

# american whitewater

May/June  
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Making of  
Meltdown  
Madness

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Olympic dreams

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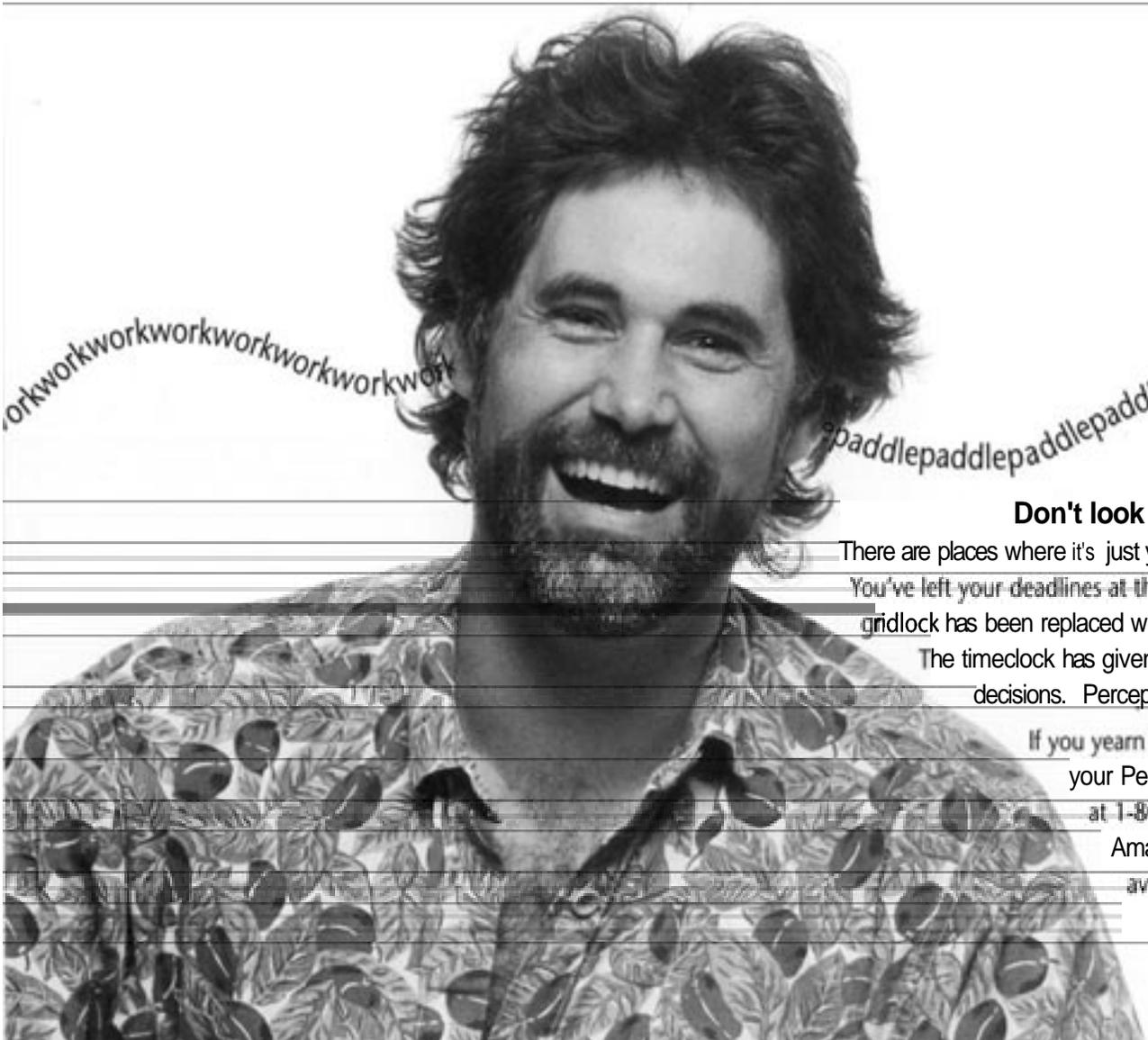
AWA Annual Report inside





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Journal of the American Whitewater Affiliation

Volume XXXVI, No.3

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*by Bruce Babbitt*

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Front Cover: Dave "Snake" Pizzuti tackles the Crystal River Punchbowls near Schofield Pass, Colorado. See "Meltdown" article inside for more "Madness"! Photo by Brian Bailey.

Back Cover: Jonathan Satz - Adrenaline Falls, Lime Creek, Colorado. Photo by Dave Pizzuti



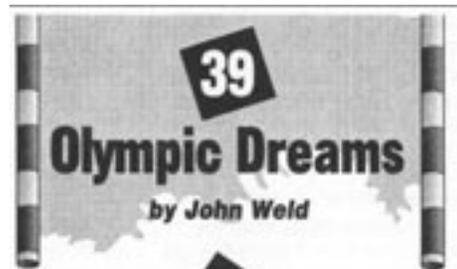
## Making of Meltdown Madness

*by Paul Tefft*



## Kayak Summer

*by Mark Binder*



## Baddlin is Barig!

*by Paul Mason*



## Rapids & Ruins & Rapids

*by John Foss*



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# FORUM

This month, American Whitewater is honored to have a statement by Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt. Previously, Babbitt has served as Governor of Arizona from 1978-1987, and as Attorney General of Arizona from 1975-1978. AWA staff had the opportunity to meet Babbitt on the banks of the Potomac River last fall where he confided his love of rivers and his weekly habit of canoeing on the Potomac.

## A Nation United by Waters

The 1972 Clean Water Act is restoring more than lakes and rivers; it has set off a renaissance of economic and recreational growth on every waterfront in America. Now, suddenly, it's all at stake.

**By Bruce Babbitt**

Only a quarter century ago, the striped bass fishing industry on the Atlantic coast had collapsed. Cleveland's Cuyahoga River caught fire. Lake Erie was pronounced "dead." Appalachian rivers ran orange. And kayakers and canoeists on the Potomac River needed inoculations against diseases in order to enjoy its now famous rapids.

It seemed every one of Americas rivers and lakes, especially those near industry and cities, was on a downward spiral of destruction and sickness.

Then, in response, a progressive, bipartisan Congress passed the 1972 Clean Water Act. That landmark conservation law articulated a simple, if awkwardly stated goal: make the nation's waters "swimmable and fishable." Set against



Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt rallies support for the C&O Canal Restoration Project. Photo by Rich Bowers

two centuries of abuse, it was the single most ambitious environmental law in history.

And it worked. In ways we never imagined.

For the Act, as enforced by the Environmental Protection Agency, not only gave Americans confidence in what they drink. It not only allowed Americans once again to fish, swim, canoe, and kayak in their local and urban rivers.

It set off an economic and social renaissance.

Striped bass fishermen are back at work on the Hudson River and in Chesapeake Bay. The Jersey Shore has spawned a new whalewatching industry.

## EDITORIAL

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Cleveland's Cuyahoga River doesn't burn anymore; it has walleye swimming in it, sportfishing boats to chase them, and new marinas and a riverwalk to anchor those boats at the end of the day. The Great Lakes support **900,000** boaters and **2.5 million** anglers, infusing more than **\$3 billion** in the regional economy. Last year, I was one of them.

I joined Americans out on the lakes and rivers of **27** states and some five dozen cities to celebrate the waterfront renaissance taking place all across America. A renaissance brought by strong federal conservation laws.

In April, I went fishing on Jamaica Bay and the Hudson River. I chased after Walleye on the Cuyahoga and Lake Erie one rainy morning last May. I caught greenback cutthroat trout in Colorado and smallmouth bass in North Carolina. I strolled the waterfront riverwalks in Jacksonville, San Antonio and Cleveland.

I rafted down the James River, an extraordinary river, the rapids running as if in a wilderness area right through the heart of urban Richmond. It's a river which has come back to life. Herring, shad, and sturgeon are now migrating and recreational boating is increasing due to its clean up, living proof that we can restore this landscape.

I saw kayakers eskimo roll on the Nashua and Merrimack Rivers of New England — rivers that before the Clean Water Act used to run orange, yellow, and green, depending on the factory discharge. I paddled down the Chattahoochee River in Atlanta, down the Little Miami River that runs through Cincinnati, across the southern estuaries of San Francisco Bay.

I expected dramatic improvement of our watersheds themselves. What I didn't expect to see was the social transformation, and economic growth that accompanied it on the banks of the waters. For as communities restored their local waters, the waters restored our communities. The Clean Water Act is the single greatest urban renewal law in American history.

That change is most evident in our own back yards. For example, I have seen growth in recreation near my home in Washington, D.C. Gradual, steady cleanup of the once polluted Potomac River, and protection of the historic C&O Canal, have allowed kayak outfitters to teach the crowded, often uptight D.C. population how to enjoy the remarkable resource.

Over **3 million** residents of Maryland, Virginia, and Washington D.C. live within a **20 minute** drive of the pristine shoreline near Great Falls. Trails wind through parks and over bridges, and fishing holes are full of small mouth bass; recently the Fish and Wildlife Service cut a notch in Little Falls Dam for shad to spawn further upstream. Land values increase with the cleanup, attracting businesses, rowing clubs, restaurants and outfitters.

Elsewhere, kayaks and canoes play the rapids at Fish Ladder and Rocky Island, while blue herons cruise alongside. Young and old generations alike are learning to roll in the placid back channels. The bedrock to the Potomac's restoration, as on all of our nation's rivers and waterways, remains the Clean Water Act.

Each river, lake and bay in America is a testament to the local communities who have learned to use that federal water law to preserve their sense of place, and to create a rich, democratic public commons on their waterfront.

The problems, however, are not entirely resolved. Runoff from streets, farms, backyards and forests are still pouring enormous amounts of pollution into rivers upon which we depend. During storms, runoff and sewage outflows wash untreated into our waters.

It would seem logical to build upon our past successes, to expand the scope of the Clean Water Act and other conservation laws to solve the problems that still exist.

Instead, on **May 16, 1995**, the House of Representatives chose to shrink it by

passing **H.R. 961** by a vote of **240-185**. This bill replaces water quality standards based on science, with standards based upon "economic and social considerations." It defines **70 percent** of the region's wetlands — our natural water filters — out of existence. And it repeals the entire stormwater permitting system. The leadership of this Congress is now telling the American people that it's time to gut the very heart of the Clean Water Act.

In **1994**, not one politician campaigned on a platform to weaken clean water protection. Yet some members of Congress now claim that the original goal of the Clean Water Act goes too far and impedes economic growth. They ignore the great economic benefit of clean, healthy watersheds: the boating, bait & tackle, ecotourism, and outdoor outfitter businesses.

The Republican environmental onslaught does not stop there. The GOP House whip compared the EPA to the Gestapo. The GOP chair of the public lands committee tried to set up a commission to shut down some **315 National Parks and Monuments Units** — including the C & O Canal, the Cuyahoga Valley NRA, the Rio Grande Wild & Scenic River, and the Chatahoochee River NRA. A Colorado GOP leader tried to give away **270 million** acres of public land. A Freshman House GOP Rep. staged an "endangered salmon bake."

Then Congress cut funds for key conservation programs, crippling enforcement of clean water standards. It slashed funds for geological and biological science agencies, which gather data on water quantity and quality, as well as species dependent on the watersheds. Finally, Congress introduced a "takings" bill that makes the public, not the polluter, pay the costs of industrial clean up of polluted watersheds.

If Congress would merely take a moment, lock the industrial lobbyists out of their offices, and look out their windows at the subtle transformation taking place right on the Potomac and rivers across the nation, they would see that, today, our environmental laws, sowed **25 years** ago, have reaped both economic and intangible rewards, felt by the entire boating community.

As an active boater, part of a growing, multi-million dollar industry, your way of life depends on the network of rivers that spread throughout this country. Your businesses bear none of the marks of traditional industry; it leaves no scars, pollutes no rivers, scalps no forests, and drains no swamps.

Keep up the good work, and keep up the fight for clean waters. I believe that as we work together to restore every watershed in America, we will witness the restoration of the American community.

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## Clashin' and Clangin'

Hi Bob,

Your article on extreme team maneuvers reminds me of stunts my brother Jeff and I were doing just before Jesse Whittemore turned us on to squirt boating in 1981-"Clashin' and Clangin'". To "Clash" we would time an entrance/exit from a hole/eddy so our hulls would caress off each other to help us on our way. "Clangin" was similar except that in passing we would hook Duffeks and Clang on to each other to get some extra pull on the stroke. It was reckless fun, even though we often had close encounters with funny glances.

Ex Rad Dude  
Jim Snyder  
Albright, WV

*Editor's note: Jim Snyder will always be a "Rad Dude" in our book!*

## Roll or Die

Dear Mr. Gedekoh:

As one who has executed outdoor rolls in each of the last 33 months (no cheating by going South, either), I fully appreciated your note in the July/August issue about your exostoses and their removal. My otolaryngologist also liked it. (So far, thanks perhaps to them ol' molded ear plugs, I'm not in need of the operation. Let's hope it stays that way.)

Of course, I love the rest of the magazine. My lay diagnosis of Jonathan Katz is that he is crazy. Thank heaven for his insanity. I hate waiting 59 days (it takes a day or two to devour an issue) for the next issue, but it's worth it.

Yours in paddling,  
Matt Muir  
Unrepentant Keel-hauler  
Akron, Ohio

*Editor's Note: Thirty-three consecutive months of northern river rolling! This guy must be a real polar bear!*

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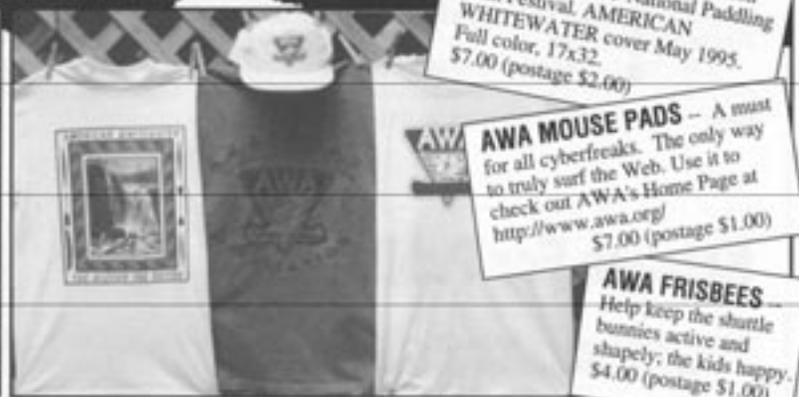
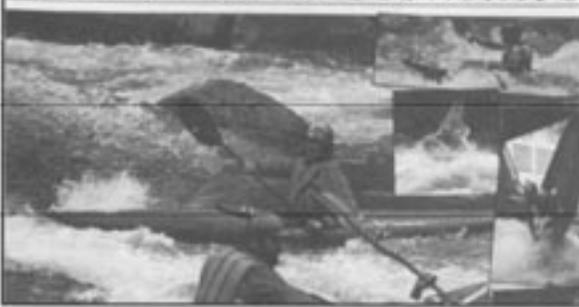
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The editorial staff of American Whitewater carefully reviews all material submitted for publication. We are particularly interested in receiving full length feature articles, conservation and club news, special event announcements, articles pertaining to whitewater safety and short, humorous pieces.

Articles should fit our established format; that is, they should be stylistically patterned to fit into our Features, AWA Briefs, River Voices, Conservation Currents, Safety Lines, Humor or End Notes sections. Exceptional photographs and whitewater cartoons are also welcomed.

If possible articles should be submitted using Wordperfect on a 5 1/4" single sided flexible disc. Please use the standard default settings; do not alter the margin or spacing parameters. If you use a different word processing program and/ or smaller disks, send us one anyway... we may be able to transfer it to our files. Send a printed copy of the article, as well.

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

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cates if possible; we can not guarantee the safe return of your pictures. If you want us to return your pictures, include a self addressed stamped envelope with your submission. Because we publish in black and white, photos with a lot of contrast work best.

American Whitewater Feature articles should relate to some aspect of whitewater boating. Please do not submit articles pertaining to sea kayaking or flatwater. The best features have a definite slant... or theme. They are not merely chronological recountings of river trips.

Open the story with an eye catching lead, perhaps by telling an interesting anecdote. Dialogue should be used to heighten the reader's interest. Don't just tell us about the river... tell us about the people on the river... develop them as characters. Feature articles should not be written in the style of a local club newsletter.

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

ries are welcome.

Don't be afraid to let your personality shine through and don't be afraid to poke a little fun at yourself... and your paddling partners.

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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.

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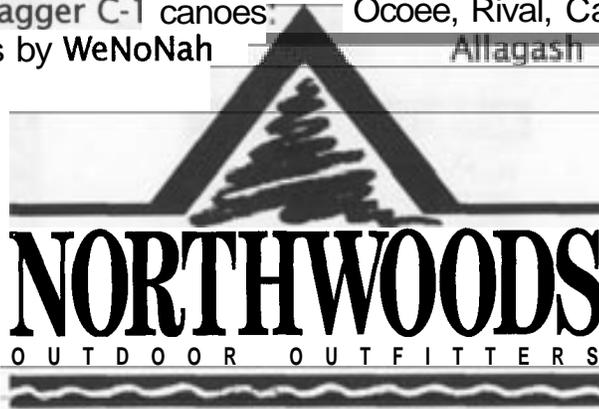
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# PURPOSE

## The American Whitewater Affiliation

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

The American Whitewater Affiliation (AWA) is a national organization with a membership consisting of thousands of individual whitewater boating enthusiasts, and more than 100 local paddling club affiliates.

**CONSERVATION:** AWA maintains a complete national inventory of whitewater rivers, monitors threats to those rivers, publishes information on river conservation, provides technical advice to local groups, works with government agencies and other river users, and-- when necessary-- takes legal action to prevent river abuse.

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

**EDUCATION:** Through publication of the bi-monthly magazine, and by other means, American Whitewater, (AWA) provides information and education about whitewater rivers, boating safety, technique and equipment.

**SAFETY:** AWA 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 AWA Whitewater Safety Code.

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

AWA was incorporated under Missouri non-profit corporation laws in 1961 and maintains its principal mailing address at P.O. Box 636, Margaretville, NY 12455, (914) 688-5569. AWA is tax exempt under Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

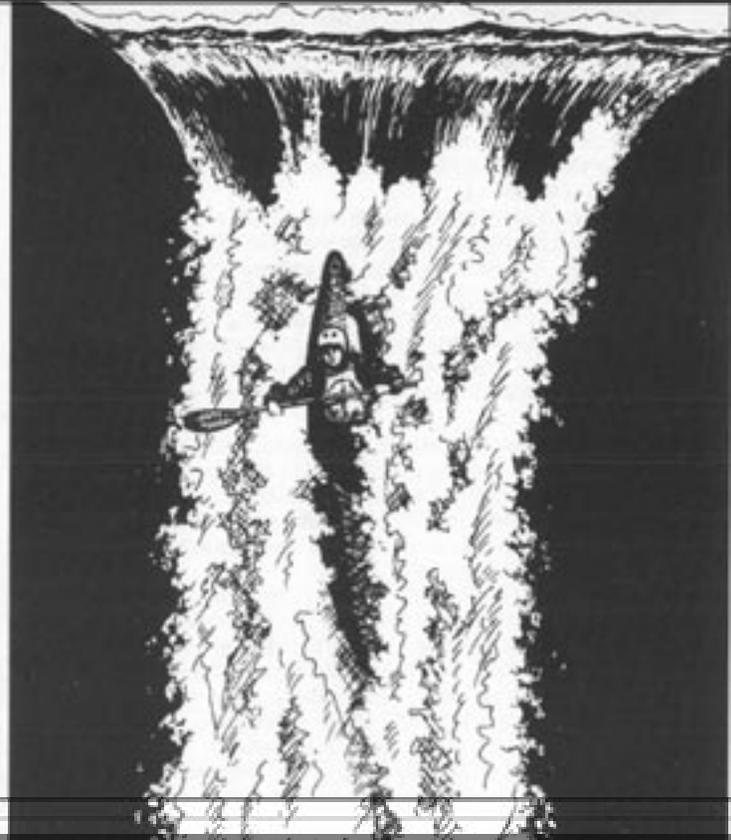
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# Lying for a Living..

## the Confession of a River Professional!

by **Rich Bowers**, AWA Conservation Director

**W**hen I read Pope Barrow's call for lies about whitewater ("Big Lie Competition," November/December issue), I knew my time had come. As AWA Conservation Director, I get to lie about whitewater on a daily (and often hourly) basis. I actually fly around developing background so that I can tell even more atrocious (and authoritative) lies. Worse yet, I get paid to do this.

It all began when I "lied" to get this job. "AWA SEEKS RIVER PROFESSIONAL — SPECIAL CONSIDERATION FOR EXPERTISE IN DAMS AND HYDROPOWER." Straight faced, I told them I had hated dams all my life (well, what boater doesn't). I nailed the position.

At the start I was a rank novice at lying. I actually felt remorse for lying (at least when I thought I would get caught). This happened about two weeks into the job, when I realized I knew absolutely nothing about dams. In a panic I called my boss and blurted out the terrible truth. Luckily, my boss saved me with this sage and profound advice — "So what! Neither does anyone else. Lie!"(Click)

Years later, I've been able to craft lying into an art. It comes from numerous introductions, often to hundreds of people as a "World Class Boater", a "River Safety Expert" or my all time favorite "a Lawyer for the AWA."

As long as the audience doesn't know Class V from Disneyland, you can usually breeze on by. Throw in some lingo, talk about "boofing" or "squirts" and they'll listen all night. But telling lies in my position can have serious consequences, so I've practiced taking lies to the second level. This is when you lie without speaking.

I've never claimed to be a lawyer (all of my legal experience was learned in traffic court), but I've also never claimed not to be a lawyer. It's amazing what you can get away with just by keeping your mouth shut. It also helps when all of the other people in the room are lawyers. It's smiling (not laughing out loud) when called a safety expert because you know these people have never seen you boat. Besides, claiming to be a world class boater is only a lie if there are other, and better boaters in the room.

If you lie enough you will get caught, and this is where you start to separate the beginner from the true professional. Getting caught sometimes calls for the ability to move smoothly from one lie to the next until you can get out of the room. I find that it helps to always have another meeting scheduled, often at regular 15 minute intervals.

The ante is raised when you have to lie in the presence of other boaters. And at this point you need to transcend to an even higher level of lying. On this third level you never claim to be an expert, but you drop names to associate yourself with recognized experts. "Sure, Rick Williams is a good friend" or "Pete Flanagan and I ran the Ohanopocosh together" (you needn't mention that you nearly drowned), or "I hang out with Ron Stewart and Kent Wigington a lot." Hopefully, if these experts do know you, they won't hang you out to dry. On this

level, I've also found it useful to concentrate your discussions on small rivers which are very far away. This works like a charm during slide shows when you can't remember which river is on the screen.

Of course, even with lying you have to recognize some limitations (unless you are a lawyer or a politician). So far, I haven't found a way to lie on the next, or fourth level. This is because this level necessitates lying on the water. And all except rank novices can usually figure out that my boating skill in non-existent within the first few drops. In some ways this is the biggest lie of all!

Being a professional means presenting atrocious lies in a convincing manner, and often in very serious settings. Pope's article mentioned that sometimes really BIG lies are the best, but on the other side some lies are so obviously blatant and stupid that no one will believe them. As a professional, I get to hear these all too often. People who haven't the faintest idea about the subject, love to tell lies about boaters and whitewater, and they do it all the time. The problem is — they think these lies are true!

Here are a few of my favorites quotes about whitewater. You will think I'm lying when I say people actually believe these, but it's true. Trust me:

"If you release water into that gorge, you will wear it out"  
— Georgia public meeting

"If we allow whitewater releases (at a hydro dam), it will use up all the electricity and the locks in jails will open and killers and rapists will be set free" — Washington State public meeting (I couldn't possibly make this up)

"If we allow boaters to come through here, they will molest our families and livestock" — Property rights advocate in Colorado

"I used to kayak until it almost killed me" — I've actually heard this a lot, usually followed by — "no one should ever be allowed to do this again" ■

# Multi-Purpose Auburn Dam Takes Another Step Towards Reality

by Rich Bowers, AWA Conservation Director

The revised threat of a multi-purpose dam on California's American may be one of the biggest and most important river issues for whitewater boaters and other outdoor/river groups in 1996.

Over the past few years, AWA has targeted its conservation efforts to fight off new, privately owned dams on our smaller and more remote rivers — because of both an increased emphasis on creeks for recreational use, and because of our security in the knowledge that the age of large dam building was over.

Were we wrong? Maybe not, since it does seem that most large dam locations are either already developed, or far too costly in this day of increasing energy competition. But Auburn Dam is without question a mega-dam project — at over \$900 Million, potentially the most expensive dam ever built in the United States!

The March-April edition of American Whitewater gave a short update on Congressman Petri's (R-WI) proposed bill which would eliminate all funding for Auburn Dam (H.R. 2951). Since then the bill has been introduced and river organizations, including AWA, have been digging up co-sponsors to support this effort. As we go to press for this edition, there are 15 Congressional co-sponsors, including: J. Kennedy (D-MA), Z. Lofgren (D-CA), C. Shays (R-CT), S. Chabot (R-OH), M. Doyle (D-PA), T. Beilenson (D-CA), T. Barrett (D-WI), V. Ehlers (R-MI), S. Levin (D-MI), J. Spatt (D-SC), P. Stark (D-CA), J. Sensenbrenner (R-WI), G. Ganske (R-IA), T. Campbell (R-CA) and A. Eschoo (D-CA).

On the down side, Congressmen Richard Pombo (R-CA), Robert Matsui (D-CA) and Vic Fazio (D-CA) agreed in Mid-March to join Congressman John Doolittle's plan for a stageable multi-purpose Auburn Dam. While the details of the plan are as yet unknown, this partnership signals their departure from plans to build a dam strictly for flood control, and moves this contentious project even closer to destroying the many resources offered by California's American River.

To date, the scope of this dam has remained open-ended, placing all of the resources of the North and Middle Fork American River at risk. As currently planned, this multi-purpose dam will:

Cost taxpayers at least \$700 million to provide flood protection for Sacramento. This is 75% of the projected total cost of \$934 million. Cost overruns should push the figure to over \$1 billion as could future expansion of the dam.

Protect Sacramento from a 500 year flood of record. Nowhere else in the country does the government offer (or could local citizens pay for) this level of protection.

Ignore less costly flood control alternatives already identified by the U.S. Army Corps and regional flood control authorities, alternatives which could be paid for by the local community without any Federal funding.

Destroy 40 miles or more of pristine river canyon used by wildlife and over half a million recreationists a year for hiking, camping, and whitewater boating (including two of the few remaining Class IV whitewater rivers in California enjoyed by both private and commercial recreationists).

Depending on the type and size of dam constructed, at least six separate whitewater runs could be jeopardized. For the North Fork, the original Doolittle Dam would completely flood the five mile, Class II+ Ponderosa Way Run. If a larger dam is

built, this flooding could extend up to the Yankee Jim bridge, or continue another four miles up the Class IV Chamberlin Falls Run. Other just discovered pristine tributaries like Shirt Tail Creek and Brush Creek would also be destroyed. For the Middle Fork, Auburn dam would destroy the lower six mile, Class II run, and flood the popular Class IV Tunnel Run all the way up to Ruck-a-Chucky Rapids.

Besides destroying whitewater river segments, the multi-purpose Auburn dam would adversely impact other outdoor recreation interests as well, including hikers, runners, fishermen, hunters and others. Of course, proponents of the dam claim that lake recreation will easily offset the losses on downstream or river recreation — but boaters have heard this one before, and we're not buying into it this time! Here are a few statistics on why outdoor users cannot afford Auburn dam:

Recreation and Tourism are California's largest industries. California rivers draw more of these users than any other location, except its beaches (1994 memo from The Resources Agency of CA)

In 1992, 130,000 people boated on the South Fork of the American and generated some \$30 million in the local community (El Dorado County). The American River Recreation Assoc. (representing commercial outfitters) says that people come to the area because they can boat more than one fork over the weekend. Losing the North and Middle Forks could cut business by 30%

The California Outdoor Recreation Plan (1988) reports that Californians spend more than \$1 billion each year on recreation and leisure.

