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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.



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The Journey Ahead

AW Board Election Issue

American Whitewater is your organization! As members, this is your opportunity to elect candidates to our board of directors, where they will represent you for the next three years. Take some time to look over the outstanding slate of candidates on page 62-63 and use the attached mail-in ballot to cast your vote.

American Whitewater's board of directors embodies the ideal of grassroots advocates who live the AW mission "to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely." Currently, the American Whitewater board consists of 13 voting members who serve three-year terms. As executive director, I work closely with the five-person Executive Committee comprised of organization officers (President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary) and an at-large member.

Because American Whitewater is administered at the staff level, the principle role of the board is that of governance—making decisions crucial to the care and

feeding of the organization. In carrying out those responsibilities, members of a board must fulfill certain duties to the organization, membership and the rivers we protect. Board responsibilities involve setting priorities and strategies to address our mission, and ensuring administrative integrity and financial stability of the organization.

Key responsibilities of board members include:

- Determine AW's mission and purposes
- Provide ongoing support and guidance for the executive
- Ensure effective organizational planning
- Ensure adequate organizational resources
- Determine and monitor AW's programs and services
- Enhance AW's public image
- Expand AW's sphere of influence
- Attend annual board meetings and prepare adequately for them
- Assess and evaluate board performance and effectiveness

Across the country AW board members, past and present, have a history of being involved in river stewardship projects that rack up tangible results. Over 50 years ago, American Whitewater was established as one of our nation's first river conservation organizations. Our founders had the objectives of exploration, enjoyment, and preservation in mind when they saw an opportunity to unite paddling clubs across the country for a common purpose of preserving the integrity of our nation's whitewater rivers. Today AW directors lead your organization as we occupy a unique role in the national river conservation movement connecting those who enjoy recreational opportunities with river conservation and stewardship goals.

See you on the river,



Mark Singleton
Executive Director

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President's Message

As I write this it is early September and it has been a big summer for American Whitewater.

In late July, AW volunteer and 2006 River Steward of the Year, Charlene Coleman, signed a new settlement agreement on AW's behalf for the Saluda river dam relicensing in Columbia, South Carolina. The settlement agreement is a thoughtful and creative document that serves AW's mission in river conservation, access, and safety. The countless volunteer hours that Charlene contributed on this project are evident in the quality of the final agreement. She has certainly had a significant and enduring positive impact on the health and enjoyment of the Saluda River. Way to go Charlene!

Just last week, after a considerable delay of over two years, US Forest Service officials announced a final decision on managing recreation uses on the upper Chattooga River. This is a major milestone in what has been an epic 12-plus year struggle for me personally and an even longer struggle for the greater paddling community. The new management plan falls woefully short of our goal of equitable Headwaters access and is far less than we deserve. We are digesting the details of the new decision and evaluating our options. However for the first time since July 1976 there will be legal boating on a small section of the upper river starting in December 2009, flows permitting. The decision also places some limited restrictions on other river users regarding group size and camping locations.

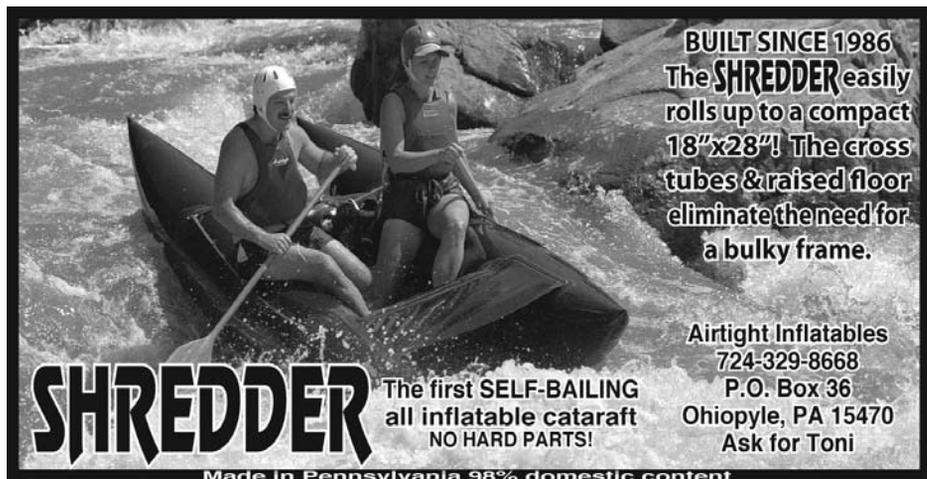
The most gratifying part of the process was when, during a press conference regarding the new decision, the acting Sumter Forest Supervisor, Monica Schwabach, stated that the US Forest Service has determined that boating on the Upper Chattooga—even in unlimited numbers—“would have no impact on the resource.” Finally the USFS affirms what AW has been stating all along. The devil will be in the implementation details, which are to be established in a workshop this fall. In the meantime we look forward to some boating on the Chattooga Headwaters this winter.

Recently Yvon and Melinda Chouinard made a generous donation to AW and our river stewardship efforts. As a teenager in the mid 70s I loved rock climbing and could often be found out at the crags at Carter Rock, MD or elsewhere in the Mather gorge of the Potomac after school. There were a number of pioneering climbers during that time, and Yvon Chouinard was certainly one of the sport's most noted. He was chief among my rock climbing heroes, and I lived vicariously through his great feats on the magnificent walls of Yosemite. Yvon is also a gifted paddler and has been a long time supporter of AW's stewardship efforts around the country. Yvon and Melinda's generous gift is made even more special since it comes from a long time personal hero that now supports the river stewardship work I am so passionate about. Thank you Yvon and Melinda for your generous support; I hope to meet you personally some day soon!

Happy holidays from the sunny south. Best wishes for a great Thanksgiving and a Merry Christmas. Please remember AW as you plan your year-end giving and put a little something extra in AW's stocking this Christmas. America's whitewater rivers depend on it.



See you on the Upper Chattooga!



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East Meets West - A Beginners Guide to Paddling the Colorado River

by Tim Oliver

What's so special about the Grand Canyon? Is it really as great as people say? What's more challenging: organizing the logistics, or finding the right people? What does it take to pull a trip together? Millions of visitors to Arizona's Grand Canyon National Park experience the thrill of driving to a viewpoint on the rim and peering over the edge. Some stay for just a few minutes and leave satisfied, but others feel a compelling urge to look deeper, to stay longer and get inside the canyon—to go “below the rim.” Few enjoy the privilege of a through trip along the Colorado River corridor, since access to many of the Canyon's secret places is so difficult to arrange. In this regard, a Canyon float-trip is similar to a multi-day caving or climbing expedition, in that it requires logistical navigation and advance planning to experience the unique view from the river.

On a commercial trip, the guides will take you down the river, cook and fetch for you and show you a good time. They make the decisions while you enjoy the ride. A

non-commercial trip is the homegrown way to experience the Canyon: it's fun to put together with a group of friends, affordable, and despite the bureaucracy involved in permitting, it feels like a true wilderness expedition. I was lucky enough to experience trips in 2000, and 2002. The permit system has changed a lot since then, with arguably greater parity between river days assigned to commercial and non-commercial sectors and the introduction of a new class of non-commercial permit for smaller groups of no more than eight boaters. What follows is a personal retrospective, and it should be read with these and other new changes in mind. I waited nine years for my permit, but it was worth it. Around 800 people a night camp along the Inner Canyon river corridor in peak season. It sounds like quite a crowd, but the magic of it is that you and your companions will arrive at a new and deserted camping beach every day with a sense of wonder, because the campsite was almost certainly occupied the previous night by a group just like yours. Luckily the tenants cleaned up so well before they left that you probably cannot tell they were there.

In 1986, a year after I relocated to Durham NC from the UK, I was lured by a friend's promise of big western water in the desert environment of Arizona. Internet pictures did not exist then, so word of mouth alone

painted the Canyon's mystique. Although I had modest kayaking skills, then as now, my goal of paddling the Colorado seemed like a worthy ambition to focus on, one I could grow into while I waited patiently for my permit to materialize. A background in mountaineering helped me tackle this endeavor like applying for a climbing permit for one of the 8,000-meter summits of the Himalayas. It was only after my permit was confirmed in 1998 that I got serious about ramping up both my organizational and paddling skills.

Planning

With a sense of bravado also born out of fast “alpine style” climbing culture, I wanted to buck the traditional expedition sized logistics that are endemic to the Colorado for the sake of what I perceived as a more intimate lightweight approach. I would take no more than a handful of well-chosen fellow paddlers, one raft and some dried food, all the better to savor the true wilderness experience of the Canyon (interestingly, there is now a new class of permit designed for small low-impact trips). In 1998 I quickly learned this was an idealistic concept of travel on the Colorado at best, that the Canyon requires lots of gear packed on big rafts of a design I'd never seen and that no one in North Carolina likely owned. One solution emerged early: talk to the guys who have the gear and experience. I called Paul Harris in Sacramento's River City Whitewater Club (RCWC).

Paul advised that four oared rafts were the default craft for a Canyon trip, gauged by his yardstick of safety in numbers, group comfort, and camaraderie in such a hostile desert environment. I was in the enviable position of selling seats on a trip that everyone wanted to join, so it



Members of the 2000 team (left to right rear: Mike Clark, Kurt Stegen, Zac Shepler Whitney Eure, Stephan Gulley, Paul Harris, Rob Shepler, Joe Palen, Bill Sampson, Wayne Irby, Raymond Williams. Front: Tim Oliver, Ruth Allbright, Bob Sawhill, Phill Thomas, Lisa Birskevich)

Photo by Tim Oliver

was in my best interests to find other folks to strengthen the team, including a guide familiar with the river, competent rowers, expert kayakers and maybe a medic.

I next agonized over how to find the best and most responsible raft captains, not the crazies. Weren't they all crazies anyway? Once I started trying to put together a mixed team of kayakers and rafters, it became clear that there was a great deal of mutual misunderstanding and even suspicion between the relative viewpoints of these two groups. I was comfortable choosing fellow kayakers from my local club scene, but initially hesitant inviting raft captains referred to me by word over the phone.

Each side, west and east, seemed to have a different outlook and river culture based largely on the different experiences their respective mode of river transportation offers. Oarsmen row slowly but navigate very deliberately, avoiding any possibility of capsize at all costs. They delight in the comforts provided by carrying plenty of food and camping gear after a hard day at the oars. Like motor home drivers, they

camp out for several nights in remote wilderness areas. By comparison, Eastern kayakers are hyperactive day trippers, entirely dependent on car shuttles to get them to and from the river each, stopping frequently to play at rapids. To some degree each camp identified itself as the purveyor of the true and authentic "river spirit," while disdaining somewhat the beliefs of the other as a bunch of yahoos. My challenge, after I'd given away eight of my sixteen seats to the oarsmen was to break down these cultural barriers and make sure everyone got along well together on the river. I was advised that oarsmen do not expect to share in the communal rotation of camp chores like cooking and cleanup, since they carry kayakers' personal baggage down the river all day. Clearly there was the potential for a lot of bad feeling if I did not take wise counsel from both sides and if I failed to foster a strong sense of community spirit amongst our group. I tried hard to achieve a balance in gender representation too, which was challenging since the pool of qualified female kayakers and raft captains was smaller than the corresponding male pool. I was also keen to invite at least one of my climbing buddies from Wales. In my conversations with the mentors whose advice I sought, horrible stories began to emerge about previous trip leaders who

had turned into petty despots, and raft captains who drank beer continuously while on the river and could not get out of bed until noon. It was starting to seem as though I also needed the skills of a personnel manager!

In order to put some of my worst fears to rest, I flew out west to a meeting with my primary Californian contact, Paul Harris, his fiancée Steff, and fellow raft captain Bob Sawhill. They patiently answered all my naïve questions about rafting gear and camping techniques, safety and contingencies for medical emergencies, personal liability, hold harmless waivers and a hundred and one other items of minutiae that filled lists on my clipboard. I flew back to North Carolina more confident, now that I had the backing of some really solid logistical raft support. I had recruited good individuals to whom I could delegate the day-to-day decision-making when we actually got on the river, instead of having to learn on the job from my own mistakes and inexperience.

Next, I focused attention on recruiting local kayakers through Joe Greiner, a first rate mentor, instructor and "good shepherd" of the river, who has also served for many years on the board of American Whitewater. Joe introduced me to Lisa Birskevich, another local kayaking instructor at the regional and club level. Lisa turned out to be the ideal person to lead the hard boaters into a cohesive and self-reliant unit. I delegated much of the administration to her, on and off the river. Lisa had paddled many of the classic Appalachian test pieces of whitewater. On the river she set an admirable example, bank scouting, probing big water, and route finding through complex and intimidating rapids for less experienced paddlers, like myself. With Lisa's help, I assembled a short list of potentially qualified paddlers who we invited. I wanted a tight-knit and personable hard boat team with excellent self rescue skills—and I got it. I worked my way through Lisa's candidates until I had given away all but two places. Next, I signed myself up for a week of Advanced Kayak instruction at Nantahala Outdoor Center. After a week in paddlers' boot camp, I

Heidi and Fiona on the 2002 trip

Photo by Tim Oliver



Inflatables

had made only modest improvement in my kayaking skills and the Canyon loomed big and scary as my launch date approached. Two more kayaker candidates emerged from my class that week, Bill Sampson and Ruth Allbright. Bill was a retired veterinarian, while Ruth was another CCC member I had formerly met and worked with, sharing with her the pleasure of teaching novice kayaking skills on weekend club trips.

Dawn on the river, 2002 (Left to right Haydn Griffiths, Phill Thomas, Will Shepler, Whitney Eure, Kurt Stegen)

Photo by Tim Oliver

The Canyon

On each of my trips, in 2000 and 2002, I had the good fortune to experience the rugged beauty of the Canyon alongside great companions who became great friends. What follows is a collection of experiences, thoughts, and reflections on both trips.

On both trips I participated in, there was an assumption that once you left the put-in at Lees Ferry you had severed connections with the outside world for the next 18 days, a rarity in the lower forty eight states in today's communication obsessed society. For my generation of adventurers, raised in a culture that identifies isolation from civilization as a strong and positive motivator in the wilderness, there is a

certain thrill in knowing that some effort is required to summon help beyond the point of departure from civilization. However, common sense dictated that we carried a VHF radio provided by the outfitter as a backup. Today, with the ready availability of compact satellite phone technology, the NPS requires all trips to carry such a device, so that in life threatening situations a call can be placed instantly from almost anywhere on the river, direct to the appropriate emergency services. This policy shift has, in my opinion, taken some of the mystique out of the trip, since it is tempting to use a satellite phone for checking on a daily basis, more mundane matters like email and voicemail, that tend to be distracting and dilute one's wilderness experience.



One day late into the 2002 trip we met with Larry Stevens, author of one of the Canyon's most popular map/guidebooks, *The Colorado River in Grand Canyon: A Comprehensive Guide to Its Natural and Human History*. By a remarkable coincidence, our float party was due to arrive at Whitmore Wash on the same day that a group of Smithsonian Institute tourists was arriving on a river trip led by Larry. Heidi, our raft guide for the 2002 trip, had learned of this exciting news the night before from a fellow guide she had met with when she rowed over to a neighboring river campsite to check the "jungle telegraph." Heidi's excellent connections with the guiding community gave us the opportunity to paddle into Whitmore Wash the following morning, just as the large Smithsonian group was arriving in two and threes by helicopter. They were shuttled from a nearby hotel ranch to the makeshift helipad just above the river's edge, prior to their short three-night passage down the remainder of the Grand Canyon corridor.

Assembled on the riverbank we listened spellbound while Stevens described the geology of the canyon, the unique and fragile aquatic habitat of the river, the complex system of administration under which the river corridor was managed, and the history of man's occupation of the Canyon. Between pauses in his oratory dominated by the roar of the helicopter rotors overhead, Larry illustrated his talk, not with Powerpoint slides, but with a casual wave of his hand at the magnificent Canyon scenery around us. First, he directed our attention immediately above to a wall of pebble stuccoed mud, solidified into a 50 foot layer of rounded river rocks studded into the cliff under which we sat, then he walked us across to an adjacent area of the riverbank where some ancient but well preserved red ochre pictographs were visible on the cliff walls. Larry looked completely in his element as he stood next to a man-made dry stone wall and the remnants of a small agave roasting pit below. Later, we got to chat to Larry "off-camera" while members of our team pulled out their personal copies of his book to be autographed by him. It was

clear that Larry the academic was also very sympathetic to the needs and interests of the recreational boater.

Many analogies are drawn between the passage of real time spent on the river over the 18 days of the permit and the passage of geologic time as you descend deeper into the earth through the characteristic colored rock layers for which Grand Canyon is justly famous. Perhaps the best example of this analogy is the book *Man Who Walked Through Time* published in 1968 by Colin Fletcher. Welshman Fletcher (born Cardiff 1922) achieved what few individuals had the boldness to conceive. The idea of walking along the Colorado River corridor in a solo, self-supported backpacking trip still seems amazing to me by today's standards of hardcore adventure. These days, Fletcher's route is rarely repeated in its entirety. Amongst several major challenges Fletcher faced along the way in his two-month long 1963 trip was that of finding a continuously navigable footpath, and locating enough water to sustain him en route. In the end, he resorted to pre-arranged airdrops of water and food, but he had researched the route very thoroughly beforehand with a colleague who had first postulated the existence of a hiker's through-route, along what is now only partly recapitulated by the modern Tonto Trail. By necessity, the Tonto Trail stays high above the sheer sided Inner Gorge of the Canyon, so access to river drinking water is next to impossible.

I got a taste of Fletcher's trail experience in an overnight loop hike our 2000 group made, up one side canyon and down another, sleeping out on the rim en route, carrying nothing more than simple bivouac equipment, food and water. Paul had done this trip several times and was able to tell us exactly what to bring and what to leave behind. The trip started from a trailhead next to our riverside camp after a late breakfast and wound its way up Tapeat's Creek to reach the waterfalls at Thunder River. At Paul's insistence, as on many of our day hikes, we doused ourselves in the stream before we set off, only to find ourselves bone dry twenty

minutes later in 100+F temperatures. We kept to the sanctuary of the creek bed until we were able to gain sufficient height to put us in the shade of the oasis of trees clustered tightly around and below the Thunder River outpouring. Here, in a cliff face above a patch of mature trees, a river emerges in a dramatic waterfall from between the horizontal strata of the Redwall Limestone. Our group spread out, and sprawled over the boles of shade trees, we napped blissfully, enjoying the cool misting spray of nature's air conditioning fueled by strong updrafts of wind against the freefalling water. In the cool of late afternoon we left the sanctuary of Thunder River and broke out into a traverse, rising to the canyon's rim, which overlooked the adjacent Surprise Valley. Here we paused to search for rattlesnakes under rocks, watch the sunset, and marvel at the desert scenery laid out before us. After a bivouac supper, we spread groundsheets out on the flat desert sand and slept until dawn's first light. If the sunset was dramatic, sunrise was its complement. Huge shadows of the serpentine canyon rim dragged themselves across the panorama that unfolded before us. Truly, one of the most breathtaking wilderness show-and-tells I can remember.

This model of planning and cooperative team spirit in a group hike contrasted dramatically with its counterpart on the 2002 trip. While making plans for that year, I had listened spellbound to Heidi's description of a subterranean river cave she had previously visited, hidden in a side valley fed by Tapeats Creek. Some effort was required to reach Tapeats Cave, Heidi explained on the phone, a comment that turned out to be a serious understatement. A four hour hike from the river turned into a "Bataan Death March" of sorts, shedding strung out and exhausted hikers along the wayside like confetti. The final half mile to the cave entrance was a poorly defined trail that petered out into a sketchy traverse along steep scree with a bad drop off below. Thus the trip became self selecting for only the fastest, fittest and bravest. Our group toted heavy packs since the cave was cold, wet and crawly. Our strategy was to utilize cheap kiddie-

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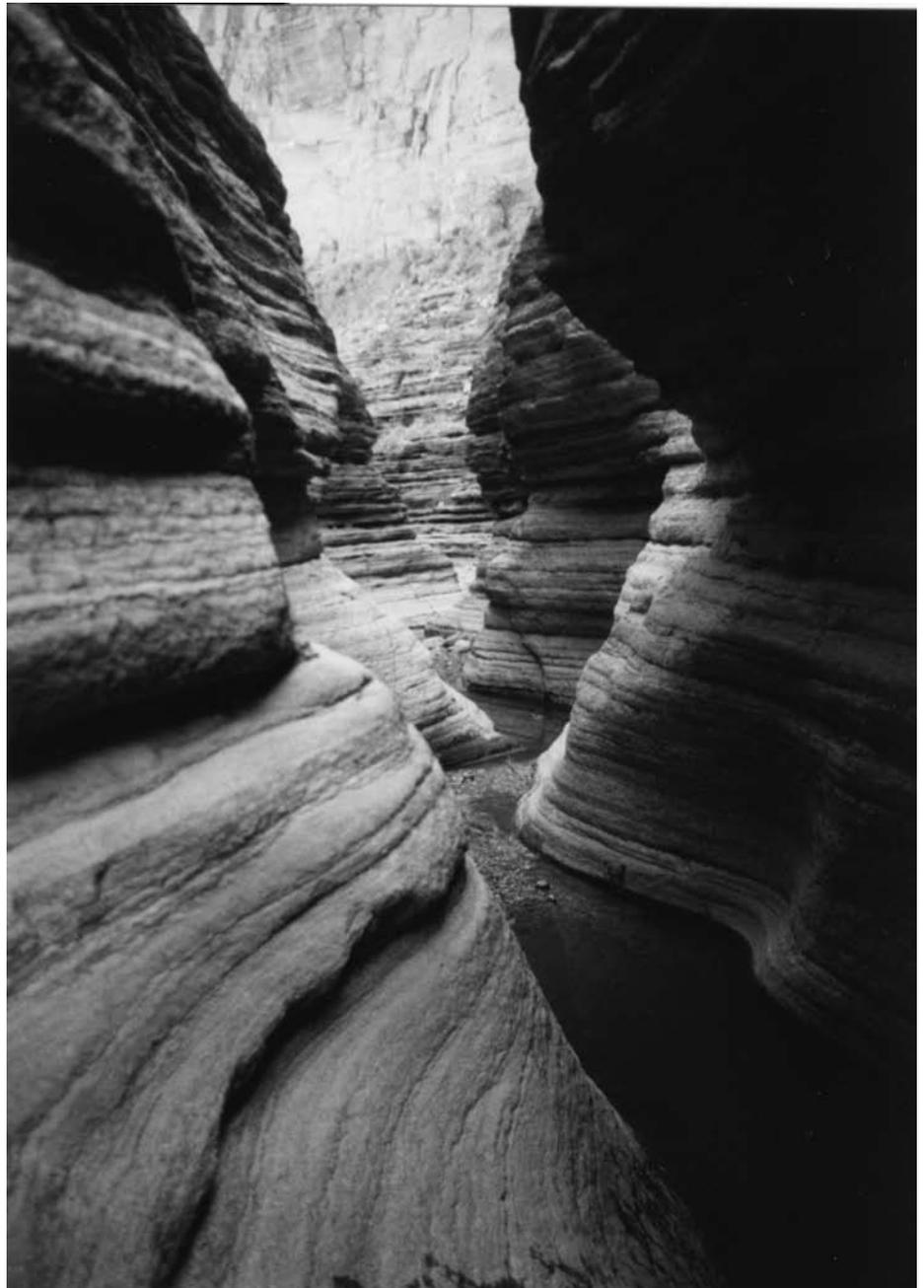
style inflatable rafts (duckies) to enable team members to stay high and dry out of the cave water. Duckies would also speed their passage into and out of the cave. A visitors' logbook awaited those intrepid enough to reach the back of the cave, and it sounded like a worthy rite of passage to gain membership of this exclusive club. I was totally hooked on the idea and backed it vigorously until late in the day, I too admitted defeat and dropped out when the trail got unacceptably sketchy for me and Lisa, my trail companion. In the end only a handful of voyageurs reached the cave. They blew up the duckies but discovered to their amusement their vulnerability to puncture on the sharp limestone of the cave. A representative party duly signed into one logbook located at the cave mouth, but failed to reach the one at the inner sanctum. It was a tired, fragmented and partly dispirited group that trickled back into camp, some members arriving back after dark. With hindsight, I realized that Heidi and I had seriously overestimated and overstretched the group's threshold for physical suffering.

