.

Last year, at a restaurant after a great day of paddling the Tumwater section of the Wenatchee River (WA), I had a discussion with my boating companions. There were two females at this table out of 10 and we talked about the idea of two people on a weekend paddling road trip. One of the two people on this hypothetical road trip was an "attached" female and the other was an "unattached" male. About half of the males thought it was inappropriate because the only reason they would ask a female on a paddling road trip wasn't to paddle but because they had an interest in her. It was a shocking moment for me. What? Where was the commonality of sharing a love for an activity? One male boater went as far to say that if I had a paddling significant other, that he would stop calling me to boat and call my significant other instead because it would be more appropriate. I sat there dumbfounded, not knowing what to say. Why couldn't he see past my gender and be able to see me as a paddler? Did he not respect my paddling skill? I had paddled stuff that was just as difficult—and some more so—than he had.

At the end of the conversation I asked the group, "Well, what about females like me? What about those of us who really just want to paddle and find some good buddies to share the rivers with? What about someone who want to travel to see good water and good places?" They all shook their heads and finally agreed that I was between a rock and a hard place. "This couldn't be true," I said to myself. Not long after my move to Washington, I started to wonder if many of my road trips here would be solo because of this strange perception.

Things seemed to work differently in the mid-Atlantic states, where I found a love for kayaking and boated for seven years. Was it because the rivers were farther from the metropolitan areas, necessitating carpooling and camping? Was it that the opinion of and perception of women differed? Was it because there were many more female paddlers out East?


My experiences on east and west coast rivers sometimes differed too. Recently while running a drop with not as much grace as I could have, a male paddler pulled up to me in the eddy below and asked, "were you scared?"

"Huh?" Did I look shaken when I didn't feel shaken? If I were scared I wouldn't have run the rapid. I wondered if he would have asked a male paddler the same question?

On a different trip a different male paddler asked, "are you okay" after I had run a clean line in an intimidating-looking drop that I didn't think was that difficult. What in the world was he talking about? Did I seem off? Sure, I had my bad days when I struggled to maintain composure, hoping

that no one would notice, but these were not those days. Most of those bad days didn't have to do with the difficulty of the run itself, but external things I couldn't let go of and brought onto the river. I truly appreciated the concern that was shown in those cases, but I didn't want extra or special attention because of my gender.

I freely admit that I have been wigged-out on some of the hikes to and from rivers. Many of my hikes with a boat have been far scarier than drops I have run. I fear the prospect of wiping out, injuring myself, and losing my boat, watching it scream down the hill into someone below or into the river. I have wiped out, held onto my boat, only to have it keep dragging me downhill. Carrying a boat that weighs more than 1/3 of my own body weight is difficult. I don't expect help. I don't ask for help. I don't want help because of my gender. If someone asks if they can help, sometimes I'll take it, especially if I'm the smallest in the group and having difficulty. In those cases I truly appreciate it. I stand in awe of my paddling buddies who simply throw their creek boats on their car. I wish I were that strong.

So here it is, my thanks to all those (male and female) over the years who saw me as paddler first (I think you know who you all are). I am grateful to have found you. Thank you for sincerely encouraging me to run that hard drop, for giving me props for stomping that run, for telling me I'll get it next time when I didn't hit the absolute perfect line. Thank you for wanting the same things that I do, for wanting paddling buddies who enjoy the same type of runs and who look out for each other on the river. I can't wait to paddle with you and share that delicious beer at the take-out again. 

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effort is his tireless lobbying of the City Council for a more bike friendly city. Because bicyclists are everyday people too.



Our friend Andy Thornley, Program Director of the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition does just that. On his suspension-less, everyday commuter, in spandex-less,

everyday clothes. Over the hills, potholes and fog of San Francisco. Even on moving day. But Andy's true Herculean

INTERVIEW BY CLAY WRIGHT

ruthgordon

so how does it feel
to be world champion?



Cleaning it up at Skook

photo by Klaas van Lil

“Tanya Shuman’s got quite the Canadian fan-club,” one scribe was saying as a cute blonde in a yellow boat took the wave with an enormous cheer from the crowd. “And when did she switch to Jackson Kayaks?”

“She does, but she didn’t,” I answer.

“That’s Ruth Gordon.”

“Who?” Ruth launches on her first pass and we start scoring ... big left airblunt, big Pan-am left, clean a irblunt left

I bet he’ll remember her name next round.



Thirty-year-old Gordon has been teaching and competing for nearly 10 years. She’s been on the podium regularly, organized U.S. and Canadian Team Trials, and worked with Liquid Skills on the Ottawa and KayakFu in Chile. She’s appeared in the instructional videos of “Girls at Play,” Ken Whiting’s Heliconia Press, and EJ’s Plaboating Series. She’s also been mistaken for other sponsored women, like Tanya and Mariann Saether. Yesterday she was best known for launching a monster blunt in Lyon, for being the first woman to flatwater loop, a Canadian National Champ, and for her stylish finesse carving up most any wave. But today she’s outscoring both Tanya and Mariann, as well as the Australian powerhouse Tanya Faux and the UK’s finesse queen, Fiona Jarvie. Today we’re at the finals of the World Freestyle Kayak Championships on the Ottawa’s infamous Buseater Wave, as Ruth adds “World Champion” to her growing list of accomplishments.

Here’s a little bit more about a girl you may not have heard of but probably will for a long time to come.

About Miss Gordon

How long have you been kayaking?

Twelve years.

How did you get into the sport?

I started working at Wilderness Tours on the Ottawa River as a summer job during high school.

Tell us a bit about your childhood and how it has prepared you for your current situation.

The year before I was born my parents opened a general store in a very small community in the heart of the Ottawa Valley. As soon as I could see over the counter I was expected to work in the store. From loading the shelves and the pop cooler to scooping ice cream

and using the cash register, everyone in the family was required to help. This community also provided loads of fun. We had an amazing outdoor playground, tree climbing and swimming in the summer and skiing and ice skating in the winter. Growing up in these surroundings created two basic values that carry through today: 1) hard work really does pay off, and 2) there is a world of adventure just outside your door.

What has kept you in the sport so long?

The drive to explore my limits: new rivers, new lines, new tricks. I’m constantly pushing my boundaries and learning how to deal with surprises. Kayaking is my expression.

Are you primarily a competition kayaker or are you focused on other aspects as well?

Recently I put all my energy into freestyle kayaking with the goal of winning the Worlds. With that came a lot of competition and preparation to be able to perform under pressure. My true love is just kayaking. Heck, I even like paddling around in a rec kayak. After so much focus on freestyle, I’m really excited about running some new rivers and paddling without purpose.

I remember you once organized Team Trials on the Ottawa. How did that affect your paddling and your plans?

Ken Whiting and I had always joked that we would work well together ... then came the brainchild, The Liquid Skills Showdown. Nine days of kayaking, the Showdown was the Canadian and U.S. team trials, as well as a boater cross and big hole surf event. After surviving that event together, it was no surprise that I soon became the first employee of Ken’s company, The Heliconia Press. And although we were cooped up in an office together all day, it was natural that we would take a midday break and go kayaking. Ken helped me create a routine for on-water and dryland, marking my first real experience with training.

You’ve also been closely involved with Ken Whiting’s guide series and various other

Happy times in Switzerland

photo by Marko Shapiro



media projects. Tell us a little about what you've done and about any future projects you have.

Over the years I've learned a lot from Ken. He's a very determined, hardworking guy. I've worked on many projects with his Heliconia Press: *The Ultimate Guide to Playboating*, *bEast* extreme video, and even canoeing and rec boating instructionals. I'd say that's the beauty of a small company – you get to stick your finger in a little bit of everything. Watching the creation of so many great products I'm certainly keen to work on something of my own in the future. Stay tuned.

Paddling

Physical stats?

I weigh 130 and am kinda short for 5'3"

Paddle length and feather angle?
190, 0 degree

What are your favorite kayaking spots and why?

Playspot - Minibus for its steep green face and big air opportunities
River Run - The Futaleufu since it just keeps going and going
Destination - The White Nile for its plethora of big water play
Waterfall - Kaituna; it's been awhile but still holds up, and such a great river.

Hardest rapid ever run, and how did it go?

Most recently, I ran the Nile's Dead Dutchman and Itunda - even managed to keep my hair dry :)

Any paddling goals outside playboating?

I want to learn how to huck. That is, I want to be able to comfortably run waterfalls and challenge my Class V skills.

Hardest river you've run and how did it go?

Recently in Switzerland I had a chance to run the White Lütschine. It was a good test of my abilities after spending most of the last year in a playboat. I was worried about the waterfall but in the end that was probably the place on the river where I had the best line.

3 rapids/ rivers / places you want to challenge yourself in the future

1. The Zambezi
2. Anything in California - that is a playground I haven't yet tapped into
3. Anything in BC - another creeking playground

AW

Quick - when I say American Whitewater, you say ...

Save the rivers

Are you a member and why?

#60436. "Be the change you want to see in the world"

What do Canadians think of AW? How do you benefit and is there a Canadian version?

The beauty of AW is that they are setting the standards for access/conservation all over the world. Unfortunately we Canadians don't have an equivalent to AW; each province has a governing whitewater

body that tackles similar issues, but there is not one central organization. In recent years, AW has been actively helping us, your northern neighbors.

Women

Who are your favorite women to paddle with and why?

Tanya, Tanya and Nikki. There is something very unique and inspiring about each of these women. Tanya Shuman is smiling and positive and we always have fun on the water. Tanya Faux is strong and continues to push the limits of what is possible for women in freestyle kayaking. Nikki Kelly is amazing on any river. She paddles lines and reads water like no one else I know.

Who are the women pushing you the hardest and how?

In freestyle: Tanya Faux is a competitor and when we paddle we play hard. In creeking: Nikki Kelly is a calm, cool leader. Each time I'm taken under her wing I walk away a better paddler.

Other women in the sport you have appreciation and respect for?

Mariann Saether for hucking, hucking,

hucking. Anna Levesques for paddling with more women each year than anyone else I know. Emily Jackson for being 17 and kicking butt. And, of course, Kristine Jackson for being the backbone of Jackson Kayak.

How does having to paddle mostly with men affect your performance/learning/confidence?

I've had an even combination of male and female influences in my paddling career. From men I am happy to see the cutting edge of the sport and have them push me to try the same. Some of these men provide invaluable instruction and support. On the other hand, women have shown me finesse, helped me hone my personal style and provided me a fun paddling environment. I wouldn't say I prefer paddling with women, but they certainly keep the eddy entertaining!

ETC

How is being a Canadian on tour different from being American?

The only difference in America is that at the end of the trip my drive home is considerably longer. Oh, and there's no

stopping for poutine. In Europe, sorry folks, but they think of Canadians as peace keepers.

Do you have any plans to use your Gold Medal to further your career or launch into some new project with your new credibility?

Stay tuned.

Where are you and what's your next destination?

Driving across Canada from the Ottawa to British Columbia for more playboating, coaching, and maybe even some hucking.

If you could make one small change in your life for the environment what would it be?

Drive a more fuel efficient car - biodiesel, hybrid, what have you.

What do you want to be doing in 5 years?

Continuing to live life to the fullest; building a house, enjoying other countries, paddle, paddle, paddle.

Thanks Ruth! We'll look forwards to hearing about your next project or adventure on www.ruthgordon.ca or www.riverangels.com. 



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The Story of a Woman Behind the Oars

By Shelly JoAnne Chambers Becker

I've been whitewater boating for most of my adult life. I started out in a hardshell kayak but ultimately ended up choosing a cataraft as my boat of choice. I spent my first years enjoying our local Class III-IV runs with the occasional Class V and as time went on I focused on improving my skills and running more and more difficult rivers.

One of the things that makes catboating Class V especially challenging is that you can't quickly roll them like you can a kayak. Re-flipping a cataraft involves balancing on a slippery tube while going through turbulent water, pulling the boat back over with a flip line, climbing back

on and often times locating and re-setting oars that are no longer in the oarlocks. There is a real risk of becoming separated from the boat both during the initial flip and the recovery effort. Compounding the issue is the fact that most catarafts weigh between 160 and 200 lbs. Being big and tall is a huge advantage when trying to pull the boat back over. If you are short and light, the laws of physics are pretty much stacked against you.

I am about 5' 2", well into the "short and light" category. When I first got my cataraft there was no way I could re-flip it by myself, and although it wasn't an ideal situation, most of the rivers I was running had decent recovery below major rapids and it was possible to push an upside down boat over to shore. I also developed a knack for quick high siding and climbing around the boat, which is an extremely useful technique for preventing flips.

Additionally, I deemed it wise to just stay out of large boat-flipping holes whenever possible.

Still, I didn't like being the only person in our group of boaters who couldn't re-flip their cat and self-rescue. At this point I had two options: 1) Get a smaller lighter catboat or 2) Get better and stronger. To me, a smaller boat seemed like it would be upside down a lot more and I was wanting to run bigger rivers so I stuck with my 14' Ocelot. Thus began my love/hate relationship with the gym. I figured if I could pull down 75% more than I weigh

Shelley Becker on Idaho's infamous North Fork Payette.

photo by Roger Smith



then, in theory I could pull a boat over that weighed almost twice as much as me. I also began working a lot on my technique and was hoping that between the two of these things I would be able to pull my cat over. I worked hard for several months and one day it finally paid off—I was finally able to self rescue and to celebrate. I promptly ran a huge hole on a local run that is normally avoided, at about 7500 cfs. My boat immediately launched out of the water into a spectacular back flip but I stayed with it and did my first self-rescue although it was very slow and not pretty at all. I knew I still had a lot of work to do, but at least it was a start.

One day I got invited in a Grand Canyon trip. I knew that an overloaded 14' boat would probably not be very fun to row in big water and that is when my 16' Aire Jaguarundi came into my life. The first day out with my new Jag on the Lochsa at high water it became clear that the boat was running me down the river and not the other way around. It felt like I was rowing the Queen Mary and I was getting turned sideways way more than I wanted to. Day two almost resulted in a trip to the hospital after I took an oar in the face but we determined that my nose probably was not broken, so I continued downstream. Even though I quickly realized that this new boat came with a learning curve I also realized the kind of water this boat was capable of running—I just needed to get better at rowing it.

I stepped up my workout routine at the gym. My Jag weighs about 215 lbs rigged out for a day trip. Not only did I need to be able to row it well, but I also had to be able to carry/drag it over rocks. Little by little I got better and ran my Jag on almost everything that was Class IV or harder. This included steep technical runs as well as big water. I was subjected to all kinds of friendly joking about going creek boating with a 16' cat. I have to admit, it WAS challenging. Not only did I have a long boat but it also had 10' oars, which could be problematic on tight creeks. You don't have the luxury of making last minute adjustments with a big boat like you can with a little boat.