There are already over 1200 dams on California rivers (River Information Digest - American River Management Society)

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In California, "over the past 23 years, whitewater boating has increased by 2000 %" (CA Dept of Boating and Waterways, Kern River Relicensing)

Less than 1% of our country's remaining rivers have Class II or better whitewater (American Whitewater Affiliation's Nationwide Whitewater Inventory)

The AWA is working to stop this dam once again (AWA and others successfully stopped a previous incarnation in 1992). And again we are working with a host of other river and conservation groups to accomplish this, including Friends of the River, National Wildlife Federation, Taxpayers for Common Sense and many others.

We need your help. We are asking whitewater boaters to **WRITE YOUR CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVES AND URGE THEM TO OPPOSE AUBURN DAM. BETTER YET, ASK THEM TO CO-SPONSOR CONGRESSMAN PETRI'S BILL H.R. 2951.** If you have connections with other outdoor groups, please ask them to join AWA in opposing Auburn Dam and to share with us other recreational affects from this proposed dam. If you write a letter, send a copy to the AWA Conservation Office at 1430 Fenwick Lane, Silver Spring, MD, 20910, or email us at 72732.401@compuserve.com. Call us before you write and we can give you an update on the situation. For more information, contact AWA at (301) 589-9453.

In late March, Friends of the River (FOR) hired AWA Regional Coordinator Richard Penny to act as their Auburn Dam Coordinator. Richard can be reached at FOR's Sacramento Office at (916) 442-3155. Give Richard a call and ask him how you and the AWA can help to fight this national river issue..

## Three Gorges Dam, China

Everything is Relative! While the \$900 million Auburn Dam would be the most expensive dam ever built in this country, its expense pales against the \$30 to \$50 billion price-tag of the proposed Three Gorges Dam in China.

Rather than backing up some 40 miles of river, the Three Gorges dam would inundate 350 miles of China's "Grand Canyon", and would displace some 1.3 million people from their homes.

In 1993, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation canceled its Three Gorges contract with the Chinese Government. In 1995, the National Security Council completed a 14 month, interagency review which recommended that the dam not be built because of significant environmental, social economic and legal concerns. President Clinton has opposed the dam because of human rights and economic viability concerns.

But like other mega-dam projects, they seem to keep grinding towards completion. The U.S. Export-Import bank, under considerable pressure from US contractors, is ready to support this dam.

For more information, please contact International Rivers Network at (510) 848-1155..

## Elwah Dam Removal Proceeds

On February 26, the Department of the Interior issued its Record of Decision regarding last year's proposal by the National Park Service (NPS) to remove the Elwha (FERC Project # 2683) and Glines Canyon (# 588) dams in Washington State.

This decision endorses the preferred alternative in the completed Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which called for purchasing both dams and associated hydropower facilities, draining the impoundments (Lake Aldwell and Lake Mills), and removing all dams, powerhouses and other structures.

The Administration's 1997 budget proposal, submitted on March 19, allocates \$111 Million for Elwha River Restoration. If approved, this money could be used to buy and remove both dams. The NPS is currently working on a second "implementation" EIS which will explain exactly how the removal is to be accomplished, including getting rid of a large accumulation of sediment behind the dams. This EIS is expected in late April.

In the EIS, dam removal was selected as the preferred alternative because it best addressed Public Law 102-495, the Elwha Restoration Act, which would "...restore Olympic National Park and the Elwha River ecosystem and fisheries in the state of Washington."

In December, 1994, the AWA submitted comments supporting dam removal, describing the outstanding whitewater resources on this river, and addressing the benefits of removing both dams on recreation: "Humans rely on rivers too. Rivers offer recreation and **respite** for wilderness adventurers and city dwellers alike. **Scenic** waterfalls, roaring rapids, and **quiet, meandering** streams are at the heart of the nation's most **spectacular landscapes.**"

The AWA Nationwide Whitewater Inventory lists three separate whitewater segments on the Elwha, over 18 miles of class II - V rapids. The upper section, the "Grand Canyon of the Elwha" which begins after an eight mile hike from Whiskey Bend. The middle section, from Glines Canyon Dam to Lake Aldwell, and the lower section below this lake are equally beautiful but less challenging whitewater resources.

As mentioned in the EIS, removal of both dams would add another 5.3 miles of river. Perhaps more importantly, a continuous 23 mile Elwha river could be enjoyed by all of those seeking a truly wilderness river experience..

## Hydro To Be Added To Summersville Dam

(a follow-up to the January/February Journal report)

The Summersville Hydroelectric Project, an add on to the U.S. Army Corps dam on the Upper Gauley (built in the mid-1960's), is scheduled to begin construction in the fall of 1996.

The 80 mega-watt project is a partnership effort between the City of Summersville and Catamount Energy Corp. (the "Gauley River Power Partners"). Catamount is a wholly owned subsidiary of Central Vermont Public Service Corp., Vermont's largest public utility. In late March, this partnership negotiated an agreement with a local power distributor, AEP, to purchase power from this project. The power station is expected to be operational by 1998.

According to a report in the Charleston Gazette, the city of Summersville is expected to receive \$18 to \$20 million in royalties during the first 25 years of operation. After that, the town assumes control of the project, and is expected to take in an additional \$75 million between 2024 and 2042.

Here's what it means for whitewater boaters— 1) Construction should not affect fall releases or access to the river (AWA, NPS and others were able to guarantee this through tough license requirements). 2) There has been a request by the Power Partners to study the effects of raising the winter pool elevation at Summersville to benefit power production (from 1575 feet to 1638 feet). If increased, this new pool level could maximize hydro generation and may provide additional recre-

ational releases during the summer (and increased flow for fish). However, this is an unproven benefit for whitewater. While it may provide more dependable summer flows, it may eliminate the natural spring draw-down flows that now exist. 3) Raising the winter pool level will make it easier for the Corp. to reach its summer pool elevation. Reaching summer pool is a requirement for fall recreational releases. A new pool level could allow the Corps to provide fall releases in dryer years (like the drought of 1988). 4) The awesome put-in for the Upper Gauley will be lost forever. New penstocks will replace the existing tubes, and water will flow through the powerhouse and be released directly into the river.

Until the study is completed, the benefits from raising the winter pool is mostly guesswork. AWA will continue to monitor the situation, get involved in the study process, fight for whitewater, and report back when we have more information..

## Sullivan Creek Hydro Proposal (Wa)

On March 20th, the FERC held a public scoping meeting to help prepare an EIS for the Sullivan Creek Hydro project near Metaline Falls, Washington.

The Public Utility District No. 1 (PUD) of Pend Oreille County has proposed adding hydro generation to an existing dam. Currently, the PUD drains Sullivan Lake in October at about 500 cfs. which provides a boatable flow for the 1.5 mile Class II upper run (Mill Pond to N.F. Sullivan Creek) and the 2 mile Class V Sullivan Creek Gorge Run (around 200 foot per mile gradient).

The AWA expects to intervene in this project, and to study how power generation either hurts or might improve whitewater boating. The deadline for comments was April 22, but we would appreciate any boater information we can get. Please call AWA at (301) 589-9453.

# Recreation Excise Tax Moves Ahead

by Rich Bowers, AWA Conservation Director

In 1994, American Whitewater reported that the International Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA), was pushing for an excise tax on outdoor equipment to fund the efforts of state fish and wildlife agencies. The money raised by this tax (approximately \$350 million per year from sales of kayaks, climbing gear, hiking boots, etc.) would be spent to improve non-game wildlife habitat.

More recently this tax, referred to as the Teaming with Wildlife Initiative has been gathering support among wildlife advocates and other conservation groups (including many groups that are working along with AWA on river conservation). If this proceeds at the present schedule, testimony on the merits of this program may be presented before Congressional Representatives as early as may be the time this issue hits your door, a legislative proposal, the Fish & Wildlife Conservation Enhancement Act of 1996, may already be working its way through Congress. Since the beginning, the AWA has opposed this tax because: 1. It is yet another tax without representation (in this case outdoor recreationists), and 2. The fees generated will not provide for the needs of those paying the bill.

Perhaps the most irritating issue is that bill proponents continuously try to separate outdoor recreation users from conservation issues. This guilt-trip tactic says that if you use the outdoors, then you owe something back to nature. Actually, many people and organizations agree with this, including the AWA (it's why we spend 80% of our budget on conservation). However, this initiative steps far beyond, and says that what we owe (millions annually) should be dedicated to funding only a nar-

row range of IAFWA priorities (fish and wildlife).

Continually, we hear that recreation users are not paying their way. That other recreation based user funds (like the Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act) have been successful in the past. But these efforts have limited funding to projects directly impacting those paying for them. This initiative takes the shotgun approach to a narrow target -- in the case of conservation, just the tip of the iceberg.

### 1. Tax Without Representation

This bill is perhaps two months away from being introduced into Congress. Yet most of those who will pay the bill are unaware that it exists, or how it will affect them. Even bill proponents are unsure exactly how much it will cost!

To be fair, the IAFWA and other proponents have spent time trying to include recreationists in this initiative. However, this is an impossible task when the bill is this far along, when the programs to be funded have already been locked it, and when these programs are so narrowly focused.

According to recent literature, this initiative will benefit outdoor users by: securing additional lands for hikers, bikers, canoeists and others; involving fish and wildlife agencies with non-traditional user groups (like boaters), and; providing improved access to lands and waters.

Unfortunately, in many cases these benefits are either non-existent or mis-directed. For instance, nothing in the draft proposal guarantees that recreationists will be able to use this land. The Sportsman's Caucus (a strong alliance of fishing and hunting advocates, including many Congressional Representatives) has stated, up front, that it will support no bill that does not retain hunting and fishing on any public land acquired through the use of these funds. Access, as defined in this bill, relates only to boat ramps, and there is absolutely no mention of how fish and wildlife agencies will be directed to change years of work habits -- many of which have been harmful rather than helpful to recreation.

### 2. Mis-directed funding

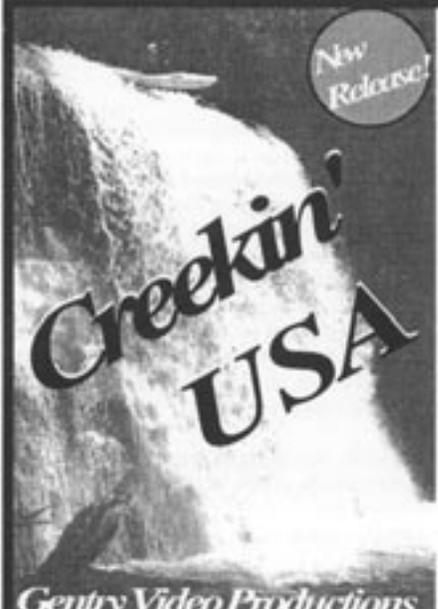
The real problem is not an issue of recreation v. conservation, but of a tax that funds only one small aspect of the prob-

lems effecting our rivers and lands. Is wildlife important? It sure is. But is it worth funding before other issues such as river restoration, watershed and ecosystem management, improved biodiversity, hydroelectric impacts, or additional and necessary land purchases?

All of these goals cost dollars, and each of these issues is broader in scope, and more critical, than just wildlife. Dollars are a very scarce resource for river work, especially recreation issues. Retailers, outfitters, advocacy groups, and ultimately end users simply cannot afford to pay separate fees for each problem.

### What You Can Do!

• Write or call your elected Representatives (tell them that while you support funding for conservation, you are opposed to a tax that targets only one small part of this issue) • Talk with local and regional conservation groups, especially those who support this initiative (explain why this is not a conservation v. recreation issue, but a funding priorities issue.) • Keep up to date as this bill progresses (call the AWA at 301-589-9453 or email at 72732.401@compuserve.com) ■



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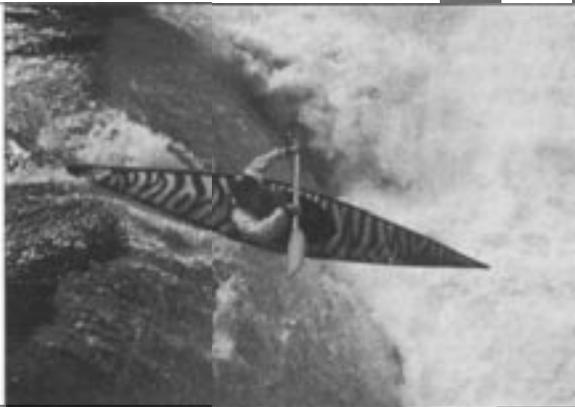
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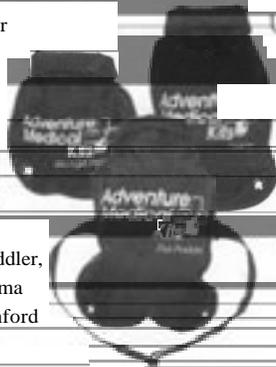
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# Swan song for the 1996 Colorado Stream Safety Act

by Rich Hoffman and Ric Alesch

**"Here is a land where life is written in water  
The West is where the water was and is  
Father and son of old Mother and Daughter  
Following Rivers up immensities  
of Range and Desert thirsting the Sundown  
ever..."**

*-Thomas Hornsby Ferril  
(quote inscribed on the walls of the Colorado State Capitol)*

In January and February of this year, the AWA and the Colorado White Water Association (CWWA) introduced the Stream Safety Act (House Bill 1079) before the Colorado legislature. As we detailed in the March/April '96 issue, this effort was the culmination of many months of effort by an energetic and dedicated group of volunteers—nicknamed CROPP, the Colorado Rights of Passage Project—and our sponsors in the legislature, Representatives Tim Foster, Peggy Kerns, and Peggy Lamm, and Senator Joan Johnson.

Our goal was to clarify the existing confusion with respect to floating past private property and to make Colorado boating safer and less restricted. We believed that we had developed a reasonable and fair solution to a confused issue, one that would reduce conflict and litigation between recreational floaters and stream side landowners. Before launching this effort, we attended meetings with both the Farm Bureau and the Colorado Cattleman's Association and invited them to work with us in drafting this legislation.

The bill was straightforward and simple. It would allow boaters to make incidental contact with stream beds and banks—including the right to carry around dangerous obstacles—and would strengthen landowner immunity from liability. The bill would clarify rights already contained in existing state law as articulated by the State Attorney General years ago, and it would harmonize Colorado law with that of other western states.

Our opposition didn't quite see it that way.

The majority of our opposition came from the Colorado Creekside Coalition, a group formed to fight the "Fair Fishing" Initiative (FFI)—a ballot attempt that would allow fishermen to walk up and down streambeds to fish. They are currently collecting signatures to get on the November ballot. While Creekside as an organization did not take an official position on our bill, several of its most active and powerful members formed an ad hoc group to fight our bill. They raised an estimated \$150,000 to hire seven of the most powerful lobbyists in the state.

Another major opponent for our bill was Jerry Mallet, who called just about everyone he could think of to lobby against our bill, including the Governor's Office and the State DNR. Apparently Mallet carries some weight based on his previous work around the state on issues relating to whitewater rivers. In the Senate Agriculture Committee, he testified that our bill would "result in loss of property value, increased law enforcement actions and serious confrontations with users and land owners and lead to more boating accidents." Needless to say, he no longer represents the interests of whitewater recreation. "You're going down," he said at one point. "We've got too much money against you."

In late January, our sponsors took the bill before the full House. It was a tough fight and we barely squeaked through by one vote. From our struggle in the House came one memorable anecdote: Rep. Tony Grampsas, a supporter of the Stream Safety Act, made a heroic return from brain surgery the week before and stood strong against lobbying by a powerful beer making interest in Golden, Colorado who urged Grampsas to vote against our meek bill—a show of strength and integrity which merited a resolution by the CWWA to name the lower run of Clear Creek as the "Grampsas Run." Incidentally, this run happens to flow past a certain beer brewery. You might want to think twice before you reach for a certain brand of beer in the store!

From the House, we moved to the Senate Agriculture Committee where things got bleak. Our opposition really cranked up the heat here, turning the debate away from a common sense discussion of the merits of the bill to a huge philosophical wrangle over property rights. Our opponents claimed that our bill was a "takings" and would devalue streamside property values by as much as 25-50%. In the end, the issue became too hot for the legislators, up for reelection in the fall.

So, was it worth it? When we were scouting out the effort from shore, it looked like a solid Class III run. However, as soon as we committed, it became a Class V maelstrom! We took some licks but we also made quite a bit of progress, and while the prospect of future legislation appears dim (especially with the specter of the Fair Fishing Initiative hanging overhead), the CROPP team will be continuing to work on this issue on several fronts:

## Information

We need to continue to inform our members about Colorado law and the respective rights of landowners and boaters. During the legislative process, influential decision makers affirmed our right to float and even argued that boaters who carry around dangerous obstacles may be covered by existing law.

## Sleeping with the Enemy?

Our adversaries from the Creekside Coalition approached us after the bill's defeat and suggested working with each other

and with the state DNR to solve our problems without legislation. The concept is to identify "hotspots"—problem areas on specific rivers—and to see if our group can solve the problems with the private landowners. We have provided a list of 5 hotspots to the DNR to see if this method will work:

1. Poudre River, Bridges section
2. South Platte River below Deckers
3. North Fork of the South Platte River from Pine to Foxton
4. Upper Taylor River below Taylor Park Reservoir
5. North St. Vrain River above Lyons

While this method only addresses a larger problem on a piecemeal basis, we feel that it is an option that is worth exploring. By June 1, we will have a good idea of whether this approach shows any signs of progress.

Thanks again for all those who helped on HB 1079. We were told that this bill really got people's attention and highlighted the importance of river recreation in Colorado! We've also set up a model that can be replicated in other states.

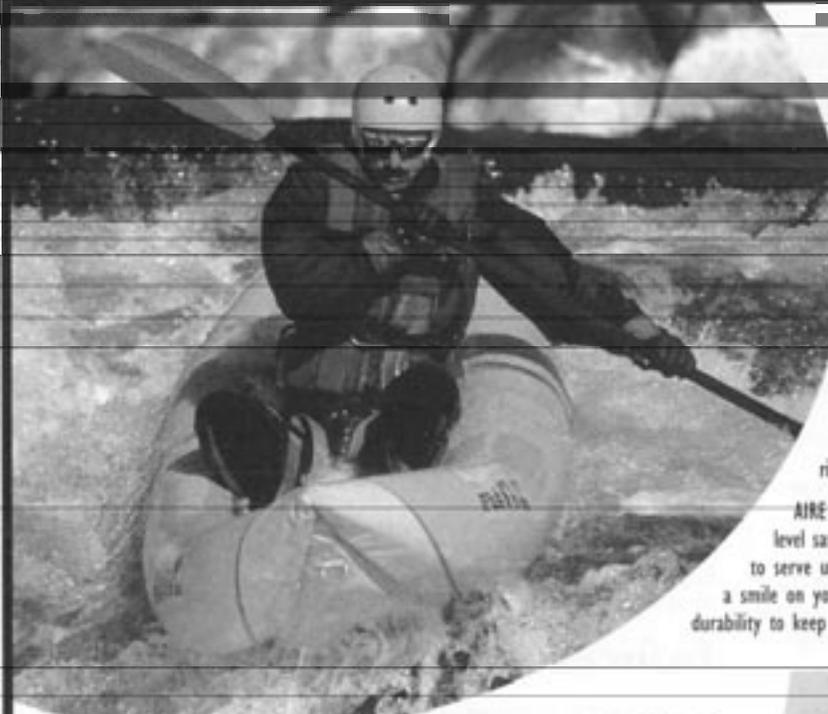
*(Rich Hoffman is the Director of River Access for the AWA. Ric Alesch is the recently elected President of the AWA and long-time River Access Director for the CWWA.) ■*

# The CROPP Team:

**If you see these folks on the river, be sure to offer them a beer at the take out!**

Many thanks are in order for everyone who assisted with the CROPP effort: Jay Kenney, Ken Ransford, Ric Alesch, John Marshall, Paul Zirkelbach, Denny Adams, the CWWA team (Pam Fitz, Julie Berg, Maggie Fox, Gary Smith), Pope Barrow, Landis Arnold, and Jim Martin.

We owe a debt of gratitude to our sponsors in the Legislature, who helped to draft the bill, ushered it through the pro-



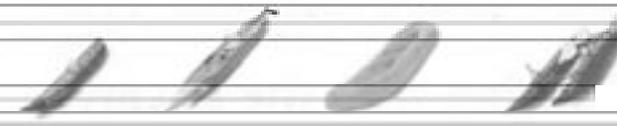
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*Representative Tim Foster*

recipient of numerous awards and is currently serving as the Majority Leader in the House of Representatives. He continues to practice general law with an emphasis in business sales and acquisition and real estate as a partner in the law firm of Foster, Larson, Laiche, and Griff.

cess, and weathered the storm of opposition. If you haven't already, please consider dropping them a line of thanks: Name, State Capitol, Denver, CO., 80203.

Representative Tim Foster is a native of Western Colorado and was elected in 1988 to serve as the Republican State Representative for District 54. He has been there-



*Representative Peggy Kerns*



*Representative Peggy Lamm*

Representative Peggy Lamm was elected in 1994 to represent House District 13 and was recognized as the Freshman Legislator of the Year from the Colorado Senior Lobby. Formerly the Executive Director of the Boulder Convention and Visitors Bureau, Lamm was a tremendous help with the Stream Safety Act. As she stated before the House, "This is one bill where we're hearing from real people. The danger is real and heartfelt."

Representative Peggy Kerns was elected in 1988 to the Colorado House having previously served on the Aurora City Council and as Mayor Pro-tem. In November of 1994, Kerns was elected as the Minority Leader for the 1995 and 1996 sessions and was ranked as Colorado's 5th most effective legislator in 1994 by the *Colorado Business Journal*.

Senator Joan Johnson from Adams County sponsored the Stream Safety Act in the Senate. Surprised by the vociferous opposition in the Senate Agriculture Committee, she stated, "I don't know what all the hullabaloo is about." ■

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## Notes from the Front Lines: The Senate Ag Committee's hearings on HB 1079

by Denny Adams

Walking up the grassy lawn toward the steps of the State Capital, I was feeling pretty important. I was going match wits with the big boys today at the Senate Ag Committee hearings on HB 1079.

I was planning on bringing up our experiences with barbed wire fences, gun toting land owners, and boats stuck in "the chutes." I was also planning on mentioning how we have safety training that is based upon Coast Guard supported guidelines, but that because of current property laws in Colorado, these guidelines are difficult to implement without fear of prosecution when boating past private property.

I felt that our input was valuable. My young daughter has been confronted by a hostile, shotgun toting landowner. She has also had to grab barbed wire fences and lift them up when they were placed in fast water on blind corners which should have, but could not have been scouted because of no trespassing signs.

As "high" as our ground was with the safety argument I knew that in reality we were walking into a Lion's Den. Our opposition today was the Colorado Cattleman's Association and the Creekside Coalition. They had spent an impressive amount of energy and money to counter our bill. In reality their fight with us was actually only a warm-up for a later and much more consequential battle with the fishermen. A firm position had to be established if they were to have any chance of preventing later legislation that would open up the State's streams and banks to everybody. They had seven lobbyists to our one. They had Peter Coors and his friends calling up the legislators.

I thought back to Davy Crockett, a (very) distant ancestor of

mine, who with his down-to-earth speaking elegance and distinctive outdoor attire had dazzled Washington, D.C. as a Congressman. I also remembered that in spite of his style he did not pass a single bill. He was the only Congressman to vote against the legislation which uprooted the peaceful Cherokee nation and sent them on the "trail of tears." Along with the Alamo thing this was his greatest accomplishment. Neither were winning efforts. What was I doing here?

I looked at the room full of suits and bolo ties. I need a life jacket, I thought.

I listened to our guys. They were intelligent, sincere, gave tremendous legal precedent and common sense arguments. I knew that in any state house in this country they would earn great respect. Amongst the people I sat with there was no response. The Senators were even less impressed.

I listened to the opponents. I learned that we were criminal trespassers. That our bill would be a "taking" amounting to a loss of millions of dollars in property values to these hard working folks. That it would also rob the State of millions of dollars in revenue from property taxes. I also learned that this bill would cause more boating accidents than it would prevent. This is because it would allow private boaters ("the most accident prone and least safety conscious of all boaters") onto waters that they had "no business on."

Forget the stage fright. I was pumped. These folks needed to hear from a boater who was at least as stupid as they were. This wasn't the Colorado Senate Ag Committee meeting at the State Capital. It was a rural school board get together. I laughed out loud during the last few speaker's testimony. I didn't want to; I just couldn't help it. I had snapped.

But the Committee chairman cut off the debate. They did not get to hear my passionate appeals. HB 1079 was then voted down six votes to one.

I looked around me and then looked down at the notes I had scribbled for my rebuttal statement. I crumpled them up. Reason and rationale were not a factor at this hearing.

However, in the hearing we learned from the Colorado Sheriffs Association that we already have the right to take the "lesser of two dangers." If we have to choose between dying in a rapid and being trespassers then the law would back us up if we trespass and are prosecuted. We are looking to get this in writing. I can live with that.

There may be some dark times ahead but I believe our Little Big Horn is behind us. The landowners still have "civil trespassing" as a weapon. In civil trespassing the landowner has the right to ask us to leave. Back to the boats we go. For repeat offenders a restraining order can be filed for.

I plan on trying to work with the Colorado Cattleman's Association. They are good people although they don't seem to know much about boating and even less about boating safety. I plan on passing along some information to them and work to document the river hazards in our state that are on private property. The idea is to identify the property owners and to establish what can be done to eliminate the conflicts. This will prove a challenge and we can use some help. We may not work out the problems between ranchers and boaters but it's worth a try if any understanding can be reached.

I am probably being naive but that is the least of my faults. I have little interest in dying and our turn to dance has yet to come.

[Denny Adams is the President of *the Rocky Mountain Canoe Club.* ■

## Lewis and Clark and HB 1079

by Ken Ransford

If Lewis and Clark came to Colorado today, they'd have to turn back. So held the Colorado Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee yesterday as they killed one of the most popular bills of the session, House Bill 1079.

Its opponents, with power and money, managed to convince the small Senate Agricultural Committee to kill this bill. One gets the feeling that the fight isn't over, it's just beginning.

When Lewis and Clark roamed the West in 1806, and Glen Powell traveled the Grand Canyon for the first time 60 years later, no one ever questioned their right to travel down rivers. History books report that when property traded hands in America last century, the right to hunt, fish and trap was reserved to the public. The public held these rights as they always had, all over America.

Until 1976 in Colorado, when a small rancher in Grand County strung barbed wire across the Colorado River and waited with the local sheriff to arrest a weekend raft trip. The local judge agreed with the sheriff, holding for the first and only time in Colorado history that a landowner had the right to shut down a river to the public. The Legislature immediately disagreed and passed CRS S. 18-5-504.5 in the next legislative session, holding the public can float downstream through private property without causing a trespass.

But that didn't solve all of the problems. Despite the fact that Coloradans have boated the Arkansas River for nearly 30 years—rejuvenating the economies of Salida and Chaffee County and creating an international tourist draw—signs began appearing along the river two years ago claiming that "If you get out here to scout the (difficult) rapid ahead, you'll be arrested." Last fall, the Colorado White Water Association and AWA called on Representatives Foster and Kerns for help, as well as the Farm Bureau, the Colorado Cattlemen's Association, and the Creekside Coalition, a small group of wealthy private fishing clubs. Those groups refused to participate in the process, muttering something about how boaters who got out of the river to save their lives were "taking away our rights."