Much has been written about Lava Falls, but the enduring memory I have is the anticipation of it, which builds in proportion to the volume of sound as you approach the rapid from upstream. Nothing can be seen, since the steep drop renders Lava's navigation invisible below its horizon line. The landscape in the vicinity of Lava seemed especially dry and hostile to me, reminding me of some lines from Browning's poem "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came." In one moment was crystallized nine years of my waiting, anticipating this single challenge like a knight's destiny as he ventures into the scorching desert of the Holy Land.

Burningly it came on me all at once,
This was the place! those two hills on
the right,
Crouched like two bulls locked horn

in horn in fight;
While to the left, a tall scalped
mountain... Duncce,
Dotard, a-dozing at the very nonce,
After a life spent training for the
sight!
Not hear? when noise was
everywhere! it tolled
Increasing like a bell. Names in my
ears

Of all the lost adventurers my
peers,---
How such a one was strong, and such
was bold,
And such was fortunate, yet, each of
old
Lost, lost! one moment knelled the
woe of years.



Matkatamiba Canyon in 2000

Photo by Tim Oliver

Mine was an easy ride through Lava in Paul's raft, but lacking none of the exhilaration of the best roller coaster ride you could find anywhere. No one swam on the 2000 trip, but there was a capsized raft and a swimming kayaker to rescue in 2002.

With so much water worn rock architecture around us, climbing opportunities appear at every turn in the river. A rock-climber's eyes will invariably wander up and over every wall, buttress and pinnacle that comes into view. Eventually, you give up tracing potential climbing routes in your mind's eye as you realize the overwhelming pointlessness to any notion of pioneering routes down there given the inaccessibility of access. One evening on the 2002 trip, Phill Thomas, Haydn Griffiths, Heidi Domeisen and I set off to explore a side canyon above camp that Heidi remembered would lead us to some petroglyphs, high on the Canyon's rim.

As the only non-climber in the party, Heidi soon demonstrated a natural speed and aptitude for scrambling on, loose and exposed rock, until the route finding for all of us became somewhat sketchy and halted further progress. At this point Haydn tied on the rope and led off up steep ground, making a rising rock climbing traverse. It soon became so difficult that he realized we were now definitely off-route. A little more careful scouting nearby revealed a faint footpath we had missed initially and, catching up on lost time, we topped out on the rim just as the sun was setting. It mattered little that we never found the petroglyphs, or that we had to run back down to our campsite in the dark, it was just the sense of collective joy at sharing a little exploration in one of the Canyon's secret places in the relative cool of evening that made it so memorable.

A few lucky individuals are privy to the secret locations of some of the Canyon's last few remaining man-made artifacts that have resisted looting, and they guard this intelligence protectively. Under oath, members of our 2000 party were shown an almost perfectly intact Anasazi water jar hidden under a rock, where it has

remained undisturbed since its last owner stashed it for the final time long ago. Heidi showed us several Agave roasting pits. These are donut shaped raised earth middens, characterized by tiny chunks of fire-cracked white rock and black flecks of charcoal. Anasazi communities reputedly gathered the edible roots of the century plant, or agave, and buried them in underground ovens until cooked. The cooked roots were then dug up, chewed and the coarse fibrous leftovers discarded onto the fire pit. I stopped to examine one such roasting pit that had been bisected vertically by an adjacent stream bed. Scratching gently into the layers revealed chewed out agave "wads," dry and perfectly preserved. Digging a little deeper I uncovered a small napped flint knife of the kind fashioned by many ancient cultures across the globe, before the introduction of worked metal tools.

The Canyon has been paddled in as little as a few days by lightweight self supporting kayakers. However, having been there I am curious why anyone would want to bolt down at such a pace and miss so many of the wonderful sights along the way, except to be first. The Canyon is a uniquely American experience, but one that can jerk you out of the present, albeit for a short while, into the distant past to rediscover signs of the very first settlers in North America, the Anasazi pueblans. If you go there, you will rediscover, as they did, that the Canyon is a poor choice of human habitat and that your stay is, out of necessity, a temporary one.

Just as beauty lies in the eye of the beholder, wilderness lies where you want to find it, whether it be on the slopes of Snowdon on a wet Welsh day, or the North Slope of the Alaskan tundra. It could be argued that the presence of just one individual visiting a pristine wilderness impacts significantly on and maybe robs it of its very wildness, but most travelers will settle for sharing their wilderness experience with a few friends. Both Canyon trips I participated in were more meaningful for the new friendships forged and the familiar ones renewed. Above all,

it's hard not to be deeply affected by the enormous spirituality of the place. Despite the crowds, it is still possible to find nooks and crannies in the Canyon where you can smell nothing but your own sweat, hear nothing but the soft wind blowing through a sandstone boulder choke, the rhythmic creak of an oar in its rowlock, or the shrill, lonesome echoing cry of the Canyon Wren. You may choose to see no sign of humanity in a 360-degree panorama except perhaps some petroglyphs, the centuries old remnants of a firepit, and your companion standing behind you.

Driving out the dirt take-out road from Diamond Creek after 16 days of bliss, I couldn't wipe the smile of contentment off my face. The words of Stephen Stills' song "Singin' Call" still echoed around my head:

Hit a stretch of rapids in the
rushing ragin' river
Looking out for boulders and falls
A woman she watches from the top of
the canyon
Hopin' we don't drown us all

Inflatables



Above: Brutus busting the V-wave at Lava

Below: Clif n Miller at Lees Ferry

Photos by Cindy Monell

I've done over a dozen Grand Canyon trips since my first baggage boatman trip in 1980 with Outdoors Unlimited. I've rowed commercial and non-commercial 20-foot, 18-foot, 16-foot, and 14-foot rafts. I've paddle boated a commercial 14-foot raft but never before have I R2-ed the Grand! This was initially the idea of my paddling buddy, Miller Bushong. I'd just purchased a brand new completely one-of-a-kind 12-foot Avon SB Scout from Clavey that was uncharacteristically made of red material with gray wear strips. Being an Ohio State alumni, the first time I saw this raft I knew it was really scarlet and gray ... and named him Brutus!

So in September of 2007, Brutus left his home rivers, the New and Gauley in West-by-God-Virginia, and flew out west for a little Canyon R&R. Huge rides at Horn,

Granite, Hermit, Upset, and of course, Lava. Got crushed once, at Red Neck Rapid of all places after getting a little cocky in House Rapid, but the rest of the trip was clean. What a great idea Miller!

THANKS!

Inflatable Rescue Ranger

By Dallas Fox

I have an NRS Bandit II inflatable kayak, and have lots of opportunity to use it here in the Ocoee River area of SE Tennessee. I don't spend time in serious whitewater yet, but have been building towards it for the last two years. I have progressed from flat-water only to Class II and III, and hope to get good enough to tackle the middle Ocoee next year.

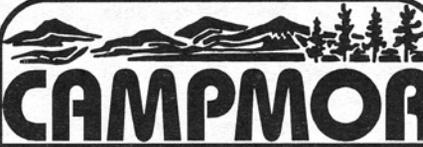
This story takes place on the Hiwassee, not in my back yard, but only 15 miles away. I have my Bandit set up as a single, as I am a big guy, and I love to play Rescue Ranger on the river. With six feet of boat in front of me, there is room to pull a fully clad kayaker into the boat, and proceed mushily through rapids. It happens regularly, and I look for opportunities to help. One day last October we were on a trip with several friends, including a new lady who had no chance of completing a roll, so every time she tipped, it meant a wet exit.

Since the Hiwassee is covered up with small islands, it is usually no big deal to find a spot to find a spot to drain and launch from, but in an area downstream of Three Bears she dumped, and it is more than 1/2 mile to a suitable location. After I recovered her from the water and got her in front of me, we pulled her small play boat up onto the front of the duck and managed to roll it to drain it, and then she climbed into the boat, fixed her skirt, and made a nice sliding entrance to the river, and we were off again. So now I figure I qualify as a carrier of some sort, including launch facilities.



These are photos of staged open water launch on the Natchala. Angela Giordano is in the kayak and I, Dallas Fox, am in the inflatable.

photo by Emma Ford of the Tennessee Valley Canoe Club



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The Takeoff

Photo by Craig Wessner

Surfing Tips For Inflatable Inhabitants of Riparian Environments

by Brik Miller

I'd gone to Barbados on a whimsey and a whim. Not because I had lost my fascination with the raging rivers around my home in West Virginia; not because the shifting sandbars and turbulent shore break of the Outer Banks had lost their appeal; I went because it involved moving water of some force and stature, and it intrigued me.

The whimsey had to do with an article I'd read in *Outside* magazine in the early 1980s titled "The Boys in Barbados." It involved a group of slightly over-the-hill friends who had decided in college that once a year, while they still could, they would go someplace new and exotic to surf. It didn't have to be the Banzai Pipeline, or G-Land in Bali, just someplace far away that had waves. The article described their time in Barbados, chasing waves, years after they met as college buddies.

The feeling and tone of the piece stuck

with me, through all the years, and all the rivers I have paddled.

The whim bit had to do with a chance find on an Internet travel site. The offer was for a week at a resort on the south coast of Barbados, including round trip airfare from Washington, D.C. I guess the reason it was so cheap had something to do with the offer being for late August through October: perfect for tropical storm season. Perfect for swell I reckoned. Game on.

Then too, I wanted to do something nice for my stellar girlfriend Marty. I'm a handful, but I try to be nice.

"Pack the surf gear and something pretty" I said to her. "I'm taking you to Barbados!"

This is where the inflatable boats come in. Roll up a Thrillseeker, put it in a rolling duffle with a collapsible paddle and various bits of water gear—don't forget the sunscreen; the entire rig checks like a suitcase. No oversize charges, no hassles with weird air freight, plus, the Mount Gay Rum they make in Barbados is protected nicely inside of a packed Ducky for the return flight home. It's only \$8 a bottle there. We brought back five liters.

One of the more interesting cultural phenomena of Ducky surfing in the land of the Bajans [what the locals in Barbados call themselves] is that while they had never seen any such boats, they knew exactly what they were for. "No mon, Bathseba dat way," the Bajans would yell at us, as we careened around the interior of the island in our rental car without doors, trying to find the various surf breaks. If they only knew.

Bathsheba, by the way, is home to the internationally famous, world class break known as the Soup Bowls. Check out the surfing DVD *Sipping Jet Streams* for the segment with Kelly Slater on a big day at the "Bowls," for a perspective on its power.

My idea of a perfect wave, however, is slightly more than head high reef break, with a nice barrel that peels. I have done bigger, but I get outclassed pretty quick. It's good to know your limits. It's also fun to explore where they are ... if you can avoid damaging yourself in the process.

The first surf spot we tried "in country," was

a beginner's break called Surfers Point, on the southeast tip of the island. Nice scene, that one, with a local surf resort right off the beach.

Well, that is, if you can describe a half dozen apartments, a small surf shop, and a tiny restaurant/bar as a resort. Nonetheless, the availability of iced liquid refreshment added to the ambiance of one of the tastiest little waists to chest high mushbuggers of a point break wave imaginable. Shake off the jet lag and get warmed up, which we did.

Plus the locals were friendly—informative almost. That's how we found out a rare northwest groundswell was going to hit Barbados in two days time. Our luck seemed to improve even further. The usual groundswell there is a Trades swell out of the east. Every now and then, however, a combination of low pressure meteorological events produce a swell that makes the beaches on the west side of the island fire.

These, with the exception of The Duppies [a reef a mile offshore and truly monstrous in size when it breaks] were the mostly the intermediate waves we were looking for. Sandy Lane, a reef on the central west coast, was rumored to be one of the best-formed waves on Barbados when it broke.

Surfing Tip #1 - All beaches in Barbados are public property. You might not be able to go directly to a beach from the landside, but public access is scattered all 'round the resorts—and everywhere else in Barbados for that matter. The fact that Sandy Lane was directly in front of the resort of the same name (and the fact that Tiger Woods had once rented that same resort for three days for his wedding) does not prevent public access to the golden crescent of sand, and thus the reef, directly ocean side from the resort.

However, when we got there on the day of the appointed swell, hiked in down the Lane itself site, and looked 600 yards north, the wave we saw was only shin high, not really big enough to even try. Well, that one wasn't working yet.

Marty and I dropped back and punted. Farther north, past Speightstown, beyond the Arawak cementworks, was rumored to be Maycocks Bay. From the Internet the waves there seemed like they would likely be larger than the ones at Sandy Lane, and thus might hold some promise.

Promise it may have had, but finding it was a different matter. The break itself was down over some cliffs, off the back end of the least populated part of Barbados. To complicate matters, the Bajans speak a version of the Queen's English truly unique in the known world. I have trouble understanding them, and I can hang with drunken Welshmen. Marty, never good with accents, was doing even worse with the local patois.

Nonetheless, after a long while in the tropical heat and after much searching, we located a path that appeared to snake down through the cliffs to the beach itself. It wound out through a field on the back end of a ramshackle residential neighborhood consisting mostly of scattered "chatel" houses. A "chatel" house is a flimsy construction where the poorest of the Bajans live. In fact, if it hadn't been Barbados, the whole neighborhood would have been a bit sketchy.

It was a track that would have done justice to the one on the other side of Pappa Weiss' Paradise, on the way to the put-in for the Tygart gorge. Marty, in true scout fashion, went ahead on foot to make sure we weren't dropping the rental Moke (our car with no doors) into an in-extractable gully. I went to get the car.

Carefully navigating the ruts and pumps, I reached what was obviously the end of the road, the car park at the end of the universe. There stood my girlfriend, staring off into the trees like an Ohio State junior at a Phish concert. Slack jawed and astounded she was. Hillbillies in paradise and monkeys in the trees.

"Monkeys, I see monkeys in the trees," she stammered. At first, I thought it was just the heat affecting her. Upon following her gaze, however, I both saw the small

primates and then heard the screeching, as a veritable simian chorus opened up from the far branches.

The carry began. You all know how boaters hate a carry in to a put-in. Even when ocean surfing, it's sometimes necessary. A bit like the put in for the lower Meadow it was, but with no real knowledge of what was down there, except for the crashing peel of the surf in the distance. Oh, and throw in the effects of a tropical sun, 15 degrees north of the equator, just for some seasoning.

When we finally got to the beach, it was all worth it. Bearded Fig trees for shade, a fair sized reef break 150 yards off shore, and a very faint off shore breeze. Conditions seemed perfect for an epic afternoon session. Three surfers [who turned out to be from Cornwall] were asleep under a tree. This only added to the laid back atmosphere.

The wave looked big, but do-able. At first glance, it appeared six or seven feet on the face, with a good 150 yards of peeling break. "Splendid," I thought. I was chomping at the bit to get in the water. This was why I had traveled all the way from West Virginia.

Surfing Tip #2 - Before paddling out on a wave you don't know, the rule of thumb is to spend 5 minutes for every foot of wave height watching the break first. This will give a better understanding of its character, where the rips are, and a sense of how it's going to behave when you are not bobbing around in stuff beyond which you can not see. To understand what I mean, imagine trying to orient yourself in Middle Keeneys on the New River Gorge at 10 feet when you are at the bottom of a wave.

I put on my life jacket and helmet, made sure the boat's outside tubes were tight, tuned the air pressure in the floor, strapped my Australian big gun leash to my right ankle, grabbed my paddle, and into the water I went. Marty decide she might watch things for a bit first, before she did the same.

Inflatables

“H’mmm,” I thought, “things seem a little bigger and pushier than they appeared from shore.” It was quite the struggle getting out through the waves. They had looked so punch-able from on the beach under the trees.

The sets were starting to line up. I was far enough out to begin to approach the take off zone. Out of the corner of my eye I see the three surfers from Cornwall in the water, beginning to paddle out. I could begin to see the tops of the cliffs above

It's all about the search for the Perfect Wave

Photo by Marty Moran

Maycocks bay above the treetops. A wave swelled under my boat. Holy &#!% it was big! No time to think about it. I was committed. Paddling furiously, I made the drop and the wave broke behind me. No style points, no flash moves, no sections made, just survival surfing at its crudest.

As I made it out the end of the wave, I immediately turned and clawed my way back out side. No hanging out in the impact zone for me. Once outside I noticed that the three guys from under the trees on surf boards had made it outside as well.

The wave size seemed to be getting bigger.

Surf tip #3 - Often in Barbados, or other places exposed to groundswell (as opposed

to wind swell like most of the eastern US) rogue sets will plow through the line up unexpectedly. Or maybe the size will simply bump upwards as swell generated leagues away finally arrives at your spot. Be prepared.

Here came a big one. Marty said later it was at least overhead and a half. I was in position, but almost too far inside, as it were. I had no choice but to go for it or get smothered. Muscles straining, reflexes on a keen edge, the back of the boat rose like I thought it was going to be pitch poled down the wave face and go over the falls. The surfer taking off immediately to my left, and closer to the beginning of the break itself, seemed an unimportant bit of



data at the time.

I made the drop. Just like the previous one it was merely a survival move. But this wave did not peter out. I was being pushed in front of an eight-foot foam pile. I was tapped in, but I had no directional control. The liquid express was shoving me toward the beach. I was upright, but I could not get off the beast.

Now, being an East Coast boy, I assumed as the wave neared the beach it would dissipate a bit. That's what waves do from Topsail Island all the way to Maine. At least that had been my experience.

Not at Maycocks Bay. As I got about 50 yards from the beach, the thing jacked and got stronger. I was being shoved toward where a coral formation turned into limestone rock that came out of the water, dividing the beach itself. My charc was more like a cannon shot.

I hit the reef, hit the rocks, whatever you want to call it, at speed. Head on, full tilt. The ducky flexed, the nose accordioned toward me with the impact. I didn't flip, but boy what a hit. The back of the boat rose a good four feet above the water.

Then the wave receded. I was on the sand, breathing nicely, still upright. I jumped out of the boat in what was later described to me as a very animated fashion, and pulled my big gun up above the water line.

I collapsed on the sand shaking. Kinda like what you do after your first big swim on the Russell Fork. Yeah, I know none of you ever swim. Whether on the Russell Fork, the Upper Gauley, or wherever.

Marty came over and made sure I was ok. Then she said, "Is the back of your floor supposed to be like that?"

On Thrill Seekers, the self-bailing floor is attached at both end of the hull near the bow and stern. The foot braces are part of the floor structure. Apparently I had hit the reef so hard, it had ripped the moorings for the foot pegs at the rear of the boat clean off. Phooowaaar!

Then I said, "Maybe I'm a bit over my head on this one."

"Duh," answered my partner. Ever the mistress of understatement that one.

I sat there for a bit, in the shade, watching the surfers still out in what was obviously some serious swell. I was still a bit shaken. A couple of local chaps came down the hill and joined them. As I sat there, calming down, thinking about what just happened to me, I realized that I had cut the dude from Cornwall off during the take off. I had been so panic I had forgotten my manners completely and cut the guy off.

Surfing tip #4 - The surfer closest to where the wave first dumps always has the right of way. No ifs ands or buts. From Tahiti, to Laguna Beach, to Mundaka, that's the etiquette. Violate this, and any attempt to reduce friction with other storm riders may result in bad vibes bordering on aggression. See Surfline.com's "Bill of Rights and Lefts" for further information on manners in the surf zone.

I had violated this rule.

I contemplated my next move. Maycocks Bays was obviously way too much for me. And then there was the question of how to apologize to the guy I had cut off.

An inspiration occurred. In our travel cooler with us at the beach was one ice-cold Banks beer. I really could have used it at that point, but it became clear to me what I really needed to do with it. And that was not pour it down my quivering gullet.

At some point, the chap I had cut off came in for a bit of a breather. I took the chilled Banks, and walked over as abashedly as I could muster. I fessed up to my mistake and said, "Please, take this by way of apology. I did see that you lot don't have a cooler. It's a hot day. I'm over my head here." I offered him the beer.

"Damn right you are mate," He replied. But he took the beer. An ice cold beverage attempting tropical diplomacy.

We beat a hasty retreat. Well as hastily as we could be in that heat. Think of it as a bit like carrying up from the take out for the middle Meadow, with a heat lamp over your head.

On the way back south, headed toward our resort with my tail a bit between my legs, we decided to give Sandy Lane one last look. There we struck surfing gold. The swell had finally made its way down island, and Sandy Lane was perfect. Just big enough for the likes of us, but not too big. So finely formed as to be almost mechanical. Delicious to the point of being gourmet.

After some jury-rigged repairs to my boat involving some webbing and massive amounts of Duct Tape, we surfed there for the rest of that day. The swell held. We spent all of the next day there as well..

Surfing Tip #5 - It's all about the journey. A boater is always looking for the perfect wave,

the perfect drop, the perfect river. It doesn't exist, except maybe in your head. You never really find it. It's just that the getting there brings you peace of mind, and opens up news ways of seeing the world and meeting new people.

Be careful out there.

Inflatables



Oregon Rafting Team: Pushing Boundaries Across the Spectrum

By Tim Brink and Other ORT Members

The Oregon Rafting Team (ORT) is a group of whitewater paddlers who compete on a variety of rivers throughout the West in multiple four- and six-man paddle raft teams. We race head to head against other teams and against the clock through rapids ranging from Class III to Class V. ORT is supported by a variety of sponsors, which include AIRE Rafts, Next Adventure, Whitewater Designs, Aquabound Paddles, Shred Ready Helmets, Immersion Research, Bend Memorial Clinic, and the US Outdoor Store.

ORT began its evolution in 2002 when 20-year river running veteran and football coach, Tim Brink, gathered a crew of his past and current teammates from rugby and college football for a local rafting race. After dominating the regional whitewater

raft racing scene for a number of years, an unfortunate career ending rugby injury forced Tim to focus his competitive fervor exclusively on raft racing, hence ORT began. After training one summer with world class guides from Colorado, Tim returned home to the Portland area with some newfound racing knowledge and began recruiting paddlers to form both men's and women's racing teams. During the initial season, ORT raced with a co-ed team as recruiting enough committed paddlers to form two teams proved to be difficult. That is not the case any longer. In 2007 ORT traveled to Colorado with two full teams as the women and men each placed in the top five nationally.

ORT athletes will have to compete with each other to earn a spot on the "Red Team" for 2009. ORT athletes include former college linebackers, dragon boat racers, endurance runners, skiers, snowboarders, mixed martial arts competitors, kayakers, catarafters, drift boaters, skateboarders, rugby players, and of course, a few river guides.

Off the water, once the gear is put away, all the seriousness stops and the raging begins. With nicknames like Rasta, Hoser, Ox, Timber, Dirty, WFE, Cuddy, Skinny Fat Kid, Dr. Frankenstein, etc., let your imagination do the rest and the resulting perception may actually be accurate. We are proud to say that ORT is the first of its kind. Not a team of guides or even river veterans, but rather an athletic, charismatic body of energy that successfully engages in a variety of adventures throughout the year while reinforcing the bonds we have created through the medium of whitewater raft racing. ORT: we are more than just a racing team. Our paddlers explain it best.

"I have an addiction to white water so, although winning races was always fun, the best part of being a member of ORT for me was the opportunity to raft new rivers—especially the Class V runs—with people I trusted and knew I could count on. My favorite and most memorable is Gore Canyon 2006. As we entered the canyon we stopped at the top of the first major rapid to scout. I looked at it and said to myself,

“No f@#\$ing way!” Then we got back in the raft and off we went. I never would have seen that canyon or any of the other Class V runs I have had the privilege to experience without Tim Brink, who I trust with my life, as our guide and good friend and the other dedicated members of ORT”.
- Ox (Bruce Reed)

“Comrades, competition, lifetime friends, hard work, good times. A lifetime of memories!! Where else would you hang with the Nightcrawler???”
- Mark

“Hurry up and wait ... to see dozens of beautiful river gorges. Some rivers are pristine wilderness runs, while others are just crazy steep rapids that remind you that you are alive. Just looking at giant churning holes with little sneak routes as skinny as the boat is enough to pick up the heartbeat along with plenty of adrenaline. Many of the routes that I have had the pleasure to raft with ORT would not have been possible without the dedication and trust that I have in my fellow paddlers. Getting to the river can sometimes seem like herding cats but once we are on the river it is full steam ahead, six paddles hitting the water simultaneously while the boat hops out of the water and leaps forward under a Team acting as one. Nowhere else have I ever been comfortable on rivers with must make moves. I know that our boat is going to dial the fast line while looking good doing it and most importantly having fun.”
- Always there in spirit (even when the body doesn't let me), Toby

“I love the carnage! Really though, I feel more comfortable in some dark remote place surrounded by cliffs and Class V upstream and downstream with an ORT raft next to me than I would given any other scenario on the river. I know Dan and Tim are not about to watch one of their fellow boaters die in front of them. In the Salmon River canyon, when Dan suggested he was going to lower us hand over hand on a throwbag, 70 feet into the maelstrom created by Final Falls, I thought it was insanity. However, I was willing to do it with Dan holding the rope; I had no doubt the rope would break before Dan would let me fall. That is what

ORT is to me. We have debacles, for sure, but no one is getting left behind. And no one is going to give up on each other”.
- Jacob (Young Gun)

“Commitment, effort, courage. As a guy in his mid-50s who had not ventured into competitive team athletics until my experience with ORT, I found that this band of brothers did not judge me on my experience, my age, or my background. Rather they looked for these three qualities: commitment, effort and courage. My experience paddling with ORT brought me way past boundaries I never knew were out there, gave me an enduring sense of the timelessness of The River, and uncovered the primal heart that still beats within us all. I am forever grateful to Tim and the playful, intense, courageous brothers of ORT. I am a better man because of them”.
- Dick, aka Action Norris

“I have always enjoyed water. I could swim before I could walk and cannot go very long without getting out on the water. While shopping for a new raft, I stumbled across a link for ORT. My first thought was no way, this is too good to be true. I called Tim immediately and dragged my younger brother and Jeff to a team practice. It was miserable, torrential downpour, temperature in the low 40s, wind gusts of 40-50 miles an hour, out sprint paddling on the Willamette River in Downtown Portland. At the end of that practice I remember thinking that these guys were both insane and dedicated. I was instantly hooked.