I was getting on harder rivers, running hard rivers at higher levels and learning a lot about rowing a big boat. The one thing that I had to give up, however, when switching to the bigger boat was the ability to re-flip. My Jag is at least 30 lbs heavier and just plain bigger than my Ocelot. This was something that always bothered me and made me feel like a liability on Class V runs, even though I was told that there are a lot of places on these rivers where nobody is going to be able to re-flip their cat—basically there are places where being upside down is not an option. I was adamant about telling people not to put themselves at risk trying to help me if I flip. I boat with my husband a lot and it always worried me thinking about what he might do trying to help me if I got into trouble. Meanwhile, I decided to try to do what in my mind was impossible: figure out how to self-rescue my Jag. More time at the gym and more time at the lake later, one day I did do it and after some practice could reliably re-flip about 85% of the time (not perfect but I'll take it).

By this time I had decided that I really wanted to run top to bottom on the North Fork of the Payette and to try some of the truly expert level, cutting edge catboat runs in the Northwest. It was also about this time that cataraft design was changing to where the tips of the boat were radically turned up. This basically allows a smaller boat to take on things as well as a traditional style boat that is 2' longer. When I ran the North Fork of the Payette I took my Jag but ended up running a new style prototype Aire boat because it was so much more responsive. Over the next several months I had the good fortune of being able to try several new "kick" style catboats and eventually bought a 12.6' boat that I named "Catalina." This boat was 3.5' shorter and about 40 lbs lighter than my Jag, which meant it was easy to re-flip and a lot lighter to carry.

This past spring we ran several rivers that have only been catarafted a few times. Some of these were wilderness Class V runs, like the Middle Fork of the Feather in California. Along with a lot of Class V whitewater, many of these runs have




The author catarafting Icicle Creek.

photo by Kalinah Krajack

serious portages and/or long hikes into or out of the river. Although Catalina is much lighter than what I had been used to, hiking in two miles to Giant Gap is still a lot of work in a cataraft. Portages that take 15-20 minutes in a kayak can take upwards of three hours for catarafts. There are good reasons why catboats don't run rivers like these on a regular basis.

During all of these trips I was the only girl and had never thought about it much except during times when we had to carry the boats. It was a lot of hard work for everyone and I didn't want anybody to have to do more than their share to help me. Of course by the time our travels were over I had observed several things that underscore the difference between men and women on road trips:

- a) Somehow the groover gets closer and closer to the kitchen area.
- b) I do not know what colors will be in style this fall, but know all about the advantages and disadvantages of a diesel engine.
- c) Spam is not part of any food group that I am aware of.
- d) Turning wetsuit booties inside out is not exactly the same as actually washing them. 



The Sands of Time All Women's Trip

By Devon Barker

I have worked as a commercial river guide for 18 seasons after growing up as an outfitter's daughter. My whole life, my family worked to protect the Salmon River. They fought to keep it free flowing and to keep additional dams from being built on its sister river, the Snake, by starting the Hells Canyon Preservation Council. The Salmon is soft, not surly. It is home to fish who rely its waters to swim some 420 miles from their mountain streams in Idaho to the ocean and back to spawn. It is the life force held within this river that offered something special to each of us in my family.

As a child I witnessed my mother's love of the river through her unofficial women's

river retreats on the Lower Salmon. After the first night of a trip, my mom and her girlfriends would wave good-bye to the rest of the group, staying at the beach until the next trip returned, three days later. I always begged to stay but my dad and brothers told me I would have to wait until I was older.

When I was a little older, I found my niche in the company by guiding women's trips. The evolution was slow, beginning with my mother's and my close friends, lots of river ritas (margaritas river style) and a little sun bathing in the secluded sections of the Lower Salmon River Canyon. These trips were always empowering as women

Enjoying each other on the first day of our trip.

photo by Megan Fitzmaurice

enjoying what is typically a man's realm—survival in the wilderness.

This summer one of our women's trips began somewhat the same way. With three of my best friends as guides, Allegra, Martha, and Megan; my mother, Mary; and Allegra's mother, Deanna, as our yoga and meditation instructor, we launched for a late July trip. We ate lunch on an expansive sandy beach with our legs dangling in the free-flowing water of the Salmon River. With the sand between our toes, I realized our ages ranged from 21 to 70 years of age. Forty-nine years of life spread out among us, and yet the river still holds something for each of us. Some of us

women & WHITEWATER

were charging down the river with paddles in our hands while others simply held on as the raft approached the rapids. We all floated easy rapids in our life jackets and basked in the sun.

Morning meditation and yoga held in the early light gave each of us time to reflect on our own lives. I grew up on the Salmon and sharing it with others is always a treat. I know where all the good jumping rocks are, shade trees, Nez Perce caves, and Chinese dwellings, but what I reflected on the most was the common joy anyone can find on the river at any age.

This retreat was more about each person's personal reflections and less about the typical raft guiding and historical hikes. Marion was seventy and enjoyed sleeping out each night under the stars. Stefani loved early morning hikes, and Megan, her early morning swims. My mother, the one who taught me how to play, enjoyed slow mornings drinking tea while still in her sleeping bag. I would sit with her in the mornings, my Lab, Ally, curled up between us remembering all the trips on the river. Is this how she started her mornings on those early women's river retreats?

We had extreme temperatures, tons of swimming, laughing, meals and a few river rits. Our last day was the hottest day I can remember. The sun scorched us and the canyon retained its heat until late in the evening. Our final evening, with the dishes done, we all joined for a gift exchange. I got a thinly wrapped package and found this poem inside:

*Women are cool
Women are strong
Women can paddle all day long*

*The rapids they swirl
The rapids they curl
And make us all feel like little girls*

*This has been a rockin' vacation
Every day starts with meditation*

*We're catered
We're coddled
And our awesome guides then take their*

rippin' throttles


*The overhead sun blazes
While the icy bevvies offer a happy haze*

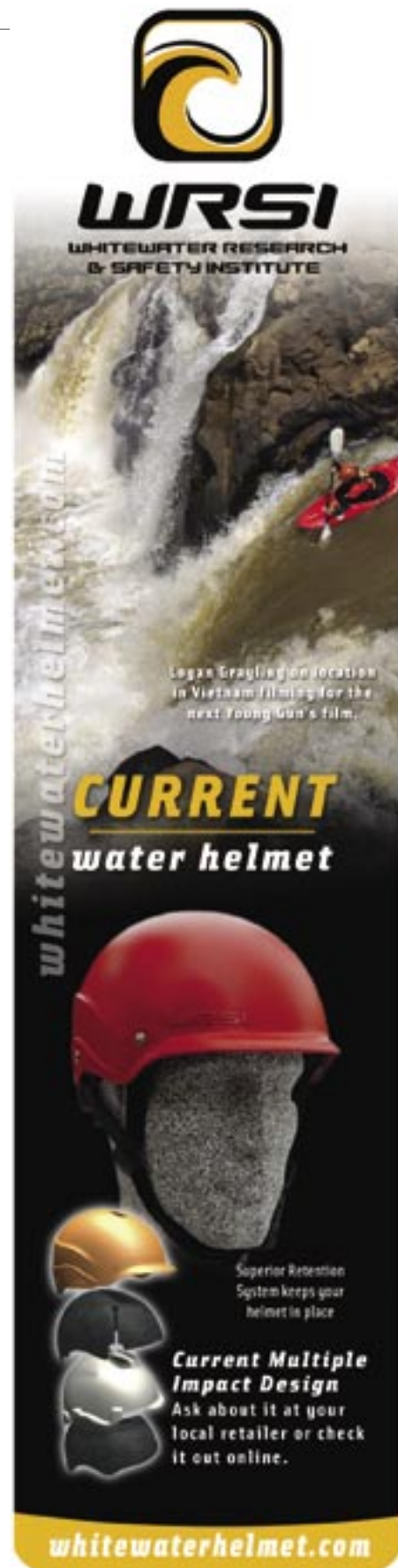
*Then our tireless guides fill our tanks
And Deanna fills our spirit banks
It's time for a big thanks!*

*Let's lift a glass and cheers
Cause this all-chick, trickle trip is in the
memory bank for years!*

Stefani, July 23, 2006

At our last morning meditation, we each brought a rock we had found along our way and shared our favorite moment of the trip, passing our rock around for the others to see. As each person shared her favorite moment, I learned a little more about my purpose as a guide. Sometimes it might be a challenge line in a rapid, but most of the time it was the quiet moments shared with the women on the trip, deep within the Salmon River Gorge.

Having this diverse group made me realize that enjoying the river is something I will always do. I may not be rowing a raft or leading a group of kayakers down the rapids, but you can bet I will be holding on to that lifeline as we enter the rapids. 



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The Female Perspective

By Janet Russell

Although I grew up in Montana enjoying lakes, rivers, hiking, biking and fishing, I never experienced the sheer energy of the water and the freedom of exploration until I was introduced to kayaking.

Thankfully my boyfriend, Andy, was a patient first instructor. People teased that I was testing the limits of our relationship in those early days. On one of our first road trips to the McKenzie River, I paddled into an eddy, up over his boat and life vest, and broke his ribs. We continue boating together, but now he gives me more room in the eddy. I will be forever grateful for Andy's willingness to share his love of the sport with me.

I have been really lucky to boat with some awesome paddlers. Tarkio's team, Willie Kern and Land Heflin, have taught me to take a deep breath, look around and see the beauty of the place. Otter Bar's team, Jason Arbetter and Peter Kettering, helped me focus on hitting eddies

precisely. I gained a lot of confidence from those drills. Mary and Phil DeRiemer have an uncanny ability to break things down to a simple formula that finally makes sense.

Although I have one gal friend that paddles, I do spend most of my river time with guys. I realize I approach boating totally differently than they do. For one, most gals have less muscle mass. To compensate for that, one of the best things I did was find a boat that fits really well. When I moved into my new boat, my skill level skyrocketed. It fits me like a glove. I can get my hands out of the water and nail my roll. It has good hull speed and I feel in control.

Secondly, I deal with my fear in a different way. I know guys get that adrenaline feeling, also, but they seem quicker to move beyond the fear, to commit and go. I need more time to analyze, to get my fear under control so I can go out there and push my limits on harder whitewater.

I am able to advance my skills best when kayaking on familiar runs. Some of the guys have said, "Gosh, with all the travel


The author enjoying a day on the river.

photo by Andy Bright

you do, you must be bored on your local Spokane River." My response is "never." Knowing my local Spokane River run, I can relax and I use my energy to hone my skills, instead of worrying about what is coming around the corner.

Finally, and most importantly, style and color matter! Flower and poodle stickers on my boat and paddle are a must. The color of my helmet (sparkly blue and pink) and drytop add a feminine flair.

I am proud that I am a gal who is in her 40s, out exploring the great outdoors. I wouldn't be enjoying life like I am without the guys in my life. I really appreciate the high fives, advice, and their help on and off the water.

Hope to see you on the water soon. 

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Mother's Day on the Selway

By Megi Morishita

To make a long story short, while helping out with an American Whitewater fundraising event in Portland, I was nominated as AW volunteer of the month and invited on trips to Idaho's Selway and Middle Fork Salmon Rivers. And so it began

Jennie Goldberg (AW board member) was trying to organize an all-women's trip on the Selway for Mother's Day weekend. Jennie is hardcore. She has probably paddled more rivers around the country than anyone I know and has an impressive repertoire of Class V runs under her belt. Her favorite weekend pastime is to "double dip" (run two new rivers in one day).

She sent out an invitation to her female friends to run the Selway but wasn't getting many bites because the Selway was running pretty high, Idaho is pretty far from Seattle for a weekend trip, and it was kind of short notice. Soon, I received another email from Jennie that said, "If we don't get enough women, we'll just have to invite ... boys!"

In desperation, I sent out an email to some female kayaking friends. Joyce Stahly couldn't go, but replied to my email, "I'm going to the Illinois this weekend, and to the Secesh two weeks after that. I have to stay home the weekend in between to spend Mother's Day with my husband and son. But I'm dying to know how you know Jennie!"

Let me back up and explain how I know Joyce. I was running the Green Truss section of the White Salmon in

Joyce, Jennie, Megi all smiles at the put-in.

Washington last year for my first time. It has a reputation in the Pacific Northwest for being a difficult run, and it was definitely a step up for me. I hadn't slept in days and was nervous about the Truss. After swimming out of two holes, I had somehow picked my way down to Upper Zigzag. I remember being told that this was probably the hardest rapid on the run. Standing at the top of it, I was feeling pretty gripped. I had scouted it with my group, and then they had all run it and were waiting for me at the bottom. I felt sick to my stomach. The angst must have shown on my face, because Joyce (whom I had never met before) came up to me with a big smile and asked if I wanted to follow her down. "Thank you so much!" I said.



Left: Jennie, Megi, and Joyce picking up a river guide.

Right: Jennie, Megi, Joyce hanging up their laundry.

She led me and the two guys in her group down, and we all styled it. She was my hero (later, I found out that this had been Joyce's first time down the Truss too). Even though I had only paddled one rapid with her in my entire life, I felt like she was a very close friend and I wanted to paddle with her again.

So, back to Joyce's question: "How did I know Jennie?" My friend Tom O'Keefe, American Whitewater's Pacific Northwest Regional Stewardship Director, is a kayaking buddy from our days together at the University of Wisconsin and it was Tom who first introduced me to his friend Jennie. Jennie had welcomed me when I moved to Oregon and invited me to go to California with her for a Thanksgiving trip.

Joyce told me that she first paddled with Jennie about 15 years ago in California. They'd sort of lost touch after awhile. Since then, Joyce had gotten married, had a son and had been living in Salt Lake City ... it had been about 10 years, Joyce concluded, her voice trailing off. Fifteen years ago? I didn't even know what a kayak was 15 years ago, and these two women were already paddling hardcore Class V stuff.

Joyce told me how she saw Jennie's van on the Crooked River last year and was so inspired that she left a message on Jennie's van saying "I'm glad to see you're still out paddling the gnar!" Joyce, who has run things like the North Payette, told me how she had gotten spanked on the Crooked at 3300 cfs that day. I had been on the Crooked that day myself, and had the worst (or best?) rodeo of my life in No Name.

It was kind of funny: I admired Joyce as my personal hero; Joyce looked up to

Jennie as one of her early mentors; and Jennie was just excited to have two female kayaking friends who were as excited about paddling as she was. Anyway, a short time later, Joyce's husband, Mike, found out that she had been invited on a women's Selway trip, and he told her that she shouldn't pass this up just to stay home with the boys for Mother's Day. What better way to spend Mother's Day than to go paddling with the girls?

In the end, there were just the three of us. Jennie is 53, Joyce 42, and I am 35 years old. The three of us spanned three generations. Joyce joked that we couldn't find anyone in their twenties to join the women's trip because they were too busy chasing boys. I guess that's what I should be doing too if I ever want to get married like Joyce and Jennie, but I'd rather be out kayaking with them!

I often think that I'm too old to get good at kayaking at my age. When you paddle with a bunch of twenty something guys every weekend and you're the only girl and the oldest one out there, it can get a bit discouraging. But, at age 35, being the youngest of an all-women's team on my first ever trip to Idaho and my first ever self-support trip, I was feeling pretty inspired! All the other women had bailed saying the levels seemed too high with the gauge reading over five feet at Paradise and over 16,000 cfs at Lowell, but the three of us decided we were driving to Idaho anyway. Our motto for the trip was, "We can do it!"