House Bill 1079 promoted one of the oldest English and American laws, the rule that human lives are more important than property rights. Landowners simply can't jeopardize the life of any person, even a trespasser, in order to protect a property right. English and American courts have forever held that a person can trespass in order to protect his or her life. Colorado has a statute specifically stating this, appropriately called Choice of Evils, CRS S. 18-1-701.

The CWWA (a volunteer group with an annual budget of under \$10,000) and AWA urged its members to call their representatives to support House Bill 1079, and legislators received more calls from their constituents on this bill than any other single issue in the 1996 legislative session. Opponents hired the most expensive lobbyist in Colorado, Bledsoe and Company who, when asked what was wrong with the bill, simply said, "We've been hired to kill this bill." In this case, money talked.

The bill's dead for now. But the Fair Fishing Initiative has just been cleared by the Colorado Supreme Court for the ballot next November. That initiative is much broader than House Bill 1079, which merely held that a boater can get out of a dangerous river when his life's in danger, and then only to the minimum extent necessary before continuing downstream. The Fair Fishing Initiative goes much farther, stating that fishermen can camp out all day on any river with enough water to support fish. Instead of shutting up the most vocal public of this legislative session, the Senate Agricultural Committee may have just shoved some into the spotlight as new leaders of the Fair Fishing Initiative.

Not all is lost for Lewis and Clark. Although times have changed dramatically in the West since 1806, the states of Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Oregon and California would welcome

them openly. Their right of passage is secure since each of these states has always granted the rights recently denied to Colorado boaters by the Senate Agricultural Committee.

At stake in this debate is what Colorado will be like in 200 years—a place where the mountains and rivers belong to the public, or a place which only the wealthy can enjoy. Will Colorado's lands be available for all to enjoy or just the few who

can afford to buy them?

*Ken Ransford is a lawyer and certified public accountant living in Westminster. He has boated throughout America and the world since 1983.1 ■*

# Potomac Update

As detailed in last month's issue, the mid-January floods on the East Coast got authorities riled up and talking about access restrictions. As we go to press (late March), much of the C & O Canal National Park adjacent to the Potomac River remains closed to the public and the Park Police seem determined to press charges against Davey Hearn.

Steve Taylor and the AWA started talking with authorities (in particular, the Maryland DNR) on the Potomac River soon after the flood to discuss the possibility of setting up a high water permit for that river. Such a system was established more than 10 years ago on the James River in Richmond, Virginia. Paddlers who want to put on the James when it's above 9 feet simply fill in a form certifying that they will follow AWA safety guidelines and agree to pay for rescue should it be required. According to the Richmond based Coastal Canoeists, there hasn't been a rescue or fatality under this system for 10 years. In January, a photo of two kayakers on the flooded James appeared in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* with the caption explaining the kayaker's right to paddle with a permit.

Another model for dealing with safety and high water comes from Colorado, where hard boaters are exempt from high water river closures.

Unfortunately, there are many authorities and jurisdictions involved in the management of the Potomac River, and the initial reception of the permit idea was not favorable, so working this out will take some time.

In the meantime, boaters have been helping to restore the flood damaged areas around the Potomac. In particular need of assistance is the C&O Canal, running parallel to the Potomac River for 184.5 miles from the neighborhood of Georgetown in D.C. to Cumberland, MD. Eighty percent of the towpath and Canal were under water during the Potomac flood. Preliminary estimates are that the National Park Service will need 20 million to restore the Park.

The National Park Foundation is accepting donations for the restoration of the C&O Canal National Historical Park to aid the Park in its efforts to recover from the recent flood damage. People interested in donating to the restoration effort should make their checks payable to: National Park Foundation/C&O Restoration Fund. Proceeds from the fund will be put directly to work in a full range of restoration activities based on priorities set by C&O Canal National Historical Park. All donations to the fund are tax deductible and should be sent to: NPF, 1101 17th Street NW, Suite 1102, Washington DC 20036. People interested in volunteering for the restoration effort should contact the C&O Canal volunteer coordinator at: (301) 739-4200. ■

## Kings River Access

by Richard Penny, AWA Regional Coordinator

Paddler access to a nine mile stretch of the lower Kings River in California was threatened and then restored! (See also Jan/Feb '95 and Mar/Apr '95 issues of *American Whitewater*.)

The lower Kings is a scenic and enjoyable Class II stretch of river for locals in the San Joaquin Valley, and is a popular instruction area with local boating clubs and schools. As described by Charles Martin in *Sierra Whitewater*, this stretch is appropriate for beginners with some previous experience.

There are however three weirs on the river. One can be avoided by staying in the main channel; the other two can be easily portaged. The portage at the Alta Weir, for example, is well-marked by signs.

Despite the fact that no boater has drowned since the early 1970's, a governmental advisory group (the Fresno Water Safety Council) considered closing this stretch of river to recreational boating, citing the usual litany: (1) to prevent drownings, accidents, and rescues; (2) to reduce the liability concerns of dams and weir owners; and (3) to prevent trespassing at portage sites.

The AWA and the San Joaquin Paddlers (SJP), a local canoeing and kayaking club, oppose this measure. While we want to promote safety and do not want to infringe on property rights, an outright ban on boating is not the solution. Other measures, such as education, signs, or better management could accomplish these goals more effectively.

To this end, the AWA and SJP organized a trip down the lower Kings for members of the Fresno Water Safety Council. Our trip was fun and safe; the members of the Council saw that the river is safe to boaters with proper instruction.

AWA and SJP also met with members of the Fresno County Sheriffs Department. From the meeting, the Sheriffs Department agreed to allow boaters to continue to use the lower Kings, provided boaters buy and install warning signs at the two weirs. In light of the agreement with the Sheriffs Department, the Water Safety Council chose to drop their proposal to close the lower Kings River! ■

## Grand Canyon

On the heels of our involvement with boating access in Yellowstone National Park, the AWA is poised to make the plunge into the Mother of all access problems, the split allocation system between commercial and non-commercial boaters on the Colorado River through Grand Canyon National Park. Look for updates on our progress in future issues of *American Whitewater*. ■



# Hand Signals for River Communication

The California System  
by Richard Penny  
AWA Regional Coordinator

Above: California State University, Fresno kayaking students demonstrate some hand signals. From left to right: Okay. Scout. Portage. Which Way?

I was following Paul Martzen on Sycamore Creek, swollen to a flood by recent torrential rains. He was ten yards ahead and approaching a blind curve. As he neared the bend, he let go of his paddle with one hand, patted the top of his helmet, and then continued on. I was immediately reassured: he had just told me that the route ahead looked okay.

The boaters with whom I paddle in California have developed a system of hand signals for communicating. Phil Martin first introduced me to the use of many of these signals. On familiar runs among good boaters, these signals may not see a single use, but on difficult exploratory runs, hand signals have become tools that allow us to convey a great deal of information to each other quickly and easily. The result is smooth and coordinated teamwork on the river. Unlike a paddle-based signaling system, hand signals are easy to execute from a boat, without adversely affecting a paddler's center of gravity. And, as in the example above, it is usually possible, even in the middle of a rapid, to take one hand from the paddle shaft for an instant, give a signal, and then keep right on paddling. In California hand signals have gradually replaced the more traditional AWA paddle signal system, as hand signals seem to be better adapted to modern boat-scouting and eddy-hopping methods of steep creek exploration. I've also discovered the system is useful when I am

giving lessons; the hand signals really help with herding a group of raw beginners down a river.

In developing the California system, we chose each signal to be as visually distinctive as possible. Each incorporates both a component of position and of motion; this redundancy makes for reliability. Most signals can serve as statements, as questions, or as answers, and when combined with a bit of pantomime, can convey surprising complex ideas or instructions.

**Okay.** A paddler executes this signal by taking her hand and patting the top of her helmet. The okay signal is the workhorse signal of the system and gets used ten times more often than any other signal. A common use is similar to the one above. The boater paddling point is boat-scouting a rapid. Poised at the top of the drop, she pats her helmet, indicating that she has found a clean line and is going to continue. Suppose she takes a swim and the next paddler down the drop discovers her crawling up on shore. The second paddler pats the top of her helmet, and makes eye contact with the recent swimmer. This is a question: "Are you okay?"

The victim pats her helmet too, meaning "Yeah, sure. You can go chase my boat."

**Scout.** A paddler executes the scout signal by placing a flat hand over the eyes, attempting to look like Daniel Boone shading his eyes as he gazes out

into the distance. To give a component of motion, the hand then executes a salute. This signal indicates the need to scout from shore.

**Portage.** The portage signal is essentially a pantomime of lifting one's boat onto one's shoulder. Do it by bending your arm at the elbow, and sticking your fist out to your side, palm up. Bend your arm as if you are curling a dumbbell, and then lift until your elbow is at shoulder height and fist is above your head. The portage signal indicates the need to walk a rapid.

**Which Way?** This signal is commonly used as a plea for information from a boater who is downstream and has already run a drop that you are now facing with trepidation. The which way signal is given by extending the forefinger, and then holding one's arm, bent at the elbow, straight in front of one's face, forefinger pointing at the sky. Then one waggles the arm back and forth like a windshield wiper.

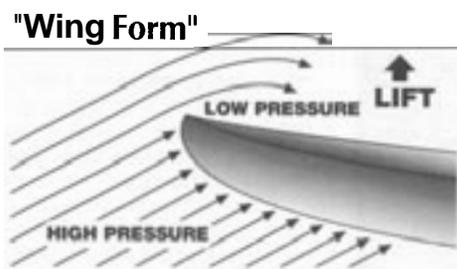
**Eddy Up.** To do this one, hold your elbow out to the side and arm bent with hand high. Circle your hand in a roping-up motion. The meaning is obvious.

**Not Okay.** Take one hand and form the shape of a pistol. Hold it to the side of your head. That's the not okay signal. A recent swimmer who gave this signal would be likely to be hurt and need help. The not okay signal can also be used to indicate that a particular entrance or line

Photo by Grant Amaral

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Above: From left to right: Not okay. Eddy up. Stop. Boof.

in a rapid is not going to work.

**Stop.** Do this one just like a traffic cop holding up a line of cars. Once again, the meaning is obvious.

**Boof.** The boof signal indicates the need to boof or ski-jump a drop. It is the only signal that requires both hands. Take one hand, make a fist, and hold it in front of you. This is the launching pad. Take the other hand and hold it flat with fingers pointing toward the launching pad. This is the boat. Now take the imaginary boat and skip it off the imaginary launching pad, and then continue on into space.

**Cut!** This signal resembles a quarterback's pump-fake motion, but with the forefinger extended. The cut signal is usually given by a lead boater in very continuous whitewater to indicate a desperate and immediate need to cut left or right to avoid a log or a huge hole. It is usually followed by the lead boater cranking his boat around in that direction and then paddling like a frenetic gerbil. The cut signal sees a good bit of use on big water, but is rarely used on steep creeks.

**Indicating the Proper Line.** There are several ways to get this done. The simplest is to point with arm and forefinger extended. But if paddlers following from upstream have difficulty seeing, we resort to the paddle. The paddle is held extended, and like the hand of a clock, indicates the entry point or general line in a rapid. A paddle extended to the 3 o'clock position indicates a far river-left line, and to the 9 o'clock position indicates the far river-right. Any of the other positions in between denote a particular line somewhere within the two extremes. Obviously, there is a potential conflict here between the meaning of a paddle held vertically in the traditional AWA system (proceed) and the slightly different meaning in the California system (take the center line). You need to make sure to agree about this with your paddling partners to prevent any unfortunate confusion.

One can emphasize the need to paddle hard up against the shore by holding the paddle in one hand, extended horizontally, and then emphatically jamming it in the direction of the proper shore a

time or two. In a bedrock granite canyon, if I saw that signal, I would put my boat all the way up on the rock wall as I went over a drop.

**Pantomime.** The extent of your imagination is the only limit to the messages you can convey with pantomime. You can detail a complex series of moves by holding up one or more fingers to number a move (as Move One, Two, Three, and so on) and then using signals and pantomime to describe each move. A simple sequence might be, "One. Boof left. Two. Eddy right."

I often use pantomime to ask a question. Say that one of my paddling partners is messing about on the cliffs above me, looking at a drop, drinking water, and otherwise wasting time. I would very much like to know whether he is going to paddle the drop or portage it. So I pantomime the following, "You (point emphatically at him). Paddle (make paddling motion, tilt head to side and bug eyes out to indicate question)? Or, portage (give portage signal, tilt head to side and bug eyes out to indicate question)?"

**Hooting and Hollering.** On steep creeks and rivers, the lead boater may not come back into view after disappearing over a big drop. The problem for him is how to indicate to the boaters trailing behind that the drop is safe and that they can follow. We use hooting and hollering for this signal. A whistle blast becomes the not okay signal in the same circumstance. Here is another example of why you should make sure to work things out with your companions beforehand. You wouldn't want to run a drop, hoot and holler, and then have your buddies come running down with throw ropes thinking you were in danger.

Experiment with some of these signals and see if they work for you. But, remember, signals are only effective if both the sender and the recipient agree on their meaning. Miscommunication could be more dangerous than no communication at all! ■

# Helmets for Whitewater

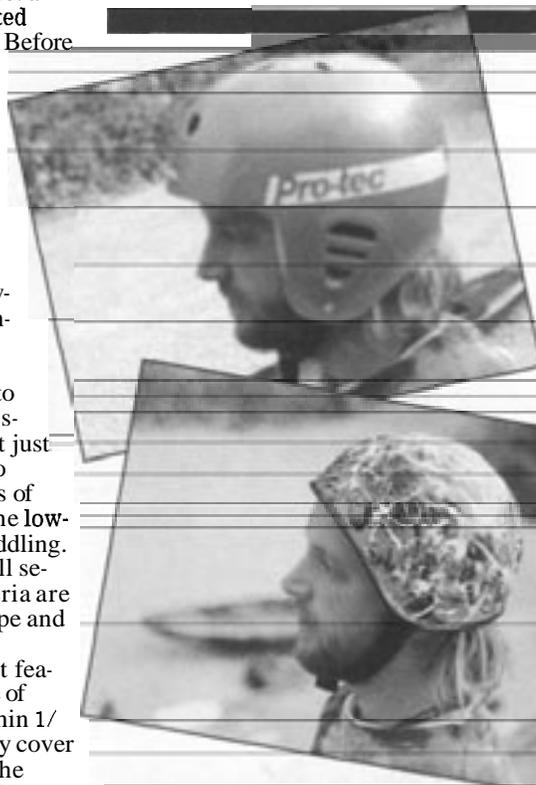
by Charlie Walbridge

**W**hitewater paddlers wear helmets even though they seldom hit their heads. The reason is simple: a light tap or scrape on an unprotected head can land you in the hospital! Before helmets were normally used in whitewater, head injuries were a regular event. Paddlers have been lucky that the popular Protek helmet and its various clones are both well designed, providing excellent coverage and fit. You don't see many head injuries today despite the increased difficulty of the rapids being run. However, if current trends placing fashion over function continue, that could change.

Good helmet designs are easy to spot. First, a hard, rigid shell transmits the blow over a wide area, not just the point of impact. Then, a half to three-quarters of an inch thickness of shock absorbing foam dissipates the low-speed blows encountered when paddling. A reliable chin strap holds the shell securely in place. Only if these criteria are met should fashion issues like shape and color enter into the picture.

Coverage is the most important feature of any helmet. The front edge of the shell should come down to within 1/2" of your eyebrows and completely cover the vulnerable temple area along the sides. The top and sides of the shell should be near the extreme limits of your field of vision. The question of whether or not to cover your ears is controversial; some feel that it's essential to avoid water impact injuries; others like to keep that area open so they can hear better. Some of the new "fashion" helmets do a good job of covering the head; others do not. The coverage offered by a given model will vary from person to person and should be checked personally.

Another issue is fit. A helmet should fit snugly so that it moves with your head, yet is not uncomfortably tight. Your head should slip down inside the shell so that the chin strap merely holds the helmet in place. If the helmet sits on top of the head, the shell may roll back on the head when in use. This increases the potential for injury. A chin strap should be snug without being uncomfortably tight. A chin strap should not be over-tightened to overcome a bad design or poor fit. It cannot eliminate the tendency of your head to roll around in a loose-fitting helmet or to slide backwards and ex-



*The popular Protek helmet (top) offers excellent coverage. The head sits down inside the shell for a secure fit; it won't roll back on the skull during use. This homemade fiberglass helmet (bottom) sits back on the head, exposing the forehead and temple. The helmet can be pushed further back on the head by the current, increasing the potential for injury.*

pose your forehead.

Check the thickness of foam. Some of this is may be a fashion issue; big shells look clunky, while close fitting models are less bulky. But the biggest problem is that many manufacturers use only one size shell, then use different thicknesses of foam to produce the different sizes. Thus, as the user's head gets bigger, the foam gets thinner. The small and medium sizes are usually fine, but in the XL sizes the foam may be pretty thin. The solution would be to use two or more

shell sizes to cover an entire size range, but this option, regrettably, is rarely taken.

Suspension helmets work fine for rock climbers because most climbing impacts come from above. These designs do not handle the side impacts encountered by decked boaters very well. (The same is true for bike helmets, which are cut away for increased ventilation). The infamous old-style Ace helmet, a "laceration cap" that offered very little impact protection, was a suspension helmet.

Combining a suspension with foam padding on the sides, however, is often used to produce a reasonably-priced entry-level helmet. Hockey helmets provide the kind of wrap-around protection boaters need. People with very large or very small heads should try a local hockey supply shop. The large size of the market provides incentive for increased attention to the extremes of the size range.

A very flexible shell is a sure sign of a light-duty helmet. If you can bend the bottom edges of the shell together in your hands, it can't distribute the shock and offer much protection in a severe impact. A rigid shell, though substantially heavier, spreads the impact over a wider area. This may not be significant for beginners, but it becomes important for those who run extreme whitewater. Because fiberglass shells are substantially more rigid than those made from plastic, anyone who is running high-gradient whitewater should consider buying a helmet with a fiberglass shell. Be certain that it's large enough to allow a sufficient thickness of foam to be added inside.

Paddlers have had a limited selection of helmets for decades because of the multi-million dollar judgments won by athletes against makers of other types of sport helmets. It's reported that liability insurance is responsible for as much as 50% of the cost of a football helmet! High insurance premiums make limited production runs for paddlers a money-losing proposition.

The Protek is used for many other sports, making it possible to produce cheaply. I hope that as whitewater sport grows, more choices will become available, particularly for the high-end paddler. In the meantime, every boater needs to check their helmet for fit, coverage, and quality. Don't wait until the river performs a random safety check!

# THE MAKING OF



# MELTDOWN MADNESS

by Paul Tefft



Photos generously donated by Brian Bailey Photography, Snowmass, Colorado; and by Dave "Snake" Pizutti, Aspen, Colorado

Meltdown Madness, our new whitewater kayaking video, was filmed during the epic, high water Colorado summer of 1995. It was conceived as a fund raising project for the country's premier whitewater river conservation organization, the American Whitewater Affiliation (AWA). Of course, you know all about the AWA already because you're reading their magazine, American Whitewater!

Kick back, relax and enjoy this sometimes scary, sometimes funny account of the creation of Meltdown Madness. We think you'll see that it is possible to simultaneously make a significant contribution to river conservation, while having one hell of a good time. We hope, just maybe, our adventure will inspire some of you to get more involved with the AWA in protecting our rivers for future generations.



*Left page: Charlie MacArthur at Crystal River Punchbowls;  
Left: Upper Roaring Fork-Grotto Wall Falls, Jeremy Signorini*

# A Rocky Mountain Wahoo



Our video adventure started when Chris MacDonald from Aspension Productions (an Aspen, Colorado based video company) contacted me about shooting some kayaking footage for a kayaking video. Chris, an avid kayaker himself, had heard through the boating grapevine that I was the right person in the region to organize the ego-driven, big-balled, brainless, beer swilling film crew. Immediately, I called my paddling bros and fellow adrenaline junkies David Pizzuti, Scott Young and Charlie MacArthur. Who else would submit to cruel and unusual punishment, risk pain or humiliation, and be abused in the media, for absolutely no financial reward. After all, what are friends for!

Everyone was psyched to help. The video was for a good cause and poser paddlers could strut their stuff to boot. Also, it promised to be a huge season. Records amounts of snow had fallen the previous winter and in Colo-



Above: Big Sur...Big Fun

rado, that transpires into record river levels. By mid June 1995 the rivers in the Rocky Mountain region were maxing out. As the snow melted, phenomenal amounts of water roared down the rivers and creeks. The Aspen area's local runs were going off!

The Slaughterhouse Run on the Roaring Fork River peaked at over 7,000 cfs. This was by far the highest level I had seen. Huge waves and holes were everywhere. The run's initiation rapid, "Entrance Exam", had Grand Canyon sized waves combined with vertical. Only the bravest of brave (or dumbest of dumb) ran "Slaughterhouse Falls", a six foot drop which turned into one gigantic, gnarly, recirculating hole. One unfortunate boater didn't make the move, was trashed in the hole and lost his boat. His kayak traveled without him 45 miles downriver in a little over two hours! This was the season of the floating yard sale; equipment and swimmers were everywhere.

For a break from the scary stuff, a river phenomenon called "Big Sur" was the place to be. Located on the Colorado River near Grand Junction, "Big Sur" is one of the country's premier play spots. When the Colorado River rises over 20,000 cfs a huge surfing arena is formed. Boaters from around the country congregate at this impressive, one hundred foot long, six foot high wave. Throw in an outstanding breaking wave and accomodating eddies on both sides and you will have some serious fun. The first wave is so big and clean you can even surf it on a surfboard. Cowabunga, dudes and dudettes, who needs a beach!

Towards the end of the season, with "Big Sur" long gone, we planned an overnight trip to film the legendary Black Canyon of the Gunnison River.

# A Black Canyon Assault

Our Black Canyon assault force consisted of myself, Dave Pizzuti, Scott Young, Amol Easton, Denise Handrich, and Tom Chamberlain. The trip was almost called off when a fisherman unwisely tried to swim across the river and was swept downstream under some huge, house-sized boulders. The recovery effort started with turning off the dam controlled river for a body search. This didn't work, so the river was cranked back up to "flush out" the corpse.

This ominous information and a request from the Park Service to keep our eyes out for the body made for an auspicious start. In spite of the tragedy, we made the most of the Canyon's beautiful scenery and fantastic whitewater. Everyone's runs were going well until we hit a photogenic, 18 ft. falls. I went first and then set-up at the fall's base with the camera to capture the action. I had barely had a chance to pop-off the lens cap when shouting from above caught my attention. I looked up just in time to see an empty boat disappear at the base of the falls.

A brand new boat, which Scott had lent Amol, had been knocked off the bank. I scrambled to get into my kayak to chase the renegade craft. I was too busy trying to get my skirt on to witness what happened next. After I heard the story, I wished I had the camera rolling. Denise bombed down the drop, followed closely by one of Paddler magazine's legendary Fallsmasters, Scott Young. Worried about losing his new kayak, or so was his excuse, Scott corked the drop, penciled-in and pitoned hard.

I rescued Amol's borrowed and now slightly bent boat and we regrouped at a rocky beach. Scottie's ankles were a bit sore, but they weren't as badly hurt as his ego. Because of this fiasco we only caught Dave's run on video, but it was worth it. The rest of the season we razed Scott. I promised to put Scott at the top of the list for my next article, the "Pitonmasters". (Sorry bro, I hammer everyone else in this article.... Except myself, for blowing a run on Crystal Mill Falls, getting cart wheeled and swimming... I tried to talk Chris into editing this out of the vid...to no avail... Ok, is Team Meltdown satisfied now?).

Anyway, filming and the mishap slowed down our progress so we didn't make it to the standard beach campsite. After the trip's infamous hell portage, we camped out on an inhospitable semi-flat rock.

The next day we awoke to rain leaking into our bivy sacks and breakfasts. As we packed up and prepared to continue the journey, Amol stumbled upon some shoes, socks and a T-shirt. Did this stuff belong to the dead man? Shortly thereafter a helicopter interrupted the canyon's peace and serenity. It was an amazing sight, the helicopter hovered over a spot where the river disappeared completely under a jumble of massive boulders. The spectacular, two thousand foot



Above: Jeremy Signorini-Grape Creek

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# Meltdown Madness

Below: Jeremy Signorini - Crystal River Punchbowl



Painted Wall towered in the background. Flying a chopper in the constricted chasm was a heroic feat; this pilot was no sissy. Unfortunately, the body was never found.

After this depressing scenario was filmed and edited, we figured our audience needed a little more uplifting entertainment, so we cut to the ever-popular Animas River Days in Durango, Colorado. The rodeo guys and gals really ripped it up during the event. Meltdown Madness sponsor L'eau Vive was quick to point out that a boat they sell took first place in all three men's divisions. Eurokayak's Rapidfire won first in the men's expert, intermediate and novice divisions. (Yes, that was a shameless plug for one of the video's sponsors. Don't worry Chan, I'll make sure to include a number of shameless plugs for Wave Sport, also an official sponsor of Meltdown Madness).

While in the San Juan Mountain region we figured we might as well include some of the Durango locals' favorite runs. Vallecito Creek has become a standard in the Colorado hair boaters quiver of creeks. A quote from Dave Eckardt's and Gordon Banks' definitive, all inclusive new guidebook, Colorado Rivers and Creeks, gives a good description of Vallecito. "Vallecito Creek offers hair boaters the opportunity to grab a quick fix of gnarl in a beautiful, sheer-walled granite canyon. Though the whitewater is quality, this narrow gorge takes commitment and you shouldn't jump into it lightly—a poorly placed tree or an accident could cause a major backtracking dilemma."

One run run which everyone has heard about is Gore Canyon of the Colorado river. Every August boaters and rafters congregate for the annual class V Gore Canyon downriver race. This exciting race and party draws kayakers and rafters from around the state. Wave Sport's president, Chan Zwanzig, created the race in 1988 and every year it has grown in popularity.

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Everyone in the kayaking class is shooting to dethrone the perennial winner, John Jaycox.

But John paddles circles around the other competitors in a self-built boat called the "Gorepedo". Maybe one of these days Friendsville legend Roger Zbel (perennial winner of the Upper Yough and Gauley races) will bring out his downriver boat to challenge Jaycox and Gore.

## Crystal Watershed Shenaiqans

If Roger Zbel can ever break away from his rafting business and new family long enough for a Colorado kayak trip, I will definitely show him the region's newest gnar-gnar hair run, located in the magnificent Crystal River Valley. This short but sweet, scary and steep run requires a four wheel drive vehicle for access. As far as I know, last summer was the first time a substantial portion of the North Fork was paddled. As is often the case in first descents, it was an epic.

The first time Team Meltdown attempted the North Fork the water level was too high to paddle the Crystal River Gorge. It was late July and the crew figured exploring a tributary of the Crystal River might be an adventure. The team consisted of myself, Dave Pizzuti, Dave Eckardt and John Placek. John just built an amazing log home on some spectacular property not far from the North Fork. John's new home and apres kayaking bar is conveniently located in the middle of a creek boater's paradise. His hectic building schedule kept him off the rivers for the majority of the high water summer of 1995. However, on the way to the creek, we stopped by construction central and dragged John off to his new back yard for some recreation.

We bounced and bumped our way past the old ghost town of Crystal and up to wildflower carpeted Lead King Basin. The North Fork was extremely high, but we had come this far, had a cameraman, so we had to paddle something. We lowered the boats down a cliff and put in immediately above a pumping 14 ft. falls. After negotiating this drop and a couple other rompy, class Vish rapids (look for a brief and scary pin in this section of the video), it was about time to take out. We scouted ahead and found a make or break eddy before we shoved off. The river was really ripping. I choked the eddy move and charged out of control downriver.

Terror gripped me but I somehow managed to jam myself up onto some rocks just before a major horizon line. I jumped out of my boat and was clinging onto the bank just in time to see that John had unwisely followed. His eyes were bulging as he stroked hard towards my suspect, rocky perch. He barely made it, I grabbed his boat and held fast. Whew, that was a close one!