I remember talking with Tim before the first race that I attended (Upper Klamath). He asked who was guiding the grey boat. Our response was either Bryan (Professor) or myself. Tim asked who had guided this river more times. We calmly stated that neither of us had ever seen or run the river before, and then enjoyed seeing the look on Tim's face. He kindly waited for us at the bottom of Caldera to pull our bodies out of the churning water. It was not necessary, but it was kind. I have been proving myself and earning my teammates' trust little by little ever since that moment. If I were to sum up my experience with ORT into a few words or sentences I guess it would be this:

ORT has given me a chance to escape the everyday life. It has given me a tight trusted group of teammates that constantly drives me to push myself to new heights and surprises, challenges, impressing me while allowing me to do the same for them. I conquered more insurmountable obstacles with this team than in any other aspect of my life. This is my team, these are my brothers.”
- Ben “Dirty” Sigler

“After a point in my life when I was traveling to climb every free chance I got and climbing at my hardest, I suffered a bad ski accident and injured my hand for the better part of a year. Becoming restless and increasingly frustrated with my progress back into climbing, I felt a need to take a break of what my life had become over the previous 10 years and focus on a new adrenaline rush, which led me to ORT. This past year has been amazing for me in so many ways that words simply cannot describe. The comfort I felt being out every weekend and a growing affinity for water made me reminisce about how I felt when I began climbing harder routes that led me onto high peaks and tall routes. The encouragement from the team and patience from Tim in spite of my mistakes supported my endurance and courage to continue coming out weekend after weekend. Feeling an ease from one lifestyle into another has been an amazing part of this last year. I only hope that I can and do give all that is given to me.”
- Tyler (SFK)

“I have heard a lot of “Band of Brothers” talk, and I would like to echo with my own sentiments of acceptance and trust with ORT members. The river has been a special place to me made even more so with my experiences paddling with ORT. It is amazing that a seemingly unambiguous act of paddling can bring such profound life experiences, bonding, and growth. Testing my own limits in whitewater has been a tremendous experience, and a time that demands absolute cohesiveness and skill. I trust my life with my ORT teammates, and only hope this Band of Brothers will live on.”
- Trey aka “Dr.Frankenstein” Knollman

Inflatables

Rubber, and Oars, and Cats—Oh My: An Epic Descent of Inflatables on the Green Truss

By Shelly Becker, Michael Franz Horner, and Will Volpert

Editor's Note: The following is a compilation of experiences from three companions who took part in an incredible descent of the Green Truss section of the White Salmon River (WA). Many thanks to Shelly Becker for collecting the raw trip reports and to Will Volpert for making sure we received all the necessary parts of this complex piece.

Michael Franz Horner, R2 Paddle Raft

My buddy Fish emailed me, private messaged me on Professor Paddle, left a voice message, and texted me—all in a time span of 2 minutes—so I knew something was up for sure! When I talked with Fish and learned what the adventure would entail, my stomach was filled with butterflies and my adventure itch tickled pink

Less than three years ago I ran the Green Truss section of the White Salmon River with Fish in a Super Puma. We ran everything but Big Brother and having run everything downstream I had really wished we'd fired up the big one. When we got there Fish wanted to go, but I was too scared. Having run BZ and Little Brother downstream, I told Fish, "Next time we are running Big Brother."

Will Volpert, 10-foot Oar Raft

Fear is exhausting, fear is exhausting, fear is exhausting. Today my hands look like they had just been taken out of a blender. They are huge and purple with nicks and bruises all over. My upper body was pummeled by oars, frame, etc. and is pretty sore too.

The word "epic" is used a lot to describe incredible river trips. Prior to our Truss run, there were a few trips I had been part of that I could have called "epic." Not anymore. Never have I rowed a river like the Truss, been around such a supportive group of boaters nor a more talented group, or had such strong feelings of fear or happiness.

Rowing the Truss, realistically, is a horrible idea. But, once you've lowered your raft, frame, and oars roughly 100 feet down a cliff, you're pretty well committed. And that's where I and about two-dozen other people found ourselves the morning of March 15, 2009. Most of them were kayaking, but we had a few R2 boats, my oar boat, and two catboats. Before yesterday, I had heard that the Truss had been rowed once before and had been written off as a really bad idea.

Shelly Becker, Cataract

For the last couple of years I had been dreaming about someday taking my cat down the Truss. I was told a lot of times, by a lot of very good boaters with Truss experience that cats on the Truss are most definitely NOT recommended. The river was too narrow, cats were too big, too heavy, and having oars in a place like that is an all around bad idea. Still, I dreamed about it.

On Wednesday night I received an email from Michael Horner that a group of boaters was going to run the Green Truss. I heard there would be some R2 teams and that someone was planning to oar a 10-foot raft. Oars? Rafts? Truss?

More than once I have been offered a spot on an R2 team so that I could take a look at the Green Truss and decide for myself. The thing is, I'm a CAT boater, and even though R2ing is great fun, I don't do it very often and the Truss didn't seem like a good place to figure stuff out. I had made up my mind that if I were ever to run the Truss, it would be in my own boat.

I told Dave what was in the works for the weekend and asked if he wanted to try to catboat the Truss on Sunday. He was totally into it, and suddenly we had a mission! The problem was, I STILL didn't know if it was possible. In the end, it was Fish who



Lots of kayak support in the one of the earlier rapids of the run

Photo by George White

helped me make up my mind. He said he and Horner were going to R2 a 14-foot raft and there would be a couple of very tight places for cats but that it was all makeable.

Will Volpert

The put-in was the first sign of how things were going to go. Kayakers, cat boaters, and rafters all helped get the boats down to the river. This was no easy task, especially with the snow and slippery slush that caked the steep banks. Teamwork. It became a theme throughout the trip.

The sense of commitment overcame me as I sat in my boat ready to push off. Glancing from bank to bank was a calm river but I knew what lay ahead downstream. The steep walls on both sides didn't look safe for walking out, and you certainly wouldn't be dragging your boat back up. I was there feeling the moment with about two-dozen others, and once we started I knew we weren't turning back.

Shelly Becker

The day before, Dave and I had hiked down to the Class V put-in. We wanted to know how hard it would be to lower our cats to the river. The "trail" consists of a vertical rock face with two different ropes set up. On Saturday it was muddy and slippery and then overnight it snowed. Sunday morning arrived with a fresh coating of slushy slop with all of the slippery goodness that goes along with that. It took quite a while and a lot of work to get all the rafts and cats lowered and many kayakers helped a LOT with this unenviable task. We had people staging boats, people lowering boats and people on the ground doing catch and release and re-secure. Many ropes were involved and at long last there was a big pile of rubber on the flat bench waiting for the final lower into the river. Before I launched, I told Dave that my personal mission for the day was to do my absolute best and not to become part of a problem.

Will Volpert

I had calmed my nerves after pushing off from the bank for the first time. But, in the very first rapid my left oar caught the bank and shattered mid shaft. Gone. As I struggled to grab the spare, the next drop came closer and closer and closer and was pulling my boat downstream. Thankfully, three kayakers pushed my boat into a little micro eddy above the next drop. Just another example of how everyone had each other's backs. I got the spare out (my only spare) and we continued on our way. This was at mile 0.2.

Shelly Becker

Finally, all the boats were in the water and Fish gave us some verbal instructions for what to expect in the Class IV rapids leading up to Meatball. Will Volpert shattered a wooden oar in the first rapid but was able to get out his spare. Another one of the rapids was a long tricky, very technical Class IV with a tough move at the bottom to get around a rock. Somehow in the process, Dave's oarlock sheared off completely, his oar leash kept the oar from being lost. Dave normally does carry a spare oarlock and thankfully today it was in the gear bag. I couldn't help but hear the little voice in my head: "The Truss is NO place for oars...." I told Will that he was welcome to use my spare if he ever needed it; at the time neither one of us thought it would be necessary.

After a few more Class IV drops, Meatball lurked around a somewhat blind corner. The big deal with Meatball is that everyone was pretty sure the rafts and cats would not fit through the left slot at the bottom (between the Meatball and the left bank). The kayaks and Fish/Horner went first while we staged ourselves upstream. One whistle meant good to go and three whistles meant portage. I waited and eventually heard one whistle. I waited a little longer and heard a second whistle but Fish had scrambled upstream and was motioning me to come down. Well, there was NO way my cat was going to fit through the Meatball slot but Fish was able climb out on the rocks on the left and grab my left

tube; he shoved while I low-sided and the boat went through. The same procedure was repeated for Dave's boat.

Michael Franz Horner

After getting an upside down raft righted and a broken oar replaced within the span of the Class IV warm up rapids, we approached Meatball. This was to be another tight slot that possibly "wouldn't go" for rafts and cataracts. To get our raft through, Fish and I had to do a little low-siding and I thought there was no way the cat boats would get through. We hit an eddy and Fish climbed upstream to help if he could. In no time Will Volpert, the oarsman on a little raft, and the Becker's were safely through Meatball having run it with little trouble from what I could tell.

Bob's and Little Bob's Falls is one beautiful rapid. It is much steeper and tighter than the impression I get from photos. Fish knew exactly where to put us, and our raft performed like a dream. Our style is for Fish to say where we are going, and then for us to go there. We are each independently paddling as if we have two little oars. When we need to take multiple stokes they are in perfect unison. When we turn the boat it is controlled, never over-rotating. There are no military-like commands, although occasionally Fish would yell, "turn me around!" After Bob's I was feeling very humble, for now we were coming to Big Brother.

Shelly Becker

The rapid above Big Brother had some trickier currents than what we anticipated from our scout the day before but everything went fine there and we rowed right up to the lip of Big Brother and took out on river left. I have never seen a horizon line like that from my boat—ever—and it was impressive to say the least. The R2 teams were planning to run and it was pucker time for them. Dave and I and Will were planning to portage. Fish made the portage MUCH easier by showing us how to ghost boat the left side. One by one, a line was attached to the cats and raft and they were hucked over the

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left side. Enough slack was left in the line so the boats could free fall over the drop but not go downstream of the bottom of the portage trail. Catalina did quite well all by herself. The highlight of Big Brother was watching Fish and Horner style the drop and stick the landing. Watching the video in slow motion made it even more unbelievable. We probably set some kind of record that day for the amount of safety that was set up at Big Brother and a couple people did need to be rescued from the cave. At least one kayaker hiked back up to run laps. Dave and I stood at the bottom and watched kayak after kayak come flying over the top and disappearing into the foam at the bottom. I've seen countless video clips of kayakers running Big Brother, but it's different when you are there seeing it first hand. Very cool!

Michael Franz Horner

We pulled over to scout and prepare for Big Brother and the feelings of anticipation overwhelmed me. Fish talked me through

our approach to the lip and I felt like I had a very sound understanding of what needed to be done. We walked up to the lip and I was flush with emotions. The feeling you get at Big Brother is that of being in a sacred place. The roar of the falls is equaled only by the peace of the green and the rock. Kayakers were running the drop and Fish was helping the oarsmen line their boats over the falls. I was becoming very focused on deciding whether to run the drop. I watched George and Hans crash big time in another R2. One of them was caught under the boat getting worked against the wall. Hans escaped and got to shore but George was still in the cave. Throw bags hit him in seconds and they towed him out. That settled it. "I can't not go," I said to myself, "there is so much safety!" Shelly and Dave were on their cats at the bottom. JP and other kayakers were down there as well. Other boaters were perched up high, ready to toss ropes into the cave if need be.

"Lets go," said Fish.

We did everything Fish planned on. We charged the drop, anticipating the current moving us right to left. When we started moving in that direction I reached for that last piece of water on the lip coming off the right flake and gave it my ultimate forward stroke. In one motion I leaned back reaching for the strap we had running behind us for an "Oh \$#!^" handle. I felt the boat twisting and reached for the higher side while Fish moved forward to avoid me. The impact was actually air soft! There was more of an impact when we hit the wall but we both popped up and high-sided. A few paddle stokes had us in the eddy below and I could barely contain my excitement. My life was changed—but we still had some serious stuff to run!

Shelly Becker

Little Brother is immediately downstream of Big Brother. Will said that he was planning to portage Little Brother and we said we were going to run the right side. The R2s were going to run the normal



route on the left. Will ferried across and looked at the right side and decided to line his boat. He also said he would try to get video of the rest of the boats (very cool). Dave and I ferried over next. I rowed up to the lip and stood up for a quick last check then hucked Catalina 14 feet over the edge. Yeehaw!

Next up was the formidable Double Drop, an 18-foot two-tiered falls with violent holes at the bottom of each, the bottom hole seeming worse than the top. I was told that at this level Double Drop would be stout and that we may want to portage. Naturally, Fish said it was good to go. "Hit the top hole HARD with very slight left angle," he said, "and then gut the bottom hole." The entrance to Double Drop had a manky tight spot where all the rafts/cats had to do some Flintstone work. It was a LARGE horizon line, and again, Dave and I were running on verbal instructions alone. I lined up, and rowed hard charging the top hole. I've never run any drop with that much vertical. When I got to he lip, it looked like I had just rowed Catalina

out of a third story window. I hit the first hole, hung on, and was immediately flying toward the second hole pointing a little more left than I would have liked. I hit the bottom hole with the same angle and as I was grabbing the front of my boat it felt like I had made it. But then it started getting darker—and wetter—and I realized we were going over. The hole had grabbed part of my back tube and flipped my cat sideways from left to right.

I stayed with the boat and quickly climbed back on. I was thinking how easy it was going to be for me to re-flip in the pool below using my thwart, because I had recently practiced that very maneuver in a lake, but quickly realized that the "pool" was moving way too fast toward what looked like another eight-foot ledge. I changed my plan and decided throwing a line to Kyle and Dan in the eddy on river right was a better idea so they could hold my boat and prevent it from going over the ledge. More importantly, I was concerned about Dave's fate in the bottom hole. Just after we got my boat stabilized I watched

Dave come down and keep straighter than I did at the bottom and emerge right side up. YAY! After Fish and I got my cat re-flipped (which entailed flipping onto a large boulder so as to stay out of the main current while Kyle and Dan kept hold of the rope I had tossed them) I ran the next ledge and was very, very happy not to have gone over it on an upside down boat or worse, in the process of re-flipping.

Will Volpert

We ran Little Brother and then came around the corner to Double Drop. A HUGE drop, it's two-tiered with a massive hole in the first drop. Some kayakers ran through first and then climbed up to say "good to go." I pushed off the lip with the thought, "I'll get to the lip and throw the

About to portage the cats and oar boat down Big Brother

Photo by Kyle Smith



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oars forward, reach back and grab my seat, hope to get through the hole and be straight for the second drop.” Well, that’s exactly what my boat did—but not my body. Pretty much I was going 50 miles an hour over a massive drop, hit the hole, the boat stopped instantly and my body shot off the front of the boat and nearly cleared the bottom drop. I was under water for a micro-second and had traveled pretty far downstream. Lucky I didn’t break my neck. The boat came through no problem and I climbed back in.

The most significant rapid (in terms of holy- $\$#!^{\wedge}$ -this-is-scary) is a rapid called Lower Zig Zag. It’s especially notable because of wood. There’s a must-make-or-you-will-hate-life move above the scariest piece of wood I’ve ever seen. You’re also walled-in at this point, and portaging a boat other than a kayak would be very difficult. With this in mind, you can almost imagine my thoughts when, while passing under a log, about a half mile above Zig Zag, my left oar jammed and broke at the wrap. I asked Shelly if I could borrow her spare and without hesitation she handed it over. Could you imagine giving someone who had already broken two oars your spare? I felt like a jackass for having broken two oars but there wasn’t much I could do about it now. The oars Shelly uses are 9.5 feet long, about the length of my entire boat. Her spare was 1.5 feet longer than my right oar. The new oar also had an oar-right, something I’m not used to rowing with. With no option of hiking out, I looked like a circus going down the river, my left oar sticking way out in contrast to the short stubby thing in my right hand.

Shelly Becker

The day before our Green Truss run, Dave and I had scrambled as far as we could upstream on river right to get a peek at Lower Zigzag. What we saw was disheartening. From downstream it looked like there was probably no way to get a cat between the log pinned midstream and the left bank. I was more optimistic than Dave—I said it looked close and that it might seem better from upstream. Further up, we saw there was a stout Class IV lead-in right above the move heading into the log. Messing up anywhere would have

disastrous consequences. Of course, there was no way to set safety at the log and no way to help anyone if they had a problem there. To add to the gloomy proposition, the portage looked horrendous. Dave was wondering if it was even possible to portage at all and I said I thought we could but that it would require several ropes.

When we finally arrived at Lower Zig Zag, after everyone in the group had clean lines in Upper Zig Zag I knew the moment I had been dreading was finally upon me. I quietly pulled my boat up on the shore and walked downstream to have a look at the drop from above. The top ledge looked big and sticky; the fan rock above the log was positively wicked and the log, well, it looked worse than that. However, the water was going AROUND and to the LEFT of the log, whereas from the bottom it looked like it was piling into the log. The fan rock actually would HELP you if you used it correctly. Still, I could not shake that sick feeling in the pit of my stomach.

Michael Franz Horner

After styling Upper Zig Zag and eddying out, I walked down to scout Lower Zig Zag. It was exactly what I expected. It looked like there was nearly no room to get between the wall and the log. I didn’t want to go down really far and get as close a look as possible because I was afraid it would scare me too much! Everyone started joining me for the scout and Fish talked me through the drop. It was to be an exercise in precise timing and stout paddling. We greased the drop and a feeling of great relief overwhelmed me. After we had cleared the log Fish turned around and pointed at Shelly and Dave telling them that they had this. I knew it too. There was plenty of room in the drop for someone with their skills.

Shelly Becker

Fish said, “There’s enough room—I’ll go first and prove it.” I watched as he and Horner aced the move. I could see that there was enough room, but I could not tell how much extra there was. I’m pretty sure my cat is wider than a 14-foot paddle boat; also, I have oars to deal with; lastly, I’m not Fish. Even though the portage

option was horrible, NOBODY made me feel like I had to run that drop and there was plenty of daylight still left. Will was also thinking he might want to portage and at one point he and I discussed how the three of us (he, Dave and I) could help each other, break down boats and take out at Orelletta. I knew that the rapid was technically possible. I also knew that I had to be perfect (we all had to be perfect). It was a game of less than an inch in a fast moving Class V rapid with a stout Class IV ledge at the lead-in.

We did have the option of easily portaging the top ledge to reduce the risk of messing up upstream. Will decided to take that option and Dave asked me if I wanted to do the same. I looked at the moves (all of them), I knew I could make them and despite getting munched at the bottom of Double Drop, I was having a very good day and was feeling on top of my game. “No” I told Dave, “I don’t want to portage the top—I’m going to go back to my boat and run it.” Dave asked if I wanted him to go first, but once I had my mind made up, I just wanted to focus and go. I climbed onto Catalina and ferried out above the first ledge. I have run quite a few very hard Class V rapids and this one felt different, it felt borderline true Class VI for me in the craft that I was paddling. I hit the first ledge and it immediately grabbed my left tube. I quickly knelt forward on the left side of the frame using a combination of my knee and a very hard forward stroke to keep the tube down and power through the hole. I somehow figured out this move two years ago on the North Fork of the Payette and it has worked well ever since. I exited slightly farther right than I wanted, but it was not bad at all and I was quickly able to power forward and hit the left slot off the fan rock perfectly. I shipped my oars and cleanly passed between the tree and the wall. Usually, I hoot and holler after running something like that and amidst the cheers from the other boaters I simply smiled and said “I lived.”

The Green Truss was a very challenging run in an amazing and beautiful canyon. Dave and I would both like to go back and run it again – I would love to have a second chance at Double Drop. Lower Zigzag will still be as scary as it was this time, even though we know there is room

it's still scary and very sketchy in a cat. If I go back again, I will go back thinking a portage at Lower Zigzag is a very real possibility depending on the kind of day we are having. That is just simply the reality of difficult Class V.

Sunday, March 15, 2009 is a day I will remember for the rest of my life with a huge grin on my face. Not only because of the incredible whitewater experience but also for the incredible group of people that pulled together to help make this a memorable and successful day for everyone. It was a great pleasure and a great privilege to have been part of this trip.

Michael Franz Horner

March 15th was an epic day that will be at the top of my most memorable list until the moment I die. The camaraderie, vertical drops, and precision paddling were a whole career in the making for all of us who embarked on that fine piece of whitewater. I will be forever linked to these people and will never forget the satisfying feeling everyone's good will generated in the middle of some insane drops and gorgeous scenery.

Will Volpert

After we all had clean runs at Lower Zig Zag it was a sprint to take-out. I ghost boated BZ because I was absolutely beat and it just didn't look like a clean line. After I got to BZ (where most everyone was taking out), Shelly and Dave came around the corner. They said they had just run BZ and styled it!

I was so happy to be on solid ground and done with the run, the thought of what we had all accomplished hadn't quite sunk in. Then Shelly said, "We just rowed the Green Truss..." and that's when it hit me. We had rowed the Truss, we'd finished the run successfully. I gave Shelly her spare oar back and thanked her again. I literally could not have done the run without her help and especially not without her spare oar! She and Dave continued downstream to Husum, while Ryan, Kyle, Dan, and I started huffing our stuff up the tracks.

Overall, it was a heinous trip for me. For about five hours I was completely terrified. After I broke my second oar, I really thought that I was done for. Kyle Smith, a friend of mine and guide on California's Kern River, was R2ing on this trip and he and I talked later and decided it was easily the most nervous we've been on any river.

Nevertheless, I'm glad we did it. I will never row a piece of whitewater like I did that day. It will be something to remember and something to be proud of, but not something to repeat. I discovered that day that I don't like fear. I don't like HAVING to run something stupid to get downstream. I don't like dropping off blindly, breaking oars, and boating defensively. Normally I have confidence when I'm on a river. On the Green Truss I had none.

I imagine that some will question our judgment in even attempting this trip. Rightfully so, I probably shouldn't have even tried rowing the Truss. I had R2'd it last year and enjoyed the run. Time does strange things to a boater. Memory shrinks the size of waterfalls, the narrowness and speed of a rapid. About a month ago I woke up and thought "I'm going to row the Truss this year." It was stuck in my head and I knew that with the right support of kayakers and boating friends it would be doable. The flow was right, the group was right, and the day felt good. I'm not sure it could have ended any better. As brutal as it was, no one was seriously hurt and we ran just about everything. I sure would like to have my two oars back, but thankfully Shelly had a spare to lend. It figures that I wait until the Truss to have my first-ever and second-ever broken oar.

I've heard that it's better to be lucky than good. On this day, I was lucky to have been around such competent boaters. With that in mind, THANK YOU to every one of you who were on the Truss March 15, 2009. Thank you, thank you, and thank you.

Editor's Note: Will Volpert is believed to be the first person to oar a raft down the Green Truss. Dave and Shelly Becker have the second cataraft descent and Fish and Horner's run of Big Brother places them among a scant few who have R2'ed Big Brother and stuck the landing for a no swim, no portage day.