When I met up with Jason Rackley on my way out of town to borrow his Idaho Gazetteer I think he was more wound up than I was. Jason exclaimed, "Wow, Megi. I'm so excited for you. You're paddling with probably the two best female paddlers in the Pacific Northwest!" They're definitely

right up there. Jennie has won gold medals at various slalom competitions and her technique shows it. At age 53, she will be representing the U.S. in Europe this summer, racing a downriver boat. Joyce is the best female creeker I have ever seen. I have no aspirations to ever be as good as these two, but if I'm still paddling into my fifties, I'll be pretty happy with myself!

As I drove off from Portland, I decide to give Tom O'Keefe a call. I wanted to thank him for having such great friends. If it weren't for Tom introducing me to Jennie, I wouldn't be going to Idaho at all. Tom said he was driving back from the White Salmon and was heading west towards Portland and was at mile marker 48. I was heading east and was at mile marker 47. A few seconds later, we passed each other on the highway and waved. Thanks Tom for working hard to protect our rivers while I go enjoy the rivers with your friends!

We all started driving (Jennie from Seattle, Joyce from Bend, me from Eugene) and eventually rendezvoused somewhere along the highway around midnight. Jennie and Joyce embraced for the first time in 10 years. After reloading boats, we crawled into the back of Jennie's van like sardines and fell asleep. No loud snoring kept us awake. This "all-women's" thing was pretty cool!

Day 1

The next morning, as we approached the put-in, I started getting anxious. Joyce had instructed me to practice packing everything in my boat for my first self-support trip, but I'm a procrastinator and didn't even have my gear thrown together until it was time to leave. What if my stuff wouldn't fit in my boat? What if I couldn't roll a loaded boat? Joyce was worried that our women's boats were smaller than the men's boats. She admitted that in the past she'd used the "my boat is smaller than yours" trick to get the guys to carry some of the group gear like the breakdown paddle and stove and tarp. How were we going to manage?

Megi, Joyce and Jennie on the All-Women's Trip on the Selway.



We got to the put-in in the early evening and saw two groups of men putting their rafts together. They would be camping at the put-in for the night. We three pulled up, unloaded our kayaks, stuffed our gear inside, and were ready to put-on the river at 5:40 p.m. Pacific Time (6:40 Mountain Time). One of the men asked if we'd done the Selway before. "No, it's my first time! And my first Idaho trip! And my first self-support trip! And my first all-women's trip," I blurted out excitedly. The man looked a little worried. Jennie rolled her eyes. Leave it to Megi to make it sound like we don't know what we're doing. Well, it was my first time! But those guys didn't know that I was with my two paddling heroes! Jennie has 27 years of paddling experience and Joyce has 18 years. I couldn't have asked for better mentors for a trip like this. At the put-in, I sat in the eddy waiting, but Joyce just looked at me and said, "The honors are yours!" My heart rate got faster. I was going first? I was used to following others down new runs, but I gave her a big smile to hide my nervousness and peeled out. I couldn't believe she was letting me go first. It really was an honor.

It felt good to get on the water after the

long drive. We found a campsite around 8 p.m. after floating along at about 7 mph without paddling very hard. Even though I'd managed to fit all my stuff in the boat, I was still a bit concerned for the next day. The loaded boat seemed heavy, but Jennie told me to not focus on how heavy it was. She said it would be fast and would melt right through the holes. She was right, for the most part

Day 2

I woke up and realized that I was going to miss breakfast—Jennie wasn't going to tolerate me sleeping in too late (this wasn't like paddling with the usual dirt-bag kayaker crew!)—so I dragged myself out of bed. Still, we took our time, and we didn't put on until 9:40 AM. We had a long day ahead of us. The plan was to run most of the river in one day, getting past the big rapids, so that we would just have a little bit left on Sunday. I would have a long drive the following day to make it to the Middle Salmon, and Jennie and Joyce would have long drives home. After a couple of hours, we passed a group of about eight men just getting out of bed. It was lunchtime already, and Jennie noted that this must be the "break-of-noon"

crowd. As we paddled past, Jennie called out, "Where are your women?" They laughed and told us that they couldn't find any. The men were also doing a multi-generational self-support trip, with participants spanning twenties to sixties. Jennie recognized some friends (she seems to know everyone), so we chatted a while before heading downstream.

The scenery was beautiful. The rapids were exciting. The company was unbeatable. Eventually, we got to Ladle. This was the only rapid that I had heard anything about before the trip. I knew we would be getting out to scout and that we might be portaging. The river was pretty high and still rising. We hiked up the path on river right and looked at some lines. I was pretty sure that I wanted to go right. Jennie was looking at the middle. Joyce checked out the left line that she had taken before, but wanted to do something different. Eventually, though, we all decided on a right line. Jennie and Joyce were going to go far right—right of the tongue, hitting the guard hole on the right, skimming along the large boulder on the right, right angle past the second hole, and continuing right past the sleeper hole below the crux move. I, on the other hand, wanted to go

center-left of the tongue, punch left of the guard hole into the weakness at the center of the big hole and to continue left of the sleeper hole.

We sat on a rock for a long time just chatting and enjoying the beautiful weather. Jennie and I got into the old debate about boat designs. I thought that Ladle would be easier and more fun to run in a playboat, but Jennie argued that a loaded creek boat was the way to go ... not that either of us had a choice that day. Joyce enjoyed listening to the debate between the generations, and said she was kind of in the middle. Funny how, in my thirties, I had to defend the "young" boaters' tastes in boats. Finally, we decided that it was time to fire it up, and we walked back to our boats. As I was getting into my boat and trying to find landmarks from the eddy, I got really nervous. First of all, I almost always follow someone else down hard drops. Second of all, Jennie and Joyce have a lot more experience and skill than I

do, and they had chosen a different line than I had. I decided that I would probably be better off following them than doing my own thing. But then, I realized, I hadn't really looked at their line. I had studied my line. And I had different strengths and weaknesses than they did. And I always regretted it when I changed plans at the last minute. So, I stopped second-guessing myself and decided to take the line that I had originally chosen. Come on, Megi. Trust yourself! Joyce took off in the lead, and I peeled out of the eddy after her. I was on my own now, concentrating as hard as I could while trying to stay relaxed.

Just break it up in your mind, Megi, I told myself, talking through every step. 1: Ferry left across the really fast current. 2: Ride the tongue down. 3: Get left angle and hit the slack water to slow down. 4: Look for the guard hole and find some landmarks. 5: Breathe! 6: Clip the left side of the guard hole with some right angle. 7: Don't be fooled by the chaotic crashing hole. 8: Get more right angle than it looks like you need and do it with lots of momentum. 9:

OK, square up and hit the huge hole straight on! 10: Lean forward, dig deep, and PRAY!

I hit it perfectly. Wahoo! As I flew past the sleeper hole at the bottom, though, I saw Joyce drop in and get surfed across it. Oh, no! Not where I wanted to see my hero as I looked over my shoulder. But she surfed out of the hole and came down after me. Jennie came third, and had a perfect line down the crux, but then was so happy with her run that she dropped into a pour-over. She came down into the eddy shaking her head, but without problem. We did it!

Since Ladle was the only rapid on the Selway that I had heard anybody talk about, I essentially thought we were done at this point. I guess I was too relaxed. I was floating mindlessly behind Joyce, not paying much attention when I suddenly saw a big



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hole in front of me. I realized immediately that I couldn't make it to the right or the left, so I tried to square up and lean forward. I slammed into it but was denied exit. Even in my fully loaded creek boat, I came to a dead stop in the big, deep hole. I was back surfed, then side surfed. I realized that I was upright and breathing, so I tried to tell myself to relax. But this was a big hole!

I reminded myself to sit up straight, not to lean my weight on my paddle, and to conserve energy. Suddenly I was in a back surf again. The hole kept spinning me from a side surf to a back surf. Darn. I always say how I need to learn better

playboating skills to improve my boat control, but this wasn't the time to be practicing. This was the time that I needed those skills! In a back surf once again, I was afraid to switch my edges to turn in the other direction because I thought I might get windowshaded. After a few uncontrolled shove-its, I decided that I needed to spin to the other side and try something different. I seemed to be in the hole forever. With much determination, I spun to the right side and saw Jennie coming down. I breathed a momentary sigh of relief, thinking that she would rescue me, but as she sped past, I realized that there was nothing that Jennie or Joyce could do for me. I couldn't even see them because the foam pile blocked my downstream view.

Oh, boy—this was exciting! I came to the conclusion that if I couldn't work my way

out either side of the hole, I would try to bury my bow in the water and ender out. But I wasn't too excited about the prospect of shoving myself into the powerful green water pouring down on top of me. It felt powerful enough when I was sitting upright, and I didn't want to get pounded. Besides, I wasn't entirely sure that I could roll my loaded creek boat, and I couldn't see downstream to know what I might get flushed into. As I was contemplating my options, I suddenly felt my boat float up on the foam pillow. I grabbed my opportunity and dug in with a right draw stroke and somehow came up and over the edge of the hole and it let me go without even flipping me! I saw Jennie and Joyce waiting down below and I caught the eddy feeling both exhilarated and exhausted. Joyce told me that she could occasionally see a little helmet or paddle edge peer up over the foam pile, but otherwise, she couldn't tell

We did it!

photo by Megi Morishita



what was going on at all. Jennie said that as she came by and saw me in the hole, she thought, "I can't believe Megi is showing off in there!" I definitely wasn't showing off! I was in survival mode!

We didn't want to get to the take-out yet, since our cars wouldn't be there until noon the next day, so we picked a campsite that didn't appear to be on the map. We pulled our kayaks up, and saw something moving at our feet. A little rattlesnake slithered away quickly and curled up by a log. He turned to face us, ready to spring if need be. His little tongue told us to leave him alone. We stood around, took some pictures, named him George, and then went about our business. Jennie and Joyce were smart enough to drag their stuff to the far side of camp before they began unloading all the gear from their boats. I was tired so I stayed in George's turf. I watched him closely as I hung my

clothes on a log, and he stayed there and watched me. Joyce thought it was pretty cool that none of us even suggested going to a different camp. Not bad for a group of girls! I went skinny dipping knowing that I wouldn't get a shower for the next three days on the Middle Salmon. George didn't seem to mind.


Day 3

When we woke up in the morning, we were surprised to see George not on the east side of the campsite where we had left him, but on the west side. That meant that he had slithered through our camp in the middle of the night! We found him curled up among Jennie's helmet and dry bags. Jennie used a very long stick to carefully collect her gear.

Meanwhile, I was trying to pack my boat for the last day but there were so many

millipedes inside that I couldn't shove my dry bags in without squishing them. The thought of sitting on the millipedes was more than I could handle, so I had to pick each one out with twigs that I used like chopsticks. Jennie tried to be patient while I did this, but every time I packed another bag into my boat, more millipedes would emerge and I would have to pick up my chopsticks again. We named this campsite "Rattlers and Millipedes."

Around noon we found our cars waiting for us at the take-out. It felt great to have completed our all-women's trip, but at the same time we were all a little sad that it was ending.

Thanks, Jennie and Joyce! This was definitely one of the most memorable and confidence-building kayaking trips I have ever been on. I hope we'll be able to recruit more women for our second annual women's trip on Mother's Day! 

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Hanna Farrar on her way to third place at
FiBARK 2007

photo by Matt Farrar

Pro Freestyle Kayaker, Hanna Farrar

Interviewed by Matt Farrar

At the ripe old age of 20, Hanna Farrar has become quite a force to reckon with on the professional kayaking scene. Hanna is not only one of the top pro women kayakers in the world (she placed 5th at the World Championships this past spring) but is also a pre-med student at prestigious Dartmouth College. As her older brother, I have witnessed first hand Hanna's growth and progression as a kayaker. It seems like just a short time ago when she used to follow my friends and me around with a camcorder to help us film for our "sponsor me" videos. Soon enough, she was out on the rivers paddling right alongside us. She went on to go pro and began pushing the limits of women's freestyle kayaking. I decided to shoot Hanna a quick email to ask her about one of her best seasons as a pro and to see what her thoughts were on the current freestyle scene. I also wanted to know where she would like to take her kayaking in the years to come.

To begin, Hanna, I am not sure that many people know this but you recently placed 5th at the World Freestyle Championships in Ottawa, Canada. This was the highest ranking that the U. S. Pro Women held in the final standings. Also, you won the Collegiate National Championships in Reno just a few weeks prior to this. This feat was accomplished with a few short practice runs after not being in your boat for eight months. This was followed by a 2nd place at the Lyons Outdoor Games and a 3rd place at FiBARK. So, would you say that this has been one of your best competition seasons, if not the best?

Yeah, I would say I'm pretty happy about how this year has played out so far. Placing well (making finals) at Worlds was one of my main goals for this year, my first time on the U.S. Team as a pro woman. When I went to Reno for Collegiate Nationals I was not really focused on doing well there because I was so concentrated on Worlds a few weeks later. But winning that event was a great way to start off my season and it ended up being the beginning of a very exciting series of competitions. After Worlds, everything just fell into place with finishing up school for the term and then competing on the Colorado rodeo circuit.

I was also recognized by the Sportswomen of Colorado in March as a nominee for Colorado Sportswoman of the Year—the first time a kayaker has been recognized by the organization—which was pretty cool. Between my results and the condition I'm in, I would say this has been probably my best and most exciting season yet as a kayaker.

I would think that either being a professional kayaker or a pre-med student at Dartmouth would be difficult enough by itself, but doing both seems a little crazy. Would you recommend trying to juggle a professional kayaking career with an Ivy League education?

Ha! Doing both is definitely not easy but I would not be the person I am if I was happy doing just one thing. There are times that I wish I could just focus on one or the other. I might be able to progress faster as an athlete if I wasn't in school, but I have an ultimate goal of going to med school and becoming a doctor and there's not really anything that would make me give that up (not even kayaking!). So I kind of live a double life: I'm a kayaker undercover as a college kid and I get out on the river whenever I'm not studying. It's a lot of

work to find time to be a professional athlete when I have class all day, but it's more than worth it for me. I love being at Dartmouth and I love kayaking and I would never give either of them up just to make my life a little less hectic.

Being one of the top women freestylers currently, where would you like to see kayaking go in the future?

I think it would be great to see kayaking progress to the level of other extreme sports like skiing, snowboarding or surfing and to have the exposure and support that those sports have. However, kayaking is limited in its progression because it is less accessible than other sports and competitions are difficult to understand for people who don't kayak. Hopefully, the sport will develop into a popular culture with idols for young athletes to look up to and widespread interest in the realm of

extreme sports.

There is a push to get freestyle kayaking to be in the Olympics some time in the future. What are your thoughts on this? What about getting freestyle kayaking into the X-Games?