We scrambled up the steep, densely foliated bank. Our jaws dropped as we started at the river below. A twelve foot plunge into a mondo, nasty hole was the lead in to a eddyless torrent. Further scouting revealed that there is an unrunnable 50 ft. waterfall a short distance downriver.

But our day wasn't over, both John, Dave and I were on the wrong side of the river. A steeply-sloped mountain face towered overhead; the only way out was up the opposite bank. There were no eddies to catch, even if we scrambled a long way back upstream. We were stuck. Enter rudimentary boater ingenuity. The rest of the crew and, more importantly, cold beer, was on the other side. We set up a rope pendulum to swing us, while paddling our boats, across the raging creek. I was very apprehensive of flipping, but the system worked fine.

The adventure still wasn't quite over, at least not for John. We were schlepping our boats up a steep, wet, rocky hillside when John slipped and



Above Paul Tefft - Crystal River Punchbowls

Below: John Placek - Crystal River Punchbowls





dropped his kayak. The boat charged towards the river with John in hot pursuit. Just as the boat penetrated the thick underbrush at the river's edge, John made a spectacular Tarzan dive to save his craft. The boat was now full of water as John wrestled with the river's considerable force. I ran down and helped him finish the rescue of his plastic Jane.



Above: Jeremy Signorini - Upper Crystal Gorge



Below: Tom Chamberlain - Escalante Creek



We made two more jaunts later in the summer to the North Fork and ran a number of new rapids. On each trip, professional photographers and filmers accompanied our entourage. The word had spread; we had found a photogenic, new, steep run, and we were willing and, more importantly, cheap, models. As we grew more accustomed to the run, we did lap after lap as the "photogs" cranked off stills and film. Anybody who has ever worked with photographers and film makers knows it's a painstakingly slow process. The over-worked and underpaid action sports model must risk life and limb to keep the picky, perfectionist photogs happy (little do the shutterbugs know, this is our idea of big fun).

On our third trip to the North Fork of the Crystal the used and abused models were myself, Dave Pizzuti and Charlie MacArthur. Our reputable photographer friends were Alan Becker (film) and Tony Demin (stills). After a number of runs on the first two steep rapids, Tony decided he wanted to shoot from an angle across the river. Being obliging peons, we set out to help Tony cross the swiftly flowing creek.

Just above the first steep drop the water was fast and shallow class II. Tony didn't want to risk ruining his mondo, expensive lens so we planned to set up a

rope to assist in his crossing. But **Macho MacArthur** decided he would just wade across the river. A little skeptical, I thought it would be wiser and safer to move further upstream. Right after Macho fearlessly entered the current, I said, "Charlie, I don't know if that's such a good idea. If you slip you are going to swim that.....". Oops, he was gone!

"Cake", as the North Fork's first rapid is now called, is a fifty foot long, 45 degree, shallow slide drop. Only a miniature eddy separates "Cake" from the 40 ft. high, second, near vertical cascade, "Icing".

Charlie disappeared over the rapid's lip. Both Dave and I were freaking as we sprinted downriver. By the time we got to the bottom of the drop, Charlie had already self rescued. He had bounced down the pushy and bony river left slide and made a masterful swim turn into the eddy. He emerged slightly bruised, both ego and flesh, but was basically unscathed. "Cake" earned its name after Charlie did our group's first descent and promptly proclaimed, "That was cake!" We all laughed with relief; maybe the river left run wasn't so bad after all.

We always indulge in the brew at the culmination of a trip to the upper Crystal River Valley. After a day of serious whitewater, a cold beer (or two, or ten..) is well deserved. There is plenty of serious whitewater in the Crystal River region. In addition to the North Fork, the area boasts the Punchbowls, Crystal Mill Falls, the Crystal River Gorge and potential, new kamikaze runs on Yule Creek and Lost Trail Creek. "Meltdown Madness" includes footage of the Punchbowls and a high water run on the Crystal River Gorge (this is truly sick puppy paddling).

A trip to the Punchbowls is always an adventure. Just getting there is a project. A long, rugged four wheel drive road is the only access from the Aspen side of 12,000+ ft. Schofield Pass. Most years a snow slide blocks the road. To reach this impressive, two stage sixty foot drop, one must scramble across the slick, slide zone and hike one quarter mile upstream.

When the snow has sufficiently melted and the road is clear, be careful,

especially if you're driving with Dave Pizzuti. The falls themselves aren't quite enough excitement for dangerous driver Dave. He likes to practice snowboard rail grinds in his truck on skinny, one lane, no guardrail bridges. Check out "Meltdown Madness" for an up close and personal view of Dave's embarrassing, near disaster. I was in the truck at the time...it was hairy, we almost went for a plunge into the cold, clear water of the Crystal River!

Below: Tom Chamberlain - Lime Creek



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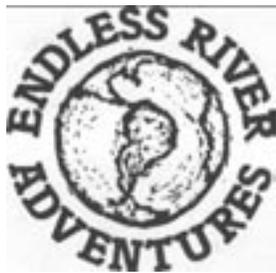
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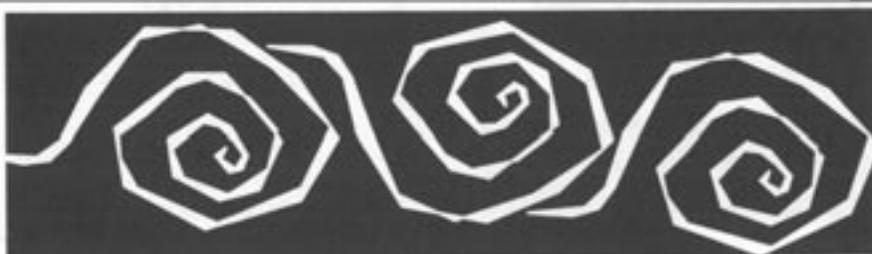
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Meltdown Madness



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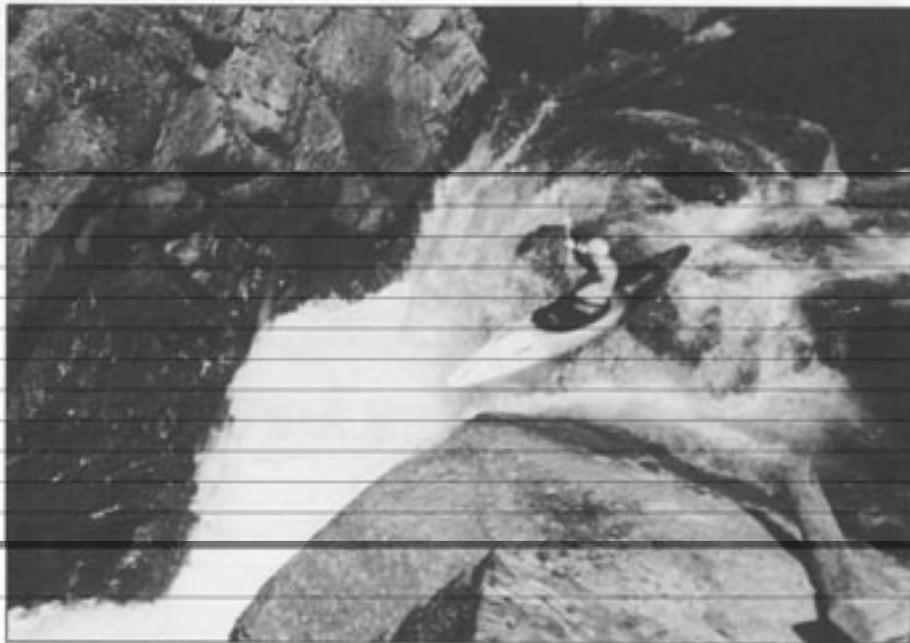


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# Classic Gore

Left page: Schoefield Pass, Photo by Brian Bailey  
Below: Paul Tefft - Vallecito Creek, Colorado

Speaking of cold water, Gore Canyon in December is definitely frigid. But when Chan Zwanzig invited us to Gore for a late season boat demo, we grabbed our drysuits and headed to the put-in to meet Team Wave Sport. Chan's new creek boat, the Descente, handled well and should become extremely popular among steep creekers. The best film footage of the day occurred when Wave Sport boater Sage performed an unintentional 10 second mystery move at Tunnel Falls. He emerged without his paddle and with a bright, pink face...brrr. This scene proved a fitting end to a video entitled Meltdown Madness.



## Fly south this fall. Paddle Costa Rica Whitewater '96

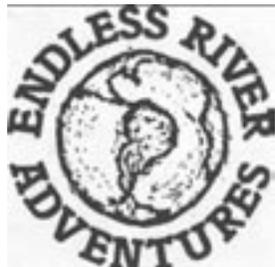
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## Video Sweepstakes Announced

By the time this rambling article is published, Meltdown Madness will be on sale throughout the country. We have created a national sweepstakes which is incorporated into the direct sales of our AWA fund raising video. For each video purchased, the buyer is entitled to enter the **Meltdown Madness Sweepstakes**. One official entry form will be included with each video.

**Over \$6,000 worth of prizes will be awarded**, donated by the video's generous sponsors: Wild Spirit, Wave Sport, Day Two USA, L'eau Vive, Kober, Teva, Patagonia, and Stohlquist Water Ware. Two prize drawings will be held, the first at the 1996 Gore Canyon Race, and the second at

# Meltdown Madness



the 1996 Gauley Festival. Two grand prizes will be awarded - each grand prize being a new Wave Sport kayak of the winners' choice.

The video production team would like to thank all the people who have been involved with the production of Meltdown Madness. Special thanks to Phyllis Horowitz and Bob Gedekoh of the AWA, Rob Cooper and Mark Small from Wild Spirit, Andy Neinas and Jim Stohlquist from Colorado Kayak Supply/Stohlquist Water Ware, Chan Zwanzig and Bo Colbert from Wave Sport, Adam Druckman from Teva, Jane Kundra from Patagonia, Scott Young from L'eau Vive/Kober, and Jayne and Rob Sevieri from Day Two USA.

Bottom: Jeremy Signorini - Lime Creek

Without our sponsors' generous support, the making of "Meltdown Madness" would never have been possible.

The evolution of our idea from fantasy to reality was an interesting and intriguing process. From the concept's inception to its final form, a many factors meshed to create the finished product that we are so proud of. Whether it was fate, karma or divine intervention, all the right ingredients fell into place for the successful completion of a positive and enjoyable philanthropic project.

Well, by now you should be  
 - a) motivated to create a AWA fund raising project of your own  
 - b) wanting to paddle in Colorado  
 - c) ready to burn any magazine article which bears my name as the author  
 - or d) all the above.

In all seriousness, the making of Meltdown Madness has been a rewarding experience... and a blast!. More paddlers should get involved with protecting and preserving our free flowing rivers. Get off the couch and out of your kayak long enough to create a national or grassroots project of your own. Remember, you can make a difference!

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# KAYAK

## SUMMER:

### *A beginner's tale*

Sometimes just getting started  
is the hardest part...

by Mark Binder

Last summer I went kayaking, and survived.

Years ago at camp, all the coolest kids had kayaks while the rest of us had to huff and puff in aluminum Coleman floating tanks. Eighteen years later, in a fit of macho, I bought a used whitewater kayak from a guy named Dave. It was blue. Driving home with my kayak tied to the car roof, I grinned.

Then it occurred to me. Now that I actually owned a boat, I had to use it. I arranged to meet a guy named John Bennett on the next Sunday morning.

Going to that late barbecue Saturday night was a mistake. On the drive down I had thought about telling Alicia (my wife) that I intended to stay fairly sober, but as soon as the first beer cracked, a smile came over my face and the next thing I knew it was two in the morning and we were still driving home.

Getting up at six the next morning was a bit of hell. I woke exhausted, filled with excitement, nausea - and fear.

What was I going to do in the middle of rapids? I'd only spent an hour in a kayak, and couldn't make it go in a straight line to save my life. Eskimo rolls, said a book, were vital to survival. The book explained in exceedingly obtuse language how to do one. I read the chapter three times and came away clueless.

Various chemicals still buzzed around my brain, and the once-delicious spare ribs were doing cartwheels though my esophagus.

It was pouring outside, too, an absolute drenching. If I hadn't said I'd meet up with these guys at 8:30, I would have rolled over and been quite content to sleep until noon. Eventually, though, I pried myself off the pillow, drank some water

and ibuprofen, and showered.

As the warm water was soothing my spraining brain, I recognized the irony in taking a shower before going out in the rain to tie the blue thing to the car. Irony in that state of mind doesn't even raise a smile.

I dressed and managed to wrestle the boat onto the roof. Forget about breakfast. A single piece of dry toast was all I could manage. I couldn't even drink more than a cup of coffee.

At Frank's house in Atkinson, New Hampshire, I used the toilet and had a chance to peek at his collection of Elvis commemorative plates. By the time I got back, Frank and John had loaded the boats onto John's truck, and we were heading north.

My head wanted to sleep. My neurons wanted more coffee, but we were on a timetable. Meanwhile, John Bennett, a 60 some year old retired auto parts salesman, told that he was widely known as a talker, which made my hangover feel even sharper.

John was one of the original founders of the Merrimack Valley Paddlers, an ex canoer, who decided that he liked wearing his boat more than sitting in it. We were heading up I-93 to Bristol, New Hampshire, where we'd put in on the

Pemigewasset River just below the dam. I told John that I was a bit concerned, and he told me that he'd trained a lot of people, and wouldn't push me beyond my limits.

Ok, I thought, what the heck. I'll put my life in your hands.

I knew that the throbbing in my brain would go away as soon as the adrenaline started rushing. At least I hoped it would. When I've been to an Aikido practice with a hangover, after ten minutes of flipping upside down, the pain usually goes away. The scenery was nice—green trees, mountains, the like. Up past Winnepesaukee and into Bristol, NH.

Finally we arrived at the foot of a huge dam where we started to unload and shuttle trucks to the pull-out point. In New Hampshire and most of the East Coast, kayaking has been severely limited by damming of rivers for reservoir and hydro electric power. In order to be able to continue to play, kayakers and boaters have lobbied hard for dam releases. Thousands (millions) of gallons of water are now released on schedule, so that some semblance of predictability has entered the game. Some folks think this is good, and others don't like it. With the rain

# KAYAK SUMMER: *A beginner's tale*

and the release, the Pemi was fairly quick, but not at its fastest.

Eventually (John talks a lot) we got down to the water. We'd be going down with another guy named Frank (Frank 11), and a family in canoes. The dad would be powering a one-man canoe, and mom and a 13 year old son would be in a two-person. It looked like your typical family trip—Dad barking orders, Mom and son frantically trying to carry them out, usually failing. At least I could see that other people were a lot like me.

Frank #1 began giving me tips about leaning into and out of the rapids. When you're turning in a current, you have to lean downstream, otherwise the tug of the current will hook the upstream part of your boat, and flip you. When you're turning into an eddy, though, you have to lean into it, otherwise you'll flip when the slow water and fast water combine.

Uh huh. I listened to his every word, and wondered if I'd be able to pull it off. My legs were cramped into the front of the boat. I adjusted the foot pedals that provide leverage. In a kayak, you use your hips and thighs to move the boat, angling it this way and that way so you don't get flipped. An eskimo roll requires a strong hip-flip. John had lent me a paddling jacket, for which I was grateful. Basically a waterproofed windbreaker with sleeves, it kept some of the spray out, and kept me warm.

New Hampshire and Maine paddlers are insane. They buy wet and dry suits and paddle as long as the river's not frozen. The idea of sitting on an ice-filled river with the threat of hypothermia doesn't make sense to me—not yet anyhow—and I intend to stick with my program of "Kayak Summer", not "Kayak Winter". Maybe I'll change my mind

later.

Bit by bit we practiced eddy turns and I started to relax. That was until the blade started to come off my paddle. We were still near the put-in and fortunately I had another with me.

I read in the book that kayakers wear their boats. It felt like that, too. Sort of like when we'd float down rivers in Utah in life jackets, pointing our feet in the direction we wanted to go. The boat I bought wasn't as tippy as any of the ones I'd tried before, or maybe I was just getting comfortable with the weight shifts.

I began to feel a bit more confident until we came upon the first ripples.

You may have heard the saying that someone felt terror rise in their throat? Maybe it was terror or maybe it was pork ribs, but I definitely felt stomach tense. These were little rapids, maybe a few rocks and a few holes.

The way the river works, water ducks under rocks, then comes up, around and over the tops, creating a white spray, an eddy behind the rock, and suction all around. I was sitting in a blue milk jug, heading towards it.

Years ago I used to be a pretty good whitewater canoer, and more recently I've done a lot of Aikido, which is all about shifting weight and balance. Maybe between the two I improved the odds, because I didn't find myself panicking--or at least the panic didn't increase. Instead, I just tried to dodge the rocks. A moment later, I pulled into an eddy, leaning in just like Frank #1 said.

They all looked at me, and greeted me with surprised congratulations. Nearly every other beginner they'd taken through those rapids had flipped.

Ok, I thought. What's next?

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*Editor's note: Mark Binder is a novelist, playwright, freelance writer and aspiring kayaker who usually writes about pizza, beer, computers and games.*

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american whitewater affiliation  
**annual report**  
**1995**





# Program Overview

To AWA Members and Friends

**T**he year 1995 has been a very significant one in the development of the American Whitewater Affiliation. The publication of AWA's Five Year Strategic Plan in March and approval of its complementary organizational work plan in September chart our direction for years to come.

Yet these two documents represent more than a blueprint for future activity; they signify the emergence of AWA into adulthood. They symbolize this organization's commitment to be fully accountable to our rapidly growing membership, their interests and their goals.

During 1995 AMERICAN WHITEWATER magazine expanded dramatically in both editorial and advertising content. Our readers tell us they like what they see, while skyrocketing advertising revenues are a positive vote from the whitewater industry, indicating that we are indeed hitting the mark. The Staff and Directors of AWA are extremely proud of the 100% volunteer efforts of our Editor Bob Gedekoh. He is a prime example of what AWA has been about over the years and the forces behind our success.

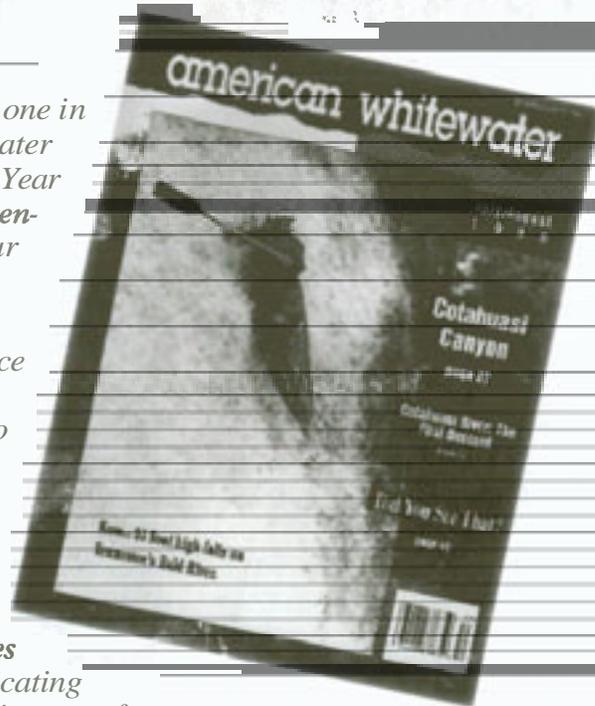
The volunteer spirit of AWA shone brightly in a new area this past year, as AWA plunged vigorously into the realm of cyberspace. A noteworthy band of high-tech supporters — David Fallside, Pope Barrow, Bill Kirby, Jay Armstrong and Jim Dodds — created a strong presence for both AWA and NOWR on the World Wide Web. Many Affiliate Clubs are now benefitting from our offer of a free home page. Rick Hudson then took all this work a step further and introduced AWA's Website Yellow Pages to better serve our advertisers.

It is gratifying to see AWA's backbone of volunteerism continue to flourish. It kept us going during leaner years and still underlies every aspect of AWA's progress today. Without AWA's ever increasing band of loyal volunteer supporters, it would be impossible for us to conduct our ambitious programs in conservation, access, safety and events. We thank them for standing behind us.

S.Y.O.T.R.

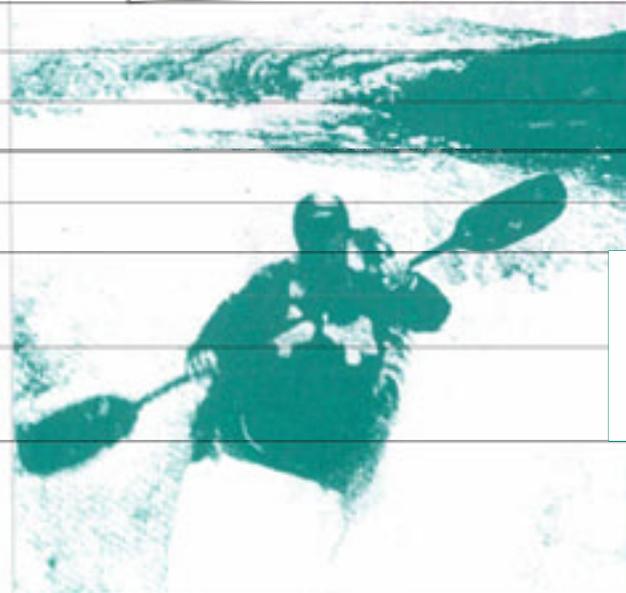
Risa Shimoda Callaway, President

Phyllis B. Horowitz, Executive Director



The mission of the American Whitewater Affiliation is to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely.

# What AWA Accomplished for Whitewater Access and Conservation in 1995



It has been a **great** year for AWA's River Access and Conservation Programs. In addition to our continued work to conserve and protect

**whitewater** rivers, many projects and strategies begun years ago came to fruition in 1995 —resulting in **tremendous** victories for whitewater rivers.

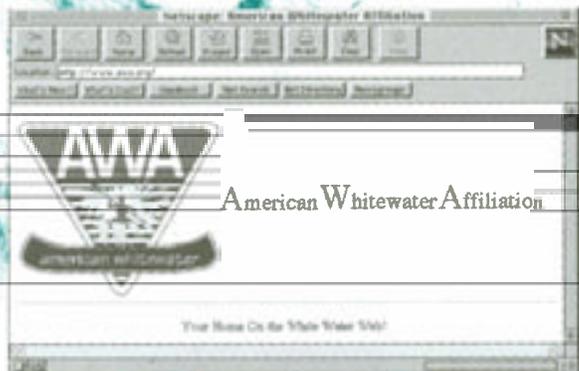
1995 was also very different. Many of the players and issues changed radically. Congress did a complete **turnaround** (personalities as well as emphasis), and changes were made in the value of energy (including hydropower), how it was sold and how power companies and others gauged the value of dams.

River organizations must rethink and retool to adapt to these changes. AWA equipped **itself** with a **five-year** Strategic Plan for river conservation and access and by turning to technology to help us along.

AWA's newest conservation advantage in 1995 was our link to the World Wide Web and the Internet. Via the Information Superhighway AWA was better able to monitor boater's needs and concerns, communicate with them directly and enlist their immediate support. One example was working with Georgia Canoe Association's Tallulah Gorge Website (directly linked to the AWA Home Page). Within two weeks AWA enlisted well over 100 letters supporting restoration of the river from boaters to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

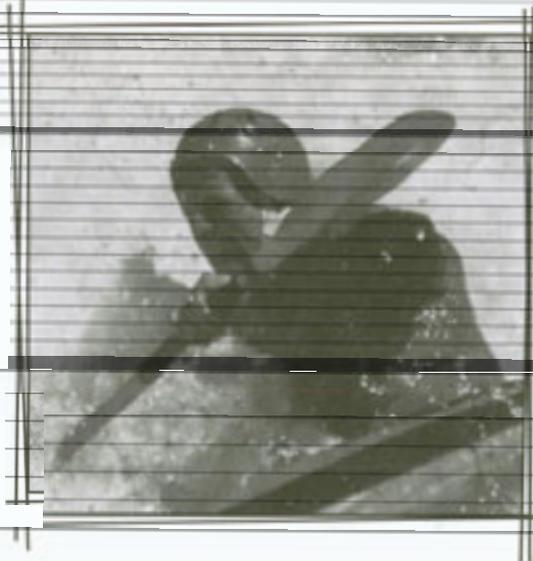
During 1995 AWA's River Access Program grew dramatically due to the high energy efforts and determination of Rich Hoffman. Since he came on board in June of 1994 as AWA's Access Program Director, Hoffman has been successfully working to keep boaters on rivers around the country.

In reviewing this list of the past year's accomplishments, bear in mind that none were solo efforts. Each was achieved by AWA in **partnership with local boaters, whitewater clubs, manufacturers** and representatives as well as with other conservation organizations. In fact, during 1995, AWA worked with hundreds of paddlers and others interested in rivers. We deeply appreciate **their** assistance.



## River Conservation

- Defeated **legislation intended to exempt Colorado's Animas-LaPlata project** from **all** environmental laws **and** remove almost **all** the water **from** the Lower Animas.
- Distributed **over \$85,000** to **grassroots** conservation and **recreation organizations** through the **REI-funded** National Rivers Coalition.
- Battled acid mine drainage on West **Virginia's** rugged Cheat, co-sponsored the first Cheat **River Festival** and commented on **Wild and Scenic** plans for 15 of the state's most outstanding **whitewater rivers**.
- Fought a proposed wildlife **viewing tax**, which in several states would have **boaters** paying for the very agencies **trying** to keep them off rivers.



## Hydropower Reform

- Stopped a proposed dam dead in its tracks on Washington's **Class III-IV Cispus River**.
- Won preliminary decisions to **rewater** Washington's **LaGrande Canyon** of the **Nisqually** and the magnificent **Class IV-V Tallulah Gorge** of Georgia for both whitewater and minimum year round flows. Whitewater releases on the Tallulah are expected by this November.
- Reached agreement with hydro developers for conservation and recreation improvements at 11 dams on **New York's** **Black, Beaver and Salmon Rivers**. Provisions included whitewater releases, improved fisheries and access, plus a million dollar river fund for future river improvements.
- Secured scheduled and improved whitewater flows on **New Hampshire's** **Pemigewasset**, an important **New England Class II-III** training ground.
- Improved whitewater releases and river access on **Minnesota's** **St. Louis River**, one of the few **Class V+** river segments in the Midwest.
- Requested, developed and participated in whitewater studies on **California's** **Lower Kern and Pit** and **New York's** **Oswegatchie**.

## River Access



- Derailed state plans for closing Georgia's Bear Creek, a cutting edge creek run.
- Overturned local access restrictions on Colorado's wild roadside run, the Uncompahgre.
- Signed agreements with Monongahela Power to lease land at the put-in for West Virginia's Lower Big Sandy.
- Moved Colorado's Arkansas, one of the most popular whitewater rivers in the country, to the top of the Forest Service and Colorado State Parks' priority list for land acquisition.
- Assembled a team of boaters and legal experts to address the navigability issue in Colorado. In early 1996 this team will push for a new state law to protect boaters' rights of passage and reduce landowner liability.
- Met face to face with Yellowstone National Park staff and new Superintendent Michael Finley regarding boater access and began development of an access proposal for the park.

## Events

AWA's Strategic Plan notes: "There is no better way to renew one's spirit and motivation than by getting together with other whitewater boaters and getting on the water!" We are always seeking new sites for a variety of river celebrations — rodeos, festivals, races, gatherings of all kinds. These events generate more than a good time for our members and friends, they provide the financial base for much of our conservation and access work.

This year the AWA Event Calendar expanded well beyond the Gauley, Deerfield and Kennebec Festivals. New venues for 1995 included the Potomac Whitewater Festival and Rodeo in the Washington DC area, the Moose Festival and Whitewater Race in New York and the Russell Fork Rendezvous in Haysi, Virginia (a joint effort with the Bluegrass Wildwater Association and American Canoe Association).