Remembering Lost Member of the Green Truss Team

On the afternoon of August 9, 2009, Ryan Morgan became entrapped in a logjam on the Little White Salmon in Washington. His body was found on August 10th. As word spread of our loss, my thoughts turned to the many days I had shared with Ryan on the water, the last of which had been on this Truss run.

Many people got to know Ryan through whitewater. After meeting him and his wife Danielle during a Grand Canyon trip, we began boating together in Oregon and Washington. He showed me some of his favorite runs and I showed him mine. He was like a magnet, the kind of person others want to be around and someone who could always be relied on for good information when it came to lesser-known runs. He thrived off of others' successes, making each accomplishment feel so much better.

Most of the trips I shared with him were a total group of three or four. Danielle would sometimes ride or paddle in my boat as Ryan kayaked. Ryan was confident, extremely bright, and had an amazing smile. His laugh was unmistakable and his "Hey Will --- how's it going?" over the phone is sorely missed.

The biggest lesson to take from Ryan's life is not in the way he died, but in how he lived. He believed in community, in helping others, and in protecting beauty. He was passionate about his interests and worked hard to share his passion with others. He was a member of the Molalla City Council and was a coordinator of juvenile justice community service programs in the Molalla area. He was, as many would put it, an outstanding citizen.

I realize now that the Ryan Morgan I knew was just a glimpse of the tremendous man he was. Ryan's paddling partner that day and friend, Markus Fant, seemed to put it best at Ryan's memorial. "He was a good friend," said Markus, "he was a good friend."

For more about Ryan's paddling, visit his blog: <http://molallakayaker.blogspot.com>

Inflatables

Trespassers

By Amar Benchikha

Editor's Note: The following is a fictional account, though many readers will recognize in the story's various elements the seeds of truth.

The remnants of the hurricane had made its way up the coast from Florida to West Virginia unleashing what they were now seeing. Buckets of rain, lightning flashing across the sky, and loud cracks of thunder.

"What do we do?" shouted one of the customers. "Do we stop the trip?"

"We're on a river, lady. There's nowhere to go but downstream."

"But isn't it dangerous?" she yelled over the din of the pouring rain.

"Not really," the guide yelled back. "We're at the bottom of a valley. If lightning

strikes, it's gonna hit one of those peaks on either side of us."

She and the rest of the rafting crew seemed relieved to hear that.

The flash flood had raised the river level quickly and the river had changed overnight. It was angry now, warning them that they were unwelcome entities—trespassers on a stretch of water that asked only to be left alone.

But commercial rafting trips stop for nothing.

Unless they were completely flooded off the river, which seldom happened, this trip was going to continue, whether the customers liked it or not. They'd definitely gotten more than they'd bargained for, the guide thought. He smiled. A downpour, loud booms, flashes of lightning, high water—this is what Stock lived for. Pure adrenaline.

They were floating through what was usually one of the calm sections of the river, a gentle pool of water in which people would dangle their feet, jump in the river, or simply admire the scenery. Today, the water assaulted the sides of the raft with violence Stock didn't remember ever seeing on a trip, a violence that shook the boat and lashed at its crew with white savage tongues.

And they hadn't even entered the rapid yet.

"Alright folks!" Stock yelled over the roar of the elements. "We've got the Keeneys coming up! Gonna be a fun one! Remember to listen to my commands!"

The boat made its way towards the waves that indicated the entrance to the rapid.

"OK, HERE WE GO BABY!!" yelled Stock

Photo by Clinton Vining



as the boat accelerated into the rapid.

“ALL FORWARD!!” he called out.

The crew paddled forward in unison and Stock aimed the craft towards a series of three nine-foot waves. As they crashed through the first one, a crack of thunder resonated through the valley and a powerful spray of water hit the passengers. The boat dropped down into the trough as Stock angled his boat 45 degrees, wanting to get into the eddy to his left before reaching the last wave.

“FORWARD HARD!!” Stock called, making his move for the eddy.

They crashed into the wave, the spray this time shooting up high into the air.

“Lord!” Stock exclaimed.

The boat was going to turn over. From the left side of the boat, where he guided from, he looked up and saw the right side rising rapidly, being pushed by the potent wave. Stock grabbed his paddle as tightly as he could, reached out into the trough and pulled as hard as his muscles allowed. The boat’s right side halted its rise for a moment, then dropped back onto the water and glided over the wave. It had all happened so quickly that none of the customers had realized how close they had been to flipping and, consequently, to swimming through the rapid and into the Meat Grinder, a deadly rock sieve. Stock himself only had time enough to feel a hint of relief before he realized he wasn’t going to make the left-side eddy.

“RIGHT BACK!!” he called out.

Change of plans. They were going to hit the third wave after all and take the riskier right line through the drop.

The boat straightened out just in time as it hit the wave square and stalled for a second on the crest. A flash of lightning lit up the

sky, and the raft dipped down the wave.

Stock took in two deep breaths as he looked down at the huge wall of whitewater facing him. There was no reading that. He was going to take it straight.

“FORWARD HARD!!”

The boat took off carried by the crew’s paddle strokes into the whiteness before them.

The raft hit the mound of water and Stock felt the whip of it on his face. In the blink of an eye they were past it. He looked around. Three of his crew from the left side of the boat had been thrown onto the floor. No one was missing.

They’d gotten through the toughest part.

He made a mental note as he evaluated the remainder of the rapid: he’d have to hit that reactionary wave at an angle next time.

“ALRIGHT FOLKS! NOW LET’S GET OURSELVES OUT OF THIS CURRENT!”

He angled the boat to the left, towards the safety of an eddy.

“ALL FORWARD!!”

The crew was tired and the boat floated

listlessly along the wave train leading straight for the Meat Grinder.

“THIS AIN’T NO JOKE NOW PEOPLE! DIG IT IN! COME ON! DIG IT IN!!”

He felt a jolt as the boat suddenly picked up speed. A few strokes more and they found themselves in the virtual tranquility of the eddy they’d been paddling towards.

Everyone was stunned. People looked at one another, out of breath, not knowing what to think or how to react. Then one of them turned to look at Stock. Staring back at him was the largest grin he’d ever seen. The customer grinned back and, the next moment, the entire boat was laughing and whooping.

Pure adrenaline.

Author’s note: this being a fiction piece, even the river’s portrayal has been altered. The scenes of angry water assaulting and shaking the boat come from my vivid recollection of high water on the Gauley River in what, on a regular 2800 cfs day, are just calm pools of water. The descent through the Keeneys rapid at high water and the overall awesomeness of boating during thunderstorms comes from my memories of rafting on the New River.

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Arkansas Raft Guides on the Gauley: A Saga in Thumb Type

By David Vandergriff

The first weekend of Gauley season is in the books. The Arkansas Raft Guides (ARG) + friends group is heading home. In three days on the Gauley including five oar rig runs, five paddle boat runs, and one sweep boat run (and I cannot stress this enough), not a single raft was flipped.

Friday we ran the upper Gauley. Cap'n Downstream rowed the 20-foot DIB in a Zen-like melding of boat with a central tenet of ARG theory (Bigger is Better). Ranger Rick aka "The Gauley Shaman" rowed a 16-footer. Ross Noland captained a 14-foot paddle raft crewed by Rodney Kestner and Marcell Jones. Captain James R. "Jimbo," "Lippo," "The Short Republican," "Monkey Head," "Branson Boy," "Tulip Girl," and "The Man With No Nicknames," Mitchell was the C.O. of Marcell's 14-foot Hyside. I rode the back left tube and served as 1st Assistant Raft Captain. Gil "Tin Man" Wooten was in front of me, and Tim "Tim Man" Eubanks, my kin,¹ was front right (with two of the four Founding Members of ARG on board, this boat was principally responsible for establishing the "ARG Line" on the Gauley).

Our Friday run was a milestone in a couple of respects: it was the first time on the Gauley for Marcell, Tim Man and me, and it was the first time anyone from the RBF (the Red Boat Fleet) has run the Gauley (I think—although I did see a lot of fat hairy men, so who knows).

The Upper Gauley has five solid Class V rapids in a 6-mile stretch, so some amount of meaningful experience is just about an absolute necessity for any chance of success. Cap'n Downstream and the Gauley Shaman had rowed it before. Ross

has been on it too, but didn't remember anything, and neither of his crewmen had ever done the Upper before. Lippo and Tin Man had done it too, but their collective recollection was about as useful as what I learned in my Admiralty class in law school.²

The First Class V on the Gauley is called Insignificant. "There's a huge hole and an undercut rock at the bottom on river right, so whatever you do, don't go there," was Cap'n Downstream's excellent advice, which we promptly ignored. The ARG paddle boat didn't even wait for the first the big hole at top of the rapid to knock us right—we just headed over there anyway. Somewhere in the small house-sized boulder garden down the right side we got hung up long enough to get pushed into the LARGE house-sized boulder above the "Avoid This Hole at All Costs" hole, which luckily forced us to spin. Approximately 180 degrees into the spin we were able to locate the top lip of the monster hole, which we then paddled into backwards. "Paddled into" is probably not an entirely accurate description; "Fell into" is more like it. We don't know how we survived, but we eventually flushed out into the pool below (after practicing a couple more "rock/spin" moves). The ARG Line at Insignificant is certainly interesting, even exciting (in the same way that the Evil Knievel line at the Snake River Gorge was interesting and exciting). Neither the oar rigs nor the non-ARG paddle boat had any problems, although Marcell's shouted commands could be heard several rapids upstream and downstream (which was weird because he wasn't the captain).

The next Class V is Pillow Rock. The guide book says it drops 25 feet in 50 yards. All the water in the river smashes to the left into the massive Pillow Rock, then this huge boiling mass of froth crashes down to the right at a 90-degree angle into Volkswagen rock several feet downstream. We scouted it, and my first thought was "Where's the toilet paper?" I think it's a little easier run

for oar rigs, since they can pull hard to back off Pillow Rock. For paddle boats the run is through a confusing wave train down river right trying to find a big hole (that is probably a Class IV in its own right) that you can punch to slow you down enough to keep from ramming Pillow Rock and flipping and/or winding up in the Room of Doom. Locating the hole was a fairly easy task for us, as we seemed to have had no trouble hitting every bad hole on the river up to that point. The end result was that all four rafts ran Pillow clean, although Marcell's voice was loud enough to set off car alarms in adjoining states.

The third Class V is an incredibly long rapid called Lost Paddle. Our run was something of a pinball-like blur to me, and, when we pulled into a little moving eddy on river left to celebrate our victory, I just remember being relieved it was over and that I still had a pulse. Then Cap'n Downstream slid in beside us with the good news that we were only about halfway down the rapid, and we eased over a little drop and the violence started up again. I think we changed time zones before we finally reached the bottom, where we were able to celebrate in earnest by getting partially pinned and filling up with water. As the tube on my side started to disappear I scrambled to the high side and we were somehow able to free ourselves so we could move a little further down and get hung again. The other rafts had apparently clean runs, as Marcell's voice was no louder than the sound of a space shuttle launch. Lost Paddle is one really cool rapid (no kidding).

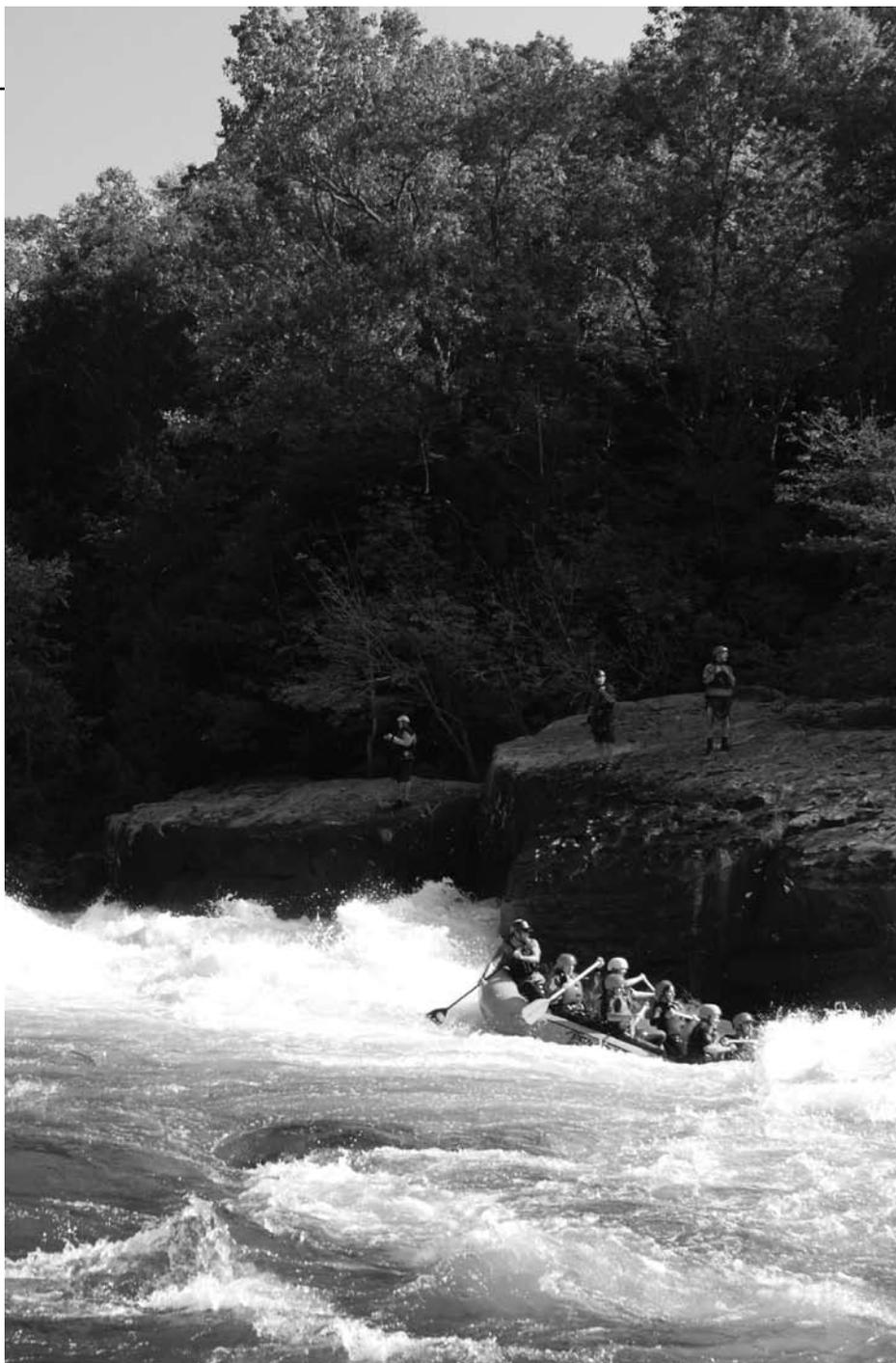
I feel I should digress here just a bit and tell you about protocol in the ARG raft. Not only did our raft captain employ the standard set of universally recognized raft commands, he tossed in few of his own as well. Lippo's most frequent command (on Day 1 at least) was "Oh \$#^!," with "This ain't good" running a close second. These commands usually preceded furious and uncoordinated bursts of unproductive

paddle thrashing, spinning, and backwards runs through huge holes, waves, or into rocks.

End of Part I (I am posting from I-40 in Tennessee using my Blackberry, and my thumbs are tired). Part II will include fish counts, updates on Marcell's decibel level, and information on new ARG line routes through Pure Screaming Hell, Iron Ring, and Sweet's Falls.

The fourth Class V on the Upper Gauley is Iron Ring, which is more of a drop or double drop than a rapid. The good news about that is that whatever happens to you happens fast and then it's over in a hurry (ditto for Sweet's Falls). There's a good lunch spot right at the rock shelf where the Iron Ring used to be, and it's an easy scout. We watched raft after raft hit the line and glide right over both drops. We watched one small R2 with a girl on the right tube go down the entire rapid and make only one (1) paddle stroke. A shredder followed her and made maybe two. All nine of us stood there looking at the rapid and analyzing the current pattern, location of the waves, wind speed, the effect of Northern Lights and Sun spots, computed the effect of the crew's various astrological signs on our collective biorhythm cycle, and then got in our raft brimming with confidence and certain of a good clean run, which we immediately botched.

The guides and other experienced boaters set up for the first drop by running left to right then hitting a little tongue that takes you over the first drop and sets you up on another narrow tongue between two holes over the second drop. The ARG Line was to run left to right, forgetting that nothing looks the same from the water as it did when scouting from above, turn too soon and hit the Woodstock Hole on the left side head on. We got some serious hang time before taking the hit and flushing out. The non-ARG paddle raft apparently liked our line because they followed us over the second drop in the same spot a few seconds



A raft takes the non-ARG line through Pillow

Photo by Thomas O'Keefe

later. We looked up just in time to see the Avon dump Marcell in the river. Several fish in the pool below suffered permanent hearing damage before Marcell bobbed up and Ross and Rodney pulled him in the raft. Cap'n Downstream and Ranger Rick cruised over with no problems.

Since scouting Iron Ring proved to be so effective we decided to scout Sweet's Falls, the last Class V on the Upper Gauley. Scouting Sweet's is such a popular activity that someone built a redwood walkway, steps and observation area alongside the rapid. We could clearly see the 14-foot drop, the misty rooster tail behind Dildo

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Rock on the left side, and the crease just to the right of it that you aim for with a little left angle, hoping that it straightens you out and doesn't flip you. To the right of the crease the river drops over the falls forming a nasty looking recirculating hydraulic. As we walked back down the hardwood sidewalk, I hardly suspected that I was getting ready to join Cap'n Downstream's Gauley Smallmouth Bass Club.

Back in the raft we once again forgot the rapid looks totally different from the river than from the bank. Cap'n Downstream went first. Although we couldn't see anything but the horizon line after he dropped over, we later learned he hit the crease, got knocked out of his seat, but stayed in his raft. Ranger Rick went next and said later he came closer to flipping there than anywhere else³ in his rafting career (which, I'll add, is extensive). Ross's raft also hit the crease and made it over, with the sound of Marcell's voice registering a 6.5 at the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology. We, on the other hand, mistook Dildo Rock for the crease and headed straight for it (unbeknownst to us the crowd gathered below had already started to cheer when they saw us bypassing THE line in favor of the ARG Line). One of the guidebooks says: "There is a 15-foot margin of error that separates a successful line from fireworks and flying bodies." The ARG Line was way outside the fog lines as we center punched Dildo Rock and taco-ed the raft. I don't remember much, but I do remember looking between my legs and wondering why the sky was where the water should be and vice versa. Also, Tin Man seemed to be hanging upside down from his knees in the raft. Just about then I completed my 1 1/2 twisting somersault and hit the froth somewhere near the bottom of the drop. I was under for awhile, and had plenty of time to count the Smallmouth bass and chat with a few who remembered the Cap'n and Tin Man from their swim at Sweet's a few years earlier. My swim wasn't bad, just furious as I headed for one of the eddies

on river left upstream of a jumble of rocks called Box Canyon that makes the three sisters look like a kiddie pool. I reached the eddy and turned around to see Lippo bobbing in the water behind me and the raft upright with Tin Man and Tim Man still in it (Tin Man said he felt the wind from the ejection as Lippo flew by him).

The last two miles of the run would have been totally uneventful except that Marcell decided to take a goober swim at Gillespie's Hole (III) within sight of the take-out. The ARG paddle raft enjoyed the show as Ross and Rodney tried to pull him in while his throw rope waist pack kept getting hung on the side of the Avon.

The second day we did the Lower Gauley from Woods Ferry to Swiss. We had the same line up as before except Cap'n Downstream rigged the DIB as a sweep boat. Before we even launched a kayaker coming downstream asked the Cap'n the most frequent question of the day: "Sir, what is THAT?" (the second most frequent question posed to the Cap'n on Day 2 was: "Where are you from"). We didn't talk to anyone who had ever heard of a sweep run down the Gauley before.

The first big rapid on the lower is Koontz Flume. The Cap'n went first after advising us to "run down the right along the wall" (sounded easy enough). We watched him as he ran down the right along the wall. The guidebook says: "The main feature of this one is a giant undercut boulder on the right side of the river. Be sure not to get pushed over there." By now you should have no trouble guessing what the ARG Line was in this rapid. We went too far right, gave Tim Man a good view looking down into the huge hole above the big rock, crashed the hole, took the hit, and spun into the undercut rock. Our rock/spin move practices the day before served us well and we survived to fight another day.

Ross's raft and Ranger Rick headed for

the middle of the rapid, bounced through some sporty waves and holes, and had time to smile for the camera (which apparently didn't snap any pictures).

The entry to Upper Mash is shallow and choked with boulders that make it very technical, especially for a sweep boat. This was a problem for the DIB as the Cap'n needed to make a 90-degree move about 15 feet to the left in moving water (a virtual impossibility in a sweep boat). He tangled with a huge hole then got stuck on a rock. All we could see from upstream was the handles of the sweep oars waving around wildly, untouched by human hands. He figured out a way to get unstuck without help and the other three rafts bumped, spun, and negotiated our way down behind him.

Things really start to pick up below the Mashies, and the rapids come at you much faster in the last half of the Lower. Everybody in all four rafts enjoyed Stairstep, a long and technical Class III that unfortunately resulted in no carnage to be reported here. Upper and Lower Stairstep probably have the best wave trains on the river.

At Cliffside the river makes a 90-degree turn to the right at the bottom of the rapid and the water in the channel is funneled through a chute between a large boulder on the right and the cliff face on the left. Raft Captain Lippo put the back left tube of the ARG paddle raft next to the wall. I stared a 5-foot high wall of water right in the face, poked it in the nose, and spit in its eye. ARG was clearly making a comeback.

About this time it started raining. Captain Lippo advised me to take over as he dug into his day bag to wipe the lens of glasses. He then informed me if it rained any harder he would be blind for all practical purposes and that, as 1st Assistant Raft Captain, I would be in command. That was okay because I read water well and could pick an ARG Line as well as Lippo.



However, my commands leave a little to be desired. I have two: “Paddle G-D-It!” and “Whoa!” Neither Tim Man or Tin Man wanted the job, so I was it. And Pure Screaming Hell (Class V) was right around the corner.

The run at Pure Screaming Hell is a long approach leading to a pair of large holes, Purgatory and Hell Hole, in addition to a very dangerous undercut sieve on the far right. In the pool above we heard a commercial raft guide describing the run to her crew and we eavesdropped. Based on her explanation I think she did her doctoral dissertation on PSH, then she had memorized it, line for line, and was repeating it to her customers while they looked at her with pure unblinking incomprehension. The whole thing made my head hurt. We gave up on her and decided on a new theory. With a blind raft captain and a complicated rapid, why not follow somebody down who knew what she was doing? Another commercial

raft (Wildwater #49) with an apparently knowledgeable guide on the back was in front of us so I suggested that we get behind her and stay there all the way down. Cap’n Downstream was a little ahead of us with no ability to stop or even slow down the sweep boat, but why worry about him in that big monster DIB? We cut in line behind #49 and bump drafted her all the way down, swapping paint with her in just about every hole. We ran clean, then turned around to see the Cap’n spinning the DIB around on the rock above Hell Hole, which then surfed him for a little while. He wanted to blame us for crowding him and forcing him to miss a crucial oar stroke, but self proclaimed ARG President Ranger Rick invoked ARG rules⁴ to dismiss the protest.

Day 2 ended with some confusion about the location of the take-out. Ranger Rick pointed to the beach where we thought our vehicles were parked and asked another private rafter: “Where are we?”

“This is the Gauley River” was the response. On that note we stacked 4 rafts on Ranger Rick’s trailer and returned to Carnifax Ferry Cabins # 8 and 9 to enjoy gin and juice as we watched the end of Wake Forest’s victory over Ole Miss.

Day 3 was back to the Upper Gauley. Ross shuttled us then left for D.C. Rodney rowed the 16 footer. Ranger Rick jumped in the DIB with Cap’n Downstream and they swapped off. Marcell got in the ARG raft. What a difference a second run in three days makes.

Since we were planning to drive part of the way back to Arkansas after we took off, and scouting on Day 1 had proved to be mostly useless, we decided to just read and run everything. Rodney had a clean run down all five Class Vs and all the smaller ones too. The ARG paddle raft abandoned the ARG Line and ran all the big rapids just like you’re supposed to, which you wouldn’t have realized if all you had was

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the audio from the runs through the Class V rapids (Marcell's voice was loud enough to trigger emergency locator transmitter detection devices in the F.A.A. satellite system). Ranger Rick did make Iron Ring interesting, finding a new ARG Line down the right side below the first drop, hanging the DIB on a rock and doing a 360 between the two drops. It is unclear whether he recovered because of pure dumb luck, skill, divine intervention, or the Bigger is Better principle.

