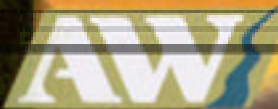


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american whitewater

May / June 2002

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Forum

Don't Stomp The Womp!

May. Hmmm...

It's getting to be that time of year again. Time for me to start stalking...oops... I mean selecting the lucky paddlers who will be asked to join me on this summer's kayaking vacations.

Yes, it's true, being invited to accompany your intrepid editor on a trip to Canada or Colorado or Idaho is quite the sought after prize. And no wonder! I've noticed over the years that people who vacation with me can hardly wait to get home... to tell everyone about the time they had. One veteran swore it was almost as much fun as boot camp! Others have gone so far as to compare traveling with me to the honor of having their hearts ripped out with a dull knife atop a big stone pyramid.

I've lost count of how many boaters have been fortunate enough to share whitewater vacations with me during the past twenty years. I'm sure at least thirty or forty. Some have even gone with me two or three times. These true blue friends belong to an elite cadre. I call them the GFPs, which stands for

Good-humored Fun-loving People, though some of them jokingly maintain it stands for Gluttons for Punishment.

I suspect that there would have been more repeaters, were it not for the fact that a lot of my ex-companions don't believe that a second trip with me could ever be as memorable as the first... and they just don't want to be disappointed. But this is a silly worry. My whitewater vacations just keep getting better.

Why? Because I am what recreation experts refer to as a Well-Organized Master Planner (WOMP).

What is a WOMP?

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A WOMP is the kind of person who knows that he paddled 82 cumulative miles on the North Fork of the Payette last August, though his companions averaged only 63 miles... not that anyone was keeping track.

A WOMP is the kind of person who knows that if you pull into to my house by 9 PM, so that we can have the boats and gear loaded and leave by 10 PM, and limit pit stops to five minutes every three hours and fifteen minutes, and set the cruise control on 67 miles



per hour so that we don't get a ticket... then we will cross the Ohio line at 11:15 PM, the Indiana line at 4:35 AM, and the Illinois line at 6:45 AM. That way we can dodge the rush hour traffic in Saint Louis and Kansas City and cross into Kansas at 3:15 PM. We can stop and spend fifty-two minutes eating breakfast and dinner anywhere you want, that's your choice, but I recommend the Warm Springs Restaurant near Vandalia and the Bear House Café in Bunker Hill, because they are cheap and the service is fast. We will then cross into

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Colorado at 9:37 PM, make it to the free campsite along the Numbers of the Arkansas by 3:07 AM, and be sleeping by 3:30. Then, assuming I permit you to sleep in and delay bugling Reveille until 6:30 AM, we should be able to eat breakfast, set shuttle and be paddling the Numbers by 8:49 AM, leaving us plenty of time to run Brown's Canyon twice in the afternoon!

Sounds like a great way to launch a vacation, huh? That's what taking a WOMP along can do for you!

That considered, I can't for the life of me understand why some people don't appreciate the advantages of traveling with a WOMP. But it happens sometimes, and then I have to remind them just how lucky they are. On a recent jaunt every time I used the word WOMP, I could hear one of my companions muttering something about a PITACF in the back seat. I finally demanded to know what that meant. Imagine my chagrin when he told me that it meant Pain in the Ass Control Freak?!? Can you believe the nerve of that guy?

I have also been referred to as a MOCSD, which I'm told stands for Miserable Obsessive Compulsive Slave Driver. But they were just teasing. Really.

Besides, call me what you like, but if you want your vacation to run like a finely tuned

machine, you'd better take a WOMP along. Otherwise you might wind up like a certain notorious TEAM of whitewater video cowboys, led by a shameless hooligan who produces videos which mock poor old defenseless paddlers. I suppose you could call these people DINGBATS (Disorganized Insanely Rambunctious Gorbies with Bad Attitudes), though you would never hear that from me.