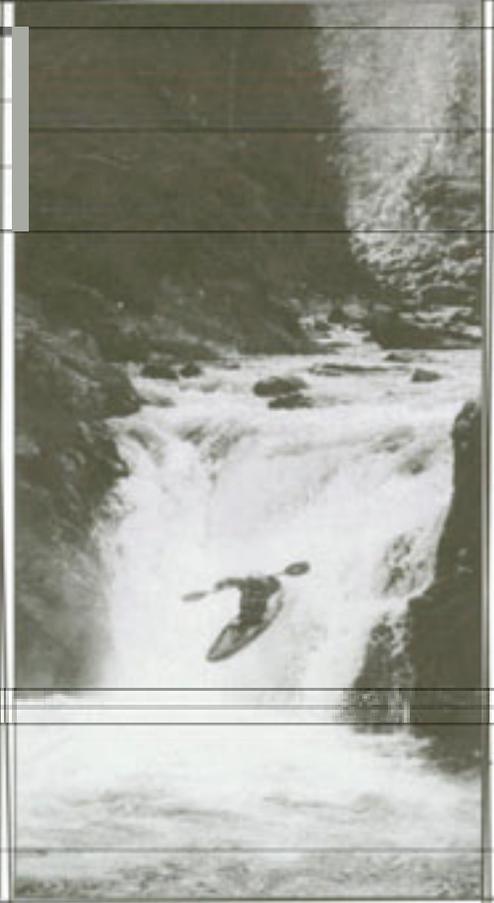
# Safety

The reported fatality rate in 1995 was at an **all** time high. Noting that approximately 90% of these accidents involved inexperienced **rafters rather** than seasoned **hardboaters**, the AWA Safety Committee began **looking** at ways to educate those who are at greatest risk yet outside the experienced whitewater **community**.

The Safety **Committee** also **stepped in** to help Charlie Walbridge with **accident** report collection. **AWA's** Internet site proved **extremely** useful, **as did** our network of Directors and Regional Coordinators, in gathering leads and **soliciting** data. The Whitewater Accident Database is now available on the AWA Web site, and summarized **reports** will be published in AMERICAN **WHITEWATER** during the coming year. The Safety pages will also **soon** be expanded to include near misses and anecdotal information of interest to the paddling community.

An extremely important project initiated during 1995 is the task of **updating** the AWA Scale of River Difficulty. The new system will be an expansion of the current version and include an **open-ended** Class V scale similar to the one used by climbers.

Another project, brought to completion at the end of the year, is the publication of AWA's Whitewater Safety Flash Cards. These sets of 10 cards, riveted together and packaged in a vinyl carrying case, contain information designed to assist the stranded paddler with various rescue, first aid and survival skills.



# National Organization of Whitewater Rodeos

During 1995 NOWR fielded a strong schedule of fourteen events, including two in Canada. The series has created an awareness of rodeo athleticism and freestyle competitive events known now among **all** whitewater consumers, retailers and paddling schools in the United States and abroad. Our mission continues to tie the proceeds from NOWR events to whitewater conservation and access programs.

## Major developments for the year included:

1. Establishment of two tiers to accommodate new and smaller events.
2. Extensive coverage of events on network television, national print and regional newspapers.
3. Initiation of a 1996 plan to develop uniform judging and scoring as well as a **paid** staff position funded by event revenues.
4. Establishment of an Internet Home Page for the NOWR.



## Education



<http://www.awa.org>

AMERICAN WHITEWATER, our full-format, bi-monthly magazine, continues to thrive as the voice of AWA. During 1995, this publication continued to expand in size and content. Increased advertiser participation and readership attest to its success as AWA's most effective educational tool. This year advertising revenue was up by 62%; and the growth of the Journal in size, content, advertising and circulation is directly related to the organization's flourishing involvement in whitewater recreation, conservation, access and safety issues nationwide. AMERICAN WHITEWATER is critical to our organizational strength and remains AWA's primary source of new members.

Due largely to the expertise and enthusiasm of California volunteer Webmaster David Fallside, AWA was in position to fully appreciate the benefits of technology and formed its own extensive web site on the Internet (<http://www.awa.org>). Containing select features and columns reprinted from AMERICAN WHITEWATER, the Nationwide Whitewater River Inventory, safety updates and full color slides from AWA's conservation presentation, our home page was cited as "a great example of using the Internet effectively" in an article covering our efforts in the Summer '95 issue of River Network's quarterly publication.

The AWA web site is not only an excellent source of information and entertainment to whitewater techies, it is also proving valuable as a source of new members and a substantial benefit to Affiliate Clubs taking advantage of our offer of a free home page. Another aspect of this venue — The Whitewater Yellow Pages — gives members of the whitewater industry yet another opportunity to advertise their wares and services while bringing AWA additional revenue.

We believe that AWA's strong Cyberspace presence will reveal new and exciting opportunities for growth as that medium continues to expand exponentially.

## Membership

As a national, grassroots organization, our members provide much more than critical financial support. Our members are the core of the organization and fuel our river conservation, event and safety programs through hundreds of hours of volunteer efforts. From working with our Regional Coordinators on local conservation issues, to researching special issues on river access, to writing articles for AMERICAN WHITEWATER on the latest runs, our members provide the critical program support that makes AWA the dynamic and effective river conservation organization it has grown to today.

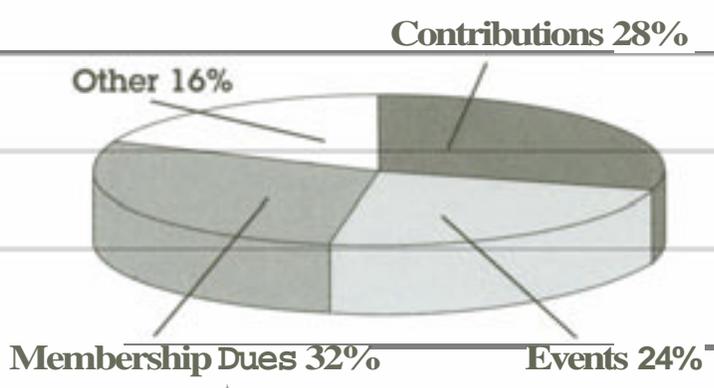
During 1995, 1,470 new members joined AWA (a 55% increase over 1994 new membership figures), bringing our total membership at year end to 4,573. In addition, our renewal rate remains strong in the 80% range. We believe AWA's newly adopted aggressive membership building strategies render our organizational goal of 10,000 members by the year 2000 quite attainable.

# Supporting Services

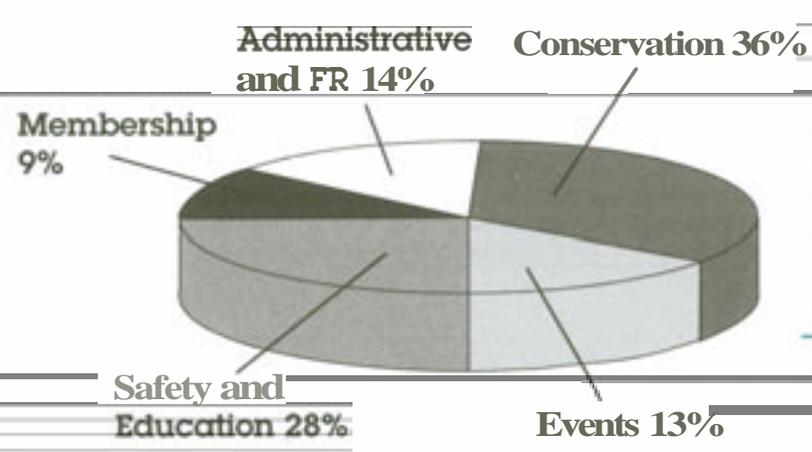
AWA continued its significant program and financial growth in 1995. Total revenues increased seven percent to \$348,922, while expenses also increased twenty seven percent to \$325,149. Eighty six percent of our expenses were for our major program areas of river conservation, education and safety, while only fourteen of our expenses went for administrative and fund raising costs.

A complete set of our audited financial statements is available upon request to our Executive Office.

## 1995 Revenues



## 1995 Expenses

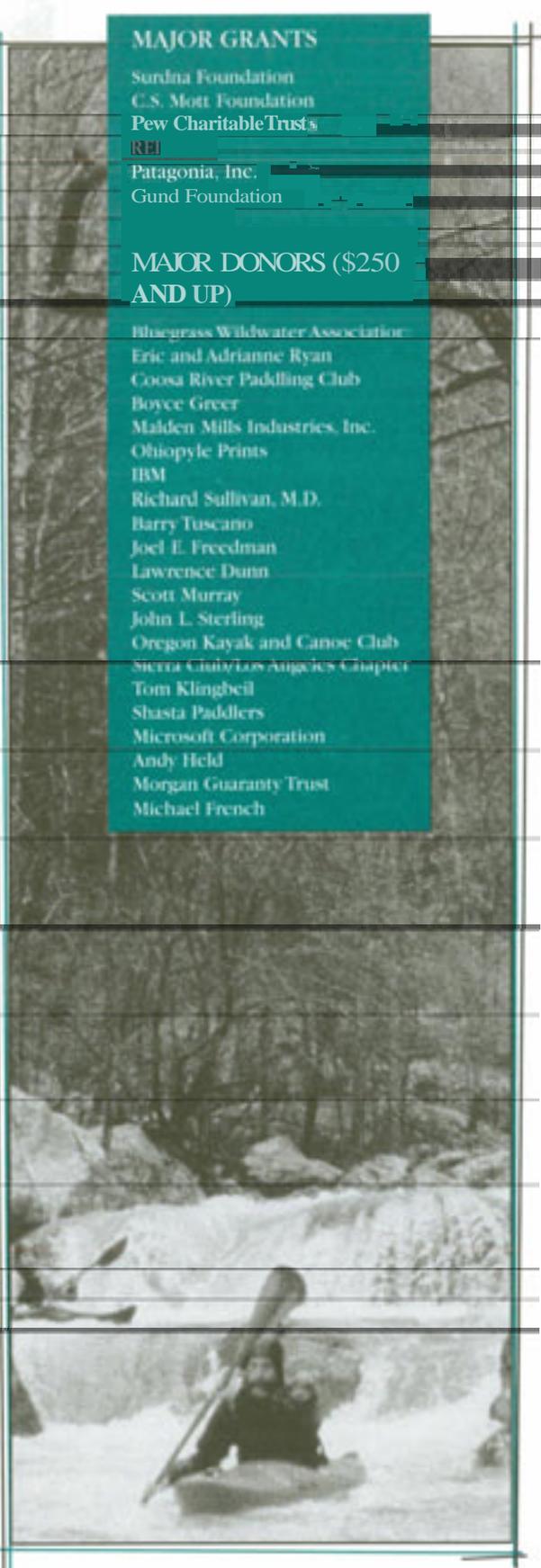


### MAJOR GRANTS

- Surdna Foundation
- C.S. Mott Foundation
- Pew Charitable Trusts
- Patagonia, Inc.
- Gund Foundation

### MAJOR DONORS (\$250 AND UP)

- Bluegrass Wildwater Association
- Eric and Adrienne Ryan
- Coosa River Paddling Club
- Boyce Greer
- Malden Mills Industries, Inc.
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- IBM
- Richard Sullivan, M.D.
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- John L. Sterling
- Oregon Kayak and Canoe Club
- Sierra Club/Los Angeles Chapter
- Tom Klingbeil
- Shasta Paddlers
- Microsoft Corporation
- Andy Held
- Morgan Guaranty Trust
- Michael French



# Statement of Support, Revenue and Expenses

	1995	1994
<b>Public Support:</b>		
Contributions	97,206	62,104
<b>Other Revenue</b>		
Membership Dues	111,457	91,473
Journal	41,116	29,770
Access Grant	0	40,000
Events	83,879	89,207
Products	6,769	8,506
Interest income	8,221	4,908
Miscellaneous	274	344
<b>Total Support and Revenue</b>	<b>348,922</b>	<b>326,323</b>
<b>Expenses:</b>		
<b>Program Services:</b>		
Conservation	117,821	99,722
Events	42,551	38,892
Safety	5,828	578
Journal	86,651	58,190
Membership	21,413	16,900
Products	6,451	4,444
<b>Total Program Services</b>	<b>280,715</b>	<b>218,726</b>
<b>Supporting Services</b>		
Administration	39,338	32,633
Fund Raising	3,580	3,700
<b>Total Supporting Services</b>	<b>42,918</b>	<b>36,333</b>
<b>Other Expenses</b>		
Depreciation	1,516	1,183
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>325,149</b>	<b>256,242</b>
Excess of Support and Revenue Over Expenses	23,773	70,081
Fund Balance (Deficit)		
Beginning of Year	173,268	103,187
Fund Balance (Deficit) End of Year	197,041	173,268

# Comparative Balance Sheets

	1995	1994
<b>Current Assets:</b>		
Cash	230,636	198,864
Cash - Nominee		1,213
Accounts Receivable	10,992	6,256
Inventory	6,092	4,990
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>247,720</b>	<b>211,323</b>
<b>Plant, Property &amp; Equipment:</b>		
Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment	8,384	6,772
Less: Accumulated Depredation	(4,226)	(2,711)
<b>Total Plant, Property &amp; Equipment</b>	<b>4,158</b>	<b>4,061</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>251,878</b>	<b>215,384</b>

# Liabilities and Fund Balances

	1995	1994
<b>Current Liabilities:</b>		
Accounts Payable	525	60
Payroll Taxes Payable	2,125	2,915
Cash - Nominee		1,213
Deferred Revenue	52,187	37,928
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>54,837</b>	<b>42,116</b>
<b>Fund Balance (Deficit)</b>		
Restricted	35,749	26,621
Unrestricted	157,134	142,586
<b>Total</b>	<b>192,883</b>	<b>169,207</b>
<b>Property</b>		
Total Fund Balance	4,158	4,061
<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Fund Balance</b>	<b>197,041</b>	<b>173,268</b>
	251,878	215,384

## AWA OFFICERS

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Vice President: **Ric Alesch**  
Secretary: **Charlie Walbridge**  
Treasurer: **Jim Scott**

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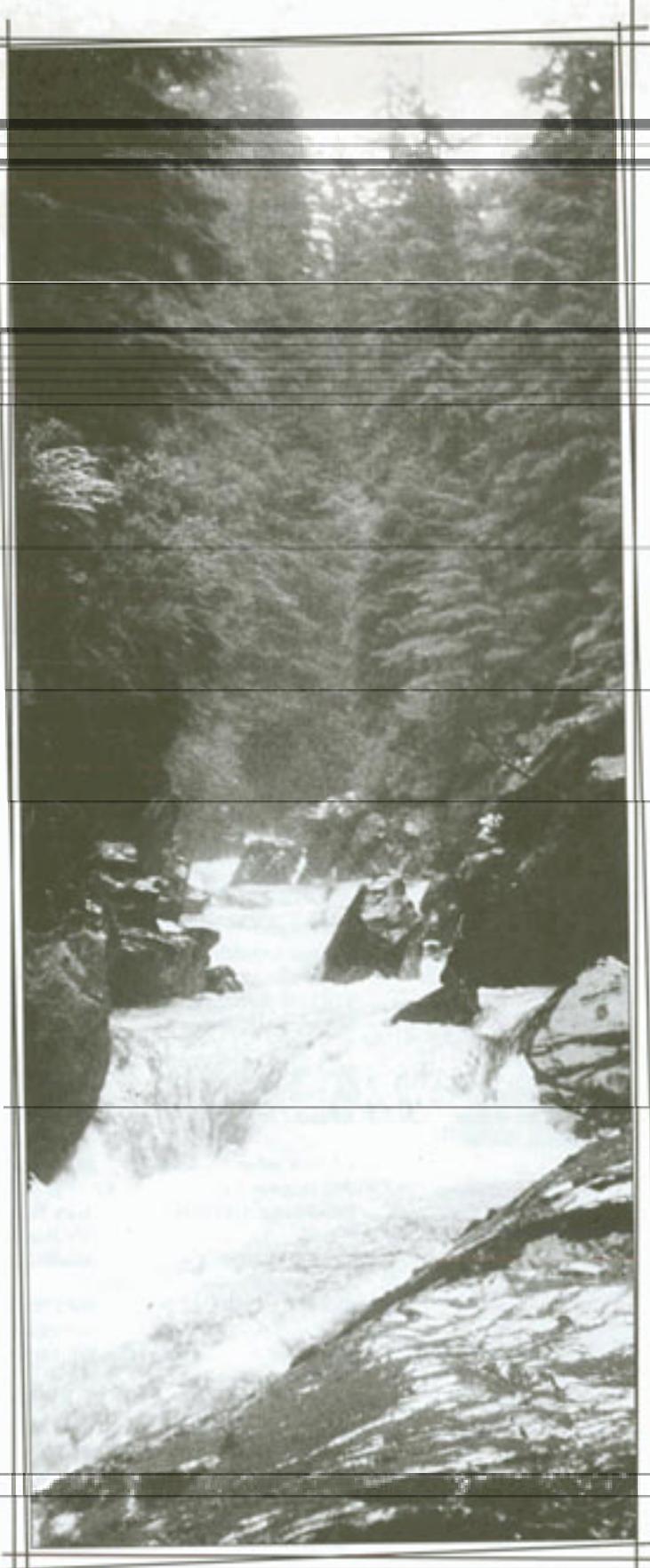
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# Olympic Dreams

## A Guide to the '96 Trials

by John Weld, Contributing Editor  
Photos by Christopher Smith

If you were training to make the 1996 U.S. Whitewater Olympic Team, right now you would be sweating bullets. In just a few days, on May 18th and 19th, the Olympic Team Trials will be held on the new Olympic Course on the Ocoee River. It's going to be no picnic.

This is the race that four years ago, right after the Barcelona Olympic Trials, seemed an eternity away. Four years seemed like a long time to condition your body to be world-class fast on a slalom course. But now, your time is up.

Although the Trials are an annual event, and the actual competition—two races over two days—requires only a few minutes on the water, these few minutes represent your only shot at going to the Atlanta Olympics, a chance to show that you are the best whitewater paddler in the world. The problem is that due to the politics of the International Olympic Committee this year's Olympic Team will be the smallest ever. For the group of elite paddlers who want to race in the Atlanta Games, this is going to be the toughest, most competitive race in whitewater history.

If you are a recreational boater you probably didn't know about this. Once upon a time, racers and cruisers were the same crowd. But since racing gained legitimacy by going Olympic in 1992, 1996 and probably 2000, racers and cruisers have diverged, especially in the few months before the trials. For Olympic Whitewater Team hopefuls, many of whom paddle for a living, this is the time of year when training partners become opponents, and workouts take on a distinctly competitive personality.

This is when, more than ever, slalom training is like a job, and a tough

one at that. Wake up at 6:30, train, eat, go out and train again, go home, eat, train, go home and sleep. The training sites are often non-descript class I and II rapids, and taking a day off to run a river is out of the question. While many boaters paddle to escape the office, for elite athletes, their boats are the office.

It's no surprise that the whitewater slalom racers have very little contact with recreational boaters, even though the racers represent some of the best whitewater boaters in the world. As a result, many cruisers that I talk to often don't know even the basics of whitewater competition: how the Team selection takes place, how many people are going to the Olympics, and even where the Olympic course is. Many non-competitive paddlers know the big names—Jon Lugbill, Scott Shipley, Davey Hearn—but have no idea of who else might represent the

sport in 1996, or that these icons might not even make the team.

The upcoming Team Trials, which represent the most important two days of many racers' lives, somehow remain a mystery to the mainstream paddling community. For this reason, I have compiled a primer and "Who's Who" for recreational boaters interested in the facts surrounding the upcoming Olympic Team Trials.

### The Course

While the 1996 Olympics are in Atlanta, the Whitewater event is going to be held two hours away in Tennessee on the Ocoee, on July 26th-28th. The Olympic course is a 25 million dollar project encompassing a fortified natural river bed, two miles upstream of the put-in for the very popular class III-IV section of the Ocoee (for a full description of the construction behind the Olympic site, see AWA July/Au-



Cathy Hearn

## A Guide to the '96 Trials

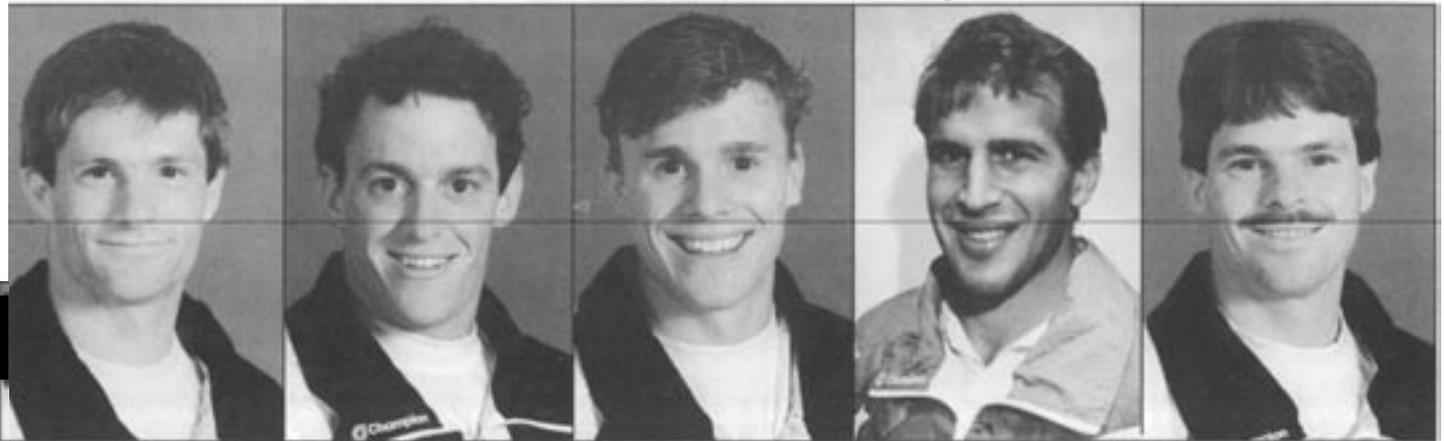
Rich Weiss

Joe Jacobi

Scott Shipley

Jon Lugbill

David Hearn



gust 1995). The 40 releases on the dam-controlled course since its completion last September have been closed to the public, but Olympic hopefuls from all over the world have been allowed to paddle there, to get a feel for the rapids. Since the first water release there have already been numerous training camps and races on the course, including the Pre-Olympics, and two World Cup races.

Last September, I got a chance to visit the site and watch some of the U.S. athletes while they paddled the course for the first time. The river valley was still being prepared for the 15,000 spectators expected on race day—with construction vehicles and piles of boulders littering the bank—but the course itself was fully operational and very impressive. Even someone with only a rudimentary knowledge of slalom would see that this is a superb place for a slalom race. The course is about a quarter-mile long, 200 feet wide on average, with about 1,500 cfs surging through at full flow.

A typical race time on this course will be very similar to most races—about two and a half minutes. Each of the five or so drops have been very subtly engineered to create an almost infinite combination of boofs, eddy turns, s-turns, river-wide wave surfs and tricky ledges. The last quarter of the course is the steepest: a technical drop that deserves a class IV rating, even before the placement of gates. The walkway along the bank is a little below water level, and this paddler's-eye perspective gave me the impression that the course is big and pushy. It's certainly going to give a lot of world class paddlers some grief on race day.

"This is whitewater on a grand scale." Davey Hearn, current C-1 World Champion explains. "It's big water surrounded by a spectacular canyon. The course is very challenging but fun to paddle... basically, it's grade A butt-kickin' whitewater."

Davey's opinion is shared by Mike Corcoran, the top-ranked C-1 in Ireland, who lives and trains in the U.S. "It's a very physical course... the whitewater isn't hard at the top, but by the time you get to the bottom, it's hard and you're tired. It's easily one of the top five race courses in the world—it's definitely Olympic quality"

Although the gate positions for the Trials and the Olympics are kept secret until the day before the race, the athletes who gather there to practice are trying to get to know the site as best as they can, while making educated guesses as to where the course designers are likely to place gates.

"When I got to the Ocoee," says Kara Weld, currently the national champion in women's kayak, "I want to know the fastest way to get in and out of every single eddy, the fastest way across each wave, and every possible combination of maneuvers between any spots that could conceivably have gates."

### The Trials

Even though the Olympics are the ultimate goal of many of the U.S. paddlers who have been learning every inch of the course this past year, the Team Trials have to be dealt with first. Every May, through a two-day, two-race process, the U.S. Team is chosen by selecting the top four boats in each class (men's kayak, women's kayak,

men's C-1, and men's C-2). Even in non-Olympic years, the Team Trials are often the most stressful race of the year because much of the following years', funding and coaching depend on whether or not you make the top four.

As current kayak team member Eric Giddens points out, "If you don't do well, you never get a chance to prove yourself later on." This year, of course, the Olympics are hanging over the competitor's heads as well.

The problem is that due to a new International Olympic Committee (IOC) policy each country had to earn spots in the Olympics, based on that country's performance at the previous World Championships. Accordingly, based on our standings last year at the Nottingham Worlds, the U.S. can only send a fraction of the 1996 Team to Atlanta. We earned two spots each for men's kayak, women's kayak and men's C-1, but only one of our C-2s can go... a grand total of eight Americans that will make the final cut. At trials weekend there will be two races: one on Saturday, and one on Sunday. The course will be changed overnight between these two races. The winner each day from each class will go the Olympics. In C-2, just the winner on the first day will go.

Fritz Haller, who, along with his brother Lecky, paddles the top rated C-2 in the country, explained the situation. "It would be like you worked in a very competitive business, and for years you all worked together, worked hard every day, and you became very successful. Then, someone came in one day and said, 'O.K., we are going to evaluate your performance for five

Matt Taylor

David Hepp

Horace Holden

Barry Kennon

Eric Jackson



minutes sometime next week, and then we are going to fire everybody but two of you."

Moreover, because the U.S. slalom community is strong, many American athletes, who are talented enough to be best in the world on a good day, might not even make the Olympic Team this year. Joe Jacobi and Scott Strausbaugh, for example. In 1992, they were the third C-2 on the U.S.

Team, but because the 1992 Olympics allowed three boats in each class, they made it to Barcelona, where they copped a gold medal. This year, they would have gotten the pink slip after the first day of Trials.

### The Competitors

The trials will be exciting especially for our older athletes, because this may represent their last shot at an Olympics. It's a good bet that they

are going to race with everything they've got. Here is a quick guide to the players in each class, with their strengths and weaknesses:

#### Men's Slalom

**Scott Shipley:** (24) Although currently the second boat on the Team, Scott is our country's most accomplished paddler. He won the World Cup last year and many consider him to be our best chance at a gold medal



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## A Guide to the '96 Trials

Steve Isenburg

Lecky Haller

Fritz Haller

Eric Giddens

Adam Clawson



this summer. Scott, however, understands the unpredictable element of whitewater. "Anything can happen at Trials," he is fond of saying.

**Rich Weiss:** (32) Rich, a very strong paddler who favors harder whitewater, won the '95 Team Trials, along with the pre-Olympics last fall on the new Ocoee course. Rich's list of international victories proves that he is one of the best in the world, but a penalty on race day will put him within reach of the other men.

**Eric Jackson:** (32) Eric is a great and versatile boater, as demonstrated by his slalom credentials and his gold medal performance in the 1993 rodeo worlds. But Eric tends to take big risks on race days, arguably hanging it out a little too much. He might do very well, or he might crash and burn.

**Eric Giddens:** (23) Giddens' technique is world-class, but at 23 Eric has never placed above third at the Trials. He is currently the 4th boat on the team.