Tim Man, finally realizing that, by swimming at Sweet's Falls on Day 1, Lippo and I had exposed ourselves to danger so that he and Tin Man could stay safe, recognized our sacrifice by doing a back flip off the ARG raft at the take-out.

So what are the long-term implications of ARG's trip to the Gauley?

1. The ARG Executive Committee will meet soon to discuss and re-evaluate the status of the non-ARG participants.⁵

2. My first ex-wife's third husband's nephew's ex-wife organized a meeting of the WWW (whitewater wives) while we were gone.

3. They elected Tin Man "Whitewater Husband of the Year." Tim Man came in second place. All other ARG Gauley trip participants came in tied for dead last with zero votes apiece.

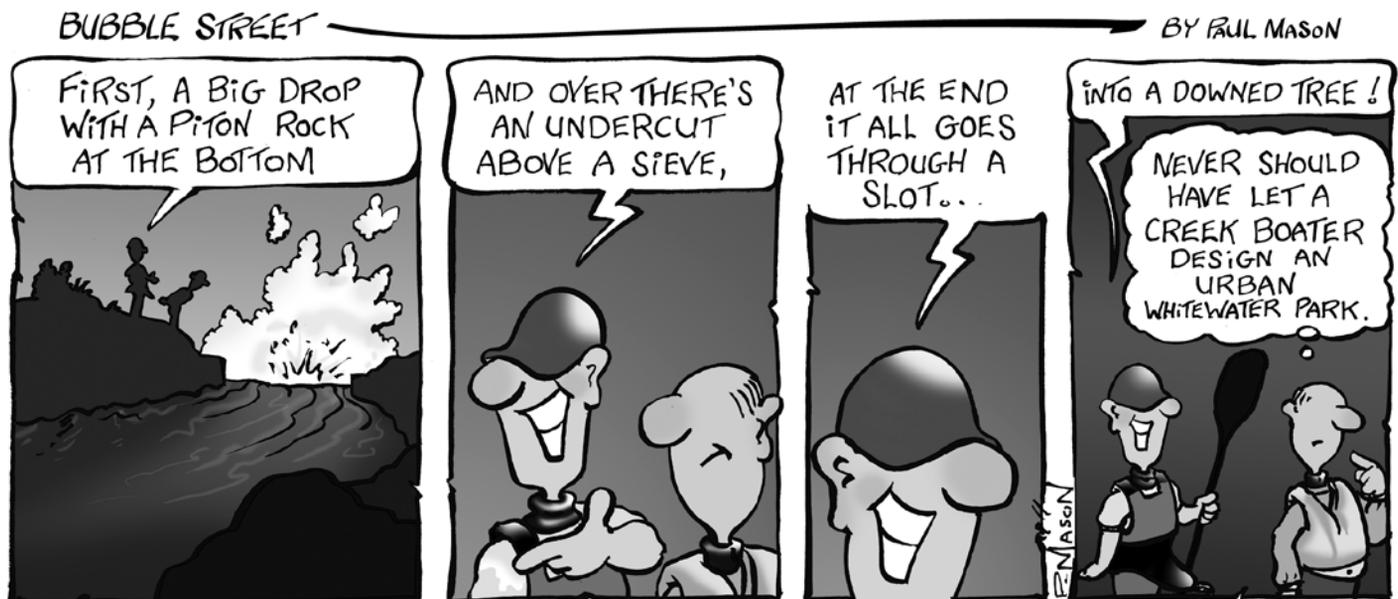
1 Interesting historical fact (I swear I'm not making this up): Tim Man's wife Cindy is my first ex-wife's third husband's nephew's ex-wife.

2 Interesting historical fact Number 2: Bill Clinton was the professor who taught Admiralty (aka "Boats") that semester (Ranger Rick was in that class too).

3 Interesting Historical Fact No. 3: Pinning a Super Puma on a cedar tree on Lower Richland and requiring a Z Drag extraction apparently doesn't count.

4 ARG Rule 6: It's always Stewart's fault.

5 Except for Marcell, who is banned for life, possibly making him eligible for ARG's Pete Rose Division.



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Stewardship

*The fat lady rapid on the Chelan Lake Chelan to
Columbia River, WA section*

Photo by Thomas O'Keefe



First Season of Chelan Releases a Great Success

by Thomas O'Keefe

This past summer marked the first season of releases on the Chelan Gorge (WA). The Chelan is a short but challenging Class V run with outstanding natural beauty in a deep gorge with clear, warm water. Approximately a dozen paddlers came out for the first weekend of releases in July with two dozen showing up for the second weekend.

Releases are again scheduled during weekends in July and September of 2010 and 2011. During this time the utility, federal regulators, and the local community will be carefully evaluating the success of these releases and a report will be filed at the end of year three for review by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. It is imperative that everyone understands that this review is taking place and our actions will be evaluated. Our actions will have implications for the future of this run and other runs throughout the region and across the country on regulated rivers.

During the first few releases, only those with solid Class V exploratory experience should attempt this run. This is emphatically not a run where aspiring Class IV+ paddlers or occasional Class V paddlers should consider making the jump to solid Class V.

Numbers were a little low on the first weekend of releases, but we had very little publicity for this event, given the desire of all parties to have a smoothly run and low key event. By the second weekend of releases, word had begun to spread and we had plenty of people to justify them. Nobody should feel that they have to register to "demonstrate interest." Our success these first couple weekends will be judged not on the number of paddlers or the number of trips, but on our ability to be safe and be off the water well before 6 pm.

For those with the skills to safely enjoy it, this run represents an outstanding resource unlike any other in the region.

We are extremely excited to provide this opportunity and hope to see more paddlers next year.

North Fork Rogue Open for Business

by Thomas O'Keefe

Paddlers have been coming out to enjoy a new opportunity on the North Fork Rogue. Thanks to a new license for PacifiCorp's hydropower project on the North Fork Rogue, paddlers now have an opportunity to enjoy the North Fork Rogue from Mill Creek Falls down to Lost Creek Reservoir during 8 weekend days in summer. There is a short Class IV+ run from Mill Creek Falls down to PacifiCorp's powerhouse and then easier rapids between the powerhouse and the reservoir.

While the 2009 season has already wrapped up, there will again be releases in 2010 and 2011 as part of a three-year evaluation of paddler interest and demand for this run. Watch the AW website for details on these opportunities, which will all be published in our release calendar.

One complication we've run into is problems with access at the reservoir (take-out). Unfortunately the trail that

paddlers have been using for many years crosses a piece of private property. The landowner is highly motivated to sell or trade this portion of his property, which would provide clear public access down to the reservoir. Unfortunately, the Army Corps of Engineers, who manages public land around the reservoir, put up a big fence and marked the trail as closed. We are currently working to resolve this situation and develop a plan for long-term public access to the take-out.

In the meantime PacifiCorp has been providing a shuttle service down to their powerhouse. The shuttle runs from 9:30 in the morning with the last pickup at the powerhouse at 4:45 pm. We will be evaluating opportunities for personal vehicle access at the powerhouse but PacifiCorp has concerns given the limited parking available.

If you do come out to enjoy the run it is very important that you sign in on the clipboard and complete the online survey which is linked from the American Whitewater website page for this run.

Chris Johnson charging the line at Pile Driver on the North Fork Rogue, OR

Photo by Jon "Shaggy" McLaughlin



Stewardship

Hemlock Dam Gone, Another River Restored

by Thomas O'Keefe

After several years of anticipation another dam is being removed and another river is set to be restored this fall in the Columbia Gorge. Hemlock Dam, which has been a barrier to fish passage and plugged up Trout Creek, a major tributary of the Wind River, was removed this past summer. Vegetation planing is just getting underway and will continue through next year. Soon after, we anticipate playing a role in helping develop a vision for a spectacular new day-use site along a restored river.

Hemlock Dam was constructed in 1935 to generate hydropower for the USFS Wind River Ranger District but the project ceased operation in the 1950s. The dam was later used for irrigation water for the Wind River Nursery. Trout Creek supports Lower Columbia River Steelhead that were listed as Threatened in 1998 and the project will improve upstream and downstream fish passage. In addition navigational passage will be restored.

Clark-Skamania Flyfisher's Craig Lynch, one of our key partners on this project, is ecstatic about the promise the restoration project holds: "Trout Creek historically produced 40% of the Wind River's wild steelhead populations. By removing the dam we have restored access to prime habitat for these fish." In fact the first steelhead made his way up through the former dam and reservoir site the day flow was restored. As project manager Bengt Coffin commented on this significant event: "We're quite certain that if we could understand fish movement well enough, we could discern this fish doing the equivalent of pumping his fist in the air (as we've been doing here on the project site)—after all, this is the first steelhead in over a century to swim unimpeded into upper Trout Creek!" Other partners on this project included American Rivers, CRAG Law Center, and Gifford Pinchot Task Force.



*Before: Hemlock Dam on Trout Creek prior to removal
After: The site of the old Hemlock Dam which was under the bridge*

Photos by Thomas O'Keefe



Everyone collects something.

I collect adventures.



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Taming the Tons – Tons River, Uttarakhand, India

Text & photographs by Stephen Cunliffe

“This is a very rocky one, so I need everyone to keep paddling through the rapid,” yells Sanjay in an attempt to be heard above the roaring river. “Speed is essential for us to steer and to avoid all the rocks; if it looks bad, then I’ll give you the ‘get down’ command, so just be ready for anything.”

Sanjay Singh Rana, our highly capable river guide, is preparing us for what we might expect in the upcoming rapid, Sticky Sarla, as our raft bears down on the noisy whitewater ahead.

Although the rapid is shallow and steep, our enthusiastic team of paddlers is overconfident and dismissive of what appears to be a relatively benign-looking

stretch of whitewater. Our eager and inexperienced crew has been lulled into a false sense of security. One minute our raft is zipping through the whitewater, the next moment it catches on a rock just below the surface and grinds to an abrupt halt. We have run aground on one of the many rocks that pepper the river above and below the frothing surface! “Brace yourselves,” yells Sanjay. But it’s too late; our raft’s rapid forward momentum and the sudden unexpected stop eject one of our hapless bow paddlers over the front tube and into the angry white cauldron of Sticky Sarla. There is little margin for error on the Tons and slow reactions are the difference between the relatively dry safety of the raft and the dangers of an ultra-refreshing, rocky river.

Sanjay’s years of river experience help him to see things happen in a slow motion that

Vaibhav Kala, owner of Aquaterra Adventures, guides a safety raft through the teeth of the infamous ‘Khunigad’ rapid

Photo by Stephen Cunliffe

escapes the rest of us. He reacts quickly, shouting, “Grab the line!” Rajat ‘Rookie-Cookie’ Mathur is already airborne and heading towards the angry river. Luckily, he has the presence of mind to heed Sanjay’s timely advice and manages to grab hold of the bowline before disappearing overboard. Rookie is immersed in the icy river water but, luckily, he remains connected to the all-important raft. Fellow bow paddler, Arvind Vermani, moves across the raft and quickly executes a textbook rescue of the “short swimmer.” After much back slapping and a good deal of high fiving, we set off again, eager to see what the Tons might dish up around the next corner.

Aside from Sticky Sarla (which certainly got the better of us), we successfully negotiate the remainder of the rapids on the Upper Tons. With Give Me Mori (after Mori village), Sharp Horn (one of the rapids on a long section called the 'Horns of the Tons') and Looking Up Sandhra (called so as it's below the bridge at Sandhra) all under our belts, confidence returns to our eager rafting crew. We will need all this self-belief and our newfound experience as we progress onto the big rapids of the 35-kilometre Middle Tons section of our rafting expedition in the days ahead.

The Tons Valley cuts through the Jaunsar Bawar region of Garhwal where the river marks the boundary between Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. The Tons feeds into the Yamuna River before

ultimately emptying into India's revered Ganges River.

Camp Lunagad, Aquaterra's rafting base camp on the Tons River, is situated barely 100 kilometres from the Tibetan border. The camp has an enviable location perched on a grassy alpine meadow overlooking the river surrounded by pine forests and abundant wild marijuana. The campsite is at a pleasant 3,600 feet, making it the perfect escape from the stifling heat that afflicts most of India at this time of year. Sitting on the banks of the idyllic Tons, smelling the pine-scented breeze rustling through the shady trees, all city stresses seem a million miles away.

The Tons River is fed by glacial melt, with its frozen source in the snowfields of the 20,720

ft Bandarpunch Peak. It is a small-medium volume Class IV river with fast flowing water that could be politely described as bracingly cold. Wetsuits certainly are a welcome barrier against the icy waves that periodically crash over the raft. The Tons rafting season has a small window of opportunity that seldom exceeds 10 weeks. Operators relocate from Rishikesh in late April and begin running the river as soon as snowmelt provides sufficient water to allow the rafts to negotiate the

Horses wade across the braided river upstream of 'Give me Mori' rapid, while safety kayakers keep an eye on the rafts progress through a sweeping bend of shallow white-water

Photo by Stephen Cunliffe



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boulder-strewn river. The season draws to a close early in July with all personnel and equipment needing to be evacuated before the onset of heavy monsoon rains; otherwise, clients and equipment might remain stranded indefinitely in this remote part of Uttarakhand.

Although we are repeatedly told that the water levels are particularly low this year, Vaibhav Kala, head-guide and owner of

Aquaterra, confides in me that the last few seasons have seen decreased precipitation, possibly as a result of global warming or abnormal El Niño conditions. The result is an incredibly bony river that requires well-honed technical skills and teamwork to negotiate. Aside from being shallow and rocky, the river boasts a multitude of obstructions and challenges, such as half-submerged tree trunks and whirlpools in the midst of the churning whitewater.

These obstacles add to the challenge and thrill of the rafting experience, although no sane rafter would willingly choose to abandon the safety of the raft.

Extremely low water levels have transformed the Tons into possibly the most technical river that I have ever run. Vaibhav concurs, “This is arguably the most technical raft trip in the Himalayas and on a shallow, rocky river, there is no substitute for training, technique, timing and teamwork.”

Rafting crews need to practise and fine-tune their skills before venturing into the continuous whitewater trains that dominate long sections of the Middle Tons. The Tons requires a cohesive rafting team that can respond instantly to the rapid-fire paddle commands being issued by the experienced river guides. This doesn't mean that you need to be a seasoned rafting junkie to visit the Tons. The guides spend the first few days drilling everyone—newbies and old-hands alike—on the use of safety equipment, the different paddle techniques, and the various paddle commands that they will be using. By the end of this intensive and fun training regime, everyone feels more confident and ready to tackle the river that rafting legend Jack Morison rated as “one of the top ten world-class rivers on the planet.”

With some big rapids lying in store for us at Khunigad, as well as the infamous Five Minus Rana rapid near Tiuni Bazaar, our superstitious guides decide that paying a respectful visit to the local Hanol temple (dedicated to Mahasu devta) is a prerequisite for our safe passage downstream. Offerings are made to appease the river gods, a goat is slaughtered and tikkas are issued. At the end of the

The Tons River is a small to medium volume Class IV river with fast-flowing glacial-melt water that could most politely be described as bracingly cold

Photo by Stephen Cunliffe



ceremony we feel spiritually fortified and ready to embrace the challenges of the Middle Tons.

We depart Camp Lunagad in bright sunshine ready to tackle the mighty river below. Our sunny day vanishes within minutes. Gale-force winds come howling up the valley, sending heavy rain clouds racing across the sky. With the approach of the monsoon, the Tons Valley is prone to sudden weather changes, and the occasional storm adds yet another dimension of excitement to the rafting experience. The strong winds neutralise the river current and at times it even appears as if the river has reversed its course and decided to flow upstream! We remain warm in our wetsuits and splash jackets as big raindrops thump on our helmets, smash into the raft and splatter on the surrounding rocks. The rafts become tough to control and it's a real challenge to manoeuvre them through the rock-strewn river. The roar of the wind drowns out Sanjay's urgent paddle commands and we flounder in the midst of the rapids. As the wind asserts its dominance over our hapless boat, we brace ourselves, bouncing off rocks in the

middle of this churning whitewater mêlée. Anxiety is building among our wannabe rafting crew as we ponder what next the storm might dish up. This is unpredictable rafting at its best!

Within a matter of minutes the storm moves off, the sun reappears and we find ourselves returned unscathed to the tranquil Tons Valley. The friendly smiling faces of inquisitive local villagers greet our procession of rafts as we paddle past small villages. Homesteads cling to the hillside surrounded by their tiny terraced wheat fields. Along remote stretches of the river even the villages disappear, and goats, cows and horses become the only spectators to our progress. They stare at us with a mild curiosity bordering on indifference, as we carefully negotiate our way through the tight lines of rocky rapids.

continued on page 55

Superstitious rafting guides felt that a respectful visit to Hanol temple was mandatory for everybody's safe passage downstream. In the foreground, the unsuspecting sacrificial goat curiously eyes our arrival...

Photo by Stephen Cunliffe



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Wilderness Sojourns: Spring in the Desert

by Brian Vogt

There are many ways to boat, many disciplines in this varied sport. Amongst so many ways to engage the river, there's nothing I enjoy more than a wilderness multi-day trip. There's something magical about falling asleep under the stars with river music to lull your senses. Waking up riverside with no driving between you and your first stroke of the day is a great feeling, as is knowing that your full day will be spent at the speed of the river, not the speed of a bus, plane, or car.

I am not alone in my enjoyment of this type of boating. Competition for permits for the classic river trips like the Middle Fork Salmon, Selway, Rogue, and Grand Canyon demonstrate just how many

people have come to love wilderness travel by river. But the typical high summer trips, as great as they are, often occur during peak use season. Competition for camps, or even campsite rationing defeats the desire to let a river trip unfold according to whim. Where ought we to hike? Layover? How many miles will we want to run next Tuesday? These are questions best resolved in the moment, not scheduled days in advance. For all of these reasons, a group of friends and I have started looking for ways to get into these places in times of low demand.

The best weapon for this kind of tactical attack on overcrowded rivers is the inflatable kayak. It's the best available compromise when looking for a boat that can go light and quick, or carry a week's worth of gear and rations. It's more able to handle less-than-optimal flows than rafts or cat boats, and more able to do so carrying gear than a kayak.

Shaun Riedinger and Bill Tuthill on the Verde

Photo by Brian Vogt

This past spring, we set our sights on the desert southwest, hoping to land a Yampa permit. When that didn't happen, we shifted gears and headed to the little-known Rio Verde, a Salt tributary with a 60-mile wilderness run only an hour north of Phoenix. Because we were taking small boats, we were able to fly to Phoenix with everything but food and fuel in hand. These other items we shipped to a local store to be picked up once we landed in Phoenix. Less than three hours after touching down we were rigging boats over cold beers in the March sun at Beasley Flats. The shuttle driver lives at put-in, which makes launching even more convenient.

The Verde is an amazingly underrated river trip. The sprawling hills are densely covered with a lush mixture of juniper,

ocotillo, cholla, and saguaro that defies the expectation of a barren wasteland. Most of the run is very remote and isolated, though a handful of trails and old jeep tracks do penetrate the river corridor. We saw no one at all in the upper section. We camped on wonderful beaches with little evidence of prior use. The river itself was flowing at 200cfs. We had barely perceptible current broken only by intermittent riffles or blind, fast chutes lined so densely with bullrushes it was impossible to see the bow of your boat.

We found excellent hiking to well preserved archaeological sites nestled in the bedrock. The white skeletons of cottonwood gleamed in the bright desert light, still

dormant despite the occasional rain and temperatures in the 70s. The Verde never traverses a deep gorge, flowing generally between hills with only occasional bedrock walls hemming the river into its valley. Despite this, most use along the Verde is limited to a handful of spots such as Red Creek, Verde Hot Springs, and Sheep Pack Bridge, which are usually accessible by vehicle. We had the river to ourselves, and we drifted at its leisurely pace. The variable spring weather doused much of the surrounding country with rain, putting on spectacular shows of light and cloud. We received only a token drizzle or two to remind us how quickly conditions can change in the volatile desert.

The Verde's wild country only whet our appetite for more desert boating. Feeling lucky, we plied the Yampa's cancellation line, getting lucky with a preseason launch in April. Once again we flew, this time into Denver. Family, planning to join in rafts, suddenly had to pull out of the trip—but drove down to the put in anyway, with the raft and pre-packed coolers, saving our trip. It was hard to launch without them, and we vowed to return with the full party in future.

Nick Borelli on the South Fork Salmon Devil Creek

Photo by Brian Vogt



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We launch to clear skies, 70-degree weather, and a friendly flow of 6,000 cfs. We never rowed, simply watching agog as the towering walls unfurled in front of us like a silent movie, canyon wrens and the murmur of water the only accompaniment. Though this was a river trip, the rock dominated all aspects of the river corridor. Its varied hues were more diverse than the wildest flowering meadow. We stopped at Anderson Hole for lunch, and continued down to check out Ponderosa and TeePee camps before deciding where to stay, a luxury of the preseason trip. Nor was our trip limited to the customary four nights above Echo Park. We could linger a full week, and we did so.

This freedom to set our own agenda paid off in a big way when we landed for a brief look at the Little Joe campsite. Little discussion was needed to decide to camp here, despite being only four miles above our intended layover camp at Harding Hole. We hiked Starvation Valley, a lovely side canyon that boxes in regularly, but never in such a way that you cannot pass. Pine trees grew 800 feet above our heads, and it seemed impossible there could be space for the roots of trees so huge, nor soil enough to nourish them, yet there they clung, testament to the ruthless fight for life in this impossible landscape. The water was rising, as indicated by the elk carcasses washing through the rapid. We saw two, several hours apart, follow an identical line down the rocky right side of the drop.

At Harding Hole, we at last saw the other folks on the river with us—three groups rolled in while we laid over, for most of them it was the first night of their trip. We hiked and napped—there was nothing that needed doing, and nowhere we'd rather have been. The weather began to change and the flow came up, approaching 12,000 cfs, though we didn't know that yet. Warm Springs was a challenge, the whitewater cost to this amazing canyon. We survived and drifted down to Box Elder for the night.

The weather was now fully that of volatile spring in the desert. We rigged tarps,

enjoying dinner and a fire while the rain hammered down. A waterfall formed just out of camp. The water didn't care where we stayed and threatened a tent or two before relenting. We'll saw some snow the next day as we floated Whirpool Canyon, a dramatic difference from the 80-degree days we enjoyed in the upper canyon. We stopped at Jones Hole to hike and enjoy a warm day that quickly became cold and stormy. We cooked under our tarp and watched the wind blow snow off the canyon rim, miles upstream, a reliable warning that the storm would be over our spot in just a few minutes. The cycle repeated all evening.

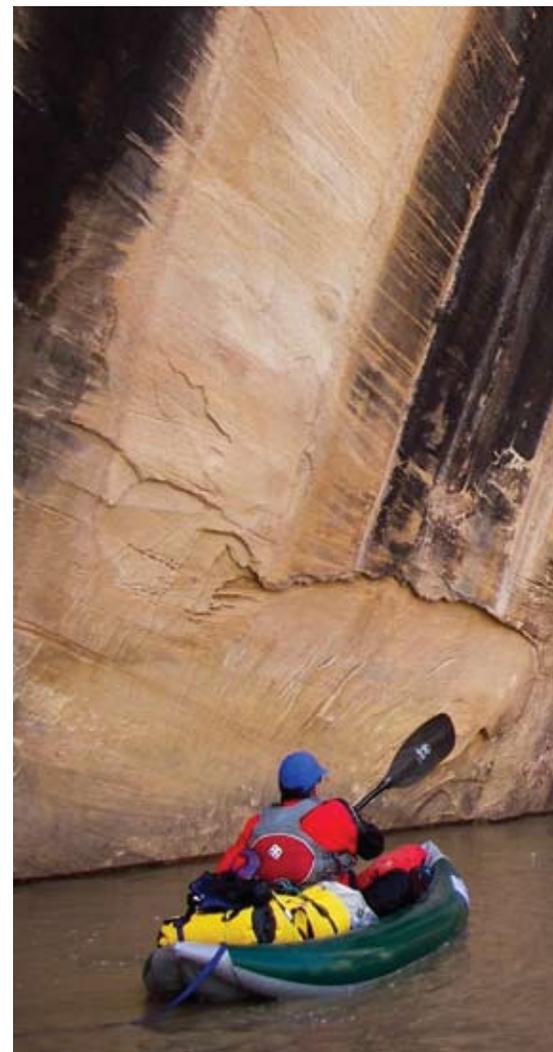
Our final day down to Split Mountain Gorge was again clear, the storms having moved on. We'd seen people rarely on this run, mostly at Harding Hole, and none on the Green below the confluence, save a small group camped lower down at Jones Hole. The rapids of Split Mountain Gorge gave the IKs an adrenaline filled finale to a mostly calm water trip. We arrived at the boat ramp within 15 minutes of the time agreed upon 70 miles and a world ago, and packed up to fly home.