The push to get kayaking in the Olympics is both a blessing and a curse for the sport. The exposure and support that comes with being an Olympic sport would help freestyle kayaking reach many different groups of people. However, the regulations and image that come with the Olympics could negatively influence the sport and halt much of any progression. The X-Games would be a much more appropriate venue for kayaking than the Olympics, in my view, because the audience tends to be at a very impressionable age and excited about extreme sports. The X-Games is all about progression, whereas the Olympics

tend to have a more traditional feel. However, it would still be incredible to be a part of the Olympics.

It seems like kayaking has certainly become more mainstream over the last few years. There are crowds numbering in the thousands showing at the Reno Festival, the Teva Mountain Games and FIBArk. Do you think that this popularity growth in kayaking is good for the sport and do you have any other ideas on how to make the sport even more popular? Maybe put a kayaker on a Wheaties box?

It is incredibly exciting to see the kayaking community growing so fast. I think there are limitations to it as an extreme sport for gaining widespread recognition because it is less accessible and harder for the general sports audience to relate to. For instance, a kid can't go out and try kayaking like she can teach herself to play basketball or



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soccer. Also, kayaking lacks a strong image and culture. A sport like snowboarding has a distinct culture and image with athletes like Shawn White who are idolized by young athletes. When kayaking distinguishes itself as a unique culture, I think it will grow even faster.


In the world of freestyle kayaking, there's a dispute over whether or not the progression of kayaking is best displayed through competition or on film. Would you say that competitions are really the best way to show the progression of kayaking or would you say that film is the better way to showcase it?

I think that competitions are very hit or miss. My experience has taught me that competition results don't always demonstrate the actual talent of the athletes, although they do say something. I think that film is a great medium by

which to judge skill and I would like to see it used more often. It would be great to have "jam style" competitions that are judged via video review. This format would allow more objective judging and be more representative of athlete's skill. Even outside of competition, film is a great way to showcase the talent of the top kayakers and is much more captivating for an inexperienced audience.

Do you have any shout outs?

Yeah, definitely! I would like to thank my sponsors: Wave Sport, Level Six Inc, Red Bull, Astral Buoyancy, and Shred Ready for all of their support. I couldn't do what I do without them. Also, I owe much of my success to my incredibly supportive family and I can't express my gratitude enough for them. Matt, I owe you especially for helping me live a dual life as a kayaker and student and not lose my mind, so thanks!

Well, thanks for your time and all the best in your pursuits of your kayaking and education. 



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Brian Kirk, Team NRS, riding holes in Reno, NV. © Josh Davis/NRS

How We're Different, Why It's Good

by Liane R. O'Hara, DVM

It's a beautiful, warm summer day and the water is releasing on the Salmon River in upstate New York, north of Syracuse. Boaters flock to the river like thirsty animals; the water has been low. At the put-in, a group of eight women get ready to paddle. The "girls" are excited and some even a little apprehensive. Even though it is a nice, mellow Class II-III float, for the most part, it will be a great day on the river. While I tend to feel that any day on the river is a great day, I am especially glad to be a part of this group. It's nice to get on the water with other girls.

I've only been whitewater paddling for about 3 1/2 years now, but it has become my passion. Most of the time, I am one of just a handful of women on the river and often, the only one in my group. This has been good to help me challenge myself (usually I'll run the rapid after watching the boys go), but more and more I hope to be the one leading. I think this is a major challenge for most women in the sport: having the confidence to lead a rapid, especially when the boys are breathing down your neck, like "What the heck are you waiting for, staring at a rapid like that?!!!" I have learned so much from other women paddlers about the different ways they analyze a rapid and group together before running it. It's a bit of a welcome change when paddling with a group of women, but sometimes I think I've run too many rivers with the boys and find myself even wondering what we're thinking so much about.

To me, this is the main difference between most women and men paddlers, the way we analyze the water. I think this is a benefit and also a difficulty—sometimes I have a better line the less I think about it. And most certainly, this is the way most guys I see on the river paddle: "OktheresmylinehereIgo!" But I do think that we all need to take things at our own speed to be comfortable on the river and for our skills to progress. Most

women seem to be more precise paddlers, developing strong basic skills before tackling hard rapids, which will eventually make us better paddlers than many of the guys. Sorry, boys, but it's true. Paddling like a girl may be a better way to excel. As a friend of mine says (a boy, of course), the "THAG RUN RIVER!" approach is one way to paddle, but not the best way. Most girls will take the time to develop the necessary skills before just plowing into that giant hole or spectacular drop. For the most part, I think, this is to our credit. But a little bit of THAG may not hurt. I've contemplated a testosterone patch, but the drawback of having to use a personal grooming tool outweighs the potential benefits.

This is certainly a sport in which women can be just as good as men, and I hope this will help attract more women to the sport. Having more women's paddling groups will help this to evolve as well. In my neck of the woods, there are few female paddlers although I have heard of some fantastic women's groups in other parts of the country. The girls in my area are doing great, though, and it's wonderful to see trips like this one on the Salmon, organized by a girl paddler, I am glad to say, with more to come.

I know I am a much better paddler than I give myself credit for, and I think lots of other women are in this same "boat." I hope by paddling with more women we can help each other recognize our skills and celebrate them instead of comparing ourselves with the boys. I also think that getting girls in the water early will do wonders for their confidence in the future—not just in paddling, but in life as well. I only wish I had started 20 years ago. Now I've got to work all the harder to reach the level I'd like to, sometimes with a little too much help from the Ibuprofen god.

Now, it's also good to see some of the outfitters creating women's specific gear—no reason we still can't be girls on the river. As silly as it sounds, coordinating my nail polish with my boat or another piece of gear is a fun way for me to prepare for a

trip. It's especially gratifying when I have some guy make a snide comment about my nail polish at the top of a rapid, only to totally outclass him in the drop. It's kind of like seeing a girl throw some huge move on a wave and watching the guys take a step back.

Maybe someday I can lead a women's group down the Bottom Moose. I think the boys would enjoy it, too *AWW*

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Better Late Than Never: My Discovery of Whitewater

By Jane Manchee

Like so many things at the time, I followed my single heart into it, hoping, I suppose, that by expressing an interest he might continue to be interested in me. With this in mind I enlisted in a kayaking course not long after we had met. It didn't really occur to me that what Don and I had enjoyed was sea kayaking on a lake in Northern B.C.. The course I had signed up for in Toronto, Ontario was whitewater kayaking.

Intellectually I understood the difference, but it wasn't until I was actually in a boat on the river that I got a true sense of what I was undertaking. Hell, I was nearly 38, very single, and looking for some adventure ... whitewater kayaking fit the bill, as far as I could tell. I even talked a couple of unsuspecting girlfriends into joining me for that first course. The part I hadn't completely bargained for was the upside-down-under-the-water bit, although I knew I would have to face that demon at some point.

About 10 years earlier during a brief break from paddling on a whitewater open boat course, I innocently experimented with the instructor's C 1. As instructed, I knelt in it, placing my knees under the straps. Within minutes I had flipped over, probably in less than four feet of water. My friends above the surface laughed unwittingly at my predicament while below I was thrashing for dear life. At just over six feet tall I would have thought I could simply stand up and be done with it. Alas, I quickly learned that wasn't the case. My fear of drowning increased the longer I thrashed until finally I was able

to extricate myself from the unfamiliar knee straps and reach the surface for some much needed air.

Generally I am not a claustrophobic person, but this incident terrified me sufficiently that it was years before I would consider getting into anything that required securing myself in a watercraft that might capsize.

Sure enough, on that first weekend course I flipped, I thrashed, I pulled the skirt ... I lived. And so it was, having faced my initial fears, I was able to continue on.

Our instructor, Lee Chantrell, who went on to become one of the founder's of Paddler's Co-op, situated on the Madawaska River, about an hour south of the Ottawa in Ontario, Canada, was patient, encouraging, instructive, patient, kind and witty—did I mention patient?

The same two girlfriends and I spent the next two summers kayaking as often as we could with Lee, his partner Shawna, and a myriad of other instructors from the Co-op, either on the Madawaska or the Ottawa. We were weekend warriors making the five to six hour trek each way every Friday through Sunday whenever we could. It was worth it in every way.

In October 2000 Paddler's Co-op, in conjunction with David Allardice's Ultimate Descents of Kathmandu, Nepal, organized a raft supported kayak trip on the famous Sun Kosi River, considered to be one of the top rivers in the world for paddling. Lee had guided for Ultimate



The whole Nepal / Sun Kosi Crew

photo by Unidentified Nepali Woman

Descents in previous years and was happy to go back. He was a capable competent leader.

The Sun Kosi is known as the River of Gold. It is big, wide, silt-filled, with wave trains the size of a two story house, and studded with glorious gold flecked sand beaches along either side, perfectly suited for camping. Its sides are steeply terraced with rice fields, peppered with the occasional small village, monkeys, birds and some spectacular waterfalls. While not overly populated, people mysteriously appear from nowhere along the river with friendly overtures of Namaste or "Hello What is your name? What is your country?"

With Lee's encouragement and my own naive bravado, I convinced myself to celebrate my 40th year by going to Nepal to kayak the Sun Kosi for eight days. My kayaking girlfriends thought I was crazy, my family was politely concerned, while the rest of my pals figured it was just me on another high adventure.

I convinced a different gal pal, one who didn't kayak but who, like myself, loved adventure, to join me on this once-in-a-lifetime river odyssey. She rode in the passenger raft with six others led by our local guide Bishnu Paudel, while I followed Lee and eight others in kayaks down the river. We also had a support raft that carried all our gear and supplies,

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The gear raft on the Sun Kosi River, Nepal.

photo by Matthew Francey

manned by three young Nepalese who were training to become river guides.

It never actually occurred to me to be scared. I had learned to paddle primarily on the Ottawa River known for its big water and, for the most part, forgiving nature. Certainly there are rapids and spring runoffs to be wary of on the Ottawa but none that I've ever had serious incident on. So paddling the Sun Kosi to me just meant bigger water.

I never felt like I was being pushed to go through something beyond my ability and would have gamely followed Lee through HakaPur, the notorious Class IV rapid, even after the most experienced paddlers had opted out. But it was when Lee, whom I had never seen smoke, lit

up his 4th cigarette, all the while saying it was okay with him whatever I chose to do that I realized it was better and safer for everyone, not to mention the health of Lee's lungs, if I erred on the side of caution. I told him I'd take the easy way down. I still wonder if I could have made it, but I realize that some questions have to go unanswered. Although perhaps the fact our support raft managed to flip on its way through, creating a yard sale of fruits and vegetables, is answer enough. Thankfully no one was hurt. The one bonus of the raft going over was the great entertainment provided by a memorable onion fight between the boats. "Pelt or be pelted" was the motto that day.

I was definitely the oldest woman in the group, and, while I wasn't the least

experienced, I was within the top three on that score too. I did get to know the Sun Kosi intimately from an underside perspective. I ably earned the biggest-lungs-longest-time-to-set-up-and-roll award, and, only swam twice in the whole 272 kilometers (170 miles).

The scariest moment for me was when I flipped in a smaller eddy swirling beside the bigger, less forgiving, Dead Man's Eddy. I tried to roll up a number of times but was exhausted from the previous rapid, where I had had to roll up several times. By then I didn't trust the person attempting to T rescue would make it before my lungs gave out, so I made my decision and pulled. The second swim was on a sneak route past HakaPur. I managed to pin myself against a rock in about two



Scott Murison in action on the Sun Kosi River

photo by Matthew Francey


feet of water. Unable to get off it easily I pulled my skirt and climbed out. I guess that, technically, it wasn't a swim since I walked to shore.

Since my 40th birthday I've had the good fortune to paddle throughout Europe, in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, and Slovenia. I've also paddled in Chile on the Futaleufu and in both western Canada and the Pacific Northwest.

For my 50th I hope to join up with the same girlfriends I started this sport with to paddle in Africa. In fact, recently a guide in Alberta told me he finds paddling with women in their 40s and 50s more fun because, for one thing, we are willing to try new things within our limits without the added burden of concern for how we look while we do it. I kidded him about looking for a bigger tip, but he was emphatic in his enthusiastic response. So could it be true?

I'm not a daredevil Class VI Steve Fisher type. Class III and some IV is fine with me. I like the thrills, I love the scenery, I relish

the camaraderie, and I like to come home alive with the least amount of bruising possible. I'm always satisfied after a good day on the river even if it was rainy and cold. Truthfully, I'm more of a fair weather paddler but, if it means it'll keep me paddling into my 70s, so be it. I still have a few continents left to visit. With any luck I'll get to them all.

Oh, and that guy who introduced me to sea kayaking? Let's just say I moved on ... to an experienced hobbyist raft guide and we're living happily ever after. 

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Bridging the Generations: A Roundtable Discussion About Kayaking and Women with Whitney Lonsdale, Beth Rypins, Maria Noakes and Juliet Jacobsen Kastorff

By Juliet Jacobsen Kastorff

In the beginning, there was a whole group of women here in the States who were daring enough to enter the male world of whitewater kayaking—the Barb Snyders, the Kennedys, the Bunny Johns, just to name a few. They boldly paddled rivers from one coast to the other, and then onto other continents, all the while in 13-foot fiberglass boats, smelly wool sweaters and scuba diving wetsuits.

Today women continue to make their own statements, paddling off waterfalls, matching men in their freestyle moves, traveling the globe, teaching and guiding. Our impact is such that even the industry has found themselves wanting to address the female gender with women-specific boats, pfd's, helmets and jackets.

It is too easy to get so caught up in the “now” of our sport, forgetting about those who paved the way for us. Looking for a group that somewhat bridged the gap between the early U.S. paddlers and those of today, the following group came to mind: Beth Rypins of California, Whitney Lonsdale of North Carolina, Maria Noakes of New Zealand, and myself—fellow North Carolinian. In bringing the four of us together, I tried to get us to agree that we were the “bridge” between generations. They vetoed me on the bridge image, but agreed that we were all lucky to have found kayaking—and to still be kayaking today. We are but a small reflection of the incredible group of women that continues to paddle today all over the world! And here is what came out of the four of us reminiscing over a couple of beers:

Maria Noakes doing the Karnali river seal launch in a Bandit.

photo by Nick Williams

What brought you to kayaking?

Beth: It was 1979 and I was your classic inner city, at-risk youth and I happened upon it by accident.

Maria: During an overseas adventure to Nepal, I was subjected to kayaking, rafting, amazing whitewater persona, and ultimately a 360-degree turn in lifestyle.

Whitney: Complete random chance got me on my first river trip on the Green River in Utah. I fell in love with paddling then, but I wasn't totally aware of it. After my first trip to Nepal in 1993 I think I was 100% hooked on traveling and paddling.

Juliet: It was the late 80s and I was living in Washington DC, struggling to learn how to windsurf. I went on a rafting trip on the Gauley, which fired me up to go home and take a kayak class. Windsurfing took a

back seat when I realized I had found the first thing I had ever done that made me think, "I really want to be good at this." I never wore a pair of heels again!

How about some of your first boats?