### Women's Slalom

**Dana Chladek:** (32) For years, Dana has been dominating the women's class in the U.S. She has performed very well in international competition, earning two World Championship medals and a bronze medal in the '92 Olympics. Dana, however, has been recovering from a serious shoulder injury, and she has not been able to train to potential this past year. This may make her defeatable at this year's Trials.

**Cathy Hearn:** (37) Cathy won the World Championships in 1979, and has been racing strong ever since.

Her unmatched racing experience will certainly help her keep a level head on Trials day. However, at age 37, many people are wondering when (if ever) Cathy is going to start to lose her edge.

**Kara Weld:** (27) Kara has been on the Team for 8 years, but even though she is capable of being the fastest woman in the U.S. (she is currently the National champion), and she seems to be getting faster every year, she does not beat Dana and Cathy consistently.

**Jana Freeburn:** (26) Jana, who was born and raised in Czechoslovakia, was second boat in 1993 (her first year in the U.S.), and first in '94. She has placed well in international competition, including a 4th place finish last year in a World Cup race, but in 1995 she did not make the Team, perhaps as result of living and training in Colorado—isolated from her competition in DC.

### Men's C-1

**Davey Hearn:** (37) Davey, like his sister Cathy, has almost unmatched racing experience. After his victory at last year's World Championships, Davey knows that he can be the best in the world. However, if someone else wins on the first day, it's going to be a close race between Davey and the rest of the top C-1's.

**Jon Lugbill:** (34) 7-time world champion; often considered the best slalom boater who ever lived. Enough said. Lugbill's problem is that he disappeared from the racing scene for two years following his disappointing 4th place finish at the Barcelona Olympics. He returned strong last spring by winning the Team Trials,



Rich Weiss

Kara Ruppel Weld

Cathy Hearn

Dana Chladek

Renata Altman



but he was not up to form last summer, placing 9th in the World Championships.

**Joe Jacobi:** (26) Joe won a gold medal in Barcelona in C-2 with his partner Scott Strausbaugh. After Scott quit in 1992, Joe continued racing C-1. He's made the transition well, he was 3rd on the Team in '95, and he also placed 5th in last year's World Cup Final on

the Ocoee. The problem is that Joe is up against the best C-1 paddlers who ever lived—he is going to have to be in absolute top form to squeeze on to the Olympic Team.

**Bob Robison:** (34) Bob touched the last gate in the '92 Olympic Trials, otherwise he would have gone to Barcelona. Bob was fast then, and although he retired in 1992 and has only

been to one race ('95 Nationals) since, rumor has it that he has never been faster.

Men's C-2

**Fritz and Lecky Haller:** (37, 38) These guys are our best, most experienced C-2 Team by a solid margin. They were second in the World Cup last summer and they have made the Team every one of the seven times they tried. They just have to live up to their reputation on the first race day.

**Matt Taylor and Steve Isenburg:** (26, 25) Were fourth boat on the Team last year, and they were our top placing boat in the World Championships last fall, showing that they have the potential to beat Fritz and Lecky in the right circumstances. However, they qualified (placed 15th or better in a pre-race) for only one World Cup race in '95.

**Horace Holden and Wayne Dickert** (32, 35) This team is the most experienced C-2 in the U.S. next to the Haller brothers, and they are the only C-2 team to race in an Olympic Trials before. (Lecky was racing with Jamie McEwan in '92.)

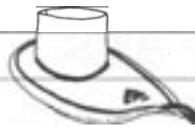
**Barry Kennon and David Hepp:** (25, 22) These guys had only one great race in '95—the Team Trials, where they placed second. But one great race is all it takes to go to the Olympics. "They're both really great athletes," Lecky told me a couple of days ago. "That's why I wouldn't count them out."

These are the athletes most likely to make this year's Olympic Team, but consider Shipley's advice: anything can happen at Trials. One touch on one of the twenty five gates placed in class IV whitewater adds 5 seconds to

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## A Guide to the '96 Trials

the final time. This is often enough to take an athlete from first to fifth place. Even Fritz and Lecky, who stand a very good chance of making team know this. "We're fast," Fritz says, "But not fast enough that we can afford to hit a gate."

Slalom racing is a tough deal. You train for years and then touch a gate with your lifejacket and wind up 6th boat. Even for the successful racers, the ones that make the Team year after year, slalom is a tough line of work. Training and racing is a full-time pursuit, and for many athletes it comes first, before college or a career. Many train into their 30's and after their last race, unless they want to pursue coaching, they have to start a new life. There is no 401k, minimum wage, tenure, job security or lucrative product endorsements for career slalom paddlers. Making the Team, in financial terms, only means that you are going to receive enough funding to squeeze by for another year. Forced retirement occurs when your body can no longer endure the workouts.

But dreams of Olympic glory supercede all of these problems. And in just a few days, over a hundred paddlers are going to compete at the Trials, knowing full well that when the dust settles, only eight of the very best will remain. The athletes tell me it has nothing to do with the money, or the gear, or the sponsorships, or the lack of any of these things. It's about competition, and proving that living up to your potential is more important than anything else in the world. "It's more of a personal competition," says Eric Giddens, "winning the gold medal means that you are the best you can be."

Says Joe Jacobi, who won a gold medal in 1992, "everyone in the world agrees that the Olympics is where we are going to go all out and race to our absolute potential. It's that agreement that's the rush for competitors."

Scott Shipley concurs. "At some point in your life, you decide that at this race, on this course, on this date, and on this exact time, you are going to be the best in the world. And because it's the Olympics, it makes it that much better."

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# BADDLIN' IS BARIG! '95 World Rodeo Championships: Augsberg Germany

by Paul Mason

Our grasp of the German language was nil so the question was: were we about to buy a can of stew, or did the picture on the label illustrate how yummy the stew could be if we used this can of lard?

We were in Europe to compete in the 1995 World Whitewater Rodeo Championships on the Eiskanal, an artificial whitewater course situated in Augsburg, Germany. More than 145 athletes representing 22 countries competed in the rodeo, which involves as "extreme" slalom worth 35% of the score, with hole riding accounting for the remaining 65%.

Our enthusiasm for traveling to Germany was heightened by the offer of a week-long paddling tour in Austria, organized by Jan Kelner and sponsored by Eskimo, Prijon, and HF.

Many had arrived only one week prior to the World Rodeo and were concerned with accumulating practice time in the hole. But after our first practice session it became apparent that at the rate our boats were er... "decomposing" in the fast and shallow Eiskanal, we would be lucky if they lasted the week. Most of the open canoes had already been shortened or modified, so the addition of everything from carpeting to pieces of tires glued to the bow for protection only added to their radical appearance.

The final day of the competition drew large crowds of spectators and media who "oohed and aahed" as paddlers performed towering enders, pirouettes, McTwists, whippets and sinus-plugging cartwheels. Then it was the kayakers turn, and they, too, were impressive. (Editor's note: In case you hadn't guessed, Paul Mason paddles a canoe.)

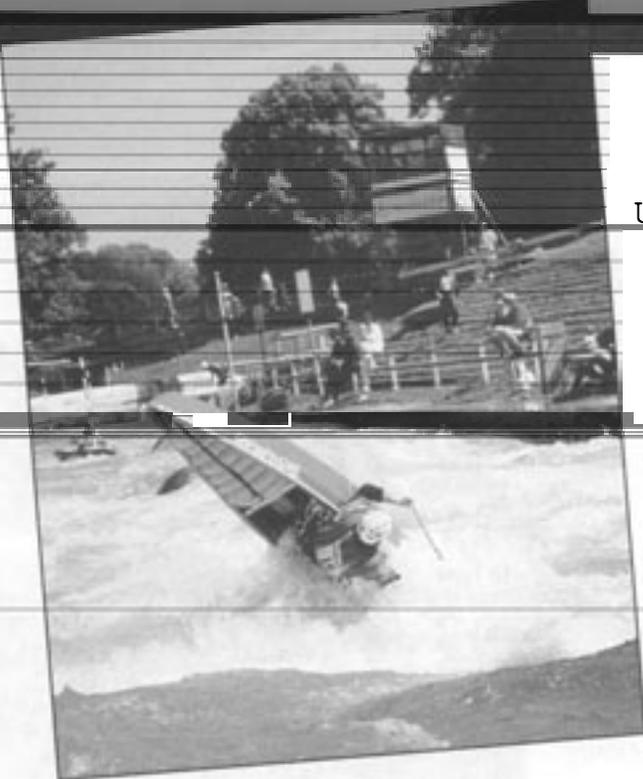
The top kayakers introduced the newest rodeo move called a split wheel: a series of cartwheels during which the paddler changes paddling sides.

In the open canoe division two German paddlers, Uwe Fischer and Lars Klotzbach, won gold and silver respectively. Jeff Richards (USA) won bronze. In men's kayak, Oliver Grau (GER) won gold, Corran Addison (SAF) won silver and Donald Calder (NZL) bronze. In the women's kayak, Jamie Simon (USA) placed first, Sandra Schmidt (GER) second and Karen Mann (USA) third. The C-1 category was won by Allen Braswell (USA) with Paul Robertson (GBR) following and Steve Lock (GBR) placing third. Winner of the squirt boat competition was Bob Campbell (GBR), Chris Taudewin (GBR) placed second and Bob McDonough (USA) third.

After the rodeo it was time for some serious boating on several rivers in Austria. Based at the Tirol Sport Camp, we made runs on the Inn, Sonnet and



Top: Above: Eiskanal, Germany;  
Photo by Paul Mason  
Above: Canoeist Mark Scriver;  
Photo Ian Thompson



## BADDLIN' IS BARIG!

Urtz rivers. These rivers offered everything from class 3-4 creeking to class 5 big water.

The top section on the Inn River was spectacular, the glacial water and continuous gradient reminded me of the Moose Ponds section of the Nahanni River (Canada). After several kilometers the canyon narrowed the boulders became bigger. This provided class 3-4 paddling, similar to the easier parts of the Big Sandy River in West Virginia. As we approached section 1 of the Inn, the rapids became more continuous and for those of us in open boats, pretty wet. This 25 km section of class 3-4 hinted at what was to come in section 2. After a break, we headed into section 2, a class 4 run similar to the upper Yough (Maryland) at 2'2" and requiring a good whitewater roll. There were two class 5 drops that were portageable or sneakable.

The first biggie was run by a few kayakers including Jan Kellner, Mark Lyle and Chuck Kern and almost run advertently by Mark Scriver in his open boat.

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## BADDLIN' IS BARIG!

Mark wedged his canoe between two rocks at the lip of the drop after missing the proverbial last chance eddy. This was fine until he started to climb out and the boat was pushed by a surge of current through the slot. Still in the now vertical canoe, he managed to cling to rocks until the water drained out, making it lighter. He then somehow clambered out onto the rocks, still holding his paddle, boat and heart, which had previously been in his throat!

Regrouped, we headed off to the next drop. This was a nine foot pour over, where Canadian open canoeist Joe Langman illustrated the primary reason not to "pencil-in" off a falls. Landing in the hole close to the falls, Joe attempted to roll up but found the water too aerated. He bailed out of his canoe but still couldn't swim to the surface. Miraculously he grabbed a throwline and was quickly pulled out of the hole for some much needed air.

Next stop was the Austrian/Swiss border section of the Inn River. Not being particularly fond of big holes in class 5 water, I observed this run from the road, far above. Suffice to say that the locals congratulated the open boaters on a first descent and I congratulated myself on going to buy ice cream instead.

Finally we capped off the paddling fest with a quick trip to the Urtz River. The Urtz, which was running high, was like the Autobahn with speed bumps. Fast, pushy continuous big water with a killer weir at the halfway point. This weir has claimed nine lives and it scared me silly- so I found a shuttle downriver and put in just below it. From there, the Urtz continued its breakneck speed until it joined the Inn River, to form a class 2-3 roller coaster ride to the takeout.

The last stop on the European tour was a Europa Cup Rodeo in Bremgarten, Switzerland, organized by Claude Stahel. This was a rodeo with emphasis on fun! It involved full contact wave wars on a huge surfing wave, the only river wave I have ever seen that is home turf to board surfers. The competition heated up as we moved to a really sweet hole to gain some verticality.

This provided a superb ending to a great trip for me, since I tied Mark Scriver (Can) for second place... a bit of a step up from my 10th place finish at the Worlds.

As a sticker on the Team Prijon van proclaimed, "Baddlin' ist Barig!" (Paddling is awesome!)

Editor's note: Paul Mason is a freelance cartoonist, a member of the Trailhead paddling team, a wilderness canoeing guide and resides in the Gatineau Hills with his family.



Scott Shipley, started paddling with Werner paddles when he was twelve. Today he's a two-time ('93 & '95) World Cup Champion and US National Slalom Champion.

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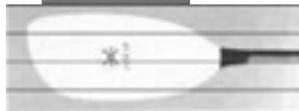
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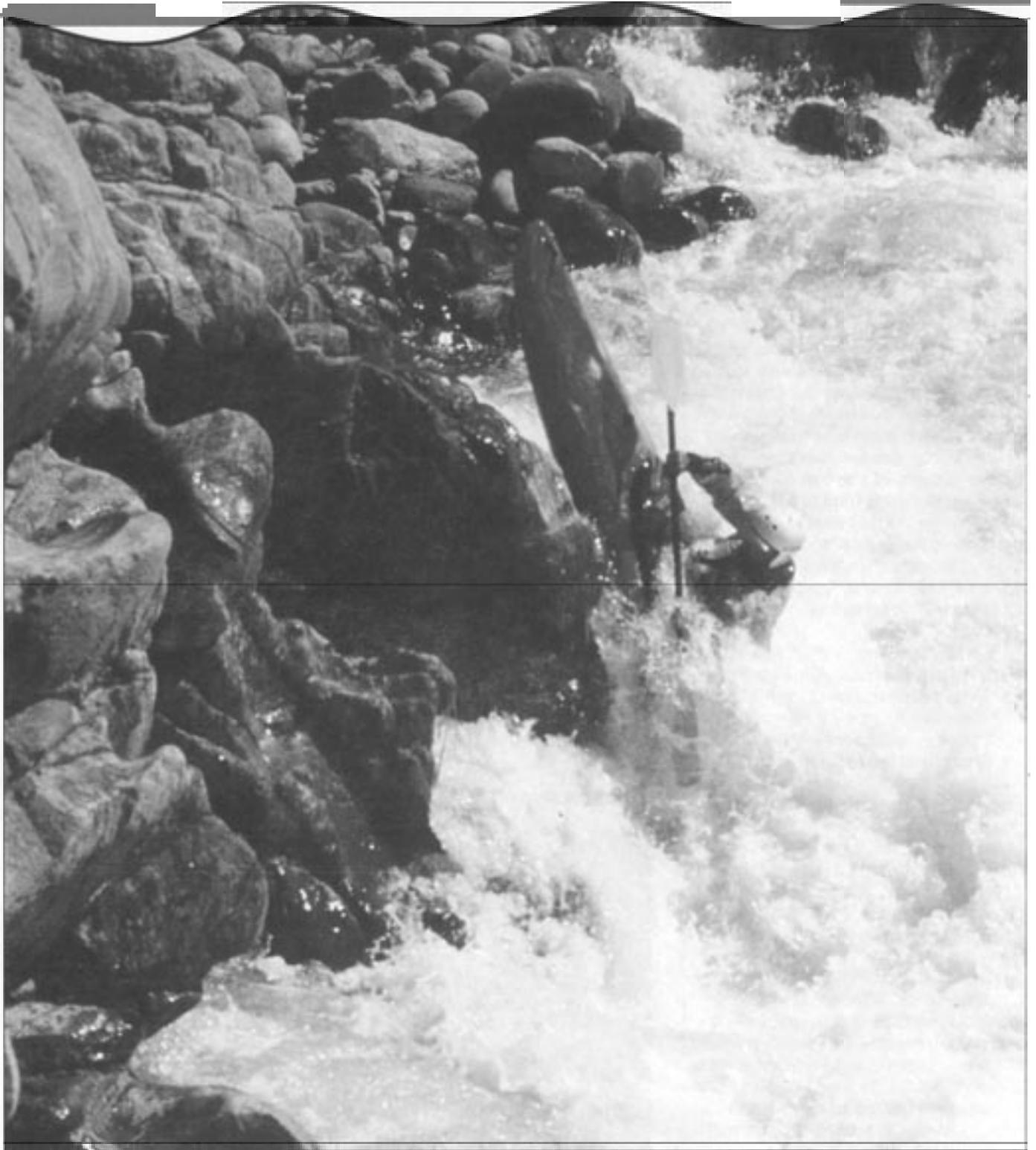
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# Rapids & Ruins & Rapids & Ruins & Rapids



*Franz Helfenstein getting splatted in "Rise and Shine".*

# RAPIDS & RUINS

## KAYAKING THE DEEPEST CANYONS IN THE WORLD

Stories and photos by John Foss  
Contributing Writer and AWA Regional Coordinator

Although drunk and festive, the two dozen passengers were getting restless. It was 2:50 PM, we were behind schedule, and our drivers were adamant, "*Vamos a las tres, nada mas!*" John Barker and I had managed to delay the departure of our bus for nearly two hours by plying *El Grupo* with three rounds of cheap wine and beer after lunch.

We anxiously awaited the imminent arrival of our young Chilean friend, Eva Luma Ramirez, who was roaring down the Pan American Highway in a private vehicle commandeered in Lima by our *compadre*, fellow kayaker and logistics coordinator, Duilio Vellutino. All we had to do was hold up our commercial bus trip a little while longer so she could catch up to us.

Barker and I, although amused by the chain of events, were getting nervous while we pensively plotted our options for the final stall. The first problem was that the nearby stores were out of liquor. Our overdose strategy failed to produce the intended state of stupor in our Peruvian bus mates who had consumed all the remaining available stock. The other problem was that we had Eva's kayak with us. By maintaining phone contact with Duilio and Pete Lopez at their Expediciones Apumayo office in Lima, we had agreed to leave Eva's kayak at the restaurant in the event she could not catch up.

Earlier we had been astonished to discover that a bus company, *Quizas Si, Quizas No* (Maybe Yes, Maybe No), had direct weekly service from Lima to our destination of Marcabamba, a tiny riverside pueblo located deep in the Andes. After an irritating predawn shakedown by Lima city police in a VW beetle taxi burdened with two kayaks, one ducky, gear and food for ten days, we found the obscure bus station in the center of the city. Locked up behind a one door garage, the entire fleet consisted of an old, dilapidated, but serviceable bus.

As dawn broke through Lima's garua-laden skies (the dreary fog that drapes the Peruvian coast for eight months a year), I found myself cruising the streets in search



Above: Ruins in Canon de Marpa, Rio Cotahuasi.

Rapids & Ruins & Rapids & Ruins & Rapids

# Rapids & Ruins & Rapids & Ruins & Rapids

of breakfast, while Jon purchased our bus tickets. My appetite quickly diminished as I witnessed an incredibly efficient display of *super pollo* processing on the streets of the filthy city. In a series of quick strokes, chicken necks were broken, jugular veins were slit and drained, the carcasses dumped into a boiling cauldron and swiftly withdrawn, de feathered and readied for consumption.

Our logistics were impossible. Eva was scheduled to arrive at Lima's international airport from Cuzco at the same time we were to depart from the bus station. By making arrangements with the bus company prior to departure, Duilio planned to pick her up at the airport and rendezvous with us at the last bus stop on the south side of the city. We thought, "...cool, this will work." We failed to consider the Peru factor.

We left the station on time and crept through the early morning chaos of cross-town traffic. As we left the din and grime of the city be-

hind, we could see the Pacific's beautiful azure waves crashing on the beach. Barker, the master of the understatement, turned to me and said emphatically, "...what the f@#% is going on?" Literally, the gringos were being taken for a ride! Without telling us, the driver altered his route, bypassing our pre-arranged rendezvous!

We traveled south for two hours, finally stopping for lunch at a ramshackle roadside stand in Chincha Alta. After a quick phone call to Lima to confirm Eva's arrival, we asked the drivers to wait. They reluctantly agreed, but by 3:00 PM they had run out of patience. During the long break, Barker and I repeatedly reminded the drivers, "...it's your fault we missed the rendezvous! You changed your route!" The drivers were furious, but everybody else was having a great time, laughing at the generous gringos' misfortune after we had spent \$50 on booze. Determined and stone sober, Barker and I were scheming in-

side the restaurant. Desperate, I walked out to the parking lot and spoke to the two drivers.

"Please take one of the kayaks off the bus. We have Eva's boat and if you refuse to wait for her, we cannot take it with us."

What the men didn't realize was that my kayak was stacked on top of hers and they would have to remove it first to get to Eva's. By not indicating the correct boat to unload, we figured that we might gain a little more time.

After they untied the wrong kayak I said, "*No, no el otro, por favor!*" The inevitable grumbling ensued. Fortunately, just in the nick of time, Eva arrived! Our drunken bus mates, the drivers, curious onlookers and the women that had sold us all the liquor simultaneously broke into a wild, standing ovation as Eva jumped out of the car! As the saying goes, getting there is half the fun, no?

We continued down the coast past the amazing Nazca lines, even-

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# Rapids & Ruins & Rapids & Ruins & Rapids

tually turning east at Chala. This pueblo served as the coastal terminus for the Royal Inca Highway and provided access for a 24 hour fresh fish delivery service to Cuzco in the days before the Spanish Conquest. After enduring a bone-jarring, breathless, frigid ride up on the Altiplano, we descended into the Rio Maran valley, 28 hours after our crazy exit from Lima.

With two days of frantic preparation behind us, we were ready for a first descent on the Maran, the major tributary of the Rio Cotahuasi. According to Peru's Instituto Geografico Nacional (IGN), the Cotahuasi surpasses in depth by 163 m the renowned Rio Colca canyon, 100 kms to the south. The Colca canyon was previously billed as the deepest canyon in the world by the National Geographic Society (National Geographic, January 1993). We had vowed to return to the Maran after our brief scout at the confluence of the two rivers during last year's successful exploratory

first descent on the Cotahuasi (American Whitewater, July/August 1995).

With the generous sponsorship of Malden Mills-Polartec, Cristal Beer of Peru, R.E.I. and other equipment manufacturers, we returned in May '95 for the "II Expedicion Peruano-Norteamericana al Canon de Cotahuasi." Our group included, at various times, an eclectic mix of Peruvian, Chilean and American paddlers including kayakers Dave Black, Kurt Casey, Franz Helfenstein, Greg Moore, Eva Luna Ramirez de Arellano, Duilio and Gian Marco Vellutino, myself, rafters Aldo Chiappe, Fico Gallese, Pepe Lopez, Pepe Negro and our ir-repressible class V ducky maestro, Jon Barker.

We had three objectives for this year's adventure. The first was to descend the Rio Maran, the spectacular tributary we discovered last year that rivals in profile the nearby Colca Canyon. Secondly, we wanted to paddle the upper reaches of the

Cotahuasi, including the difficult Aimana gorge, which was bypassed on our exploratory trip. Finally, we knew from our first trip that a potentially significant archeological discovery beckoned in Canon de Marpa- where ancient pre-Inca Huari culture ruins lined the river corridor. A lack of extra food last year inhibited extensive exploration, so this time we intended to map and photograph the ruins.

Virtually the entire town was on hand to greet Jon, Eva and I upon arrival in Marcabamba. After warm greetings from the mayor, we heard dire predictions from local fishermen of crazy rapids, unrunnable waterfalls, and our certain demise if we were to attempt a descent of the Canyon of the Maran. Although skeptical of their dire warnings, they did convince us to put in downstream at the nearby village of Lampa where we could find a route to bypass a long, unrunnable sieve in the canyon.

Descending late in the day on a



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# Rapids & Ruins & Rapids & Ruins & Rapids



Above: Jon Barker below the Cascades de Huanca Huanca.

trail too steep for burros, we were forced to shoulder our heavy boats into the canyon with the aid of two locals who graciously accepted our meager work offer. Loaded with ten days of food, boating gear, video and camera equipment, the boats each weighed at least 35 kilograms. Dismissing our friends in the dark after three hours of arduous boat hauling, we bivouacked high above the river, totally exhausted, engulfed by star-studded skies and the stark, moonlit desert.

The next morning we listened with trepidation and excited anticipation to the raging whitewater 200 m below as we continued our trek to the river. Sweating profusely in the hot desert sun, we slowly made our way around the unrunnable, 100 m long sieve the locals had warned us about. After a couple of 20 m boat rappels, we finally reached the water's edge at mid-day.

My immediate reaction was that the locals were right, we were in over our heads! Peering down the canyon all I could see was vertical, limestone walls and kilometers of

boulder-choked class V rapids. Once we left the security of the trail there would be no way out until **Puente Urchubamba**, approximately 30 kms downstream. From our 1:50,000 scale topographic map we calculated an average gradient of 50 meters/kilometer (250 feet/mile) around the Pampa de Lampa immediately downstream. The only saving grace was a user-friendly flow of 25-35 cubic meters/second (800-1000 cubic feet/second), perfect for an unknown, exploratory first descent.

During the first five days we traveled one, three, eight, three and

two kilometers per day, respectively. Progress was slow as we cautiously scouted, portaged or ran drop after drop. The fabulous pool-drop rapids had all the requisite challenges for a great class V run: waterfalls, explosive ramps, and continuous, technical moves through narrow, boulder-choked constrictions. Repeatedly consulting our topographic and geologic maps, we feared the ultimate nightmare: class VI rapids and unportagable cliffs, necessitating a long, arduous bailout from the depths of the canyon.

At the end of day three we had an anxious moment at the bottom of a tumultuous class V rapid. Tired and hesitant, but not wanting to carry her boat 100 m to camp, Eva decided to run a long complicated drop. Shoving off into the maelstrom, she successfully navigated the top before dropping into a turbulent river-wide hole. Ejected violently from the hole, she quickly rolled without realizing her helmet was missing.

Positioned downstream with a throw rope, I yelled to her, "Eva! Your helmet's gone! Where's your helmet?"

For a few moments, panic reigned. Fearing the helmet lost, we diligently searched the class II runoff below the rapid. To our great relief the helmet surfaced 50 m downstream in an eddy. Eva calmly paddled over to the helmet, placed it on top of her spray skirt, and returned to shore. Relaxing in camp that night, we decided to name this

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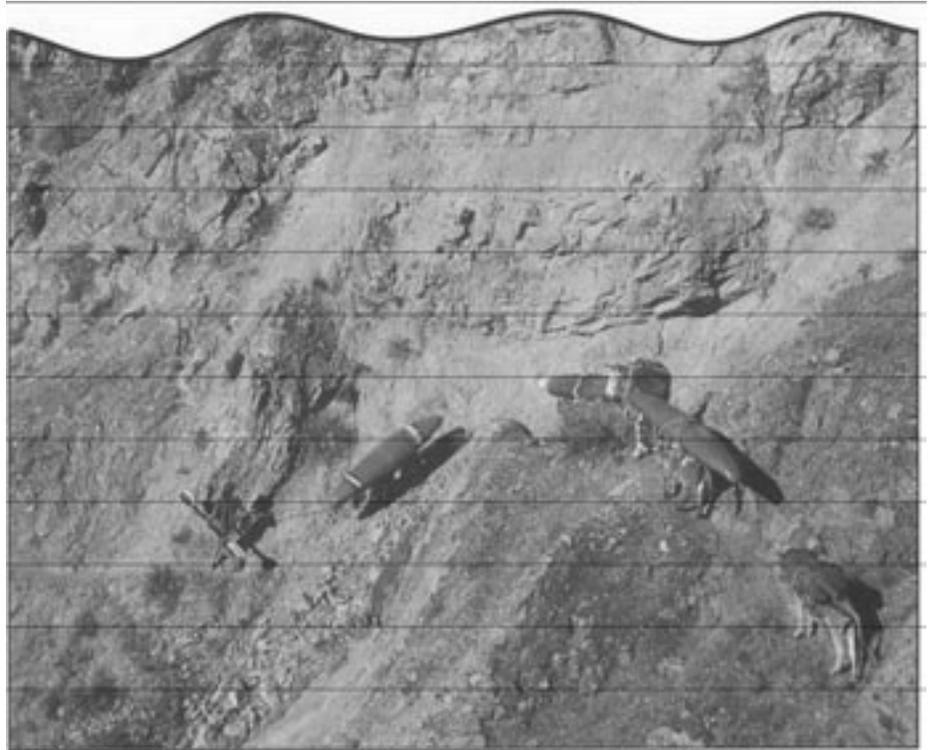
rapid "*Casi Desastre*" ("Almost Disaster") to commemorate her good fortune.