Having made two such excellent trips, we weren't sure there would be another in the cards for the year. But a late summer rainstorm brought the SF Salmon up to 2.4 feet and we decided to jump on the flow. This little run may just be the best whitewater in the Salmon drainage. It's 36 miles from launch to Mackay Bar, at the confluence with the Main Salmon. We picked up our tags allowing us to turn the corner and boat out to Vinegar Creek. We had only run the SF at flows below 2 feet, when the run was a technical but not pushy Class III-IV experience. The extra water we had this time was readily noticed in rapids with much more push and holes far more retentive than those in our memories. We adjusted and made good time, running the left-to-right line at Devil Creek, crashing huge laterals and escaping mostly unscathed. Surprise drop lived up to its name this time around. The top three moves belie the difficulty of the bottom ledge, with rock piles or huge holes being the main choices. We sneaked

Elk Creek, avoiding the left side ledge hole that recirculates for 15 feet downstream.

This was blitz trip—four days from Seattle total, for a 54-mile trip and 17 hours of driving. We did 18 miles the first day. We ran V drop, a handful of Class IV+s, and countless Class III and IV rapids. As we pulled into camp, everyone was grinning but tired from so much action. Everyone agreed the scenery and whitewater were equal to those found on Oregon's classic Illinois River. We slept the dreamless sleep earned by such a day, eager for tomorrow's challenges.

The second half of the SF flows through a steeper canyon that looks like the Middle



Fork's Impassible Canyon in miniature. This version is more intimate but just as difficult to traverse. We had two big Class IV rapids to start the day, then miles of fun low stress Class III-IV before we arrived at Fall Creek, the finale of the South Fork Salmon's whitewater feast. We portaged quickly, making this and Greyhound the only drops we opted to walk. This was a very crowded trip on the SF—for the first time, we saw another group on the water, something we'd never seen before on these late season low water trips. It was great to see people out enjoying such a gem of a run, and we felt lucky this canyon was still self-regulating to this degree.

This trip was the end of our big wilderness

excursions for the year; except for maybe a fall Rogue trip; or a rain fed Illinois run over the holidays; or perhaps a sunny weekend on the Olympic Peninsula, camping in a river bottom, out of sight of the clear cuts on a beach where no one ever stops. But one thing is certain: it won't be long before we set out again, everything we need carried with us, eager to see what new corner of this amazing world we will call home for a night—or perhaps longer.

Nick and Bill at Tiger wall on the Yampa

Photo by Brian Vogt



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Discovering the Bruneau: How a derailed Owyhee trip turned into a classic wilderness float

By Rebecca Sherman

The temptation started when almost no one in our Portland boating community had even heard of the river.

“What did you say? Bruneau?”

“Never heard of it. Where is it?”

“How do you spell that?”

The Internet didn't help. A few photos, fewer videos, and gushing trip reports that mostly shrugged off mention of any

rapids. (We later learned that this oversight wasn't due to disinterest in the river, but rather to the stunning scenery and wildlife that distracts from the whitewater.) By contrast, what tidbits we did hear from friends of friends said that we better know what we were doing. The river required a “solid Class IV boater,” said one friend from Idaho, “not solid Class III.”

Huh. And when we called the river rangers in southern Idaho, they were downright encouraging. Nope, no logjams (the BLM website remains out-of-date, warning boaters in bold type about wood in the river). The flows were, to quote them, perfect for our 14-foot gear boats. The hardest thing about the river is the put-in road, they said.

For months, our group had been planning

a trip down Oregon's Owyhee River, a remote desert destination well-known for its canyons and its tight window of flow: the river starts its decline towards a trickle in late May to June. We watched the Rome gauge go from 1000 cfs (doable, but low) to 900. Then, six days before launch, 820. We had missed the window; we just couldn't run the Owyhee this year.

We looked at our options. Sitting on the side of the road at Bob's Hole after a paddle on the upper Clackamas four days before the planned trip launch, we talked about alternate rivers. None, except the Bruneau, offered the kind of desert scenery and exclusive spring run that we

Canyon view from near the ridgeline

Photo by Bernard Romey





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were looking for. But we hesitated over the Bruneau because it felt so accidental. We had only learned of it because it shared a BLM map with the Owyhee. A 500 mile drive lay between the river and Portland, and we only knew what meager details the Internet divulged.

On the roadside, we felt a group dynamic kind of like mischief mixed with curiosity. We decided to take the adventurous route: let's go see what's actually on the Bruneau River in far southeast Idaho.

The Bruneau makes a relatively short trip from the Jarbidge Mountains in Nevada across a wide plain in southern Idaho before it empties into C.J. Strike reservoir on the Snake River near Mountain Home, Idaho. Over time, the power of the Bruneau and its major tributary, the Jarbidge, carved a steep canyon into the plain. From a distance, the canyon is almost invisible – it looks like a scratch on the surface of a wide desert, bracketed by distant mountains.

The Bruneau River is a special place. In March 2009, it received the highest possible federal protection specifically for rivers: nearly 40 miles of the main stem of the river—the very reach that we were about to run—were designated Wild under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act as part of the Owyhee Initiative. Several Bruneau tributaries, including 25 miles of Sheep Creek and 30 miles of the Jarbidge, were also newly listed as Wild. President Obama signed this bill into law as part of Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009, a package of 160 bills that included the Owyhee Initiative.

What makes the Bruneau worth protecting? According to Idaho Rivers United, it is part of the largest concentration of sheer-walled rhyolite/basalt canyon systems in the Western United States, the canyon rising more than 1,200 feet above the river level. The Bruneau was identified in the original 1968 Wild & Scenic Rivers Act as one of 27 rivers around the nation to be

studied immediately for designation.

For more on the Owyhee Initiative, visit Idaho Rivers United: www.idahorivers.org.

Ten of us embarked from Portland on a Thursday with a plan: meet at the take-out that night, shuttle to the put-in early the next morning, and float 41 miles of wilderness canyon over Memorial Day weekend.

Camping at the take-out turned out not to be simple, especially in the dark. The only sign designating the turnoff was a weathered, handpainted strung up board that said “YARD F.” Every last car, arriving separately, voted against taking this road until it became clear that two miles before and after this road, all turnoffs led elsewhere.

The group at the take out

Photo by Bernard Romey



The real challenge lay ahead: the drive over the Class V road to the put-in. You hear how bad the road is, and still it is worse than you imagined. That's why many people choose to put in at the Bruneau's tributary, the Jarbidge. For our group, the Jarbidge would have meant mandatory portages around rock gardens, and so we chose the lesser evil of the put-in road.

On this road, driving 40 miles takes over two hours. Half of the distance between the put-in and the take-out, the road becomes something more like a narrow strip of land that 4WDs happen to have driven across enough times to kill vegetation, and that's about all. Necks bobbed constantly as we passed abandoned Subarus. The final push from the canyon lip down to the river's edge was so steep that our truck driver could not actually see the road before him. Tires carefully rolled over ledges, and truck cabs tilted at 20-degree angles toward the drop-off. Passengers chose to walk the final 1.5 miles, and helped out our white-knuckled driver by placing large rocks in the deep ruts to give the tires something to land on.

Once we arrived at the put-in ramp, we took our time and had lunch. No one was here! We congratulated ourselves. Only as we put the finishing touches on our rigging did a group of guys show up. Then, shortly after, a large group of cat boaters and kayaks arrived. We divided up preferred campsites among the groups and hustled on to the river, eager to get to our selected camp for the evening and take in a hike.

The first major rapid (listed as Class III+ or IV) is called Cave Rapid, because most of the flow pushes you right side into cave with a tough keeper eddy. At these flows, although still somewhat bony, we could sneak the far left channel and avoid the mess. In general, the river's challenges are characterized more by technical narrowness than big water, even in Five Mile and Wild Burro. The canyon is continuous, slotting through with what seems at times like a

never-ending string of subtle twists. Class IIIs were sometimes indistinct from the rest of the whitewater, sometimes a fun pinch of water for a drop or an S-curve. Mostly the object of maneuvering on the Bruneau is to avoid pinballing off canyon walls or to explore another appealing draw, a break in the canyon.

After Cave Rapid was out of the way, we pushed on to Cave Draw, admiring the steep canyon that quickly enveloped us. Cave Draw is known for its modest hike back into a spectacular cave, a great place to spend a few hours. We had hoped to camp here for the night, but to our surprise a group was already present and was distinctly not sharing space. At the next campsite, the same thing; this friendlier group told us that they had just put on the river this morning.

Where did these people come from? We hadn't seen anyone launch before us, and we assumed there couldn't be because we departed from the take-out in early morning. And, how did so many know about the Bruneau? We began to suspect a conspiracy of hiding this river. Ultimately, a beachy break in a canyon eddy – one of many beaches but one of the few without poison ivy – sufficed for a lovely but limited first night camp.

As a group, we had decided to take an easy pace, allowing four days on the river for a 41-mile float. This decision happily disintegrated into a focus on enjoying the best campsites. Twice we pulled off for lunch and ended up relaxing our way into dinner.

The first time, we lost momentum on a beach hidden in the shade of a tree grove with an easy hike up to a cave, of which there are many accessible in the canyon. The grove held a significant diversity of canyon flora and fauna, and gave our ecologists a site on which to get their bearings. Plants were plucked and identified, cave scat analyzed, and bird calls deciphered. Our ornithology buff was

astonished at the range of birds present in this remote canyon.

At the second camp the next day, we started a lunchtime foray at the confluence with the East Fork Bruneau River, also called Clover Creek. Seeing the high plateau above the river and the warmer swimmable waters of the East Fork, we pulled everything from the boats and decided to break for the day. This was the only truly wide breach in the canyon, and it offered a promising vista and hikes. Winds from the night before led us to set up a wind breaker, but instead of wind we experienced a sudden, magical thunderstorm. Crowded underneath the wing, we enjoyed the fresh smells of a sodden desert rather than the sights of the back canyon. When one of us tried to find quick shelter under a tree, her ears discovered that a rattlesnake had the same instinct. This would be our one rattlesnake sighting all trip. Once the rain had passed and after rounds of ammo-can tug of war, stars loomed large in the sky and signaled a return to clear sunshine for the next day's journey.

As trip leaders, we were warned most of rattlesnakes on the river. In fact, the more pervasive problem was poison ivy and poison oak, with stands flourishing all along the river's banks. Scouting spots and campsites were less full of the stuff, but still required constant vigilance.

Natural hazards also gave way to other life. Bugs and birds were in abundance. Canyon wrens sang their descending cascade and redwing blackbirds crisscrossed the river. Fish jumped, stink bugs prowled, and fuzzy caterpillars ran—the closest thing to running you can imagine for a caterpillar, honest—across the sand footpaths. The cold water and rains gave life to the canyons, recoloring the hills with Indian paintbrush and the momentary green of spring.

Finally we faced up to it: we had to put in one day of significant mileage if we were

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going to leave the canyon on time. We pulled off the river to put on splash jackets and helmets, the first time on the trip that they were a good idea, just above Five Mile Rapids.

Five Mile is a five-mile long series of continuous Class IV rapids. In our flows (1300-1500 cfs), at least three eddies were possible for our gear boats to catch and take a breather. A steep gradient drop combined with substantial boulders creates fun rapids much like endless Plinko—a constant barrage of left-right decisions in a field of water full of rocks while keeping one eye ahead to the final destination. Our heavy boat was fully

muscled to make quick moves and hit narrow lanes of water; otherwise we risked getting stuck behind a rock fence. In lower flows, our boats would have had fewer options and very skinny lanes, but more time to make choices. We watched kayaks and catboats tumble around happily in the rapids, boaters occasionally dethroned but able to recover quickly.

That night, we pitched our swan song camp halfway between Five Mile and the last significant rapid, Wild Burro. The theme—left over from our Owyhee trip, which was to begin in Rome, Oregon—was Roman Coliseum. We played bocce in togas, cooked up steaks, and drank

cocktails carelessly. The canyon we were still deep inside, far from everything, would be hundreds of miles behind us by this time tomorrow.

On the final day, as we approached Wild Burro, we heard roars and explosions, and not from the rapid. This drum roll into Wild Burro was actually the nearby Saylor U.S. Air Force base and bombing

Last day camp above Wild Burro, near the end of the canyon for

Photo by Bernard Romey



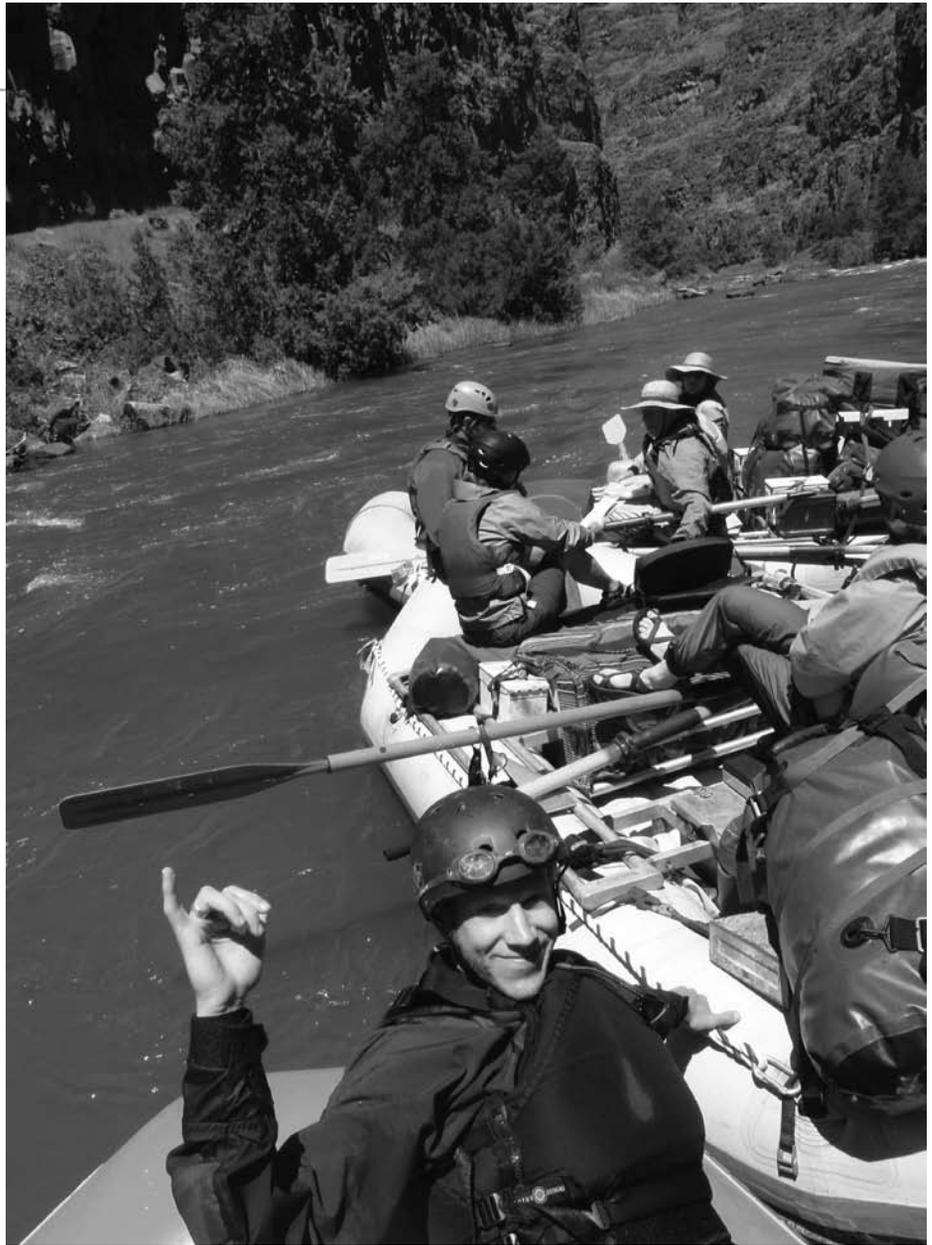
range. Although we had read about planes and explosions, they had not been present on the trip until this morning. We could not decide if the Air Force took a Memorial Day holiday, or if the noises were inaudible further upstream. Either way, we listened to the first unnatural noises we'd heard since the rigs drove away at the put-in—hardly subtle ones. Our sense of wilderness had been cut away by the sounds of destruction.

Wild Burro begins with a narrowing river channel, a drop, an island in the center, and a horizontal wall on right where the bulk of the flow falls. Our 11.5-foot paddle boat took the left channel, but larger boats all battled the wall on river right. Prickly rocks near the center island prevented us from skirting the wall entirely, and all boats took a good bruise against the wall, but with no consequences. As one of us calls it, PICMAN (Position In Center, Maneuver As Necessary) was all that was required in Wild Burro after the initial entry.

Once Wild Burro was behind us, the canyon walls opened up into rangelands and dissipated into low hills. We floated until we saw trucks on river right. There is no riverside sign for the take-out, but it is obvious. Hazard note: also unmarked but much less obvious is a low-head dam immediately below take-out. If you do run the first low-head dam successfully, there is a second larger dam just below. Make sure you pull off at the ramp.

Five hundred miles from Portland, our group couldn't have been more pleased that we missed the Owyhee and were forced last minute to consider the heretofore unknown Bruneau.

But there is a conflict to broadcasting a great trip about an unknown gem. Perhaps Idaho paddlers have been wise to keep the Bruneau their secret.



Group prepares for Five-Mile Rapids, a five-mile long series of Class IVs.

Photo by Bernard Romey

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The Flow

By Mark Gabel

It was a bitterly cold and dreary autumn morning in the Appalachian Mountains of West Virginia. A heavy fog created a ceiling that hovered only feet above the notorious Gauley River, which was running at a level I had never seen before: 5000 cfs, nearly double its normal flow. These factors alone created an intimidating stage that was frightening to most seasoned river guides, but I had only guided this section of river twice in the past and this day was going to test my skills on and off the water in ways I had never anticipated.

Five years of whitewater guiding had led me here, a high water day on a Class V river that I probably had no business guiding on, in a small boat with a crew of four, three of whom were in tears. One of the more startling realizations for me that morning was, of the five people getting ready to paddle that particular boat down a 15-mile stretch of the Gauley, I was probably the most apprehensive. The butterflies had started swirling in my

stomach days before. I had already made several trips to the crosiers well before my crew arrived and made one last mad dash as I saw our bus pull into the parking area. It took every drop of self control I could muster in order to appear calm and confident when those four people, who were about to trust their lives to me for the next six hours, approached my raft.

I was accustomed to guiding larger paddle rafts on the New River with crews of seven or eight guests. You could always count on four gung-ho types who would volunteer to sit up front, paddle like Hell, and take the abuse that the river consistently offered. If I blew a line, I could easily place the responsibility on a lack of paddling, misinterpreting of the commands or, most often times, just laughed it off as, “part of the adventure.” In a worse case scenario, a flip or a dump of the entire raft, the rapids on the New River ended in long forgiving pools that allowed plenty of time for picking up the pieces before the next drop. The Gauley wasn’t as generous; its lines routes were not as straightforward, there were sieves, significantly more undercut rocks, and rescues had to happen quickly and efficiently, especially at high water.

Green guides tend to rely almost exclusively on their crews to successfully navigate whitewater. Average guides, most often experienced weekend warriors, mostly use some combination of muscle and reading water. The best and most seasoned river guides usually depend on the water to put them where they need to be. They know how to move their boats through a river using the currents to their raft’s advantage, following the path of least resistance, following the flow. I had never considered myself to be part of this elite group of river professionals.

In past seasons I claimed I had no desire to guide the Upper Gauley. I was having a good time on the Class IV sections of the New and Lower Gauley, meeting girls, drinking beer, and fulfilling whatever need for adrenaline my body craved. However, the preceding Saturday I had been informed by the General Manager, Brags, a crusty, tough, old river runner, who didn’t believe in taking no for an answer, that I would in fact be working on the Upper Gauley, on a commercial trip, that day! Short staffed and scrambling for guides, he knew that I had run this stretch of whitewater, the required five times, meeting the state’s minimum to work as a licensed guide. It appeared that I had fooled everyone into believing my skills at reading water and running rivers were up to the challenge of the Upper Gauley—everyone except me.

My crew on this day included a newlywed couple. She came to the boat with a paperback novel in her hand, lavishly made up and looking more like someone going to brunch than on a river trip. When I inquired about the book, she told me her husband had suggested she bring it since, “she might be bored.” I raised an eyebrow



The author runs Pillow Rock with friends on a less stressful day on the Upper Gauley

Photo by North American River Runners, Hico, West Virginia

and asked her husband if he had ever been on the Gauley?

“Oh yeah!” he responded.

I asked if he had been bored. “Oh no!”

So why, I asked, do you think your bride would be?

“Well, she wouldn’t have come if I had given her details; she doesn’t swim.”

The bride cried most of the trip, from the moment she realized it wasn’t going to be a gentle float trip, until she finally climbed onto the bus at the take-out and received a much needed beer.

The other two individuals in the raft were a mother and daughter from Columbus, Ohio. I had dated another of the woman’s daughters and had known the family for years. When I was training to become a guide the mother had repeatedly told me the story of how she had nearly drowned on a river trip and how she would never consider putting herself in that type of dangerous situation again. However, for some reason at this particular point in her life, she had decided that this was the day, the Gauley was the river and I was the guide, to help conquer that deeply embedded fear. I was curious how much she knew about the summer romance with her daughter and how that might have influenced her selection of a guide on this day. They both climbed tentatively into the boat, both at least as frightened as the bride. Neither of them had heard anything but horror stories about this section of river in the past. Most of those tales had been told by me, as proof of my bravado, and now I was about to pay the price. I might very well have taken the paddles out of the hands of three of my four crew members.

Dave Bassagio was the trip leader that day, a guide who I had done my original training with. While I had worked as a weekend warrior for most of the past five years,

Dave had guided full-time internationally. Bassagio read water as well as anyone on the Gauley and always managed the flow of the river to his boat’s advantage. In addition to being familiar with the river, he and knew me well enough to see through my façade of calm. He pulled me to the side, looked at me intensely, and made it clear that I had both the experience and ability to utilize those same skills. Dave’s advice as we carried the boats to the rocky edge of the raging river was, “Trust the river, trust your abilities, and don’t fear the flow.” After years of crashing headfirst into the biggest waves and screaming at crews to, “Paddle or Die,” I found myself in a situation where I had no choice but to become one with the flow and listen to an inner voice that would help me to negotiate the rapids in a way that only the most seasoned of river runners were capable.

I looked downstream towards the horizon line that marked the entrance to the first Class V, Insignificant Rapid (which it is not). The fog was still hanging just feet above the water, creating an even more daunting stage than was normal in this calm pool above the first major drop on the Upper Gauley. I knew where I had entered in the past and I knew in order to run the traditional right-hand line I would need to power my way from the far left side of the river, across the main flow, to the safety of river right. Failing to make that ferry would result in dropping over at least one of two huge pour over ledges and than flushing into a series of enormous standing waves that funneled into a massive undercut boulder near the rapid’s end. Missing this line, at these levels in a small boat, would almost certainly result in a flip; the result of a flip would, at best, result in a complete loss of confidence by my already terrified crew. I had swum this stretch of river once while on a private trip and the thought of repeating that swim personally or watching any of the people in our raft swim it, nauseated me. If anyone went in the water here it was going to make for an incredibly long day for us all. I looked at the people

in my boat; three of them were in tears, two of those trembling to a point that was making it near impossible for them to hang onto their paddles. The fourth was busy trying to figure how he was going to salvage his new marriage. I stood on the back tube of the raft and studied the river and my horrified passengers as we slowly drifted towards the entrance to the drop.

There was the same confusing mix of rocks and swirling eddy water that had always been there, but this time I saw something new. Perhaps the high water made the alternative more obvious or possibly the trepidation had forced me to find an alternative to the standard route. Down the left side of the entrance there appeared to be a crease, which with the right angle would allow you to drop into the chute backwards below the first ledge and potentially ferry above the second. If timed correctly and with just the proper momentum, it appeared that a raft could split the two ledges and follow the wave train to the safety of the river left eddy at the bottom of the drop. This maneuver would require several cartwheels, a finesse technique I rarely utilized, but very little power from my crew. More importantly, if necessary, I might be able to pull it off alone. Alone that is except for the help of the river’s flow and one very humbled newlywed, who I asked to move to the front left position, directly opposite me, in the raft. From this position he had the best chance of providing the power I anticipated needing.