Maria: My first boat was a borrowed squished Pirouette. From then on it was adjust, heat, melt and move seats. Every boat I had was put in the oven, heated with a heat gun; then one of us would put loads of socks on and sit in it, while somebody else jumped up and down on the nose. Anything to make that RPM cartwheel! Then the LL Skip came out, and my world was changed forever as I could finally cartwheel and huck my body around like I had been trying to do for years.

Beth: I learned to paddle in a Hollowform! Then my parents bought me a Mirage as a high school graduation present. When the Dancer came out I thought I'd won the lottery.

Juliet: After my kayaking class I made a beeline to REI and bought a Mirage

Juliet heading home from a day at the office, Quijó River, Ecuador.

photo by Ursy Potter



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Beth Rypins portaging on the first descent of Rio Achibueno, Chile.

photo by Lars Holbeck

that was about 20 feet long! Soon after I upgraded to a Wave Sport Laser. But it wasn't until I got a Jeti that I figured out how to stay right side up.

Whitney: I'll never forget my first boat, a Dagger Crossfire, I loved that thing. I hauled it to a few different foreign destinations and was sad to part with it when I finally sold it in Chile. After that the Perception Supersport felt like a revolutionary surf machine; I never thought there would be a better kayak than the Perception 3D; the Liquidlogic Session changed my world, and I think the LL Skip was one of the best, early women's boats.

When you began paddling, who were the women on your radar screen?

Juliet: I'm not sure I even met another female boater until I visited North Carolina. Even then, I mostly paddled with men. But I had such respect for the female whitewater pioneers I'd heard stories about: Bunny Johns paddling Overflow (in a borrowed Quest), Kathy KB Bolyn running the hole at Terminator on the Futaleafu, Risa Calloway paddling the Green and Arlene Burns traveling the world. More remarkable than their talent on the river was their attitude—they were all so low-keyed about who they were.

Beth: There really weren't women that

I looked up to until I met Nancy Wiley on the Paucartambo expedition in Peru (1986); she had grown up around boats and water, and her comfort level in big water and tough situations was totally inspiring to me.

Whitney: Becky Weiss, a long time raft guide at NOC, was the first woman I knew of who paddled the Green and Gorilla. Although I didn't know her at all, the boys would tell stories: she could supposedly pee out of the window of the rafting bus and kick your ass in a minute. Not that I aspired to be just like that, but I imagine hearing about her running the Green inspired me somehow.

Maria: From the beginning I had a passionate bunch of paddlers to gain momentum from, the likes of the Whitneys, Tommies, Daves, Shanes, Dougies of the world provided me with a whirl of inspiration. The only female I knew who kayaked was Whitney. We became fast friends, and over the past 12 years, we have coaxed, cajoled and consoled each other.

What part of paddling became your main center of focus?

Maria: From learning, instructing, guiding freestyle and creeking—each has played a major role in my paddling career and the diversity has created a continuing passion

that keeps me interested and growing.

Whitney: Traveling around the world, loaded up in a variety of vehicles with a group of teenagers from World Class; paddling, studying and being immersed in other cultures.

Juliet: For me kayaking is not about me, but rather sharing my passion with others. Being able to balance between instructing and guiding is what keeps me going. I am not sure which is more thrilling—paddling down a remote Class IV jungle river or helping someone kindle their own passion for paddling on a Class II river.

Beth: Expedition boating. That's where the magic happens. I remember when the video *7 Rivers Expedition* came out and I loved it because I thought they were telling my story. My life is really different now as I have a family to care for. Multi-day self-support kayaking expeditions down hard rivers are now a thing of the past, but any day I can get on the water is special.

What keeps your passion for the river going?

Whitney: The community of people that surround rivers worldwide has been a huge part of what has kept me excited about paddling for so long. The river constantly amazes me with the different experiences it offers. It puts you on top of the world one day, and then humbles you

the next, scares you one day, then chases away all your worries the day after. It's all there.

Maria: It's a necessary "soul food." The "feel good" aspect of paddling just doesn't seem to diminish with time. I get out there and I just want to start beaming from ear to ear

Juliet: I have given up trying to figure out my "favorite" river; it is just being on the river that makes me happy.

Beth: I'm no longer out on the cutting edge, but I still enjoy it tremendously.

What is your favorite "luxury item" to bring along on a paddling trip?

Juliet: Some great nail polish for my toes. And contact solution.

Whitney: Peanut butter.

Maria: My two boys – really!

Beth: Good lotion.

Let's hear your most memorable quote:

Juliet: I was recently on the Cheoah with two of my staff, and after asking when I began paddling they both said, "Wow, I was two years old then." I hear that way too often—especially coming from fellow staff who I once taught to paddle when they were like 10 years old—and it's awesome!


Maria: I was kayaking one day with my nephew on the Narrows of the Green and this "kid" told me, "Wow, Maria, I hope I'm still kayaking the Green when I'm your age."

Whitney: We were on a month-long road trip with Willie and Johnny Kern one spring, and one night Willie said, "Yeah I figure you have until you're 30 to kayak really hard." And Maria said, "Well, I guess I have about five more days."

Beth: Train hard! Get a good foundation in the basics and don't be in a hurry to run the biggest rapids. It's better to take a little longer to develop solid skills.

Juliet: Don't use kayaking to prove something to someone else. This sport is about challenging yourself. That means becoming a better boater, exploring new rivers and sharing cold beers with friends after a great day on the river.

Whitney: Paddle with people who make you happy.

Maria: Why not go ahead and replenish your soul today with some wicked paddling? 

Whitney and Maria scouting Dry Meadow Creek circa 1996

photo by Shane Benedict



Any words of wisdom for women entering the sport today? Or just random thoughts?

One Woman's Story

By Michelle Burks

My name is Michelle and I learned to kayak mostly because my boyfriend at the time (now my husband) was a kayaker. I was 43 years old, the mom of 3 teenagers and deathly afraid of the river. Twelve years ago, I had been flipped on a raft in high water on a known rapid in Idaho and had seen my life flash before my eyes. It was terrifying. The thought of being underwater, powerless and frightened, did not interest me in the least.

My boyfriend, Rod, was an avid Class IV-V paddler and also owned a cataraft (partly in hopes of getting on multi-day trips I am sure!). I started my career towards kayaking by learning to row his cataraft. Not too excited by it and finding it way too much work to get the craft in and out of the water, I moved on, or should I say moved down, to an inflatable kayak. I thoroughly enjoyed this but found myself swimming more than staying in the boat! At least I was in the water again.

Hesitantly, and most likely because of "love" and my inquisitive nature, I decided to open myself up to giving the hardshell kayak a shot. I went to a weekend pool class that Rod and his best friend, Bill or "Spill" as they called him, were in charge of, got sooooo frustrated learning to roll, but I was determined to stick with it. I finally had a 90% roll in the pool. Rod and Spill took me down a Class II-III stretch on the Snake River every weekend all winter long in Idaho. It was cold; a deterrent to swimming, so you'd think. I swam over and over and each time got back in my boat wondering, is this worth it?

Then it happened. I remember the exact moment that kayaking changed my world. The passion ignited. It was sometime in December, on the Snake River, in a rapid called Buck's on the Hagerman stretch. I had my first successful combat roll. I remember the sheer elation; the switch turning on. My eyes bugged open in amazement when I

found myself back upright in my boat! From that moment on, I was hooked. I followed these Class IV-V boater boys everywhere that winter and spring, waiting for any river they'd let me go down. I was invincible on the water, or so I thought. I advanced to Class IV rapids within the first 9 months of my boating, running the Bruneau, the Middle Fork of the Salmon and the same stretch I had flipped on the raft in some 12 years before ... Staircase on the South Fork Payette River.

I was usually the only woman with these guys. "Where are all the women" I kept wondering? I'd love to find some gals to paddle with. I need someone who I can relate to! See, the thing is, we women, we're different. We're from Venus they say. We take this sport personally and emotionally. Plus, my testosterone levels don't come close to those Mars men. I would break down, get scared, get mad, or cry, drag my boat up a steep cliff, throw my paddle down, and eventually get back in the water. They just didn't get it. That's what I needed to do to get back in, and I always got back in.

My second season paddling took me to new places of fear. I bought a new playboat, then a new creekboat, both which I thought I was again invincible in. I ended up with 3 terrifying swims that spring and was back to square one. I left my boats on my car most of that summer and spent hours rolling in the pond nearby, 100 rolls a day, back to the river, back to the pond. This is a mental sport. We must believe we can do this; we must know from a place deep in our innermost self that we can roll up no matter what. And, at the same time, carry a deep respect for the river and a healthy fear of dying. This is where I was now heading. I would not let the fear control my life. I slowly got myself back to the place where I felt sure of my roll, and yet did not put myself in rivers or situations that I knew were beyond me. I was moving through fear. Fear can be a




The Canyon Launch.

photo by Bill Studebaker

great motivator to paddling well. Am I still invincible? Hardly. The river is in charge, God is in charge, I am not in charge. I am simply between swims.

I am in my 4th season of paddling now, challenging myself more as I feel comfortable. I still don't have the testosterone to do it like a guy. I have the grace and balance of a woman. I have the tenacity (and tantrums!) of a 2-year old. Mostly, I have the passion to keep moving forward, one wave at a time. "Lean forward, keep paddling, loose hips, trust yourself, trust God"my mantras on the water.

I have met more women to paddle with since I started. Most of them are much younger than I with bodies like Gumby. My favorite friend, Jane, is my age and she teaches me to let the river hold me and carry me down the river. She once told me to sing a happy song before a scary rapid. We share a respect and love for the wilderness and for kayaking. She never seems afraid, though I know at times she must be.

What I love about kayaking is that we get to go places that no one else can get to. We engage in an outdoor activity that exercises our mental tenacity as well as our physical bodies and enables us to grow, appreciate and trust in life's gifts. Living life is scary; kayaking is also scary. Fear is a part of life and the only way through it, is through it. One wave at a time. 

Tech Tips: Edge Control Technique

By Anna Levesque

Edge control is one of the most important skills in whitewater kayaking. We use edge control to enter and peel out of eddies, make ferries, steer our boats, and perform bow stalls and cartwheels, among many other things! To improve your boating, it's essential that you improve your edge control, whether you're a beginner or an intermediate starting to work on play-boating skills.

As women our centers of gravity are in our hips and butts and when we put our kayaks on edge we essentially throw our balance off (but guys, this will definitely work for you too). It's important to strengthen the muscles and balance needed to maintain our edge. The most basic drill is to sit in flatwater and hold your edge for 5 to 10 seconds at a time, holding your boat on edge for longer as your muscles strengthen.


I break this drill down into three levels:

In the first level you simply put all of your weight into one butt cheek. Your edge won't be very aggressive in this first level. The knee on the side of your boat that you're lifting will press up against the thigh brace. That same side of your body will contract as though you're performing a side crunch. This muscle engagement will draw your upper body toward the edge that is lifted. This will help your upper body stay straight and not lean over. The side crunch motion is very important for strength, balance and control.

The next level is to lift up on your thigh brace with your knee so that your edge becomes more aggressive. Your side crunch will also become more aggressive.

The third level is to try to tuck your cockpit rim into your armpit and place your hand on the bottom of your kayak. I often place my paddle flat on the water to

help my balance in this drill. Even though you can place your hand on your hull, it's important to note that you're not holding yourself in that position using your hand, you're using the side crunch motion.

It seems very simple, but if you practice this drill every time you go out on the water your paddling will improve 100%! If you're trying flatwater moves, this drill will help you develop the edge control you need for the double pump. 

Anna Levesque is the founder of Girls at Play. For information on her workshops, instructional DVDs and adventure travel trips please visit www.watergirlsatplay.com

The progression of leaning and balance for the three levels of edge control

photo by Paul Villecourt



Accident Summary

January - June 2007

By Charlie Walbridge

Major U.S. whitewater regions experienced drought or near-drought conditions this year, and river levels have been unusually low. As a result, there were fewer deaths in the first half of this year than any year in recent memory. In the first half of the year four kayak, six canoe, and 11 rafting deaths were reported. Two of the canoeing deaths involved rental craft and three of the rafting deaths were on guided trips. You'd have to go back to 1993 to see numbers this low. Many of the deaths came from the interior of the country, especially Texas, where heavy rains caused major flooding. Most of these accidents involved inexperienced people, low-head dams, or failure to wear a life vest.

Kayaking Deaths

The year started inauspiciously on January 1st, on North Carolina's Rocky Broad River. Paul McKinney, 33, was with a group of four experienced boaters making the run. He ran second over Walker's Falls, a Class V drop visible from the road, while a third member of his group set safety. According to an email from Paul Schulte, who started with the group but pulled out upstream, Mr. McKinney flipped and was pushed off-line. He broached against a small rock on river left, spun out, and was pushed deeply into a tight slot between two huge boulders stern first. He pinned vertically with only a foot of his bow visible above the water.

His friends moved in quickly, using a rescue vest and ropes. Without the vest they never would have reached him. After 5-6 minutes of strenuous effort they were able to dislodge the boat. They pushed him and his boat to the river left bank, got him out of the water, and began CPR. Paramedics, summoned by a spectator, arrived ten minutes later with a defibrillator and oxygen. Mr. McKinney was life-flighted to Mission Hospital in Asheville where he clung to life for several days before he died.

Ten days later, on January 12th, Dennis Squires died on New Zealand's Waikaia

River. Mr. Squires, a skilled paddler known for his "New York Exposed" river paddling guidebooks, was on a two-month tour of the country when he ran the Class V Waikaia River at high water. Mr. Squires, 48, failed to appear below a steep gorge. When a paddle and knee pad floated past, his companion searched for him upstream. After several hours of looking without finding any trace, he contacted authorities. Mr. Squire's body was found underneath a tree five days later.

While most whitewater kayak accidents involve experienced paddlers, this one did not. It appears that Ladd Fish and a friend decided to run a low-head dam below Nelson Island on the Kansas River near Kansas City on March 6th. This is a spot well known to local paddlers who use the area for training. No hydraulic forms at its base, but the sluice is rocky and is seldom run. Both men capsized at its base. One man made it ashore quickly but Mr. Fish, 34, was carried downstream by the fast moving, icy water. Nearby construction crews saw what happened and called 911. Rescue workers searched the area until late evening without locating him.

On June 7th A.C. Phillips, a 71 year-old kayaker, was found floating face-down in the Nantahala below Patton's Run. Because he was paddling this North Carolina river alone no one knows what happened, or whether having someone along would have made a difference.

Idaho's Blackfoot River Canyon is a tough Class IV-V run with many complex, obstructed rapids. Teller's Tube is one of the hardest, a big drop with no margin for error. On June 24th Dr. Paul Abraszewski, 37, ran the river with five other paddlers. According to an excellent article in the *Idaho State Journal* he decided to run Teller's Tube while others set safety. He flipped in a big hydraulic, missed his roll, and swam. The current pushed him into a logjam and shoved him down under. It took his group an hour and a half to get him out.