Barker and I were in our element, elated to find ourselves in the depths of this magnificent canyon. Eva, who at 22 years of age is already one of the best kayakers in South America, had never attempted a trip of this sort and was equally jazzed.

One rapid in particular got our juices flowing, appropriately named by Eva, "*Aprieta los cachetes!*" ("Tighten Your Buttocks"). Towering, curvaceous, overhung walls enclosed a rapid that offered no direct route except a blind, scary entry on the far left. Even after climbing up the vertical walls on both sides of the river, we could only see the 2 meter wide entry, a tight 90 degree turn immediately below, and the bottom pool. The middle section, the crux of the rapid, reverberated with the deafening sound of raging whitewater.

After an agonizing hour of deliberation, we decided to run the blind drop. The rapid may have been portagable high on the cliff, but would have required a grueling, roped climb out of the inner gorge and subsequent rappel back to the river. Focused and committed, we decided to exit the eddy at ten second intervals to avoid a pile up in case we blundered into a keeper hydraulic.

I went first and slipped through the narrow slot. After making a



quick draw to correct for the sharp turn, I accelerated down a ramp, crashed through a big hole, washed up on a pillow rock, and made the final left turn into the welcome flat water pool. Eva and Jon had similar runs, the three of us howling and happy to be safely below this dangerous cleft in the canyon. Running out of daylight, we camped immediately downstream near the eroded stone buttress of an ancient Indian bridge that once spanned the river. We decided to name our bivouac Campo Cruz in commemoration of the grave and cross that was

*Above: On the precipitous portage trail around the Cataracts of Sapia, Rio Cotahuasi.*

visible high above the river on the right.

According to our topographic map, the river changed names three times enroute to its confluence with the Cotahuasi. In the headwaters the river is known as the Rio Calpamayo. Below Lampa the river is called the Rio Huanca Huanca, finally changing to the Rio Maran below Puente Urchubamba at the confluence with the Rio Oyollo. The Rio Huanca Huanca section inspired the name of the most difficult portage of the trip, the boulder-choked Cascades de Huanca Huanca. This complex, kilometer-long maelstrom involved a three phase portage that took over 6 hours to complete safely.

The first phase mandated a long carry in the blazing sun, we returned to the river only after a rappel over house-sized boulders. Phase two involved an easy, but critical, do-or-die ferry across the river from left to right. After catching an eddy just above the lethal sieve, we had to exit our boats directly into a narrow slot.

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# Rapids & Ruins & Rapids & Ruins & Rapids



Above: Kurt Casey carrying his boat to the river upstream of the Cataracts of Sipia, Rio Cotahuasi.

We contorted our bodies to squeeze through to the other side. Unencumbered, we then climbed a short, steep pyramidal rock, hauled the boats up and over, and finally lowered them into the pool below.

The third phase of the portage was the most difficult and dangerous of all. A short pool led to a constricted boulder-strewn sieve on the

left that seemed to guarantee entrapment. The right side sported an explosive ramp landing directly onto an ugly, recently fallen rockpile. An impassable hotel-sized rock blocked the center of the rapid.

There was no doubt we were going to portage, but we had to resort to big wall climbing tactics to accomplish the task. After carefully scouting our route, we systematically shuttled our tired bodies and our gear with ropes from station to station, 20 m above the river, while tenaciously clinging to the limestone

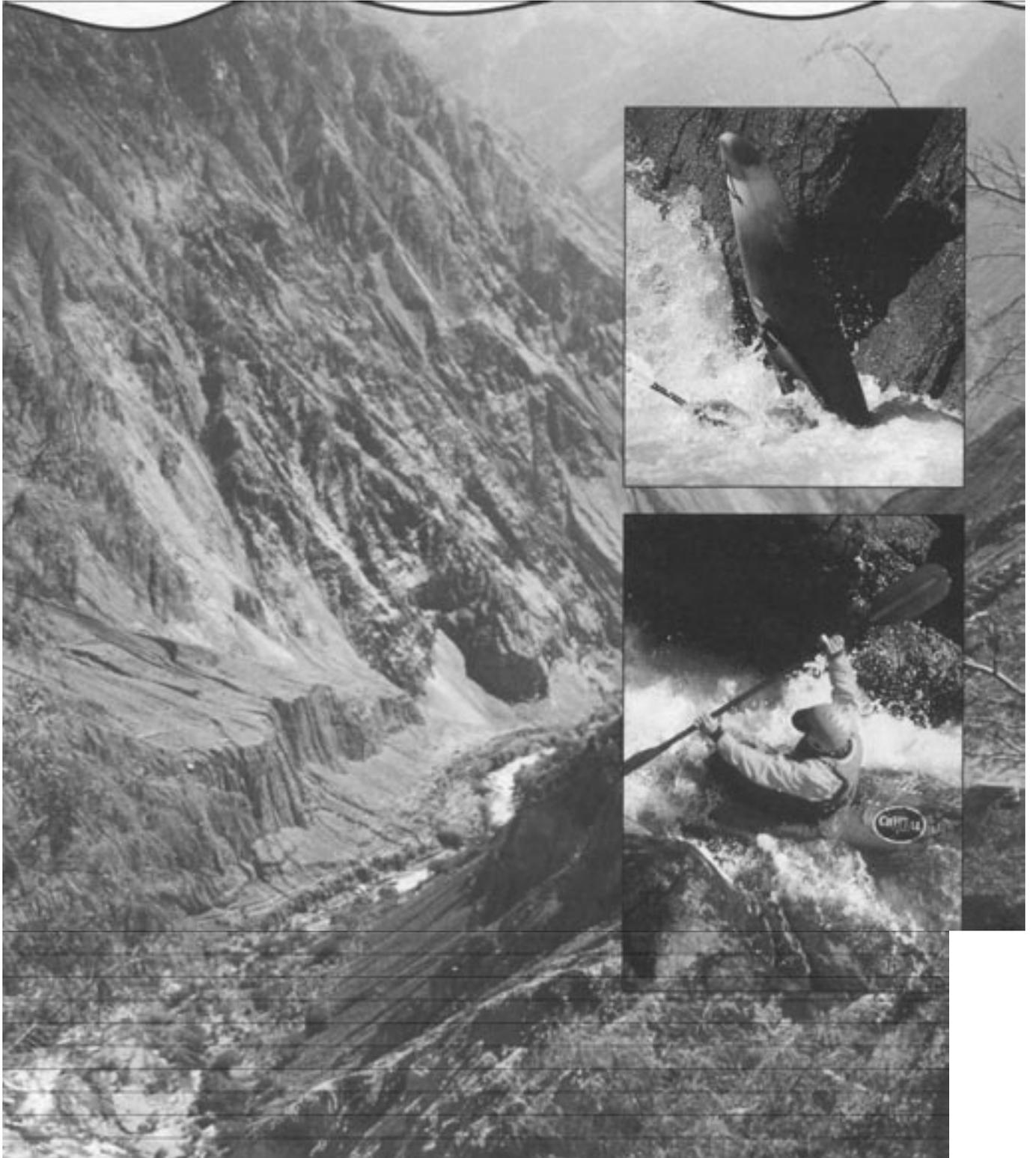
ledges. We set anchors, clipped in the gear and lowered Jon on belay. When Barker reached the river he was able to walk on a narrow ledge to a staging area. We then lowered everything down to him, finally completing the portage in the waning light of late afternoon.

Exhausted, but still in the midst of raging class V whitewater, we were lucky to find a tiny spit of sand shortly downstream. And so, after portaging one of the most outrageous class VI cascades I had ever seen, we made camp.

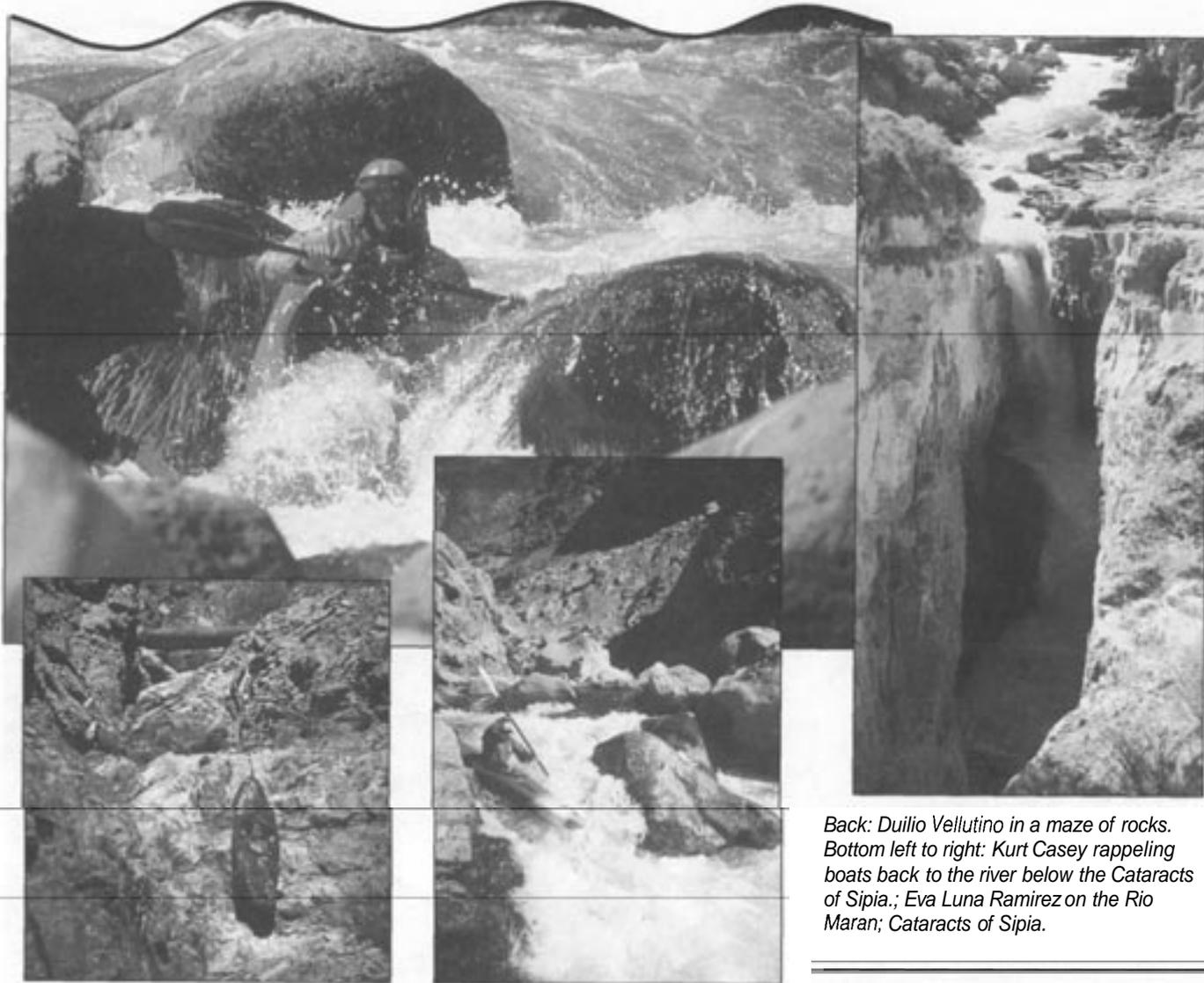
Dawn brought streams of Van Gogh light into the narrowest section of the canyon immediately below our camp. Towering 500 m walls rose above the river corridor forming a magnificent gash in the parched Altiplano. Condors riding early morning thermals dotted the narrow cerulean slit of sky above us. Paddling through "*El Paso del Condor*", all we could do was gaze in awe at the grandeur of the canyon. One of the wildest geothermal displays imaginable marked the end of this magnificent limestone gorge. Psychedelic multi-hued bacteria stained the canyon walls as hot water gurgled from the face of the rock.

Below the hot springs the riverbed changed from Mesozoic limestone to Quaternary gravels. Big beaches and wide open views of massive peaks accompanied the metamorphosis in geology. The whitewater eased accordingly with playful, continuous class IV boulder garden rapids down to the Cotahuasi. From the confluence we had a long paddle out, dodging freshwater shrimp traps, before reaching our take-out at Iquipi, 80 kms upstream from the Pacific Ocean.

After such a great warm-up, we were ready to join our *compadres* in Cotahuasi, a beautiful Andean highland village located fourteen hours north of Arequipa. Visions of centuries old Spanish architecture, llamas sauntering through winding cobblestone streets, and the timeless faces of descendants who endured the onslaught of the Spanish conquistadors remain indelibly etched in my mind. Emotions ran high with warm greet-



# Rapids & Ruins & Rapids & Ruins & Rapids



*Back: Duilio Vellutino in a maze of rocks. Bottom left to right: Kurt Casey rappeling boats back to the river below the Cataracts of Sipia.; Eva Luna Ramirez on the Rio Maran; Cataracts of Sipia.*

ings from the locals who remembered us from last year's expedition.

The police station, pock-marked by bullet holes, was a grim reminder of Peru's recent battle to subdue terrorism. Fortunately, government forces have triumphed and tranquility now reigns here and in most remote areas of Peru. In fact, in response to the publicity surrounding the mapping agency's findings, we learned that Peru's popular President, Alberto Fujimori, had visited the town via helicopter just the week before.

Arriving in Cotahuasi ahead of the rest of the group, Duilio, Dave and Kurt organized logistics, finished preliminary reconnaissance and then successfully completed the first descent of the spectacular,

horseshoe-shaped Aimana gorge that surrounds the Pampa de Aimana.

The chasm along with the entire upper Cotahuasi is inundated with Quaternary volcanic ash deposited during a series of violent eruptions from the Valley of the Volcano's, the arid, volcanic plateau that separates the Colca and Cotahuasi watersheds. Recent rumblings from nearby Nevado Solimana have spewed hot ash over Nevado Ampato, melting its snowcap and causing the ground to shift, thus revealing the corpse of a 500 year Inca girl who was buried on a ceremonial platform on top of the mountain.

Located directly below Cotahuasi, the Aimana gorge presents a formidable challenge because of a mandatory portage at the top of

the canyon around a class VI cascade. Last year we were so intimidated by the logistics that we decided to bypass it entirely. Over a three day period this year, Duilio, Dave and Kurt completed two descents of this precipitous canyon using burros as kayak shuttles. After portaging out of the inner canyon via a steel cable suspension bridge, they returned to the river via steep switch backs, spent the next day paddling the canyon.

The rest of us joined them on the second run. Mungui Rapid, named after a small village high above the north side of the river at the confluence with the Rio Pampamarca, turned out to be the toughest drop in the gorge. A long, complicated entry with tight, techni-

# Rapids & Ruins & Rapids & Ruins & Rapids

cal moves culminated with some very big reversals. Eva provided the most exciting theatrics during her descent. After tipping midway through the rapid, she floated through a boulder sieve upside down, finally rolling up just above a big hole at the bottom.

Arguably the most spectacular part of the river lies a few kms below the Aimana gorge at the awe-inspiring Cataract's of Sipia. Here the river plunges over a series of three 50 m falls, carving a magnificent gash through a massive block of titled Mesozoic limestone. We spent a day and night next to the raging cataracts, watching the murky canyon walls bathed in the silvery iridescence of a full moon. The river sounded as if we were sleeping next to the tracks of a out-of-control freight train roaring over an abyss!

As we readied our equipment for the portage, logistics *maestro* Rene organized his burros for our trek around the cataracts. Living a peaceful life in paradise with his family one kilometer upstream from the cataracts, this resourceful and happy-go-lucky fellow was our key man on the Cotahuasi. Some problems last year made it apparent that these sometimes ornery pack animals would be a vital element to the success of our expedition.

I asked Rene, "What do you think about us running the river that flows by your house?" He smiled warmly and replied, "Incredible...super hermoso!" ("Incredible...very beautiful")!

Leaving the river behind, Rene patiently led the burros up steep switch backs. We followed single file on the vertiginous meter wide trail, slowly ascending the inner gorge of the Cotahuasi. The caravan provided an amusing clash of cultures with our colorful plastic kayaks securely tied to the backs of these timeless beasts of burden. Walking in the airy realm of the condor, we found ourselves staring down at these magnificent raptors as they soared above the narrow cleft!

Five hours of trekking brought us to a terrace overlooking the inner gorge. To avoid a long hike to the river near Chaupo, a small village three hours away, we chose to return

to the river via a "short cut" rappel back into the inner gorge, just below the cascades. Locals told us that a break in the cliffs allowed direct descent down a crumbly talus slope on

a "fishermen's trail" leading to the river. Led by climbers Black and Helfenstein, we miscalculated the amount of time necessary for our precarious descent back into the can-



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yon. Running out of daylight, we had to descend vertical cliffs of boulder-packed mud in the dark.

We finally stored our boating gear 200 m above the river underneath an overhang. Exhausted, hungry and dehydrated, we made our way down to the river by 11:00 PM. The next morning Kurt and I returned to our emergency bivouac to finish the multi-pitch rappel of the boats. After an hour of rope work our boats were back on the river, having survived the most spectacular, demanding portage imaginable.

After descending the talus slope we were able to easily hike back upstream along the shore to the base of the cataracts. Gazing up river, we were rewarded with stunning, misty views of the lowest cascade, crashing into the tranquil pool below. With big trout lurking in the depths, the pool was a favorite with local fishermen. They were quite adept at catching these fish on jury-rigged tackle

attached to tin can reels.

We heard rumors from the locals that the river was flat below Chaupo. It was...for about 500 meters. Below this pool a massive pile of debris at the mouth of Quebrada Andamayo choked the river and marked the beginning of days of non-stop whitewater. Appropriately, we named this long, complicated rapid "*Barro Rojo*" ("Red Mud"). And we named this an entire section of the river "[The Locals Call It] Flatwater Canyon" in honor of the erroneous information we received.

Tragedy is an integral part of the lives of some people who live along the Cotahuasi. Last year we became aware of the plight of the people of Velinga, a tiny pueblo situated on a terrace high above the inner gorge. We returned this year to find that only seven families remain, survivors of the Chagas disease which has decimated the population.

Caused by a parasite transmitted by the bite of the vinchuca beetle, this fatal disease has wrecked havoc in the village. We brought a humble offering of clothes, medical supplies and photos from last year's visit. In return, we were enthusiastically greeted by women, who generously shared fresh fruit from their garden.

Other people along the river also shared their bounty with us. We have fond memories of being fed fresh fruit by the people of Quechaula who came out in droves to greet us. We turned an impromptu lunch into a riverside party as Dave and Duilio paddled kids across the river on top of their boats, while the rest of us drank the *not-so*-vintage wine offered by our friends.

As we paddled downstream through the towering portals of the Canon de Marpa, I felt as if we were heading back in time. Dike-laden walls of billion-year-old Precambrian basement rock, the oldest part of Peru's Coastal Batholith, enclosed the home of pre-Inca people from the Huari culture who dominated the area from 400-1200 AD. Cotahuasi in Quechua means "house on the hill" and undoubtedly refers to the superb flights of agricultural terraces and stone foundations that stand sentinel on the steep contoured slopes overlooking the river.

Life was sustained in this arid climate by sophisticated gravity-fed irrigation systems that delivered water from springs high above these terraces. Natural cavities in the canyon walls entomb human skeletons and clothing, providing clues to their burial rites and reverence for the dead. Inspired by the surroundings, we couldn't help but conjecture about the demise of this ancient civilization.

Archeologists believe the Huari culture developed during the Middle Horizon period. Their well organized and prosperous society rose in conjunction with the Tiahuanaco culture, centered on the Bolivian shores of Lake Titicaca. Although the relationship is not clear, some theories suggest that the Huari functioned as a strategic military out-



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post, while the Tiahuanaco served as the political and ceremonial center. Gazing upon cantilevered walkways, inlaid roads, and the defensible terraces lining the river corridor, it is easy to imagine the remote Cotahuasi canyon forming an impenetrable fortress.

Some archeologists suggest that the canyon was utilized as an agricultural center for people living on the harsh Altiplano. Staple crops such as maize, tubers (potatoes, yucas) and local grains (quinoa) were probably grown in its benign climate-as is the case today. However, a large proportion of terraces formerly used for cultivation are now abandoned, both here and throughout the Andes. One explanation may be that critical fluctuations of rainfall and/or the lowering of the water table reduced the supply of irrigation water. Another possibility may stem from the harmful accumulation of salts and other minerals in the soil from such a highly evaporative environment.

The Huari culture was already in decline by the 1200's and may have been peacefully assimilated by the Incas during the consolidation of their empire. Although health conditions prior to the Spanish invasion of the New World appear to have been good, syphilis and a serious and sometimes fatal skin disease known as *verruca peruviana* were endemic. The health of sixteenth century inhabitants may have been threatened by the introduction of certain European diseases- particularly influenza, smallpox and measles, which ravaged indigenous populations in the Andes and throughout the New World. Regardless of the cause, the terraces along the Cotahuasi have never been reclaimed for settlement.

After returning to civilization, we heard a worrisome rumor that engineers had discovered the Cotahuasi's Cataract's of Sipia and inspected the site for its hydroelectric potential. As a consequence, we have decided to actively promote in Peru the creation of Parque Nacional Cotahuasi that will include the Rio Maran.

The geographic and cultural sig-

nificance of the canyon, combined with the world class whitewater, is unique and deserves World Heritage status. We want to present our case to President Fujimori, in hope that the Peruvian government will see the wisdom in protecting these stark, magnificent canyons from development.

The engineers may be dreaming of the kilowatt hour potential of the rivers flowing through these deep, mysterious canyons. But our dreams are of a far grander scale. In fact, all we can do is think about going back.

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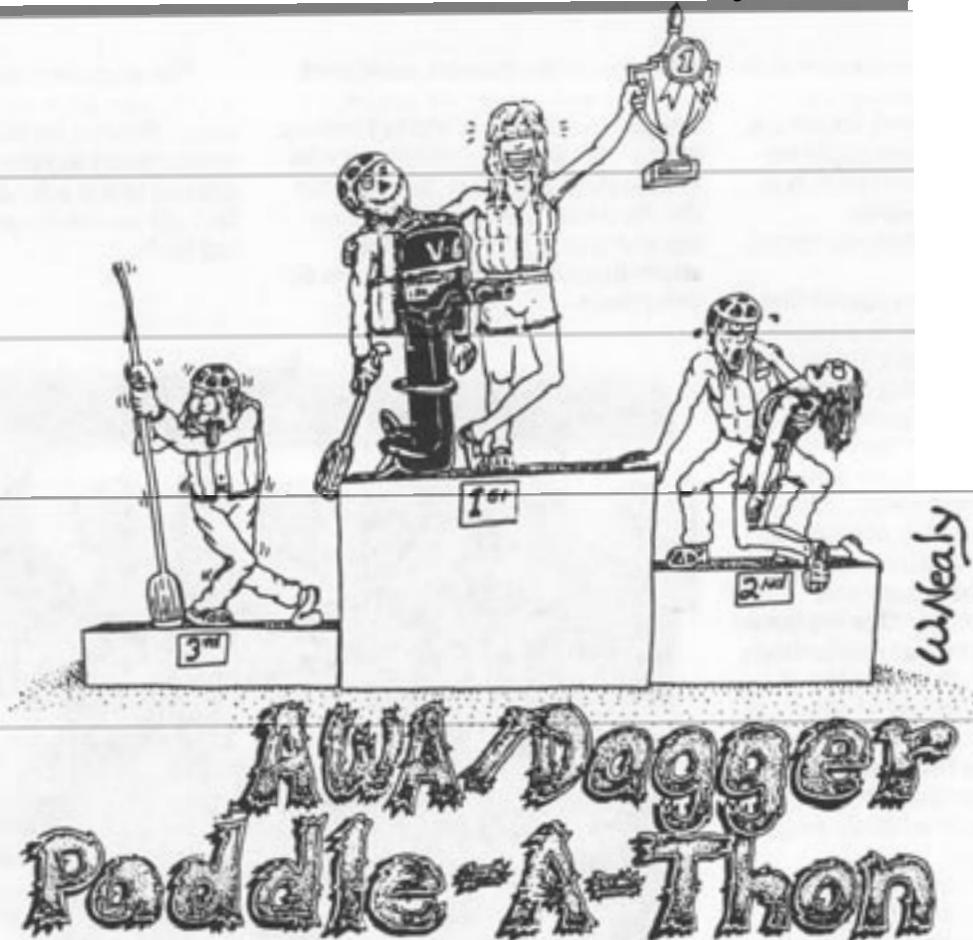
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## Update on Upper Yough River, Maryland

by Steve Taylor

### I. 1996 Flow Schedule

As of this writing, the release schedule for Saturdays and special events is not officially set. There has been an unexpected delay due to a recent change in authority from Karl Christensen and his DNR gang at the lake (aka The Fanny Patrol) to our DNR "friends" in Annapolis (the Water Resources guys, whom we are getting to know all too well from the ongoing hearing process (see II. below)). However, the tentative schedule for Saturday and special releases is as follows.

### Tentative Saturdays, Holiday and Special Releases

- Friday May 3 (time 9:00 to 12:00 instead of 10:00 to 1:00)
- Saturday May 4 (time 9:00 to 12:00 instead of 10:00 to 1:00) (note: May 3 is Cheat River Race, May 4 is Cheat Festival)
- Saturday May 25 (Saturday before Monday Memorial Day)
- Saturday, June 1
- Thursday, July 4
- Saturday, July 6
- Saturday, July 20
- Saturday, Aug 3
- Thursday, Aug 29 Upper Yough Race (6 hours of water)
- Saturday, Aug 31 (Saturday before Monday Labor Day)
- Mon-Fri, Sept 30 to Oct 4 (Week after Gauley Festival)

In addition, all Fridays and Mondays from April 1 to October 31 will have 10:00 to 1:00 releases. At present, if the lake gets too low, Saturday and Monday releases can be canceled (see below)

In addition, as part of the ongoing hearing process, the following releases have been requested:

- Saturday June 22
- Wednesday July 31 Slots of Luck Race (4 hours)
- Saturday Aug 22

Due to the large crowds last year on holiday weekends, we are asking for more Saturdays in the hope of spreading out the use. In addition, as of this writing, the procedure for fish cooling releases is the same as last year (see AWA Journal June/July 1995).

Watch the AWA homepage (<http://www.awa.org>) for an update and a firm setting of dates.

### II. Negotiations Continue

As of this writing, we still have not had a meeting to discuss last year's operations and our recommended changes to the present operations and the power company permit. Over the winter AWA produced a complete water budget analysis showing that more water goes to fish versus whitewater. As consequence, AWA and the Upper outfitters are asking for essentially no cancellation of Whitewater Releases in the summer. In addition, AWA and Outfitters are asking for 1) more Saturday releases (it's been crowded from the limited number of Saturdays), 2) converting weekend releases for fish to whitewater release (two hours to three hours), 3) a more prompt notification of fish releases (like their computer talking to ours) and 4) an annual evaluation of operations (instead of paying lawyer fees to keep talking). Any questions, thoughts or complaints, call Steve Taylor (301-299-8426).