All of the other commercial rafts were larger and powered by much stronger crews. We watched as each of them entered the traditional line and easily cleared the menacing obstacles in the center. The guides screamed commands and their crews battled their way from the far left side of the river to the right where they eerily disappeared into the fog and turbulence. Adrenaline filled the air and concentration intensified, as did the thunderous roar from the quickly approaching rapid, as

Inflatables

our boat continued to gain momentum as it drifted into the entrance. Our line was going to require threading between two boulders with thousands of gallons of water dumping over them each second, much more water than any of the guides on this trip had ever experienced on the Upper Gauley. If we missed our line there would only be one boat left behind us to pick up the pieces and in that boat sat the Trip Leader, Dave Bassagio. Dave first looked down river and then directly at me, as I continued to float towards the potential entrance, still standing on the rear tube trying to anticipate the river's flow. He knew what I was studying; he had run this line in a kayak, but not a raft. Again we made eye contact and he gave me a thumbs up and screamed, "Trust your instincts, trust the flow!" I sat down, placed my paddle in the last chance eddy above the route in question and started the first of several cartwheels to maneuver us through the guard rocks and into the first slot.

The boat effortlessly spun around backwards and slid into the crease that would commit us to the line I envisioned. As we fell through the drop I again reached my paddle into the eddy on my right. I felt the paddle catch the back current and momentarily stall the boat, and then slowly spin us towards the ledges. I looked at the groom, who seemed to instinctively know what I needed, and on command he paddled directly towards the base of the first huge pour-over, dwarfing our little boat in its shadow. He, along with three highly motivated and surprising strong crew members, managed to provide enough power to carry us between the two immense ledges. I pried on the rafts side with all my strength, listening to my wooden paddle splintering under the stress, trying desperately to maintain the ferry angle that we needed to pass the obstacles. I suddenly felt like Moses had given us permission to cross to the other side—the "seas" had parted and we were permitted safe passage through the middle

of something I had always perceived to be impenetrable. As the raft slid past the right side of the lower pour-over, I placed my paddle in the backwash and again felt the boat pause; it slowly began to cartwheel in the direction I was hoping and fell onto the massive wave train, significantly larger than normal because of the high water. We rode it effortlessly into the safety of the calm river left eddy at the bottom of Insignificant. The rest of our trip, other than Dave's boat, waited there in amazement.

We had just run one of the five most difficult rapids on the Upper Gauley at flood stage by simply going with the flow; no heroics, no screaming, no panicking, just a series of cartwheels and a couple of powerful forward strokes to help move our raft along the path of least resistance into the safety and security that awaited us at the bottom. Everyone on the trip was amazed at how well our line had worked, but no one more so than me. After years of fighting the currents of whitewater rivers and struggling with the standard routes that we were taught, suddenly I had found myself in a position that wasn't going to allow those traditional raft lines to work. I had to allow the river's currents to help control the boat, work within its limits and my own, to follow the obvious path that the river had chosen, to read water, and to go with the flow.

The enlightened strategy paid dividends throughout the day. My crew slowly became more confident, as did I after realizing that the river was the controlling influence. I had finally accepted that the river's flow couldn't be fought, it was not something to overcome, but something to embrace to the boat's advantage. The newlyweds made up and the mother of my summer fling from the past hinted at what had finally given her the strength to come back and float a river. I never found out why she had chosen me as her guide, but it was clear that somehow I had earned her trust during a summer fling with her daughter years

before. It was a day of learning for all of us, in which, for one reason or another we decided to go with the flow. I admitted to my terrified crew at the top of Insignificant that I had never attempted that line, but that I believed it was our best option under the circumstances and I hoped they would trust me. I had a similar conversation with one of them years earlier, but relating to a more personal situation. Funny how the flow of life often carries us back to our past.

Since that high water day on the Gauley I have revisited many of my experiences on rivers. Those included being in boats wrapped around and under rocks, having friends drown, participating in CPR on the river, and failing. I'd seen dozens of boats flip and have been constantly awed by the power of a river, but until that day I couldn't accept that fighting the flow of a river was futile. Water, like life, will take you where it will. You can look downstream at where you hope to be at the end, you can choose alternative lines from the acceptable norm, but how and where you finally arrive isn't completely ours to decide. To some extent, you just have to trust the flow.

continued from page 41

When we stop to camp on the riverbank for the night, a large crowd of children gather on the fringe of our camp. They sit quietly and observe the strange goings-on until Rana, one of the lead guides, gets everyone singing and dancing to break the ice. Everyone is friendly and having a good time under the full moon. I slip away to my thoughts and reflect on a superb day of rafting that saw our rafting teams pull together to conquer long stretches of near-continuous high quality whitewater. Earlier in the day the Tons entertained and terrified us in equal measure. It was adrenalin-spiced entertainment at its very best and now I'm happy to see we have become a novel source of entertainment to our newfound friends.

Tons Technicalities

Accessibility: The Tons River rafting season is relatively short, running from May through to early July. Rafting is accessible to anyone over the age of 12 years and, although swimming ability is not mandatory, it certainly is desirable for anyone wanting to run the bigger Class IV rapids.

Rafting equipment: All rafting enthusiasts are supplied on arrival with 3mm neoprene wetsuits, splash jackets, life jackets and helmets. The use of this state-of-the-art safety equipment is compulsory. Internationally imported self-bailing rafts and experienced river guides ensure your safe enjoyment of the river.

Camp Lunagad: Accommodation is in comfortable twin-bed deluxe tents with all linens and pillows provided. Meals are served as a buffet with a wide range of scrumptious Indian and mouth-watering western dishes on offer. Showers are provided at base camp with hot water upon request. Toilets come in the form of rustic, environmentally friendly, dry pit latrines.

Activities available: Whitewater rafting is the premier attraction on the Tons, however trout fishing, day hikes (the Sandhra-Mora loop walk is a very pleasant 3 hour stroll that provides picturesque views across the Tons Valley), overnight trekking options, forest walks to hidden rock pools, bird watching and relaxing on the riverbank, all add to the diversity of attractions on offer.

What to bring: In addition to personal items and toiletries, do not forget to bring your rafting sandals, a wind/water-proof jacket, towel, and flashlight, as well as a hat, sunglasses and sun block.

How to get there: Camp Lunagad and the Tons River are located 450 kms from Delhi and can be accessed in your own vehicle or via rail/flight to Dehradun and an onward vehicle transfer to the camp. The easiest option is to board the over-night Mussorie Express from Delhi's Nizamuddin station. On arrival in Dehradun you will transfer into an Aquaterra vehicle for the 6-hour drive to the Tons. The mountainous route boasts picturesque views as it passes Mussorie, Kempty Falls and on to the tiny village of Mori, located on the banks of the Upper Tons River.

Trip duration: Anything from 3 - 10 days is recommended dependent upon your available leave, your inclination for adventure and need of rest and recuperation.

Recommended operators: Aquaterra (www.aquaterra.in) and Himalayan River Runners (www.hrrindia.com).

Further information can be found at: www.indianhimalayas.net.

Inflatables

Brownwater Tribe in Cataract Canyon

By Ryan "Danger" Dunn

Whitewater, in my humble opinion, always denotes clear water—or at least I used to assume so. Boy, was I about to be mistaken.

Years ago I heard a Middle Fork guide talk of the venerable cataract canyon. Those were the days before my guiding career matured. The talk of the dirty brown haunted me and I never forgot the stories of "the Cat."

Fast forward to April 20th, 2009. I was now the proud holder of a permit down that lovely ditch called the Cat. Up until this juncture I had only seen and guided rivers in the Pacific Northwest, mostly glaciated cold mountain runoff. This water is clear clean and damn near drinkable.

You must know that my wife is deathly afraid of this kind of water and has never swam a rapid, nor is she a kayaker. So, on April 20, 2009 a band of gypsies find ourselves at the Moab launch, ready to embark on the electric koolaid brownwater test.

Danger, Spanky, Mark Twain, Sambo, Scrote, Tall, Blonde, Drunk, Red and the wifey shove off. Hot is the name of the game for the next two days; swimming and whiskey are the primary means of travel for the brownwater gypsies.

Finally we arrive at the confluence to find some very comforting words etched on a great billboard river left:

The Brownwater Tribe on the brink: Ryan Dunn, Christie Roberts, Scot Smith, David Peterson, Sarah Peterson, Brian Batchelder, Mark Flatt, Robb Greer, and Jeff Spanke

Photo by Ryan Dunn



CAUTION, DANGEROUS RAPIDS LIE DOWNSTREAM, EXPERTS ONLY. And what a confluence it was. One could almost envision mastodon bones hanging out of the banks of the green river. On closer inspection, it was really huge foam piles of agricultural runoff from upstream farms and ranches. Ah yes, a layover day is a fine one, especially at Spanish bottom where one can swelter in the 100-degree heat of the Utah sun.

At 11 am I decide a round of beers and a swim in the mighty Colorado seems appropriate, so I round up the pranksters and we soak our naked bones in the drink. Eventually Sambo says to me, "What the hell's that thing floating mid stream?"

Much speculation ensues. "Is it a J-rig?" Drunk wonders.

"No, no it's a dory boat," says Spanky.

"Wait a second," Mark Twain shouts, "what's that god awful smell?"

"Ahh," Scrote says, "it's a dead cow." Holy smackers it is a dead cow with a big raven riding on its flank picking at the putrefied flesh of the bloated bovine. This was the turning point in our trip, realizing that there was no turning back; for that matter, what the hell are we doing swimming in this water with a bloated cow carcass. The wifey says YUCK! Blond, being the EMT in the group, starts to explain cellular membrane necrosis while the rest of the pranksters take for shore.

Sometime around dark we get a visit from the high alpine tribe, a nomadic group of elite front range catarafters. They explain to us the perils we are about to face the following day as we maneuver our rubber through the dark recess of the Cat. After grimacing at their stories, we ask them to join our tribe for the next day's misadventures. They reluctantly accept and we all sip the black potion to ceremoniously seal the deal.

Next morning, tensions are high. The groover is experiencing multiple usage by the boatmen and the women are in sheer disbelief on how long it's taking to rig up the boats. Finally, dry suits on and neck gaskets bulging, we shove off. The first rapid, Brown Betty, comes to play and we run it no problem. I tell the wifey to relax, that Betty is probably the biggest rapid of the day. I LIE.

Capsize and Hell to Pay go screaming by, then Big Drop 1 then Big Drop 2 and 2 1/2. "WHOA, COWBOYS" Bonoparte, one of the catarafters, says, "let's scout Big Drop 3. Eddy out river right." Of course the river right eddy is holding the dead cow from the day before. It has come back to haunt us. After a brief scout and minor fecal matter in my dry suit we decide to peel out and run Big Drop 3 a wee bit left of center. Bonoparte first, then Mark Twain, then Megagraeme (the other catafter), next Sambo, then Tall and Blond, and finally me and the wifey.

All goes well until Satan's Gut's little brother's cousin gets me. I watch the world turn upside down as we capsize—swoosh, crack, boom—and there I am under the boat in the dark room. Being the trained guide that I am, I quickly get out from under the rubber and start yelling for the wifey. She pops up beside me and I motion for Megagraeme to get my beloved princess out of this cow carcass infested undrinkable brownwater chaotic mess called the Colorado, and he does. In the meantime I decide to ride this puppy on out, but all of a sudden from the river left emerges the 14-foot Otter with Sambo, Spanky and Scrote, and they pluck me out of the quagmire to safety.

I am shaken and in a daze. I know the wifey's fine because I can see her in Megagraeme' cat. Then, in a heroic leap of faith, danger takes over and I leap from the Otter to my capsized boat, attach a line and throw it to Spanky and we pendulum her in. With the help of six strong men, we

right her and all find all that's lost is a hat, a six-pack, and a good amount of pride.

To this day I would boat any water in the world with the brownwater gypsies and the high alpine tribe. It's great to have good friends, and there's nothing wrong with drinking a little bovine infused water under the hot Utah sun.

Inflatables



High Water Fun on the New River

By Harry Rhett

On the dreary morning of Saturday, May 9, 2009 I awoke in my cozy, warm camper to skies that were a sad looking gray and a chill in the spring air outside. Well, as bleak as it was, I thought “no work today”; I was at Fayetteville! I had driven to my camper in Fayetteville, WV Thursday night and had worked all day Friday repairing a raft I had recently purchased from an outfitter in Martinsville, VA, my home. I had already called Big Mike to arrange shuttle for the day. I was planning to run the section of the New River from Sandstone to Stonecliff. After a glance at the Weather Channel in the camper, I knew the temperature would rise and thus

the air would be more comfortable on the river later. I looked at the Fayette Station gauge on the AW site from my Blackberry. The river was running in excess of 15 feet, a very high level. Little did I know that on that fateful day I would experience one of my most memorable trips on any river.

In my trusty red Jeep Grand Cherokee (Dbl Z) with my red and yellow inflatable solo ThrillKat strapped to the top I arrived at the quaint combination gas station and general store near Sandstone just off of the Interstate 64 exit. Crossing the bridge I got an astonishing view of the tall waves that awaited me on the swollen river. There had been rain in West Virginia and throughout the entire gargantuan watershed of the New River that starts near Boone, North Carolina and ends hundreds of miles later at Gauley Bridge, WV. I checked the gauge reading one last time and found the level

Picture of my solo Thrillkat, the one I paddled the day of the trip

Photo by Stephanie Couch

to be about 16 feet according to the Fayette Station Gauge.

During an average summer with moderate rain, the New River will range from minus one foot to plus one foot (FSG) and given the average rate of speed for an ordinary river trip of about 2 miles per hour, a trip on this 26-mile section in one day is not feasible. Many people travel the shorter trip from Sandstone to McCreery or Glade Creek to McCreery for a day trip, then McCreery to Stonecliff for yet another day of paddling. At a level 9 or 10 feet and above the New is running sufficiently fast to make the 26 mile trip doable and

with the fast water and big waves, it is lots of fun.

I have run this section of river a number of times, but my very first trip had been many years before in a Dagger Encore canoe. I had a wonderful time with all the fast moving water, beautiful scenery, and big, big waves. The level that day had been 17 feet (FSG). There had been four of us on the river that day and there was actually a rescue to be done; one of the Kayakers flipped, and after missing his roll, bailed out. We had to do a mid river rescue as the river was racing through the trees at the shore and you surely didn't want to end up there. Two of us in whitewater canoes pulled the kayak up over our boats, flipped it upside down to drain it, then we steadied the kayak while the kayaker balanced himself on the back deck and climbed back aboard. Just as he was fastening his spray skirt, we entered the next rapid. Boy was that close! We ran the trip that day in just over four hours after having stopped twice, once for lunch. What fun! So I was very much looking forward to today's run.

As I arrived at the put-in I noticed several blue busses that had just unloaded passengers for a raft trip down this same section of river. GREAT! Someone to travel down the river with. Did I have a plan B? Well, no. I guess I figured that someone would be there. There were three separate commercial groups with a number of rafts per group. I decided to try to hook up with the last trip out and asked permission to join their group. They readily agreed and the trip was set—now I was really excited.

I first met Marilyn, a guide for ACE, just a marvelously nice and friendly person. I left her alone as she coached her people in the things to expect on the trip and listened to her very professional presentation including asking about health issues that they might have; an important thing to know. I topped off my IK with a manual pump and began getting my boat and gear

together. Let's see, PFD, helmet, paddle, dry bag with extra clothes, throw bag, lunch, drink ... yep, got it all.

All the guides finished their safety talks and we boarded our boats and entered the water, which was, of course, a bit cold from all the rain and hey, after all it's early May, not June. I secured my thigh straps and prepared for an exciting trip. The first waves are about a quarter mile down on the left side of the river. I paddled hard to the left side and hit them straight, felt the cold water splash on me and was thrilled with delight.

The river smoothed out for a while but the scenery still whipped by as if I were in a jet. I casually paddled up to various rafts in the ACE group and shared a little B.S. with the guides and passengers. Several were interested in my little craft so I fielded questions and bragged proudly about my miniature solo raft.

About every five minutes or so we came upon waves that looked promising; we all took a position, allowed for a safe distance between us and crashed the waves with gusto. Some of the wave trains were at least half a mile long allowing for extended fun at this level. We arrived at McCreery, WV and pulled out on river left, where ACE planned to stop for lunch. There they joined the rest of their force which was just finishing their lunch. They carried a stove on this trip and cooked a warm meal for their customers. Following the meal and after the guides ate, they shared lunch with me which I thought was a very nice gesture. I had lunch already prepared but theirs was a lot better.

Following lunch we again boarded our trusty boats and headed back into the runaway freight train of a river in front of us. Just a short distance downstream of the put-in on river right is a lovely series of large waves that get bigger with higher water levels. The rapid is much longer than at lower levels and almost connects to the

next rapid beyond it.

At the area downstream where a tunnel on river right leads to two beautiful waterfalls, I noted the river level. WOW! Normally you would park your boat on the rocks at the entrance and walk up the incline into the tunnel and continue on through to the stream that empties there. I peeked through the tunnel as I was flying by and saw that the creek, where it entered the tunnel was now level with the water I was paddling. There was about four feet of distance between the water and the top of the tunnel. Usually the 20-foot tunnel is completely out of the water.

I continued down the river from the tunnel at light speed. There is usually no rapid to speak of at this point on the river but at about 500 yards below the tunnel I noted that at this level there was something definitely going on. The river actually necks down and as the river level rises this section becomes turbulent and unpredictably wavy. Water is smashing into the left bank of the river, bouncing off with large lateral waves, sending them at great speed across the river to smash the right bank before sending them back again! Woah, this is much bigger than I remember! As I entered this oceanic mess I felt a little uneasy. Quickly face a wave to the left, face a wave to the right, face a wave in front of you, left, right, left—oh my God, no—it came from the RIGHT this time! The right side of the boat lurched up skyward in the sickening manner it does when bad things are about to happen. Poised on the left tube, right tube high in the air for what seemed an eternity but was just a split second, it fell over to the left, upside down!

Instant awareness of the very chilly water! Hold on to the boat! Hold on to the boat! Oh God! It's gone! As though a great hand had come out of the sky and jerked it away. A large wave had risen and swept the boat out of sight. How quickly trouble happens, how quickly life can go from

Inflatables

a dream world to nightmare! Oh God, I can't breathe! Remember, breathe in the troughs, not the top of the wave—cough, cough—remember you fool, remember—cough, cough, gag.... The waves are huge and never ending. Where am I? What happened? I can't get my breath! Still got my paddle but without a boat, what good is it? Where were the Ace rafts? No sense in looking around, the waves are too high. Can't see anything! Turn your head sideways and backwards to avoid the face-fulls of water—cough, sputter—waves are getting a little smaller but I am still floating at enormous speed and being

violently tossed around ... can see a little now. Left bank seems to be closer. If I can make it to the bank there is AIR there. The current abated just a little and there seem to be finally a little hope of some reprieve. I see the left bank getting closer and closer. Good. But—I look up and to my horror I see that the river is flowing at a significant rate through a forest of trees at the bank. Holy crap! I thought I was safe! But there was no choice—that is where the current was headed. What the hell do I do now? The current quickly confirmed my worst fears and shoved me head long into the trees.

As I passed through the trees I realized this was not the place to have something in your hand that could snag on a tree. I turned my custom Muskrat paddle loose, my last connection to completion of the trip. Now, trees are coming at me fast and I have to make split second decisions. Dodge this one, push around this one, swim left to avoid the next one. Where does all this end? Up ahead I caught a glance of a

The author at Upper Railroad on the New River Gorge

Photo by Whitewater Photography



thicket of multiple branches of dead wood leaning from the bank down into the river extending out about 20 feet. Right in front of me! I will not make it through that! It will trap me and that will be where my life ends. I grabbed the next tree I passed and committed to fight my battle with the river right there on that tree. Legs quickly whipped around to the down stream side of the tree and began to flap under water with the strong current. Hang on, hang on, don't let go and be swept under that mass of dead wood! My chest and lungs were heaving from the effort of the swim, desperately trying to get precious oxygen to them.

Just then I heard a voice to my left and glanced quickly to the river to see a blue raft passing by. They saw me! They saw me! Thank God, they saw me! As I began to calm down from the swim, I tried to get my bearings. Where am I? After a quick look at my surroundings I discovered that I was actually just a few feet away from a rock ledge at the left bank, but with significant current between me and the ledge. My energy reading at this point was about 1 on a scale of 1 to 10. Do I have the energy to reach the ledge? Will the current sweep me away? My foot finally found a rock just three feet below the surface and with effort I managed to fight the current and climb to the rock ledge. Guide Tim Smith magically appeared 75 yards downstream and began working his way toward me and inquired about my situation. My chest was still heaving in the quest for precious air. Tim reached my position on the ledge and immediately began asking questions about how I was, took my pulse, and loosened my life jacket so I could breathe more easily. This guide was a paramedic, serves actively on an ambulance and knew just what to do. I needed no first aid, just air and a second to recover my breath. Still, I was glad he was there. After my lungs were adequately satisfied he led me over the rock-strewn landscape downstream to his raft through hordes of poison ivy that I

knew would (along with this memory) be with me for a long time. We boarded his raft with customers waiting and paddled down the river another several hundred yards where another couple ACE rafts had stopped to see if help was needed. I saw a red boat they were holding. They had rescued my boat! We got closer and I saw they also had found my paddle! Thank God! Got into my boat, thanked the guides and continued on my journey downriver, my life made whole again by the wonderful guides of Ace Whitewater. Thank you Ace and thank you Tim.

When you choose to run a whitewater river at high or flood stage levels:

- Never run a whitewater river alone, regardless of its difficulty.
- Always wear your trusty PFD. Never attach it to your boat.
- Possess the level of knowledge and experience necessary for the class of water you are paddling. High water is moving much faster than normal. Anticipate waves early. Pay closer attention at all times.
- If you paddle Class IV whitewater, participate in Swiftwater rescue clinics when possible and obtain CPR training.
- Be extra careful and aware in high and fast moving water of any kind. Carefully "T" into each wave, especially if you paddle a solo or tandem inflatable.
- When paddling an inflatable boat have appropriate ropes or strap attachment on the exterior to insure that you can hold on to the boat. If you swim, hang on to your boat! It is your ticket to safety.
- If paddling a kayak or whitewater canoe, have a bomb-proof roll. When paddling an inflatable, know how to quickly get back in the boat.

- Exercise adequately and be in good enough shape for the sport in which you are participating. Age of the boater is an important factor.

- Breathe in the trough of the wave, not at the top.

- Be sure all equipment and gear are firmly attached to your boat.

- Trees at the edge of a flood stage river are not the place to be. Stay in the middle of the river if possible.

Harry Rhett lives in Martinsville, VA and regularly paddles the New River Gorge in a ThrillKat solo and tandem inflatable as well as a raft. Harry spends most weekends in Fayetteville, WV during the spring, summer and fall months. Harry has paddled several hundred times on the upper and lower New. He has been paddling whitewater for over 20 years; he has attended Swiftwater rescue clinics and teaches whitewater boating to many novice and beginner boaters. He enjoys taking other people down the river and, well, just the whole river experience.

"You are never too old or too experienced to swim a rapid. Get used to it"

"If you are not swimming, you're not learning....."

We are all out there together and we help each other.

SYOTR!

Board Bios



Eric Nies

New Paltz, NY

I still remember my first day in a kayak, 30 years ago: full-length boat, horse-collar life jacket, flipping and swimming 10 minutes from the put-in. A decade later I was guiding and teaching kayaking full-time, making my living on the rivers that I still love today: the Chattooga, the Gauley, the Grand Canyon, the Cal-Salmon, the Bio-Bio and Futaleufu, the Pacuare and Reventazon in Costa Rica, and the Motu and Rangitata in New Zealand. For an old dog, I still get out a lot. And I think I have an unusually broad take on whitewater sport. I've been pegged (correctly) as the safety geek with the big helmet, but I've also gone solo on Bald Rock and Decker's Creek. These days I make my living as an ER doc in New York, and I paddle for fun. Raft, canoe, kayak, East coast or West coast, old-school or new-school, it's all about getting on the water, connecting with friends, and having a good time. And I believe that one of the reasons we all can do just that is because American Whitewater has worked so tirelessly and successfully on issues of safety, access, education, and conservation. I've supported AW as a member for a long time, and I've increased my commitment to AW as Chairman of the Safety Committee.