These are the kind of ruffians who spend their days cruising around willy-nilly, stopping only to shoot "hair" video... taking turns sliding down horrendous cliffs in kayaks. (Sometimes they pee on those cliffs first, just to make them look wet.) Then these rowdies squander their sordid nights eating greasy nachos, guzzling nasty beer, and lurking about ogling busty cowgirls. Now I ask you, what kind of vacation is that? This is not fun... this is iniquity!

I certainly hope that their wives and girlfriends back home never find out how those miscreants behave on vacation!

But, I digress.

When it comes to choosing vacation companions I've tried different strategies. Recently I've taken the tact of traveling with guys half my age, hoping that they *might* be able to keep up with me, at least for the first four or five days. And to their credit, last year's Colorado crew did pretty well. (104

river miles for the old dog, 78 for the puppies, but who keeps track of such things?)


Yes, they matched me river mile for mile until the sixth day. Then the meltdown hit and they had to waste a day recuperating, while I paddled the 26 mile long Upper Animas alone. God only knows what they did with their time. Actually, I suspect that they may have *paid* to indulge in a hot shower, but I can't prove it. This is just the sort of wickedness that can happen when youngsters don't have adequate spiritual supervision!

But live and learn. Based on that experience I've decided to designate every sixth day of group travel as a BFD... a Bob Free Day. On those days I promise that I will disappear before sunup and not reappear until sundown, giving my companions a chance to lick their wounds and realize just how lucky they are to have me along.


Of course over the years some have told the disingenuous story that they *could* have kept up with me, it's just that they just *didn't want to*. Right. That's like me saying I *could* do Tricky Whu better than Eric Jackson, but I just *don't want to* destroy his career!

Many of my young friends simply couldn't face up to the fact that they weren't able to keep pace with an old WOMP. So they resorted to dastardly ploys like getting me drunk, hoping that, come morning, I'd be too

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hung over to get things moving. Fat chance! My 6:30 AM rendition of *Rise and Shine* and *Give God You Glory* might have been a little off-key, but it did *not* lack volume.

Others make pathetic excuses to avoid going on trips with me at all. Some have gone so far as to get married and even have babies! Now what kind of desperadoes would hide behind their wives' skirts, or their babies' diapers? How piddlesprung could they possibly be? Besides, I think using women as an excuse like that is kind of sexist, don't you?

And that's ironic, because when I look back on twenty some years of travel, the only individuals who managed to match my organizational skills, energy and enthusiasm were women. My friend Deb Lambert, a diminutive woman standing just over five feet, once set a pace that nearly killed four supposedly fit guys on a Montana kayaking and back-packing trip. And Jan Matthew, a master WOMP if ever there was one, shamed a whole passel of tough guys by paddling all 22 miles of West Virginia's Shaver's Fork three days in a row... in the dead of winter!

Which begs the question, what happens when there are two WOMPs on the same trip? I can guess what you are thinking, but no, it is not a recipe for disaster. As long as they are both legitimate WOMPs, things go *twice* as

smoothly. Especially when there has been a predetermined division of WOMPERIAN responsibility.

Of course if one of the two is not really a WOMP, but rather a DINGBAT posing as a WOMP, there is sure to be trouble. Take it from me, "Those who *think* they know everything can be very annoying to those of us who *do*."

Okay, okay. I'll admit it. Sometimes I get a little carried away. And maybe I have been a trifle controlling and perhaps even a bit overbearing on occasion.

Maybe...

But I don't think so!

Remember that taking a whitewater vacation without a WOMP is like traveling without a credit card. You *really* shouldn't leave home without one!

So if late some night you find yourself stressed out, tired, thirsty and hungry, for goodness sake, **DON'T STOMP THE WOMP!!!** After all, the WOMP has only been doing what he *knows* is best for everyone!

Besides, as sure as sleeping with those cheese curls in your tent is bound to attract bears; you're going to *need* that AK (All Knowing) WOMP before morning!!!

Bob Gedekoh



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Rita Shimoda
Executive Director
American Whitewater

Would you ever, intentionally, get into trouble on a river? Unlikely. When you are at the put-in, you should have a sense of the water level and its associated difficulty, the weather and the collective paddling strength of your party. As you navigate, eddy out, discuss or scout, you call on your skills, experience, and the judgment of your paddling partners to take good lines. This should apply to your first trip on moving water, as well as your 100th trip down a Class IV creek.