Cheoah Claims One

On April 22nd there was a drowning on North Carolina's Cheoah River, recently liberated from dewatered obscurity by the efforts of American Whitewater. Ashley Miller, 24, was paddling in a "Shredder" (two-person cataraft) with a small group of experienced rafters. In Take-out Rapid, the steep drop above the falls, they hit a hole and she bounced out of the boat. She was floating on her back, feet first, when her shorts snagged on an underwater tree stump. The current pushed her forward, pulling her shorts down around her ankles and pushing her downstream. She simply could not keep her head above water. Someone, we're not sure who, jumped into the river and pulled her free. It could have been a member of her group or a spectator from shore. Then a group of paddlers from NOC arrived, pushed her ashore, and began CPR. The rescue squad was able to detect a faint pulse. She was life flighted to Knoxville, where she was pronounced dead.

Rivers like the Cheoah, whose flows have been cut off by upstream dams, inevitably suffer from the encroachment of vegetation. Trees and bushes growing in the river pose an added danger and those planning to run such stretches must take this into consideration.

Deaths in Flooded Texas

Flooded Texas was the scene of three river paddling deaths this spring. A 19 year-old man who failed to wear a life vest flipped his canoe on May 15th during a high-water run of the Brazos River and simply disappeared. Then on May 28th Col. Clifford Walker and his 13 year-old son washed over Herff Falls, a 20-foot drop on the Cibolo River, north of San Antonio. The boy survived, but his father did not. Both canoeists were wearing life vests and knew that the falls were there. Apparently they misjudged the speed of the water. There were many other tales of peril and salvation emanating from Texas as people were pulled from trees, homes, and automobiles by boats and

helicopter. One rescuer, 28 year-old Game Warden Ty Patterson, flipped a john boat during a May 30th search for a missing 16 year-old girl. The young woman had been swimming in the Paluxy River in the North Texas hill country when she got caught in a pourover formed by a road crossing and was pulled under. Patterson's partner was rescued and briefly hospitalized.

Canoe rental clients accounted for two other river running deaths. On May 20th Corrie Fister, 30, was paddling with a group of 13 adults in five canoes on Ohio's Big Darby Creek. According to the *Columbus, Ohio Dispatch* Mr. Fister and another man were not wearing their life vests and had been drinking heavily. After their boat flipped the friend swam for shore while Mr. Fister held on to the canoe. He was carried downstream and drowned. On June 10th Jose Rivera and his wife rented a canoe to paddle New York's Hudson River below the Glen. The pair, who were wearing life vests, flipped in some mild rapids near an abandoned railroad bridge. As they tried to right their canoe in the pool below, Mr. Rivera's wife heard him sigh loudly and saw him go limp. His body was found floating face-down two miles downstream.

No PFDs ... Again!

Many people who die on whitewater rivers would have lived if they had worn a life vest. On May 20th Robert Muir, 36, was paddling a section of the lower Dolores River in a "one-person raft" without a PFD. When his boat hit a rock and flipped he was in serious trouble. His friends pulled him ashore and began CPR. He was alive then, but died later at the hospital. In another unfortunate incident Max Braune, 74, drowned on June 16th on Montana's Yellowstone River. According to the *Bozeman Chronicle* he was attempting to get off the river above Yankee Jim Canyon, a popular Class III run. Instead, his drift boat was swept into some rapids where it broached on a rock and capsized. Mr. Braune, like many drift boat fishermen, did not wear a PFD. He suffered head injuries when he flipped and could not survive the swim. His body was recovered by kayakers in a downstream eddy.

Flush-Drowning Takes its Toll

Flush-drowning occurs when a swimmer drowns in whitewater despite a PFD. It is a common cause of rafting deaths. On March 30th Mark Allred, 62, arrived at Crystal Rapid in the Grand Canyon with a group of six rafts and a kayaker. They scouted the rapid, then ran it. According to the RRFW Riverwire, Mr. Allred's cataraft dump-trucked and threw him and another man into the top left hole. Although the rapid gets easier below, fast, cold water continues for several miles. His companion swam ashore easily, but Mr. Allred was unresponsive when picked up by a downstream safety boat. The group began CPR and contacted the Park Service by satellite phone. Rangers arrived by helicopter and took Mr. Allred's body back to civilization.

We've all had the experience of choking on a small amount of water while swimming whitewater. Any water entering the throat can set off a laryngospasm, an involuntary muscular contraction of the vocal cords. This is a normal reflex that prevents fluid from entering the lungs. Breathing during laryngospasm is difficult or impossible; the spasms typically last less than 30 or 60 seconds but can go on longer. In cases of prolonged submersion this results in a so-called "dry drowning" because the victim dies without any fluid entering the lungs. Cold water seems especially effective in setting off this reflex and some people, especially those with asthma or a history of throat surgery, are more susceptible than others. It might be the cause of a number of "unexplained" whitewater deaths, especially when a person drowns in mild rapids while wearing a PFD.

A paddling doctor writes: "When laryngospasm obstructs someone's airway for a prolonged period of time (more than 30-60 seconds), you can usually fix it by providing positive-pressure ventilation, essentially the same thing as giving a rescue breath. This might be one reason that many drowning victims respond so well to rescue breathing. A

"wet drowning" victim is less likely to respond and has a higher risk of delayed complications such as pulmonary edema and pneumonia." Voicedoctor.net says that those who experience this problem should breathe slowly and tilt their head back to facilitate the passage of air, but this advice may be better suited to a couch than a whitewater river.

Another flush drowning occurred in Utah, on the Green River's Desolation Canyon. This is a mild whitewater run with a few Class III rapids, but it carries a good amount of water and is powerful in places. On June 6th a group of private boaters wrapped their raft on a big rock in Jack Creek Rapid. Everyone went in the water except for one person who climbed out on the rock. An unidentified 29 year-old woman was pulled from the water with no detectable pulse or breathing. CPR was ineffective. A short time later a trip run by Sheri Griffeth Expeditions arrived. They rescued the stranded paddler and used their satellite phone to contact authorities.

Three commercial rafting guests perished after tough swims. Charles Bointy, 52, died in the Royal Gorge of Colorado's Arkansas River on May 20th. His guided raft flipped in Wallbanger Rapid at 2140 cfs, a medium flow. The *Salida, CO Mountain Mail* said that a heart condition probably contributed to his drowning. On June 9th Jed McKnight, 36, died after being thrown from a guided raft on Colorado's Clear Creek. According to a post on Mountainbuzz.com, one of the three rafts had previously flipped and Mr. McKnight's boat had picked up a number of swimmers. It was heavily loaded when it hit the big hole in Hell's Corner Rapid and capsized. When Mr. McKnight was pulled ashore downstream, he was dead. Lastly, Saffin Virani was on a high water guided trip down British Columbia's Kicking Horse River. He was in the first of five boats when it flipped and was the only guest who did not swim safely to shore. When he was rescued minutes later, he was dead.

Accident Summary

Two Professional Guides Die

Two Western commercial guides made up part of the death toll this year. Brian Kirkwood, a 47 year-old guide trainee, died during a swimming drill in Brown's Canyon on Colorado's Arkansas River. The incident occurred in Pinball Rapid, which safety correspondent Dane Patterson called "the most difficult place to drown I can think of." Resuscitation efforts began immediately, but were not successful. The cause of death is not clear but a heart attack is suspected.

On July 1st Dean Fairburn, a 45 year-old raft guide from Garden Valley, Idaho, was taking a group of guests down Staircase Rapid on the South Fork of the Payette. According to a post on www.kayakidaho.com, Mr. Fairborn's raft broached on a rock and spilled him and his guests into the river. He was swimming aggressively upstream when he flushed over Split Rock and caught his leg in the crack. A group of kayakers arrived moments later. One of them was able to grab a sling that Mr. Fairborn was wearing around his waist but could not pull him free. Two other boaters, one of whom worked with Garden Valley Search and Rescue, were able to attach a rope to the sling. When they got him loose he had been underwater 15-20 minutes, which was much too long. Detailed descriptions of these and other accidents can be found in the AW Accident Database.

Low-Head Dams Prove Dangerous

Low head dams once again proved dangerous to river travelers. On April 29th six people washed over Holtwood Dam on Pennsylvania's Susquehanna River after their powerboat's engine failed. As they washed towards the brink all hands quickly put on life vests. Five of them survived the 55-foot plunge and

were rescued from midstream rocks by a State Police helicopter. Nicole Barlow, 16, could not be found. A life vest, torn from her body, was found downstream. In a similar incident a family of four washed over a dam on the Upper Mississippi near Dresbach, Minnesota on May 12th. Their prop apparently got caught in an anchor line and stalled the motor. No one wore life vests, and no one survived.

Back in the paddling scene, Jonathan Hill, 26, and Drew Goodknight, 22 died at Alden Dam on the Iowa River on April 29th. The pair and a friend, who were not wearing life vests, had portaged the structure but put in too close on the downstream side. They were pulled into the hydraulic and all but one of them perished. On May 19th another person was killed at a dam on the Colorado River near Palisade, CO. Ricky Crewse, 29, was rafting with his girlfriend and her two children when their raft capsized. The woman and her children swam ashore while Mr. Crewse, who was not wearing a PFD, stayed with the boat. His body was found downstream. The accident occurred near the Price-Stubbs Diversion Dam, the site of a strong effort by local paddlers and businessmen to convert this hazardous structure into a whitewater play park.

The Western Headworks Weir on the Bow River in Calgary, Alberta is probably the best-protected low-head dam in North America. The weir was completed in 1975 and eight people drowned there in the first seven years of its existence. Dam managers formed the Weir Safety Committee in 1982 and it designed the current protective measures. There had been no deaths since then and the program served as a model for dam managers everywhere. Warning signs (both verbal and using pictures) were placed on shore and on nearby bridges. Above the dam two sets of buoys direct boaters to a side channel cut into the shore. There a short portage trail awaits them.

On June 10th the buoys were gone, washed away during a period of unusually high water. A group of nine friends from Quebec decided to float the river in two small rafts. No one was wearing a life vest. Four of the group managed to swim ashore above the 8' drop; five went over. Of these, three people washed free and two 28 year-old men died. This shows that even an ideal combination of warning signs and buoys do not offer complete protection. This year construction begins on the Harvie Passage, a project that will convert this dangerous structure into a whitewater play park. Named for a local philanthropist who provided the funds, the project will further reduce the risks posed by this facility. It will be combined with strong enforcement of city rules requiring the use of PFDs on the river.

Near Misses

As always, there were a number of near misses to report. SwiftH2O News, a Yahoo group for river rescue professionals, reported a dozen instances of whitewater paddlers being rescued from dams and islands on various rivers. Some were experienced; most were not. In one case a tuber on the Stillwater River near Billings, Montana snagged his PFD on a tree branch. Friends ran to a nearby construction site and a worker called 911. Responding firefighters cut the boy free; he was taken to the hospital in serious condition.

In northern New York an experienced kayaker ran an "8 to 10 foot waterfall" on the Saranac River and got caught in a hole. A friend rescued him and got him to an island in terrible shape. The friend left him there and went for help. Responding firefighters had to set up a line system to bring him ashore. Had he spent the night on the island he would certainly have died of hypothermia.

A potentially deadly scene unfolded at North Carolina's Class IV Wilson Creek

on January 7th. A kayaker drifted into a ledge drop at high water with no forward speed. He was caught in a powerful hydraulic, bailed out, and was recirculated in the hole for several minutes. Finally one of the many ropes thrown to him wrapped around his foot, allowing him to be hauled clear of the hole. No pulse or breathing could be detected when he was pulled to a rocky island. His companions rolled him on his side and pounded on his back. He vomited. Four rescue breaths were given. He vomited again and started breathing. Somebody flagged a vehicle on the riverside road. A second group ferried a rope across the river so the victim could be pulled across, supported in the arms of one of his friends. Lacking cell service, they drove the man to the nearest fire station. Treatment started here and an ambulance was called. He was taken to a nearby hospital where he thankfully has made a full recovery.

A dam rescue training session on the Great Miami River was nearly fatal to a 32 year-old Hamilton, Ohio firefighter. Boats performing a "two-boat tether" flipped, throwing four men into the water. Three men were recovered quickly, but a fourth was pulled into the hydraulic. His PFD and helmet were pulled off and he disappeared for minutes at a time. Extricating him took all the skill and training that the group possessed. The rescued firefighter was taken to a hospital where he remained in critical condition. A second firefighter had to be hospitalized with a head injury. Both are expected to recover fully.

Michael Blair, 32, was a novice kayaker with big ambitions. On the early evening of April 19th he was paddling alone when he decided to run 20-foot Mine Falls Dam in Nashua, NH. He flipped at the base of the drop and bailed out, only to be shoved into a log. Mr. Blair, who was wearing a life vest, wetsuit, and helmet, held on for a while before he let go. He ended up on an island in the middle of the river. His girlfriend, who had been talking

with him via two-way radio, was having dinner in an apartment overlooking the river when she saw his paddle float by. She called firefighters who found him on the island shaking uncontrollably. He was hospitalized with severe hypothermia.


On May 31st the Spencer Heights section of Colorado's Poudre River was the scene of a very close call. Veteran kayaker Kevin Domby found himself pinned vertically in a steep slot when his creek boat nosed under a log. He was stable, but trapped, and it took a lot of energy to stay upright. His friends threw him a rope, but his legs were caught and he could not get free. Then one of them paddled out to the log and attached a rope to it. They pulled hard, the log broke, and the kayak washed free. Mr. Domby, who was very cold and tired, was swimming now. He caught a well-aimed throw bag and was pulled to safety.

You can read the full account of this and other near-misses on the AW Accident Database.

In early June a fast thinking kayaker made an innovative rescue of a rafting guest on Pennsylvania's Lower Youghiogheny River. The woman, who was stranded on a midstream rock, was being rescued by a guide using a throw bag when the unexpected happened. As she swung to shore on the rope the "bag end" got caught between some rocks, leaving her holding onto the line in the middle. The guide let go of his end of the rope, but as the woman floated downstream the free end of the line wrapped around her leg. She was left to dangle in the current head-first. A guide waded out and tried to cut the rope, but succeeded only in cutting himself badly.

Heather Rau, who was shooting video for her company, saw what was happening and moved in fast. She paddled her kayak in front of the woman and told her to grab hold of the bow. By now the victim had

been struggling to breathe for several minutes. Her grip was weak and she could barely hold on. Heather paddled hard upstream, forcing the boat under her chest. This put some slack into the rope, allowing a second guide to free her.

This report, and others like it, depends on paddlers like you who send us information on whitewater fatalities, near-misses, and rescues. I'd like to thank Slim Ray, Dane Patterson, Margaret Weise, Chris Aidnan and many others who took the time to correspond with me. Many accident reports were in SwiftH2O News, a Yahoo group. Others were found in a newsletter published by the Paddlesport Industry Association. It's easier than ever for you to contribute. Go to www.americanwhitewater.org and choose Safety from the "Our Organization" menu to bring up a report form. You can cut-and-paste newspaper stories or Internet postings or write your own account. All the material you send in is available on-line and will be forwarded to the AW Safety Committee for review. You may also correspond directly with your safety editor, Charlie Walbridge, at ccwalbridge@cs.com. 