Adam Cramer

Bethesda, MD

My local river is the Potomac and I make a living in Washington, D.C. as an attorney at a small firm specializing in public lands matters. I have a pretty good sense about navigating Capitol Hill and the federal agencies that govern much of our whitewater resources—skills that are good to have in AW's toolbox. Through my work with Outdoor Alliance, a coalition of national human-powered outdoor recreation organizations (of which AW is a founding member), I can try to help put AW policy matters in a broader context and develop strategic partnerships with other likeminded groups and organizations. Since 2003, I have worked on a number of Mid-Atlantic issues, from forming the Great Falls Kayak Coalition and helping the local boaters in Friendsville, Maryland negotiate an improved release schedule for the Upper Yough, to working on access issues for the Upper Blackwater. After spending my first tour on the AW Board being totally confused and spending the second tour getting my bearings, I think one last tour might give me the chance to serve AW from a position of experience and maybe even a little bit of wisdom.



Jennie Goldberg

Seattle, WA

An organization needs fresh input and an organization needs historical memory. I've been on the board of American Whitewater since 2000, so I certainly bring historical memory. Yet I'm still seeing new areas to get involved in and feel like I have new ideas to bring forward. You've heard the saying, so many rivers, so little time ... so little time to paddle them all and so little time to save them! After 30 years of paddling whitewater, I'm still paddling whitewater. I see American Whitewater as the driver and the engine that ensures we all have the opportunity to enjoy whitewater from any kind of boat we want or just from the shore. I enjoy paddling releases from once dry riverbeds. I appreciate public access to rivers. I like clean water and wilderness. I enjoy meeting other boaters at events. I savor staying up to speed on safety issues. And I bet everyone one of you reading this feels the same way. One thing that troubles me is our declining membership so I will work to change that and am open to your ideas. I'm willing to work for another three years to keep American Whitewater an organization that is fiscally sound, happy, efficient and effective. Thank you for your support.



Evie Locke
Charlemont, MA

My love for water began as early as I can remember at the local lake club, spending all my summer days swimming, fishing and messing about in boats. I came to understand how murky the water in that little man-made lake was when I went to summer camp on pristine Sebago Lake in Maine. There I learned to canoe as a teenager and then returned as a college student to direct the canoeing program for a couple of summers. I was introduced to whitewater in high school, which was only 10 minutes from Tariffville Gorge on the Farmington River, and where we were lucky enough to have a slalom team. We were involved in organizing races there and one year we hosted the national team trials, so I was exposed to and inspired by the best slalom paddlers of the time. After a hiatus of some years on the west coast, I moved back to New England and, not too much later, discovered Zoar Outdoor and the Deerfield River in Massachusetts. I worked at Zoar for 11 years, first as a raft guide and then as Office Manager and occasional kayak instructor. I left Zoar in 2004 to raise my twins who are currently five years old and veterans of a number of raft trips down the Deerfield. I look forward to introducing them to kayaking and/or canoeing when they are ready.

I have been proud to serve on the Board of Directors of American Whitewater for the past six years and watch the organization grow more and more stable and thrive even in these challenging economic times. With your support, I would be thrilled to serve another term and help facilitate the work of this amazing staff and the important river stewardship work that they do.

VOTE

Board Members 2010

Each year American Whitewater membership elects board members to serve three year terms. The following candidates are volunteering to serve three-year terms on the American Whitewater Board of Directors. Candidate biographies can be read on page 62-63.

Please vote for four American Whitewater Board of Directors:

- Eric Nies
- Adam Cramer
- Jeannie Goldberg
- Evie Locke

Please write your name:

Please provide your American Whitewater membership number:

Please return ballot to:
American Whitewater
PO Box 1540
Cullowhee, NC 28723

Deadline for submitting ballots is February 1, 2010.

Thank you for your participation in this important election process.

AW Corporate Partners

Class V Sponsor



In 2006, Keen's contributions will aid American Whitewater's projects in the Southeast, and the Pacific Northwest. In the Southeast Keen's support will help American Whitewater's work restoring the Catawba watershed. Additional funding from Keen will support AW's projects on the Columbia River Basin and the Cascade range in the Pacific Northwest.

Class IV Sponsors



Class III Sponsor



Class II Sponsor



SUBARU.

Boof Sponsors



Wave Sponsors



Each day American Whitewater faces new challenges that threaten our whitewater rivers. To aid us in this fight, we rely on support from members, donors, foundations, and partners in the industry. Companies throughout the whitewater and outdoor industries are stepping forward to support AW's River Stewardship work. American Whitewater urges you not to make purchase decisions blindly. When you buy your next piece of outdoor gear there are many factors to consider: quality, dependability, comfort, safety, and fashion. American Whitewater hopes you will add one more consideration to this list: corporate responsibility. Support companies that support your rivers

Jackson Kayak

Family owned and operated, Jackson Kayak launched in October of 2003 dedicated to the simple goal of making paddling better for everyone. Since then, the company has grown from its humble beginnings in a 730 square foot ex-laundromat to a 92,000 square foot facility in Sparta, TN.

At Jackson Kayak, paddling is a lifestyle and to that end, the company expanded its championship approach to whitewater to reach a full spectrum of flatwater paddlers from the sit-on-top Riviera to the all-purpose Day Tripper, the All-Water flatwater/whitewater transition boat, and the sea touring Journey.

What's more, Jackson Kayak backs up their product with a lifetime warranty on workmanship and customer service that's rated among the best in the industry. Company president Eric Jackson welcomes direct customer feedback via email: eric@jacksonkayak.com. How many companies do you know of that can say that?

Finally, and just as importantly, Jackson Kayak is a long-time supporter of AW. As one of AW's Class IV sponsors, Jackson Kayak donated multiple boats to American Whitewater to use to encourage memberships, donations and volunteer participation. As an American Whitewater Partner, Jackson Kayak lends their voice in support of all rivers everywhere.



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 less than 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://americanwhitewater.org/content/Membership/join-AW/>, 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

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

CONTACT INFORMATION

New Member Renewing Member

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone () _____ Email _____

*Note: American Whitewater will never share your information with others

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

\$35 Standard

\$25 Affiliate Club Member

Club: _____

\$25 Student

School: _____

\$50 Family

\$100 Ender Club

Shirt Size: _____

\$250 Platinum Paddler

\$500 Explorer

\$750 Lifetime

\$1,000 Legacy

\$2,500 Steward

DONATE

Donation of \$ _____

DISCOUNT SUBSCRIPTIONS

\$30.00 Kayak Session Magazine (Save \$5)

\$40.00 Lunch Video Magazine (Quarterly DVD) (Save \$8)

JOURNAL OPTIONS

Do NOT mail me the AW Journal, email it to me <- Saves AW money, and trees! :)

PAYMENT INFORMATION

Cash

Check # _____

Credit Card

MC

Visa

Disc

AMEX

Card Number: _____ Exp Date: _____

Name on card: _____

Signature: _____

July 2009

SAVING RIVERS SINCE 1954



The Last Word

A Very Partial List of Why Paddling is More Fun Than What I've Been Doing

By Ambrose Tuscano

Over the past two years, I've been paddling way less than I used to. It'd be kind of embarrassing to express it in numbers, but let's just say that for the editor of a whitewater magazine, I sure haven't been practicing what I preach much. Instead I've been building a house—mine and my wife's actually. While I haven't had much spare time for reflection lately, here are some observations that anyone in my condition (half-sane, ex-paddling and all around outdoor enthusiast) is bound to notice.

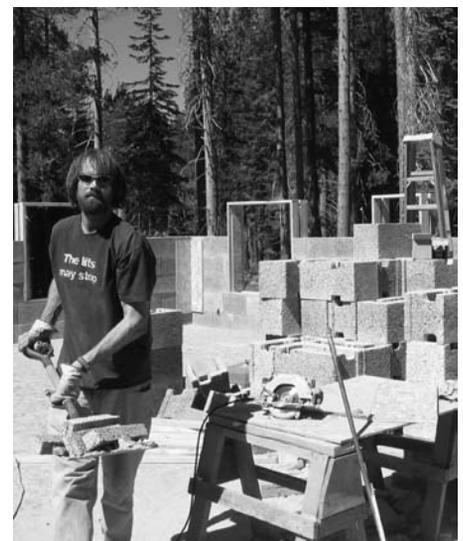
1. Building a house and paddling whitewater have nothing in common. Nothing. Seriously.
2. When you spend as many hours as I have recently working construction, you're apt to notice parallels between building and just about everything. Tooth brushing, for example. How, you might ask, can someone see connections between dental hygiene and residential construction? It's easy. Just spend a few hours on your hands and knees scrubbing the slate tile you've just installed because you didn't realize how easy it would have been to blast them with the hose before you installed them or how much time that would have saved, and because they're filthy, and now you've been down there so long that your knees ache like a 60-year-old C1er's after eight hours straight in the saddle and your sponge looks like it's been stuck underneath the seat of your kayak for about 23 years. I know that doesn't sound much like brushing teeth, but what the heck. I am, admittedly, only about half-sane at this point. Anyway, the good news is that my slate scrubbing experience has triggered an epiphany that could revolutionize tooth care: hook up a garden hose in your bathroom for high-pressure tooth spraying and kiss your toothbrush goodbye.
3. Decisions. Those innocuous reflex choices that paddlers have to make approximately twice per second when they're in a rapid are actually really terrible when they pertain to your future home. There are all sorts of good reasons why this is the case, but still, I never thought making decisions would be a problem for an experienced paddler. But, it turns out, left of the big rock and boof right, or eddy center, ferry right and split the pour-overs is way more interesting than deciding the placement, size, building material, and color, of every wall, ceiling, appliance, floor, fixture, window, and door in a house. It's been a real struggle to care about such choices—all of which I'll have to be living with the consequences of for a very long time. Perhaps if more of them threatened bodily harm I could rise above the apathy. I can't wait to get back in a boat...
4. Being good at things is fun. At the beginning of this project I thought that perhaps by the end of it I might be a pretty decent builder. Now that we're within a few months of "finishing" I've realized that this was just a silly fantasy. Yes, I got a lot of things done on the house, but none of them were done particularly well. Actually, many parts of the house are well done, but that's all thanks to various family members and friends who came to help out along the way, and to my wife, who learned to become a pretty passable journeyman electrician in the space of about a month. I, on the other hand, have been responsible for lots of mediocre work and not a few catastrophes. On several occasions I've found myself doing a poor imitation of the Little Dutch Boy, trying in vain to plug a geyser rocketing out of one of our pipe. In each case, the jet of water and resulting flood was wholly due to a stupid decision on my part. Which is a shame, really, because I thought plumbing was going to be my strong point, what with all my experience in moving water. In any event, I know now that I'll probably never be more than a Class II-III builder.
5. Maybe I was hasty before. Maybe paddling and construction do have something in common. I was thinking just now of the last time I was on a river. Actually, it was only a few months ago, and I had just successfully negotiated a pretty big rapid. All the anxiety and nerves I had had a few seconds earlier were gone. Perhaps—just maybe—when this whole

building episode is over it'll seem less like a prolonged waking nightmare and more like that, an experience that brings relief and a sense of accomplishment. I sure hope so, 'cause so far it feels like floating through a boulder garden upside down, taking blows to the head and body like an overmatched boxer.

6. Oversight stinks. I think that one thing paddling has taught me is to value independence and scorn rules and authority. And having municipal building inspectors looking over your shoulder and enforcing code specifically designed to make it impossible to build your own house unless you're a specialist in every trade is more than a little bit galling. While we were fortunate to have a really understanding inspector for much of the process, it still feels crazy that it's someone's job to tell you that you haven't built your own house the right way. It kind of makes me want to become a libertarian and move to New Hampshire. Although, ranting is pretty cathartic too; maybe I'll just—wait, what's that sound? It's kind of like a river. Am I hallucinating or ... is one of my pipes leaking—stupid question. Wish I was paddling. Think I'm going to stencil that motto onto my pipe wrench. Gotta run

One of the very few things I am good at in building

Photo by Megan Seifert



Affiliate Clubs

Affiliate Club Spotlight

American Whitewater would like to recognize the Carolina Canoe Club located in Raleigh, North Carolina as an outstanding Affiliate Club and long time supporter of our mission to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely. The Club consists of a group of people interested in many phases of paddlesports – whitewater, quietwater, touring and camping. Club members teach skills to people just starting in the exciting outdoor sport and share their knowledge of the many nearby waterways of the Carolinas and the southeastern United States. Best of all, Club members enjoy getting close to nature at a pace that varies from leisurely paddling to churning wild water.

River trips are the life-blood of the Carolina Canoe Club with trips being scheduled for practically every weekend, year-round and run whether there is rain, snow or sunshine. (However, they do not run if there is a lack of water!) The Club also organizes extended weekend trips at Easter and Labor Day, as well as a 10-day paddling/camping experience, "Week of Rivers," at 4th of July. Most river trips are for Novice and Intermediate skill levels. A schedule of river trips is published in the Cruise Schedule section of the Club's newsletter The Paddler.

The Club has significantly increased its role in education and has become increasingly active in the area of river conservation and in promoting the development of whitewater facilities. Instruction is offered for all skill levels from beginner to advanced including weekly rolling sessions. The CCC also conducts rescue and safety classes including Basic Rescue and Swiftwater Rescue.

Yearly dues are an affordable \$15 for online access to The Paddler and \$20 for a mailed copy; both membership types have access to the CCC membership directory. To learn more about the Carolina Canoe Club or to join, check out their website at <http://www.carolinacanoecub.org/>. And remember, current members of the CCC receive a \$10 discount off their AW membership.

Thanks CCC for your continued support of American Whitewater!

It's Easy to Support AW!

American Whitewater is proud of the work we have accomplished in our stewardship program but we need your help to sustain our success. Your support through membership and donations enables our staff to be active and engaged in the process of river stewardship. Donations don't have to be large; each person doing a small part makes a noticeable difference. Many donors fail to take full advantage of federal tax incentives specifically intended to encourage charitable contributions. Such incentives often enable a donor to make a larger gift to AW at little or no additional cost. For more information about maximizing your gift visit the IRS website dedicated to charitable organizations.

American Whitewater is a national non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, EIN# 23-7083760. To learn more about the Giving Options below, contact us at 866-BOAT4AW or visit the "Donate" link under "Support AW" on our website at www.americanwhitewater.org.

- Donate online today!
- Monthly Giving: Contribute a minimum of \$10 via credit card or electronic transfer from your bank account.
- Bequests: Include AW in your will or living trust. Bequests to AW are generally exempt from federal or state inheritance taxes, and subject to an unlimited deduction.
- Combined Federal Campaign: Federal employees including federal civilians, military personnel and U.S. Postal Workers can donate to AW through the CFC a once a year charitable fund raising program. Look for AW (Agency #11351) in the official CFC listing of eligible donors.
- Charitable Remainder Trusts: Convert a highly appreciated asset (such as real estate or stocks) into a lifetime income while minimizing income and estate taxes.
- Employer Matching: Many employers will match your donations to non-profit organizations. This includes membership payments, as well as additional contributions. Check to see if your employer has a matching program.
- MissionFish: Sell your items through the MissionFish program on eBay and the proceeds come directly to AW.
- Other Assets: A gift of real estate to AW qualifies you for a tax deduction based on the property's fair market value. If it is not a river access point, AW will sell the property and use the proceeds to protect access and restore rivers. Acceptance of property is subject to certain conditions. You may also be eligible to receive tax benefits for gifts of real property. Art and jewelry are examples of personal property items that may be eligible. Interested donors should check with your financial and tax advisors and AW on the feasibility and tax considerations of such gifts.
- Securities: Donating appreciated stock to AW benefits both the donor and whitewater rivers. The donor receives two tax-related benefits. First, the gain on the stock is not subject to capital gains taxes. Second, the donor can deduct the value of the stock as a charitable contribution.
- United Way: All federal campaigns, and a few of the local campaigns will allow you to donate to AW. AW's UNITED WAY member # is 2302.
- Vehicle Donations: Turn that extra car, truck, or RV into a tax deductible donation benefiting AW.

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 1954 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 110 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.

American Whitewater is proud to announce the Affiliate Club recipients of the 2009 Clif Bar Flowing Rivers Campaign - **Jackson Hole Kayak Club** of Jackson Hole, Wyoming and **Genesee Waterways Center** of Rochester, NY. Each club will receive a \$1,250 grant to go towards their respective projects. This year's grant process saw some excellent entries, but these two stood above the rest.

The **Jackson Hole Kayak Club's** proposal is to install a set of stairs to access a section of the Snake River near the Kings Wave Rapid. This section of river has some excellent play features and is also a popular Class II/III run for beginner and expert boaters alike. The necessity for these stairs is brought about by the steep banks in this area (1200 feet per mile gradient) that make river access there very difficult. They've already completed the first section of these stairs at a cost of approximately \$8,000.

Genesee Waterways Center's proposal is based around rehabilitating an existing low-head dam feature into a potentially usable whitewater feature and improving the surrounding area for multiple types of users. Their goal was to "Eliminate a hazard that exists in an area with a lot of recreational boating use, including an upstream whitewater park, a downstream rowing facility, an increasingly used canal park that attracts many hikers, bikers and other users and a very popular fishing spot."

Several other clubs submitted some great proposals; however, we could only pick two. Some other proposals included Bluegrass Wildwater Association's proposal for a cleanup this fall on the Southeast classic Russell Fork River; Tennessee Scenic River Association's proposal for a river cleanup on the Bledsoe Creek in Tennessee; and Tennessee Valley Canoe Club's proposal to improve access to Rock Creek in Georgia.

Thanks again to all of the clubs who participated in this year's grant process. Most of all, a huge thank you goes out to Clif Bar for sponsoring this wonderful opportunity for our Affiliate Clubs to try and do their part in saving our rivers! The AW Journal Club Affiliates by state:

Alaska

Fairbanks Paddlers, Fairbanks
Nova Riverrunners Inc., Chickaloon

Alabama

Birmingham Canoe Club, Birmingham
Huntsville Canoe Club, Huntsville

Arkansas

Arkansas Canoe Club, Little Rock

California

Chico Paddleheads, Chico
Gold Country Paddlers, Lotus
Sequoia Paddling Club, Forestville
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Ch., Grass Valley
Sierra Club SF Chapter, Livermore

Colorado

Avid4 Adventure Inc., Boulder
Colorado Whitewater Assn, Englewood
Grand Canyon Priv. Boat. Assn., Colorado Springs
Pikes Peak Whitewater Club, Colorado Springs
San Miguel Whitewater Asso, Telluride
University of Colorado Kayak Club, Boulder

Connecticut

AMC - Connecticut Chapter, Colchester

Delaware

Wilmington Trail Club Paddlers, Wilmington

Georgia

Atlanta Whitewater Club, Atlanta
Georgia Canoeing Assoc, Atlanta
Paddlers4Christ, Ellijay

Iowa

Iowa Whitewater Coalition, W Des Moines

Idaho

Idaho Whitewater Assoc., Boise

Illinois

Chicago Whitewater Assoc., Chicago
Team SICK, Carbondale

Indiana

Hoosier Canoe Club, Indianapolis
Ohio Valley Paddlers, Evansville

Kentucky

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

Maine

Penobscot Paddle & Chowder Society, Topsham

Massachusetts

AMC - New Hampshire Paddlers, Hanover

Maryland

Blue Ridge Voyageurs, Silver Spring
Greater Baltimore Canoe Club, Cockeysville
Mason Dixon Canoe Cruisers, Smithsburg

Michigan

Club Sport: University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Minnesota

SCSU Outdoor Endeavors, Saint Cloud
Minnesota Canoe Asso, Minneapolis

Mississippi

Mississippi Outdoor Club, Clinton

Missouri

Ozark Mountain Paddlers, Springfield

Montana

Beartooth Paddlers Society, Billings

Nevada

Sierra Nevada Whitewater Club, Reno

New Hampshire

Mt. Washington Valley Paddlers, Intervale

New Jersey

KCCNY, Flauders

New Mexico

Adobe Whitewater Club, Albuquerque

New York

ADK Schenectady, Schenectady
AMC NY-NJ Chapter, New York
Colgate University, Hamilton
Genesee Waterways Center Inc., Rochester
Flow Paddlers' Club, Ontario
Hamilton College, Clinton
Housatonic Canoe & Kayak Squad, Ossining
St Lawrence University, Canton
Town Tinker Tube Rentals, Phoenicia
USA Paddling, West Falls
Zoar Valley Paddling Club, Buffalo

N. Carolina

Base Camp Cullowhee, Cullowhee
Carolina Canoe Club, Raleigh
Mecklenburg Regional Paddlers, Charlotte
NCSU Outing Club, Raleigh
Triad River Runners, Winston, Salem
Watauga Paddlers, Boone

Ohio

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

Oregon

Face Level Industries LLC, Portland
Lower Columbia Canoe Club, Portland
Northwest Rafters Assoc, Portland

Oregon Canoe and Kayak, Portland
Willamette Kayak & Canoe Club, Corvallis

Pennsylvania

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Sugarloaf
Benscreek Canoe Club, Johnstown
Blue Mountain Outfitters, Marysville
Bradford County Canoe and Kayak Club, Sayre
Canoe Club of Greater Harrisburg, Harrisburg
Conewago Canoe Club, York
Holtwood Hooligans, Lancaster
Lehigh Valley Canoe Club, Lehigh Valley
Lehigh Valley Whitewater Inc., Lehigh Valley
Philadelphia Canoe Club, Philadelphia
Three Rivers Paddling Club, Pittsburgh

S. Carolina

Foothills Paddling Club, Greenville
Palmetto Paddlers, Columbia

Tennessee

Appalachian Paddling Enthusiasts, Kingsport
Chota Canoe Club, Knoxville
East 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

Utah

Utah Whitewater Club, Salt Lake City

Vermont

Vermont Paddlers Club, Essex Junction

Virginia

Blue Ridge River Runners, Lynch Station
Canoe Cruisers Assn, Arlington
Coastal Canoeists, Blacksburg
Float Fishermen of Virginia, Richmond
FORVA, Roanoke

Washington

BEWET, Bellevue
Paddle Trails Canoe Club, Seattle
Spokane Canoe & Kayak Club, Spokane
The Mountaineers, Seattle
University Kayak Club, Seattle
Venturing Crew 360, Snohomish
Washington Kayak Club, Seattle
Washington Recreational River Runners, Renton
Whitman College Whiteater Club, Walla Walla

West Virginia

West VA Wildwater Association, S. Charleston

Wisconsin

Hoofers Outing Club, Madison
Sierra Club / John Muir Chapter, Madison

Discounted AW Membership for Affiliate Club Members

By Carla Miner, Membership Manager

AW offers a discounted Affiliate Club membership of \$25, a \$10 savings. If you are renewing your AW membership or joining as a new member, select the Affiliate Club Discounted Personal Membership online at <http://americanwhitewater.org/content/Membership/join-AW/>. Or, if you are renewing or joining by mail or telephone just mention the name of the Affiliate Club you belong to and you can take advantage of the \$25 membership.

A list of AW Affiliate Clubs can be found on our website at <http://americanwhitewater.org/content/Membership/join-AW/>. If you do not see your Club listed here please encourage them to renew their Club membership or to join AW as a new Affiliate Club. Your Club's membership and your personal membership enable our staff to be active and engaged in the process of river stewardship. When you join or renew your membership your support is helping to meet the many challenges whitewater rivers face.

If you have any questions about the Affiliate Club membership, please contact me. I can be reached at 866_BOAT-4AW or membership@americanwhitewater.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 the 2009 Clif Bar Flowing Rivers grant

For more information,
contact Carla Miner at
membership@americanwhitewater.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.

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Px MY PADDLE PRESCRIPTION

PADDLER: JOHN GRACE

I'M A: WERNER SHO-GUN

TYPE: STRAIGHT

DIAMETER: STANDARD

LENGTH: 200 cm

HEIGHT: 5'11"

OCCUPATION: VIDEO GURU

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First descent Petite Mecatina, North Quebec

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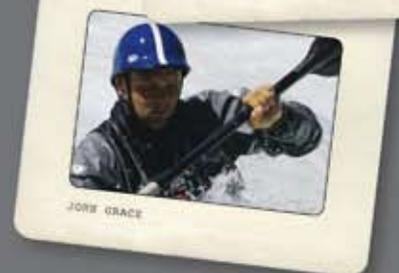
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