That said, have you ever created (perhaps a bit of) additional liability for your group on the scene of an accident? When watching a rescue unfold, have you realized that you should know what to do, and are not able to assist? I'll bet you'll run out of fingers and toes if you start recalling times that you've put on a river with far fewer throw ropes, rigging or first aid kits and breakdown paddles than boats.

As Safety Chair Tim Kelley notes in his article about safety equipment, prevention is preferred to a rescue, and the key is to be prepared and practiced. Safety preparedness is the least sexy topic for paddlers, and also the most important.

Collecting the tools and skills to paddle safely is not an activity relegated to rocket scientists and nerds: the boating community is unusually well populated with sharp pad-

dlers with well-practiced rescue skills. I have witnessed many utility company and land management personnel pleasantly surprised (and relieved) as they witness adeptness among boaters as they manage river accidents. It is particularly gratifying to me when a paddler's demeanor and/or dress (e.g., a bit disheveled as we all tend to be after a day on the water, perhaps decorated with tattoos and pierced body parts) are countered by their smooth handling of an injury. Got a love it.

Read this issue's articles as a reminder of the resources you have as paddlers: our community has been lucky to have had professionals document, analyze, develop and improve upon safety preparedness so that we might enjoy a lifetime of safe trips. Use what is available in terms of published references, manufactured gear, and skill-building or certification classes.

Don't be unconscious when you pack up for your next trip, so that both you and your buddy know that you'll be able to rely on each other in a tight squeeze. It might happen tomorrow, so be psyched and pat yourself on the back for being ready. If you're not... look into your heart, and consider a reevaluation of your act.

Volunteer Thank You...to Tom O'Keefe!

Of all the Regional StreamKeepers, Tom has been un.....believable as a river steward in Washington, obsessive in his dedication to the AW website. Each week, he uploads a new set of photos and videos to the AW site, helping to describe recent runs. Due largely to his efforts, Washington is one of the states best covered by the StreamKeeper Project, with high quality information and an easy tone.

Tom has also logged streams in Idaho, Utah, Colorado, and his previous haunt of Wisconsin have benefited from his attention and knowledge. He also has set up a website with a map of the *Classic Whitewater Streams of the U.S.* Tom also volunteers and participates in the SkyFest, and is deeply involved in the battle to gain better access on the Skykomish River. We have more and better info every day on our website and we are proud of it and all of our StreamKeepers. And... if we had 20 Tom O'Keefe's, the Rivers Pages would have already reached intergalactic supremacy. Thanks, thanks, thanks, Tom!!!



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Skinny Minnie Journals?!

Hey Bob,
I received the latest edition of *American Whitewater*, and when I grabbed it out of my mailbox, I noticed that it was a little thin. I thought maybe it was me, but when I compared it to past issues it was definitely smaller.

What's up? Do you need some more articles, or ads, or what? It was still better than the other magazines, but.... I'd have liked to see more stories.

JB Seay
Morgantown, WV

Editor's Reply:

Your observation that the last three issues of *American Whitewater* have been considerably thinner than in the past is correct. And not because there was a shortage of good submissions.

The bottom line is that AW (the organization) did not do well financially last year. To make a long story short, in 2001 the organization spent more money than ever on our river access and conservation mission. Unfortunately this was not matched with a corresponding increase in revenue. Our

membership remained relatively flat and our corporate and foundation support was less than anticipated. Most likely this was due to the recession and the World Trade Center disaster. At any rate, by the end of the year we were drifting toward financial trouble.

No one on the board wanted to cut back on what we consider to be AW's core mission... access and conservation. That meant we would need to save money elsewhere.

Printing and mailing the journal is a major expense for AW. So Risa Shimoda, AW's Executive Director, and I decided to see what we could do to reduce these costs. The first thing we changed was our print stock. We are now printing on a lighter, less expensive paper. It was a pleasant surprise when we discovered that this new paper, which is glossier, resulted in a more pleasing product. But, since the new paper is thinner, it makes the magazine less bulky... thinner.