A man with a beard and sunglasses, wearing a straw hat and a life vest, is relaxing in a raft on a river. He has his hands behind his head. The raft is filled with gear, including blue and yellow bags secured with orange netting. In the background, there are steep, rocky cliffs and a yellow raft with other people further down the river.

River Voices

Dean Fairburn

Outdoorsman, Adventurer, Storyteller

By Ambrose Tuscano, Bob Gedekoh,
Craig Fournier, and Barry Tuscano

All photos by Ralph Foote,
Garden Valley photography

Dean Fairburn was a storyteller. He never told flat stories or dull, self-promoting tales. When Dean finished a story, his audience would be affected. Some were puzzled, most came away from it a little bit happier, and a very few would find their life or worldview totally changed.

Part of what made Dean such an exceptional storyteller was the number of adventures he lived through. While it certainly wasn't beyond him to invent a story for entertainment's sake, a remarkable number of his tales were true and unembellished. It didn't hurt that he got around so much. Dean didn't just travel to all corners of the country, but he actually lived in most of them at one point or another. Not exactly your typical Midwestern boy, his first river trips often snowballed into epics simply because of the eight- to 10-hour drive separating him from the whitewater of western North Carolina.

In one of Dean's more memorable moves, he took a teaching job in Holy Cross, Alaska, an Inuit village off the grid in the southwest part of the state. There he was introduced to dog sledding, or mushing, when a friend gave him six Alaskan

Husky puppies. Though Dean only lived in Alaska for a few years, his love of mushing traveled with him wherever he went thereafter. When he and his family eventually settled in the whitewater Mecca of Garden Valley, Idaho, paddling and dog sledding became complementary activities for Dean. There, he would run his ever-expanding team of Huskies all winter, and work as a raft guide on the Payette Rivers in the summer.

Of course, what he loved most about each activity was its ability to transport the participant where few, if any others, would go. Dean loved the wilderness and wildness of rivers more than the average paddler. He was less interested in the difficulty of a run than its remoteness and scenic qualities. He undertook countless wilderness river expeditions to far-flung places, including Alaska's Alek River (see *American Whitewater*, September/

October 2000, p. 76), the Romaine River in northern Quebec (see *American Whitewater*, January/February 1988, p. 22), and the Grand Canyon.

Last winter Dean won his first dog sledding race, Oregon's Eagle Cap 200, a grueling 200-mile trek that qualified Dean for the Iditarod, mushing's most difficult and prestigious race. Just this summer he announced that he would be entering the Iditarod in March, 2008. It was going to require a huge sacrifice from Dean, his family and the high school where he worked, but anyone who knew him well realized that the allure of the 1150 miles of snow-clad wilderness between Anchorage and Nome was almost irresistible to Dean. Turning down the opportunity, or even deferring for a few years, would have been completely out of character for him. No obstacles—not raising the money, nor placating his boss and least of all the



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grueling miles of Alaska wilderness—would stand in his way.

But this story doesn't end the way anyone wanted it to. On July 1, 2007, Dean Fairburn drowned while guiding a commercial raft trip down the South Payette. He never got his chance to race the Iditarod and everyone who knew him, or who could have known him, is poorer for his untimely death. To honor Dean's spirit, however, we're going to attempt to focus away from the tragedy of this story and instead remember some of the many, many good times that Dean helped make possible. Here are some of our attempts to do, clumsily perhaps, what Dean did so well: tell stories.

Sled Dog Racing

During the years spent teaching school in a remote Native American village in Alaska, Dean developed an interest in sled dog racing. When he relocated to the mainland he was unable to bring all of his dogs with him, but he soon had a new team in his Idaho backyard. Mushing remained an obsession for the remainder of his life. Dean dearly loved whitewater kayaking and rafting, particularly organizing wilderness river expeditions, but I think that he loved running his dogs even more.

Sled dog racing is not just a physically demanding sport; training and fielding a competitive team of dogs requires a huge commitment in patience, time and resources. Housing, feeding and exercising 15 big, boisterous dogs, not to mention cleaning up after them, is a major undertaking. It goes without saying that Dean would never have been able to pursue this passion without the support of his wife and sons.

Dean's dogs lived in a large enclosure next to his house. Going into that enclosure for the first time was an intimidating experience. The dogs were big and unruly; to the untrained eye they looked more like a wild pack than a team. But once in the pen visitors soon discovered that each dog had its own personality; some were

shy, while others were affectionate and playful. None of them were mean, and it soon became obvious that they were all Dean's pets.

Every winter Dean would send his friends vivid accounts of his latest mushing adventures. Several years ago on a solo wilderness trip near Idaho's Deadwood River Dean was awakened in the middle of the night by what he described as a canine hullabaloo. He crawled nervously from his tent and using a flashlight beam he scanned his team, counting sets of eyes glowing in the dark, hoping that all were present and accounted for. To his surprise he spotted an extra set of eyes peering back at him ... a wolf had decided to pay his dogs a visit. Most people would have been terrified, but Dean was thrilled by the encounter.

Later, during a late evening run in the valley of the Middle Fork of the Payette, near his home, Dean's team went berserk for no apparent reason, diving en masse off the trail and over a bank. His sled had upset and his hysterical dogs were tangled in the dense brush by their harnesses. Dean described the scene as pandemonium. As he struggled to unravel the mess, he was wondering what had triggered his team's bizarre behavior. Finally he noticed that the focus of his dogs' hysteria was a tree that towered above him. Closer inspection revealed two full-grown mountain lions crouched twenty feet above his head. Characteristically, Dean did not abandon his team, though he admitted that he wasted no time in getting them back in line and onto the trail that led home.

Dean the Storyteller

Dean was a master storyteller and jokester. He was at his best late at night beside a campfire, entertaining an audience that was only a bit more inebriated than he was. His delivery was so droll and unassuming that it often took a while before anyone realized that he was "stretching the truth." The fact that so many of his stories involved, for instance, a two headed midget who fell in love with an enormous woman with wooden eyes, should have

been a clue. These jokes were very long and the punch lines were inevitably very silly, but Dean still managed to leave his audience begging for more.

Once Dean and I were completing a self contained three-day kayak trip on the Middle Fork of the Salmon. It was early in the spring, before the permit season, and we had waded through snow to reach the Marsh Creek put-in. The river was high and there were only a few other parties on the river. On the last day, after we had paddled about 40 miles and still with 15 to go, we spotted a group of rafters eating lunch on a beach. We paddled over to say hello and quickly surmised that their approach to river running was a bit different from our own. Thousands of dollars worth of state of the art camping equipment was strewn across the beach, and they sported immense cowboy hats. They looked like they were from Texas, they looked rich, and they looked very Republican. Their leader was a big blustery fellow who seemed to very knowledgeable about everything. Dean decided to tap into his "wisdom."

"How much further do we have to go to get to Selway Falls?" Dean inquired, with a totally straight face.

"What ..." the baffled Texan exclaimed. "That's on the Selway River, you can't get there in a boat."

Dean looked convincingly confused. "The book said that Selway Falls is the take-out for the Selway River, so that's where we left the truck," Dean replied "Now how much further downstream is it? We must be getting close."

The Texan was starting to look astonished ... and exasperated. "Why would you leave your shuttle vehicle at the Selway take-out when you were paddling the Middle Fork of the Salmon," he demanded.

Now Dean managed to look astonished. "But we aren't on the Middle Fork," he announced, "we're on the Selway."

"No, you're not," the Texan exploded.

"You're on the Middle Fork."

Dean was totally nonplussed. "You might be on the Middle Fork but we are on the Selway," he announced, without even the hint of a grin.

I sat in my kayak, struggling to keep a straight face while this insane conversation continued. By the time Dean was finished and we paddled off, I think the Texan was so befuddled that he didn't know what river he was on! I have no doubt those rafters are still debating what happened to us.

Living the Dream

During the 30 years that I have been kayaking, I have shared rivers and campfires with hundreds of enthusiastic young men and women. Many of them

expressed their determination to lead lives full of adventure. They dreamed of traveling to exotic lands and of working and living in remote places. They spoke of unconventional futures filled with excitement.

Most of these folks have long since disappeared from my life and the "river scene." Some did not have the dedication and commitment to pursue their dreams. More commonly, they became distracted, and then, entrapped by the hard practicalities of life. Careers, spouses and children have a way of changing priorities.

In the 20-plus years that I knew Dean, he came closer to living his dream than anyone I know. Together we backpacked through remote canyons in Mexico and spent nine incomparable days paddling

the rugged Romaine River in Quebec. We paddled the Middle Fork of Salmon and the Selway, and made one of the early descents of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison in Colorado. We spent countless days together kayaking throughout the Appalachians and the Rockies. With others, Dean paddled dozens of rivers in Idaho and Alaska, as well as the Colorado through the Grand Canyon.

As a young man, Dean lived and worked in the mountains of Tennessee and in Alaska, finally calling Idaho's beautiful Payette watershed home. There he was a dedicated and enthusiastic teacher who genuinely cared about his students. He spent his summers working and guiding on the rivers and training his dogs.

He managed to live his dream while starting and raising his family. Accomplishing this



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required determination and imagination, not to mention sacrifice. None of this would have been possible without the active support of his family, particularly his wife, Jenny, who shared Dean's sense of adventure and stood by him through some wild and woolly times.

It is tragic that Dean was taken from us in the prime of his life, when there were still so many potential adventures ahead. But I think that all of his friends would agree that he lived his life to the fullest, and that he experienced more in his 45 years than most people could experience in 10 lifetimes.

More than anyone I know, Dean lived The Dream.

Celebrating Life

We have an unknown distance yet to run, an unknown river to explore. What falls there are, we know not; what rocks beset the channel, we know not; what walls ride over the river, we know not. Ah, well! We may conjecture many things.

- John Wesley Powell

Whitewater brought me to Idaho nine years ago, away from my home in another whitewater state: Ohio (Rattlesnake Creek Falls, Paint Creek, etc.). Not only did I find excellent whitewater here, but I was lucky enough to meet some great people. Dean Fairburn was one of those people. Troy Dyke, a paddling buddy from Chillicothe, Ohio, told me about this guy named Dean who had moved to Garden Valley, Idaho, around the same time I moved. Troy told some remarkable stories about him, so in the spring of my first year here, I finally got Dean's email and we met one night near the Middle Fork of the Payette. At the time, I was a whitewater junkie, and the stories of his first descents and other adventures, like mushing in Alaska, were absolutely spell binding. In the years since, he introduced me to many adventures.

Dean was larger than life and he had a way of elevating an ordinary paddle or multi-day trip into true adventure. Fun

and safety were part of every trip, and practical jokes and storytelling were the norm. There is not enough room here to tell about all the people who he had a positive impact on, or to share the endless stories he told or the countless stories told about him. His unspoken goal, I think, was to celebrate life and introduce as many people to the outdoor world (stargazing, mushing, and whitewater) as possible. He was not just interested in enriching the lives of boaters either; he helped neighbors, students, fellow teachers, customers on his commercial paddle trips, and total strangers find value and meaning in life they'd never known before.

I remember one spring day Dean was kayaking and I was taking my cataract down the Staircase section of the South Fork Payette at extremely high water. At the put-in, two strangers from Florida walked up and started talking to Dean. Within five minutes, Dean had one of the guys outfitted in his extra splash pants, paddling jacket and PFD, and told him to jump on my cat. His enthusiasm for life was contagious.

Dean was a remarkable human, a merry prankster at heart, a mentor, a dedicated father to Kit and Kavik, a loving husband to Jennifer, and a genuine friend who could always be counted on to make you smile and laugh. The spirit and memories he leaves are bigger than the Grand Canyon. Dean celebrated life and would want all of us to continue to do so. It was a blessing to all of us who were lucky enough to know him.

Hydro

When Dean was still living in Tennessee, he got a black lab pup. He named him Hydro after a rapid on the Wataga, and set about shaping him into a companion that he'd be comfortable spending his time with. Hydro went everywhere with Dean and always occupied the passenger side of his pickup truck seat ... even when there was another passenger. Dean tried to teach Hydro to fart at will by throwing him a treat whenever he passed gas. Hydro did his best to master this trick and certainly

was very good at frequent random stink bombs. On occasion Hydro succeeded in coordinating his farts to Dean's command and both master and canine would just beam with pride.

Hydro's prowess at revolting behavior was crowned when Dean taught him to catch big slimy hockers in mid air. Dean would put a morsel of food in his mouth, then loudly clear his throat before spitting it in an arc toward Hydro. Labs will jump instinctively to snatch food. Soon the throat clearing became a signal that something tasty was coming. Dean, of course was careful to only display this trick when it would have the greatest effect on observers—like when they were eating.

When Dean and Jenny moved to Alaska, Dean began to run sled dogs. Hydro had no instincts for working in harness, but was willing to try anything for Dean. No doubt the other dogs never considered him a part of the team, because Hydro stayed in the house and ate people food. Only when Hydro became too old to run with the team did Dean start making progress with the sled dogs. Hydro lived out the rest of his days in Idaho as perhaps the most pampered ex-sled dog in the world.

Sense of Humor

In the summer of 1989 Dean went to Quebec with some other boaters for a whirlwind tour of the rivers of "la belle province." Dean knew one phrase in French—"Voulez vous coucher avec moi?"—and practiced it whenever he had a chance. It was probably fortunate that he didn't understand the replies he got. Towards the end of the trip, the group had moved down past Montreal to la Riviere Rouge. They had been paddling every day for at least 10 days and the rivers had been getting the best of the group for the entire trip. Dean hadn't figured prominently in the mayhem, but between the rescues and the late night, beer-drenched rehashing of the rescues, he was exhausted. He announced that he wouldn't be paddling the Rouge.

Instead, Dean drove to the take-out to

wait for his friends. The end of the run is a series of seven spectacular waterfalls called the Seven Sisters and Dean set out to take a look at them. He started up a trail on river left until it split. One fork went up and one stayed along the river so Dean started climbing in order to get the best view. Soon he was looking down on the last of the drops and the trail was getting narrower and closer to the edge a rock cliff. As he proceeded into the gorge he could see the upper drops ahead, but the trail fed into a narrow ledge on the face of the sheer cliff.

Dean had never been comfortable with exposed high places, but the trail was well worn and he figured that there had to be a good perch ahead where he could see the upper cascades. He proceeded carefully, trying not to look down at the torrent 50 feet below. As he approached the next drop, the ledge narrowed and he had to turn to face the cliff and slide sideways along, groping for secure handholds. Dean was barely controlling the rising phobia when the ledge rounded a sharp corner and he had to swing his body out over the void while gripping small cracks with his fingers and barely finding toe holds for his feet.

It was in the middle of this maneuver that Dean was completely overcome with a serious case of vertigo. His head was spinning; his leg muscles were twitching uncontrollably; he was drenched with sweat. He caught a glimpse of the rocks below that if he fell, his body would bounce off before being swept over the thundering waterfall, and then he saw the wide spot in the ledge ahead. Survival instinct took over and he managed to inch around the corner without losing his footing.