## PERCEPTION NAMES SARAH FAULKNER LEFF RIVER

## CONSERVATIONIST OF THE YEAR

Sarah Faulkner Leff of the Rivers Alliance of Connecticut has been named the "River Conservationist of the Year" for 1995 by Perception, Inc. Leff was recognized for her efforts in the formation of the River Management Program and Rivers Advisory Committee, which coordinated the efforts of many river conservation groups. In the last six years, four achievements have put the River Management Program at the forefront of river conservation in the nation:

**State Protected Rivers:** A new state program to designate certain river segments as special, natural areas. The program conveys a permanent, high level of protection against development to those segments.

**Rivers Restoration:** A strong funded program to encourage restoration of river segments to a more natural condition where the rivers have been degraded, channelized, or otherwise damaged by development.

**Multiple Use Rivers:** A voluntary program by which communities can join together to plan and manage jointly held river segments. Once adopted, a management plan is binding on the communities and the state.

**Rivers Assessment:** An automated database of river information that provides valuable information on natural resources.

Ms. Leff has been instrumental in facilitating these programs.

"These achievements merit recognition," stated Bill Masters, President of Perception. "Protecting natural areas is a sound part of our business ethic, and is simply the right thing to do."

**SARAH FAULKNER LEFF**  
Photo by Paul Cryan

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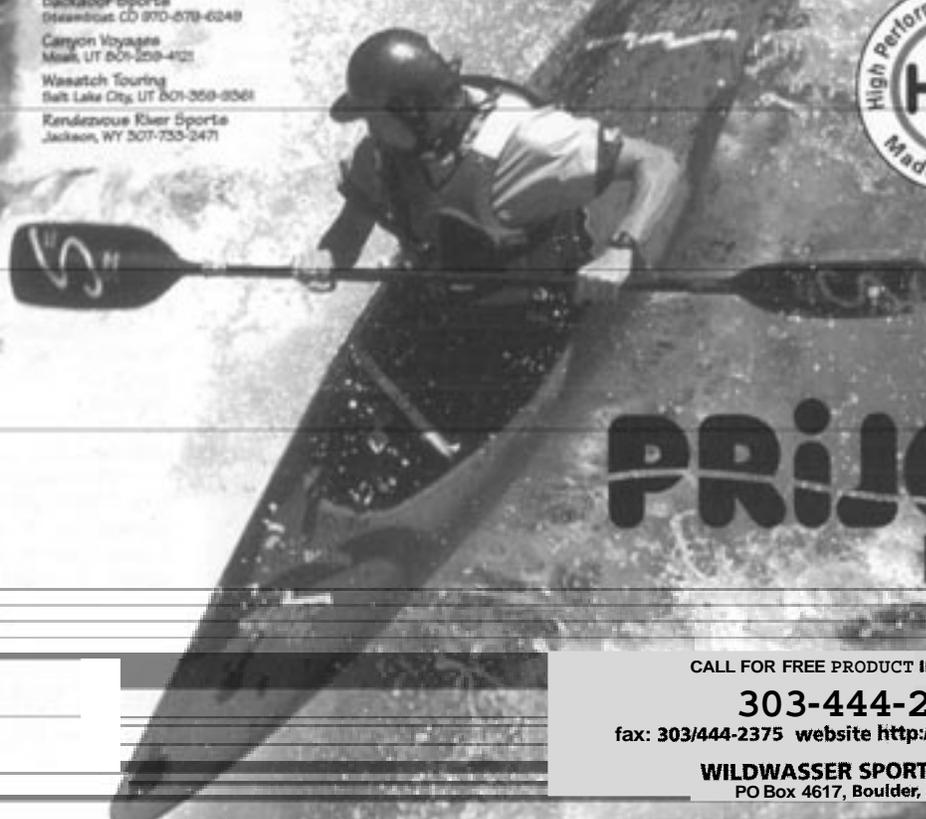
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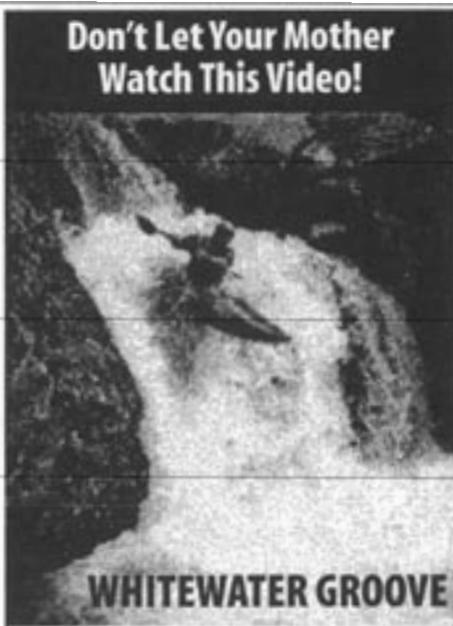
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# You Know the Water is High When.....

by Sean Buckley  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

- ...you can hear small boulders rolling down the river bed beneath you.
- ...you need an amphibious vehicle to get to the river.
- ...you eddy out in someone's swimming pool.
- ...you have to peel off the surf waves to dodge freshly fallen trees.
- ...to boat scout means hanging on to a convenient tree....
- ...the dead cow floating in the eddy is too fresh for the buzzards.
- ...you beat your shuttle driver to the take out.
- ...you can mystery move a Freefall on an eddy line.
- ...the 8 mile paddle in (with small riffles described in the guidebook) takes ten minutes and has 6 foot surfing waves.
- ...you crest a wave and discover two railroad ties and a 55-gallon drum in the trough.
- ...the risk of running the rapids, without scouting, is lower than risk from the newly homeless and enraged copperheads on the banks.
- ...someone nick-named Psycho tells you not to put in.
- ...there's already a Wal-mart in the only eddy on the river.
- ...you can't run right because that's where the logs stack up...you can't run left because that's where the boat parts stack up...
- ...people plan paddling trips from Aspen to Moab!
- ...you hope the powerlines you are ducking under are not live.
- ...you come back a week later on a recovery mission to find your kayak hanging in a tree.
- ...you don't have to take down you boat from on top of the car.....it floats off.
- ...when you can paddle into your camp kitchen....

# ODE TO THE CHEAT

My love must lie alone tonight  
-down the valley, out of sight.  
Her mood full of indifference.  
See she's been raped by thousands of men for hundreds of years  
with pick, and shovel, and blast.  
And they paid each other handsomely for the "right".

So now she is barren.  
Speaks of poison to all.  
And she lets me know  
I am just another man.  
And she'd rather lie alone tonight.

Jim Snyder  
Albright, West Virginia

# Waiting

He waits for the changes that come every year.  
He waits for the snow to melt and run fast and white.  
He waits for the ice to thaw from the creeks and for the waterfalls to lose their icy crowns.  
He waits for the time to slide into his boat and wrestle with the skirt, He waits for the rush of adrenaline as he flies over ledges, waterfalls and through the tiny slots.  
He waits for the time that makes him feel young and alive,  
The old man stares through the window over the snow encrusted land,  
And he waits...-

Pete Fey '96  
Milford, PA

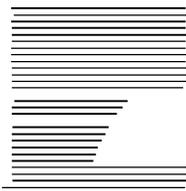


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# THE GOLD MEDAL

BY JONATHAN HATZ

**F**or Abu Kaboum, the scariest point on any mission was the moment he picked up his orders. It was the one time he had to communicate with his superiors, the one time he could be exposed as a "Palestinian terrorist." He hated the term—it was so melodramatic. He preferred "homeless."

Walking swiftly through the crowded streets of bombed-out Beirut, heart pounding, he spotted the smaller man striding quickly toward him, wearing the red-checked keffiyeh. As they passed, their bodies brushed, and a tiny piece of paper was thrust into his hand. Clutching his nation's destiny in his fist, Kaboum ducked into the basement of a hollow hulk that used to be a five star hotel. Hands shaking, he unfolded the document. It read:

XXZYL RTPBH  
FPCLK WYVBX SDPLY

Code. Abu burned it with his fuse lighter and snorted the ashes.

Hours later, sweating in his tent, he finished the translation and shook his head in dismay. The message, in clear, said:

DO WHAT I  
TOLD YOU

Why me? Why me? Abu lamented. Why does bad shit happen to good people? For his worst fears had been realized. He was going to America. On a suicide mission.

He had been ordered to present himself at the offices of **McBride-Omaha Chemical Company**, the whitewater technology and pharmaceuticals conglomerate headquartered in Central New England. There he was to obtain work and acquire sufficient whitewater skills to win a gold medal at the Atlanta Olympics. "If you don't come home gold, don't come home," his leader had said. There was no margin for error.

Two weeks later he and his trusted co-conspirator Ali "Spiderman" **Ar-Rachnid** found themselves hanging by their shirt collars from Mark Chopper's meathook hands. They were light men, under 150 pounds, and the massive biker had no problem dangling the two of them,

their feet  
barely touching  
the ground.

"Caught these guys looking into the factory window. Any suggestions?" Chopper asked Theodore "Bam Bam" McBride, President of the Corporation.

Bam-Bam, though nearly bald, was having a bad hair day. "Take them out and shoot them," he said grumpily.

Chopper turned to go, when Ali panicked and screamed, "Wait! We have marketable skills!"

It turned out the Arabs were past-masters with explosives. Abu had majored in agriculture and minored in petroleum chemistry at University of Baghdad. As Chopper noted later, "Boo knew oil and fertilizer." Ali was a natural born alchemist who could turn the contents of the average Cincinnati refrigerator into an international incident. Having talked their way into Chopper's heart (for the big man loved anything that went boom) they spilled their guts like wine, revealing the intimate details of their mission.

"We are the PLO Whitewater Team. We must win gold in Atlanta, or die trying."

"Now let me get this straight. You want us to train you in slalom racing?"

"Yes," Ali replied. "Teach us C-2. In return I will show you how to make bad cottage cheese and Italian dressing into spiffy little hand grenade."

"You got a deal," the biker replied, eyes gleaming at the thought of one curd, exploding.

"Hold it." Bam-Bam interjected. "How much whitewater experience have you guys had?"

"Never seen a river." Ali replied.

"I have paddled a kayak!" Abu stated proudly, puffing out his chest.

"What class rapids?"

"The Red Sea."

As Bam-Bam slapped his forehead in dismay, Omaha staggered in. It was 4:30 p.m. and he was just regaining conscious-

ness from the previous night's overdose. He nodded to the swarthy strangers and offered to share his standard hangover

breakfast: a quart of pork fried rice and a pitcher of tequila sunrise. The two PLO operatives respectfully declined, citing religious reasons.

Later, over hash and pizza, Abu told his life story. "I was born in refugee camp near Bint Jubayl in southern Lebanon, but I grew up on the outskirts of Bint Jubayl in Southern Lebanon. One day Red Cross delivers food to camp. Boxes of cereal. Wheaties. On the box is Jon Luggbill. I know right then my destiny is to win whitewater gold for the Palestinian Homeland."

"Lebanon's mostly desert, isn't it?" Omaha asked.

"Yes. Particularly area around Bint Jubayl, where I was born and grew up. Conditions are ideal for beach volleyball, lousy for kayaking. It did rain, once, but I missed it. So I decided to get American paddler pen pal. I wrote to Canoe Magazine. They get me Jake Reed. He wanted to be mountain climber and a river guide. He lived in Iowa. No mountains. No whitewater. And he couldn't read Arabic. After a while he stopped writing. And when our Leader called for volunteers to win the Atlanta gold, I said hallelujah."

While Abu talked he played with Omaha's disposable lighter, wrapping it with tape and layer upon layer of wooden matches. He tossed it to Chopper who caught the device, admired its workmanship.

"Use it to shout fire in a crowded theatre. Just Bic your flick. You like?" Abu asked.

Chopper nodded. "Adorable," he said.

"Good. Keep it. Teach me to paddle like Luggbill."

Easier said than done. The next day the two Palestinians spent the morning listening to Chopper teach "land class," a chalk-talk about fundamentals: bow, stern, capsizes, cardiopulmonary resusci-

tation. Then he explained the fundamentals of slalom racing.

"These two hanging poles are called a "gate." Paddle between them, don't touch them, and don't miss any gates. Best time wins. That's all there is to it."

"No problem," Abu nodded. He understood.

That afternoon Chopper decided they were ready to get baptized. He took the two freedom fighters to his favorite slalom practice rapid, a long twisting, bumping, grinding Class Three. It featured a big midriver hole at the top known as The Mouth and another at the bottom, called The Hole.

"What is name of rapid?" Ali asked.

"Dallas Cowboy Cheerleader." Chopper replied.

"Ah yes." Ali grinned. "Ass seen on TV."

The young foreigners were awed by the roaring power of the river. After a quick scout and a short lecture on river strategy—"Paddlelike hell!"—Chopper pointed Ali downstream and shoved him off the rock. Ali paddled his kayak directly into The Mouth, where he promptly capsized and wet exited. As he held onto his boat and washed downstream Chopper could hear him shouting something in a foreign language.

"What does that mean?" he asked Abu.

"It means, I can't swim." Abu replied.

"Oh. You can't, or he can't?" Chopper asked dumbly, as Ali Ar-Rachnid's body disappeared into The Hole. A few minutes later the bruised and chastised terrorist hauled himself ashore.

"I'll take volleyball!" he spluttered.

A month passed. The Cheerleader punished Abu and Ali mercilessly. She cracked their boats and their ribs, lacerated their drysuits and their skins. Ali was a hope-

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# THE GOLD MEDAL

"We need to know the PLO National Anthem," he said. "In case Abu Kaboum wins gold."

lessly poor pad.

lder. but Abu improved to the point where he could clean two downstream gates in succession. Chopper was delighted with his progress.

"Boo, boy," he said, calling Abu by his new American nickname. "It's time to go public. Tell 'em who you are, and why you're here."

Abu nodded. He was busy siphoning gasoline into beer bottles and stuffing the ends with bits of funky old polypro. "Molotov sixpack," he explained.

Six weeks before the Games were scheduled to begin, Kenny Omaha summoned several hundred sportswriters to a nationally televised press conference. There, in true Gonzo style, he declared that Abu Kaboum would enter the men's K-1, coached by Mark Chopper and sponsored by Y. Arafat Promotions. He then started screaming incoherently about rats and snakes, and the networks cut to commercial.

The announcement that the PLO was sending a team to the Olympics consternated Congress and nearly ignited World War III. Newt Sandwich introduced a bill making kayaking with intent a felony. The French threatened to boycott the Games and resume underground nuclear testing beneath Paris. The only nation that didn't seem to care was

Israel. The Israeli Minister of Sport noted that the PLO was only entering one event, the Men's C-1, and Israel did not compete in whitewater. "If some meshugah Palestinian wants to drown himself, who are we to argue?" he asked.

The logic of this position was not lost on the International Olympic Committee. It decided to allow the PLO team to compete by a vote of four to one, with 146 abstentions. Kaboum was in.

A week later Abu came to McBride's communal dinner table grinning like a dung beetle at lunch. "The Olympic Committee called. They want me to lead the torch-lighting ceremony."

"That's wonderful!" Arden said breathlessly. Chopper's ravishingly

beautiful girlfriend flung her arms around Abu. Kissing him wetly in the ear, she asked, "What does the ceremony consist of?"

"It is a very spectacular nighttime event," Abu replied. "I am to dress all in white, wearing a white flowing robe and a tall white hood. I will carry a wooden cross into Atlanta. When I get to the city line Senator Dole will light the cross and I will run to the stadium carrying the blazing cross, following the same path taken by one of your great military leaders, a General Sherman."

Chopper, a former Klansman, recalled just enough Civil War history to know that this was a bad idea. He was tactful but firm. "Its a fine honor, but as your coach I really cannot allow you to distract yourself from the race. You'll need all your concentration to survive—I mean, to paddle the gates at a Gold Medal pace."

"But... But..."

"Just say no."

"OK. No." Looking crestfallen, Abu tossed a kernel of couscous into the candle, where it made a soft pop.

Two weeks before the start of the Games Arden took a frantic phone call for Bam Bam. She found the physicist in the toilet, downloading the bowl of black bean soup he'd eaten the previous night.

"Come out this instant," she ordered. "Its Peter Perrier, from the International Olympic Committee. He's in charge of protocol and needs to speak to you right now."

Perrier? Protocol? BamBam broke into a cold sweat as he pulled up his Sonic the Hedgehog undies and reached for the phone.

After a few minutes of diplomatic pleasantries Perrier got to the point. "We need to know the PLO National Anthem," he said. "In case Abu Kaboum wins gold."

Musically, McBride was clueless. He tried to sidetrack the protocol officer. "Don't worry," he said, "The way he paddles you won't be playing it."

"Please try to cooperate," Perrier beseeched. "The orchestra has to learn 151 anthems, and it needs a week to rehearse."

"I'll call you back," McBride promised.

That night McBride popped the question. "Is there any chance Boo can medal?"

Chopper cringed and shook his head. "He'll be lucky to finish. He swam twice this afternoon."

But Omaha smiled, wiggled his fin-

gers in the sign language for injectible drugs. "Better boating through chemistry."

"Then we'll have to ask Abu to name that tune."

The consequences of winning staggered Kaboum's imagination.

"Win?" he asked. "If I win do I get endorsements? Paid autograph sessions? Perhaps my own line of sweat socks?"

Chopper nodded excitedly. "That's right, Boo. Fame. Fortune. A river of money. The PLO National Anthem, heard around the world."

Nothing in the Palestinian's guerrilla training had prepared him to deal with the question of a national anthem.

"Anthem? Who needs an anthem? We don't even have a country."

"You gotta have an anthem. Its diplomacy."

"Then we need the right song. Something that captures the spirit of the moment. Maybe the theme from Rocky?"

"Your call, Boo. You win, you get to hear whatever damn song you want."

Peter Perrier had spent the past three years catering to the needs and whims of athletes and heads of state from a hundred fifty one countries, and he thought he was beyond surprise.

"You're quite sure?" he asked, when McBride called the next day.

"Absolutely positive."

"Then the athlete gets what he wants. If Mr. Kaboum wins, the orchestra will play 'Revolution' by The Beatles."

Abu picked up his first two endorsement offers during the week. One was from a candy company, which wanted to market a chocolate and peanut confection called the Ak-Bar. He turned it down. The second was from the Unabomber, who ordered the New York Times sports editor to print his thirty-two thousand word kayaking manifesto "Desert Gold."

As the Games drew closer Abu Kaboum became increasingly nervous, and the McBride-Omaha Olympic Coaching Team discovered that both he and Ali Ar-Rachnid suffered from compulsive bomb-making. Kaboum was usually too tired to fool around with explosives after three workouts a day. But Ali had flatly refused to get back into a boat after his last encounter with the Cheerleader's Mouth, and he had a lot of time on his hands. Around him things were forever going bang, and after he attached a limpet mine to Abu's kayak Chopper insisted that his lone contestant use a Kevlar boat. "Faster, lighter, and shrapnel resistant too!" he explained. Kaboum, eyebrows smoking, nodded in helpless agreement. Eventually Ar-Rachnid got his hands on the nitroglycerine tablets McBride took for his heart, and nearly blew Bam Bam's tongue off. After that they put the lone former

member of the PLO Whitewater Team under 24 hour surveillance. This cost everybody a lot of sleep and messed up their sex lives and made them cranky. Let the Games begin, already.

The good people of Georgia had blown about seventeen million dollars building an artificial whitewater course on the Ocoee River. For that kind of money you should get some rapids, and they did. The boulders in the riverbed were jagged and edgy, not smooth like natural river stones. The result was bizarre waves, sticky holes and a very bad place to swim. The fiends who laid out the slalom course took full advantage of the surging eddies and hideous holes the engineers had created. As a result the gate placements had names like Gates of Hell, Pearly Gates and the dreaded Bill Gates. It was a brutal course, built to test the best in the world, and the moment Chopper saw it he knew Kaboum had no chance. He should forget about trying to "slalom" anything and just run the rapids down the middle, taking whatever chicken routes he could get to. Even so, he would be lucky to stay in his boat.

Faced with the sick feeling that his athlete might actually die during the course of the run, Chopper adopted a policy of denial. He decided not to let Kaboum do any practice runs, or even scout the rapids till the race started. In this way he could at least guarantee that the young terrorist would start the race. Whether he finished was up to the river gods to decide.

"No sweat, Boo," Chopper reported after he returned from scouting the Olympic venue. "If you've seen one rapid you've seen them all. You can run this river blindfolded. In fact, it would be a hell of a stunt if you did!"

The day of the race Chopper did indeed keep Kaboum blindfolded till starting time. The top drop was called **InterrorGates** and the moment Kaboum saw it he blanched. The Ocoee course made Dallas Cowboy Cheerleader look like his kid sister. Though Kaboum had developed some shreds of boat control and a halfway decent river roll, there was no way he could even begin to deal with the monster water crashing through the artificial rapid. He turned away from the river in despair.

Chopper put one massive arm around his shoulders, to encourage and, if need be, to shove. "C'mon, Boo! You can't quit now. You're the only Olympic athlete officially endorsed by the Unabomber. Go for it! Remember Munich!!"

Behind him he could hear the crowd egging him on with a chorus of boos. "Boo! Boo! Boo!" they chanted, pelting him with eggs. Hearing the sound made his heart swell with pride. Adrenalin crackled like nitroglycerine in his veins.

Pride short-circuited his survival instinct. He stuffed himself into his boat, and when the gun went off so did he.

Chopper watched in amazement as Abu cleaned the first two gates in heavy water, and drove hard for Gates of Hercules. He punched the hole cleanly above the gates and sliced through without a touch. But he slid too low. He dug his paddle in to sweep into the hard left turn, and caught an edge. Instantly he capsized upstream. Incredibly, he rolled! Upright again he paddled frantically, struggling to regain momentum, to make the left ferry he had to have to stay in the race. Suddenly his boat came to a jarring stop and canted upstream. He was broached on a rock, and stuck fast!

Chopper could see Abu flailing at the water with his paddle, rocking his body from side to side, struggling to free the pinned boat. But nothing worked and he was losing precious seconds, and tilting further upstream. They would have to get him a line and pull him off, before he capsized and the current pinned him into his kayak. Chopper grabbed a lifejacket and a throw rope and started to run down the riverbank, when he saw a familiar figure emerge from the crowd downstream. It was Ali Ar-Rachnid. And he had something in his hand. Something round and familiar. Chopper's military training kicked in. Grenade!

Quicker than Chopper could say Jerusalem artichoke Ali pulled the pin with his teeth and lobbed the grenade underhand to the base of the rock where his teammate was pinned. Abu watched in horror as it bounced off his deck and rolled into the water. Knowing he was about to die he bent forward in a vain effort to kiss his ass goodbye. If he screamed, nobody heard. An instant later a geyser of water erupted all around him, and by the time it settled his boat was floating upside down in the rapid.

The spectators watched in stunned silence as the inverted hull swept into the current. Then, amazingly, a paddle appeared alongside the boat, held by two blackened hands. Convulsively, Abu levered himself upright. Even as Abu's face broke the water, Chopper heard **McBride** scream.

"My God! He's got a bombproof roll!!"

**Bleeding** from the

nose and ears, Abu looked like Wil-ey Coyote at the end of a Roadrunner cartoon. But his eyes glowed with crazed determination and a new-found lust to survive and to conquer. Paddling savagely, he attacked the slalom course like a pit bull on meth. Rocketing down the rapids he cleaned 19 gates, touched three and missed none. Finally he slid through **FumiGates** ("The Exterminator"), slumped exhausted over his paddle, and capsized. His race was over.

Powder-burned and bedraggled, Abu bailed out and swam his swamped kayak toward shore. He was rescued there by members of Team Bosnia. Behind them a hundred thousand spectators chanted his name: "Boo! Boo! Boo!"

Amid the deafening roar of the crowd, the six muscular Yugoslavians gently shoved Abu Kaboum's body head first into the cockpit of his boat. When it did not explode, they hoisted it to their shoulders like pallbearers and marched it under the Finish Line. The evil opening riff from John Lennon's guitar blared out of the public address system. Kaboum, face mashed against his bulkhead footbrace, thought the music sounded divine. But try as he might he could not understand why the crowd was chanting about the color of urine:

"Pee Yel-Low! Pee Yel-Low! Pee Yel-Low!"

© Jonathan Katz, February 4, 1996

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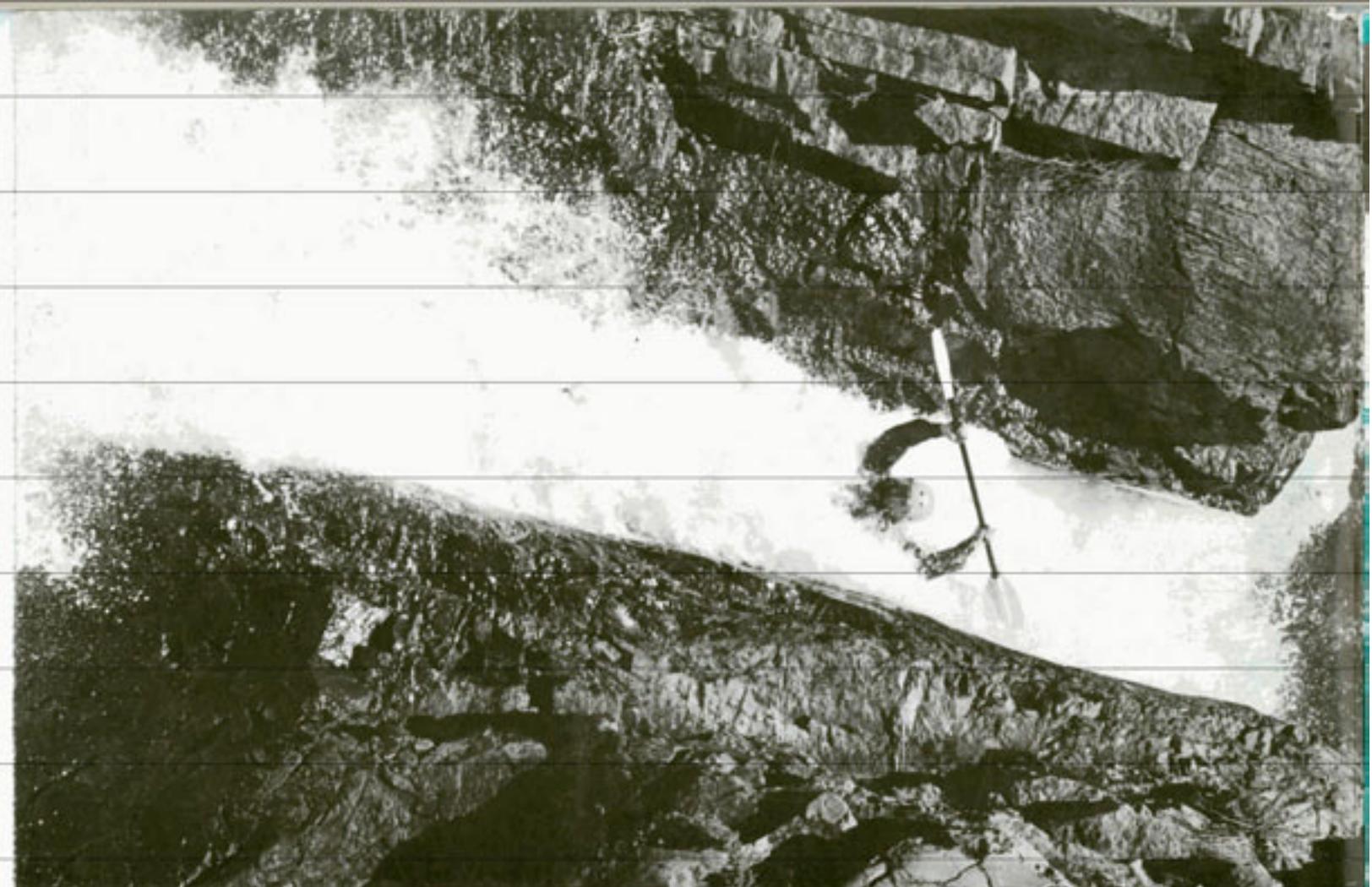
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