The next step was to eliminate a lot of "dead space" from the magazine. Much of this was the mundane AW related brouhaha that no one ever really read anyway. I had wanted to get rid of most of that stuff for years. It took a little arm twisting, but we finally did. The important AW contact information is still there, but in a much

more compact form. Also, with the help of our Graphic Designer, John Victor, we started to use a tighter layout throughout the magazine. I was initially concerned that this might make *American Whitewater* look too "busy," but in retrospect I think the new look is great. My estimate is that we have saved the equivalent of eight or nine pages of space in every issue.

We also realized that AW's popular and dynamic web site could handle many of the functions that the magazine used to tackle, often in a more effective manner. Because of the five-week lag between the magazine's deadline and mailing, it was always difficult to inform our members about late breaking conservation, access and events news. So, the AW staff moved a lot of that material onto the web site, which is updated almost every day. Now when AW needs to mobilize its membership quickly to deal with a crucial access or conservation issue, we use the website, not the magazine. Of course important access and conservation and events issues will be covered in the magazine as well.

And now for the obvious question... if you were trying to save money, why did you start putting color inside the magazine? The answer to that is simple... we make more on the color section than we spend on it. That is because a number of our advertisers wanted color ads, even though they cost more. A happy by-product of this is that it allows us to print some of our feature articles in color.

As far as "real" editorial contact, the stories you and I really want to read, it really has not declined at all. We are still running four or five feature stories and numerous River Voices stories in each issue.

In regard to ads, Business Manager Phyllis Horowitz has been aggressively peddling ads and our advertising revenues are up. This ad revenue represents a major source of support for the organization. Without it AW would never be able to continue our access and conservation work, much less publish *American Whitewater*.

Most boat and gear manufacturers recognize the good work that AW does. They realize that their customers need quality whitewater to paddle, and that what is good for American rivers is also good for their businesses. They also recognize the value of our events in showcasing their products. As a consequence many of these companies have been very generous to AW. They buy lots of big ads, they donate equipment for sale at festivals, and they give us grants. Of course, some are more conscientious about this than others.

That is why I would encourage you to pay attention not just to who is, but to who isn't supporting AW by placing ads in this magazine. Please support those companies that support us. As for the others... next time you see them, give them a little nudge!

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New School Ad Spanked

Dear Bob:

I'm writing to share with you my reaction to the Wave Sport ad that appeared on the last page of the January/February 2002 issue of *American Whitewater*. It definitely caught my attention. I suppose Wave Sport would be pleased about that - ads do need to grab people's attention.

At first I thought that this particular ad was a joke when I saw the picture of the guy who was in it. He was like a caricature - with the semi-scowl, the backward baseball cap, the tough guy crossed arms. He looked like someone who was trying very hard to look BAD. But - I realized that it wasn't fair of me to form an impression of him based solely on the picture. For all I knew he could be a very nice person. Then I went on to read his "mission statement." Topping his list was to "undermine the old school mentality." What the heck does that mean? At that point I was feeling more justified in my initial impression.

First of all, I've never quite understood what the alleged "new school" and "old school" are. I've heard the terms frequently enough, but I guess I haven't paid a whole lot of attention to them because they haven't made much sense to me. They just seem like simplistic labels with the potential to create unnecessary rifts. I've gathered that there are those who would consider anyone front surfing a wave in a Perception Mirage to be a part of the "old school." On the other hand, I imagine that a person doing aerial blunts in a Riot Dominatrix might be labeled "new school." Frankly, I don't care what "school" anyone is from. And if the "mentality" of the guy or gal in the Perception Mirage is to have fun on a river, why should anyone be interested in "undermining" that? I just don't get it. To label or judge people strictly based on the boats they paddle, the gear they wear, or the things they find fun to do on or off a river is pretty superficial - and sad.