The relative security of his new roost allowed Dean to catch his breath and survey his predicament. Dean knew with absolute certainty that returning on the route he had come was not an option. The ledge he had attained was a couple of feet wide and ran the length of the pool between waterfalls. While it seemed spacious compared to the previous stretch,

he knew that he couldn't reasonably expect to stay there. Above and below were sheer rock walls that would entail technical rock climbing without technical rock climbing equipment. Thirty feet below was a deep pool of water with an easy exit onto some flat rocks. A jump into the river here seemed to promise his best hope of escape because there were sunbathers enjoying the ambiance of that special place. Access to those rocks couldn't be too difficult since the sunbathers had gotten there dressed in speedos and flipflops.

Then Dean did a double take and realized that some of the sunbathers were only wearing flipflops and also that they were all young men. Upon further inspection it became obvious to Dean that he was overlooking a favorite hangout for the local gay community. To further complicate the situation Dean now noticed his boating friends were on the opposite cliff executing a portage of the worst of the Seven Sisters.

What ensued can only be described as a comedy of miscommunication. Shouting over the roar of falling water was totally ineffective, although it did alert the sunbathers to Dean's presence. Dean's friends weren't aware of the difficulty he'd had in reaching the spot and didn't know of his fear of heights. Desperate sign language was insufficient to convey his predicament, but that didn't stop Dean from trying. He knew he was in serious trouble, but at the same time he couldn't help seeing the humor in the situation. He began to pantomime various lewd and morbid cries for help.

This was great entertainment for his friends who were soon rolling on the ground with hysterical laughter. The sunbathers also enjoyed the show and began to beckon to Dean to jump. With their gestures, they made it clear that Dean was welcome on their rock. They were yelling encouragement to him and may have even had some helpful information, but Dean only knew one phrase in French, and felt it wouldn't be appropriate under these circumstances; a guy in flipflops was becoming very flirtatious.

Dean's friends were overcome with laughter. They assumed that he was unwilling to take the plunge for fear of being attacked by the sunbathers. They were soon yelling and motioning for Dean to jump. The sunbathers were inviting him to jump. Dean looked into the deep pool. That was his safest escape, yet his mind was tortured by those 30 feet of void between his ledge and the water. The longer he considered the jump, the further the possibility of it retreated. After about 15 minutes, his friends assumed that the show was over and waved merrily to Dean as they continued their portage. Dean helplessly watched as his only hope of rescue disappeared.

About an hour later, the paddlers were at the take-out loading boats and changing into dry clothes. There was some chatter about where Dean was, but there was cold beer in the truck, so no one was in a hurry to go looking.

"Hey guys. Thanks a lot for the help." Dean was strolling down the road toward the truck, apparently intact and unmolested. As he popped the cap on a cold one, his friends badgered him for details about his escape. He told them the story of how he had gotten to the ledge and his fear of heights.

"So did you jump?" one of non-rescuers asked. They could see that his clothes were dry, so unless he had stripped and dropped his belongings to the delighted crowd of cavorting sunbathers, they knew he hadn't. The other two possibilities involved gaining control of his fears and making some truly dangerous moves up the rock face or out the narrow ledge.

Dean smiled. "I'm not telling" he replied. Then, spying a group of women raft customers coming up the trail from the river he called out "Voulez vous coucher avec moi?"

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Class III Sponsor



Kokatat remains one of AW's strongest allies by continuing support of AW's membership and river stewardship programs. By providing American Whitewater with valuable membership and donation incentives, Kokatat will create the support we need to continue our stewardship of North American rivers.



Teva and American Whitewater have worked together for nearly a decade to protect access and conserve whitewater resources for paddlers and rafters nationwide. Teva and AW have partnered on numerous tours and events over the years, including AW's 50th Anniversary Gala in 2004.

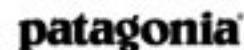
Class II Sponsor



Boof Sponsors



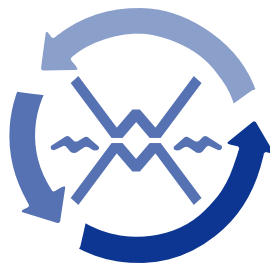
Wave Sponsors



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.



Subaru always has been, and will continue to be, committed to safeguarding the natural environment that so many of its customers avidly enjoy. Subaru is proud to continue this tradition by supporting American Whitewater's largest event of the year the 2007 Gauley River Festival now presented by Subaru.



WERNER PADDLES

Corporate Spotlight: Werner Paddles

Our Connection to Water

Everyone on earth enjoys water ... being near water, listening to water or simply gazing out at water. Kayakers take it to the next level. They have a special connection with water that extends beyond simple enjoyment. Sea kayakers and river runners alike feel a spiritual connection with and an awe and respect for Mother Nature's precious gift. The people who make up Werner Paddles feel this passion and spiritual connection as well, and we believe it is our responsibility to protect what we love and to play an active roll in preserving it.

How & Why We Work with AW

Werner Paddles is proud to be a Corporate Sponsor of American Whitewater and a strong supporter of AW's Stream Keeper Program for the Sultan River, which flows near our manufacturing facility.

But we can't do it alone—we need your help! With many dam licenses coming up for renewal, waterways being de-watered and more and more public access being denied or closed, we don't have the luxury of waiting for tomorrow—we need to act today. Without AW, our future is one with filthy polluted waterways, no access to water, or worse yet—no free-flowing waterways at all.

Without AW, we would all be up a dry creek without a Werner paddle! And let's be honest, Werner certainly doesn't want that and we hope you don't either.

AW is our best advocate for preserving and protecting whitewater resources across the nation. For several decades Werner Paddles has been honored to support AW's efforts and considers AW an

essential partner in our long-term plans and future success. AW is a core group of talented, hard working, dedicated and passionate paddlers who are advocating for us all. These same individuals have become masters at stretching resources, but they need our help ... so become a member, volunteer your time and talent, be a river steward, or donate a gift. Do it today. Support American Whitewater.

Thank you AW for all your hard work and thanks to all of you who support AW.

Werner Paddles
Hand crafted since 1962
Sultan, Washington USA



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



P.O. Box 1540, Cullowhee, NC 28723 • 866-BOAT-4AW

Membership Application

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

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone _____

E-mail _____

Club Affiliation _____

Individual Membership Levels

- ☐ \$25 Junior (under the age of 18)
☐ \$25 Individual for Affiliate Club Members (SAVE \$10 if you are also a member of an AW Affiliate Club)
☐ \$35 Individual One Year
☐ \$50 Family (immediate family members excluding children over the age of 18)
☐ \$65 (2) Year Membership
☐ \$100 Ender Club* (Receive AW's annual Ender Club T-shirt FREE)
☐ \$250 Platinum Paddler* (Receive AW's exclusive IR Polartec shirt FREE)
☐ \$500 Explorer Membership* (Receive a drybag from Watershed FREE)
☐ \$750 Lifetime Membership (Receive AW's Lifetime Membership NRS Paddlers Duffle FREE)
☐ \$1,000 Legacy Membership* (Receive AW's exclusive Kokatat Gore-tex Drytop FREE)
☐ \$2,500 Steward Membership* (Receive AW's exclusive Kokatat Gore-tex Drytop and Pants FREE)

* A portion of your contribution is tax deductible. If you would like information about the tax deductibility of your contribution please speak with an AW Staff Member.

Organizational Membership Types

- ☐ \$75.00 Affiliate Club (Join our growing network of paddling organizations across North America)

Additional Donation

☐ \$5.00 ☐ \$10.00 ☐ \$25.00 \$ _____ Other

☐ \$24.99 Kayak Session subscription (Add Kayak Session to your membership at a 40% discount)

Amount

Membership subtotal \$ _____

☐ Do NOT Mail me the AW Journal. I will read it on-line.

Donation subtotal \$ _____

☐ Do NOT share my name with like-minded groups.

Total \$ _____

Ender Club and Platinum Paddler indicate shirt size (S, M, L, XL, XXL). We will mail gift certificate for Kokatat gear.

Transaction Type

☐ Cash ☐ Charge ☐ Check# (payable to American Whitewater)

Card Type: MC Visa Discover AMEX

Card Number _____ Exp. Date ____/____/____

Name as it appears on card _____

Signature _____ Date ____/____/____

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 fifth year that Clif Bar has sponsored the Flowing Rivers grants. Clif Bar and American Whitewater are happy to announce the recipients of the 2007 "Flowing River" grants. The Flowing Rivers campaign, a joint initiative between Clif Bar and American Whitewater, puts money in the hands of people who are protecting the rivers that are running through their backyards. This year's funding will support initiatives from the Foothills Paddling Club (SC) and the Willamette Kayak and Canoe Club (OR). The Foothills Paddling Club will use their funding to enhance an access area and purchase water quality equipment while the Willamette Club will use their funding to organize a safety education weekend. To read more about the two projects see <http://www.americanwhitewater.org/content/Article/view/articleid/29549/display/full/>.

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

Chico Paddleheads, Chico
Country Paddlers, Lotus
River Touring Section, Angeles Chapter
Sequoia Paddling Club, WindsorGold

Sierra Club Loma Prieta Ch., San Jose
Sierra Club SF Chapter, Livermore

Colorado

Avid4Adventure Inc., Boulder
Front Range Paddle Asso, Lafayette
Grand Canyon Priv. Boat. Assn., Colorado Springs
Pikes Peak Whitewater Club, Colorado Springs
Pueblo Paddlers, Pueblo West
San Miguel Whitewater Asso, Telluride
University of Colorado Kayak Club, Boulder

Florida

North Florida Whitewater Assoc., Ocala

Georgia

Atlanta Whitewater Club, Atlanta
Georgia Canoeing Association, 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

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

Maine

Outward Bound, Newry

Maryland

Greater Baltimore Canoe Club, Kingsville
Mason Dixon Canoe Cruisers, Smithsburg

Massachusetts

Brian White, Boston
Zoar Outdoor, Charlemont
AMC - New Hampshire Paddlers, Honover

Minnesota

Boat Busters Anonymous, Stillwater
Charlie Sawyer, Maple Plain
SCSU Outdoor Endeavors, Saint Cloud

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

Mt. Washington Valley Paddlers, Franconia

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
KCCNY, New York
Wildrivers, Millwood
St Lawrence University, Canton

N. Carolina

Carolina Canoe Club, Raleigh
Davidson Outdoors, Davidson
Triad River Runners, Winston, Salem
Watauga Paddlers, Boone
Dixie Division ACA, Tuxedo
UNCG Outdoor Adventures, Greensboro

Ohio

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

Oregon

Face Level Industries LLC, Portland
Oregon Kayak and Canoe Club, Portland
Oregon Whitewater Association, Beaverton
Willamette Kayak and Canoe Club, Corvallis
Lower Columbia Canoe Club, Portland
North West Rafters Asso, Portland

Pennsylvania

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Sugarloaf
Bens Creek Canoe Club, Johnstown
Canoe Club of Greater Harrisburg, Mechanicsburg

Conewago Canoe Club, York
Easton Whitewater Parks Commission,
Bethlehem
Holtwood Hooligans, Lititz
Lehigh Valley Canoe Club, Lehigh Valley
Philadelphia Canoe Club, Philadelphia
Three Rivers Paddling Club, Pittsburgh
Lehigh Valley White water 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

Texas

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 River Runners, Lynch Station
Canoe Cruisers Association, Arlington
Coastal Canoeists, Richmond
FORVA, Roanoke
Float Fishermen of Virginia, Richmond

Washington

Outdoor Adventure Club, Redmond
Spokane Canoe & Kayak Club, Spokane
University Kayak Club, Seattle
Venturing Crew 360, Snohomish
The Mountaineers, Seattle

Wisconsin

Hoofers Outing Club, Madison
NE Wisconsin Paddlers Inc. Appleton

Canada, British Columbia

Vancouver Kayak Club, Vancouver

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 AW, which is a volunteer conservation and safety organization.



PO Box 1540 Cullowhee, NC 28723

www.americanwhitewater.org

Release for publication

I hereby release my work (literary, graphic or photographic) for publication in American Whitewater magazine

- I understand that my work may be edited or cropped at the editors' discretion.
- I understand that I will not be paid for my work.
- I accept responsibility for the accuracy of the information included in my submission. I have not libeled or slandered any individual, corporation, or agency in this work.
- I understand that all or some of my work may be reprinted at some future date in an American Whitewater publication
- I promise that this material has not been and will not soon be published by another magazine or publication and the rights to this material are clear and unrestricted.
- I understand that once this material is printed in American Whitewater it may be reprinted or reproduced in other publications if I wish, providing I notify them that it has already appeared in American Whitewater.
- I understand that the contents of American Whitewater Magazine, including my contribution will be archived on the American Whitewater website.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

This release must be signed by the contributing author(s), photographers(s), and graphic artist(s).

Send your material to:

American Whitewater Journal PO Box 1540 Cullowhee, NC 28723 or via email to editor@amwhitewater.org

Send your material to:

Journal Editor

P.O. Box 1540

Cullowhee, NC 28723

E-mail: editor@amwhitewater.org

GET YOUR FIT ON

Anatomy does matter and we've got it in all the right places....Werner Paddles offers the widest range of design and fit options so that every paddle can be a custom fit. Other than quality, durability, a lot of performance, (your buddies running your shuttle and cold ones at the take-out) a proper fitting paddle is essential to having a really great day on the water.

To view our entire line of play and river running paddles and our Interactive Guide to a Great Fit log on to our website at www.wernerpaddles.com.

*Jamie Simon has a really great day at the Skookumchuck Narrows, British Columbia
Photo by Jennings Steger*

The Player
Premium Whitewater

The Side Kick in NEW BLUE
Premium Whitewater

1.800.275.3311 www.wernerpaddles.com





ANNA LEVESQUE - TEAM D



CHRISTIE GLISSMEYER - TEAM D



NIKKI KELLY - TEAM D



MARIANN SAETHER - TEAM D

AGENT - CHRISTIE GLISSMEYER

"Finally a play boat that works for female freestylers. Fast, forgiving, lightweight, and comfortable. The Agent's design produces HUGE loops and massive air on waves. I love the way it handles down river too. Paddle all day and rip every feature!"

MAMBA - MARIANN SAETHER

"This is the boat to have as it does everything well. I can do big water overnights or low volume day trips. It surfs, river runs, and handles the steeps. It is ideal for learning but will remain a kayak you will never grow out of. I paddle it around the World."

NOMAD - NIKKI KELLY

"This is the top choice in today's creeker. Quick downstream, turns fast, stable, easy to roll, and resurfaces fast. Add all the safety features and the Nomad is the blue print of the perfect creek boat."

APPROACH - ANNA LEVESQUE

"The Approach is the boat for women who enjoy both flatwater and easy-going whitewater. It has the perfect balance of speed and stability that are key for a day trip with the family or an exciting run down a Class II river."

www.dagger.com



AGENT



MAMBA



NOMAD



APPROACH