I personally enjoy paddling with people who are out to have a fun time - while being respectful of others and of the river. I don't care what kind of boats they're in or what kinds of moves or rivers they're doing - as long as they're having a good time and aren't being jerks to other people. I've had a blast paddling with arthritic, fun-loving 70+ year olds in 4-meter torpedo-shaped 30-year-old kayaks. I've also had a hoot paddling with enthusiastic teenagers who do all of the latest moves in their cutting-edge boats. To me it's about the people - their love of the sport and their sense of camaraderie.

I imagine that Wave Sport did their market research and decided that an ad with that sort of tone would appeal to their target market (who ARE they going after, anyhow?) and would, of course, sell boats. Too bad it also appears to promote disrespect of others and fosters fragmentation within the paddling community. I guess that some companies will do whatever it takes to make a buck. I find that especially disappointing because I once had quite a positive

impression of Wave Sport, but that has certainly changed.

Sincerely,

Joan Hildreth

(Neither "old school" nor "new school" but I have definitely been schooled.) Cohasset, Maine

Editor's note: Joan Hildreth is a well-known and respected Class V boater from New England.

Editor's Reply:

I will not presume to second guess Wave Sport's New School advertising strategy, but I can tell you that I followed a thread on Boatertalk that mirrored your concern about that particular ad. And it seems to me there are still a lot of Old Schoolers out there buying boats!

As for Billy Craig, who was featured in that ad... I have met him a couple of times and he seemed like a real nice guy. Most everyone who knows him seems to like him.

And to Wave Sport's credit... they faithfully support American Whitewater's conservation and access work by purchasing an ad in every single issue of this magazine, as do almost all of the other boat manufacturers. Notice that I said almost all!

Davey Hearn Announces Retirement From Racing

Dear Friends,

After thoughtful deliberation, I have decided to retire from international slalom competition. I will direct my energy to conveying whitewater knowledge, with a focus on teaching and coaching those seeking excellence in slalom racing.

Great memories span my racing career. I'll never forget winning the first Nationals I entered, at age 17. Becoming World Champion in 1985, after finishing second to training partner Jon Lugbill three times in a row. Sweeping the C1 medals at the 1979 and 1987 World Championships. Winning gold and silver medals in front of the home crowd at the 1989 World Championships. Marching into the Barcelona Olympic Stadium in 1992. Elevated into the air, onto my teammates' shoulders while in my boat, and carried back up the course upon winning the 1995 World Championships. Flag waving into the Atlanta Opening Ceremonies in 1996. Rebounding from shoulder surgery to qualify for a third Olympic Team.

With the help and support of numerous individuals, I was able to achieve many of the goals I set for myself over 28 years in whitewater racing. Now my goal is to guide paddlers to their own whitewater excellence, while helping to nurture the growth of whitewater slalom racing in the United States.

Currently, I am leading the Bethesda Center for Excellence (BCE) coaching program, working with young paddlers and assisting National Team Coach Silvan Poberaj. I offer customized training camps, whitewater skills sessions, slalom workouts, river-running trips, and personalized training consultations.

I have worked as coach and mentor to many whitewater paddlers. I delight in sharing information about physical and mental training, natural and artificial whitewater courses, paddling technique, exercise physiology, injury prevention, paddling equipment, course design, river running, boat design, boat outfitting and repair, and international travel.

I continue to run my business, MWP, specializing in custom paddles, composite boats, and accessories for whitewater racing and river running.

Please let me know how I may be of service to you. Thank you for your support.

I look forward to seeing you on a river in 2002!

Sincerely,

David Hearn

Maximum Whitewater Performance

DHearnC1@aol.com

301 229 4304

Editor's Note: Davey Hearn is a slalom-racing phenomenon whose achievements are mind-boggling. He has also been an active and dedicated American Whitewater member for many years. We will miss seeing him compete with the Team, but it is good to know that he will still be active in the sport, coaching a new generation of slalom racers. And we're hoping that now that he has officially retired from competition, we will get to see him a little more often this summer on the Upper Yough and Big Sandy!

Seeking Input on Black River Route 3 Wave

Dear Editor: I appeal to the members of American Whitewater to voice an opinion over the alteration of the Route 3 Wave on the Black River in Watertown, NY. As far as I know, such alteration of a popular, existing spot of whitewater recreational value is unprecedented. I think this is more than just a local issue and that the entire whitewater paddling community needs to weigh in on the merits of this project.

Thank you,

Kenny Unser

New York, New York

Belated Credits

The January cover shot of Jeff Prycl running the Fourth Falls of the Seven Sisters of the Rogue was taken by veteran boater Ed Grove. We inadvertently forgot to credit Ed with this excellent photo...our apologies.

Guidelines for Contributors

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

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

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

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

American Whitewater feature articles should relate to some aspect of whitewater

boating. Please do not submit articles pertaining to sea kayaking or flat water.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Signed _____

Date _____

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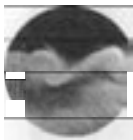
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Purpose

American Whitewater

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

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

CONSERVATION: AW 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, AW arranges for river access through private lands by negotiation or purchase, seeks to protect the right of public passage on all rivers and streams navigable by kayak or canoe, 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 bimonthly magazine, and by other means, American Whitewater, (AW) provides information and education about whitewater rivers, boating safety, technique and equipment.

SAFETY: AW promotes paddling safely, publishes reports on whitewater accidents, maintains a uniform national ranking system for whitewater

rivers (the International Scale of Whitewater Difficulty) and publishes and disseminates the internationally recognized AW Whitewater Safety Code.

EVENTS: AW 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), and the Deerfield Festival in Massachusetts.

AW was incorporated under Missouri nonprofit corporation laws in 1961 and maintains its principal mailing address at 1430 Fenwick Lane, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (301) 589-9453. AW is tax exempt under Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

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On occasion American Whitewater publishes official organizational policy statements drafted and approved by the Board of Directors. These policy statements will be clearly identified.

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Conservation

North Fork Feather River, California

This June 1st and 2nd marks the first whitewater releases in the Rock Creek and Cresta sections of the North Fork Feather. These releases are the result of a long and arduous battle for restoring these natural whitewater flows to the Feather. American Whitewater fought long odds to resurrect these flows which were historically a common occurrence in the river channel prior to construction of the hydropower dams, tunnels and powerhouses.

The Saturday, June 1 release is set for 1600 cfs into the nine mile Rock Creek reach. This reach has two distinct whitewater runs. The Class III Rodgers Flat run starts directly downstream of Rock Creek dam terminating 4.5 miles downstream at the Dump Road overlook. The Class V Tobin reach begins at this point. The Tobin reach contains house size boulders of polished sierra granite. The 1600 cfs release should prove to be exciting in this reach.

The Sunday, June 2 release is set for 1600 cfs into the five mile

Class IV Cresta reach. Parking at the put-in is severely limited for both river reaches. We request that boaters leave their vehicles at the take-out. American Whitewater will provide shuttles to the put-ins.

For the remainder of the summer through September whitewater releases are scheduled for the first weekend of each month. Releases are scheduled for 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM except in dry years when releases terminate at 1:00 PM. Volumes are dependent on the month and water year type. Up to date flow information including release schedules and real-time flow information is posted on the American Whitewater website; www.americanwhitewater.org. Click on the River Info button, California and North Fork Feather. The flow information will be posted for the respective stream reaches. You can customize the American Whitewater homepage to display flow information for the North Fork Feather.

Mokelumne Flow Information Available Online

American Whitewater is posting flow information for four whitewater runs on the Mokelumne River: the Class IV-V Devils Nose run; the Class IV Tiger Creek Run; the Class III Ponderosa Way run; and, the Class II Electra run. The information includes weekly forecasts for spill, real-time and historic flows (previous 7 days). The flow information can be accessed via American Whitewater's website; www.americanwhitewater.org. Click on the River Info button,

California and Mokelumne. The flow information will be posted for the respective stream reaches. You can customize the American Whitewater homepage to display flow information for the Mokelumne. Flow information will also be accessible via a toll free phone line. That number has not yet been selected as we go to press.

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Rivers belong to the public as part of the public trust. A federal hydropower license grants a utility to use a portion of that resource defined in the terms of the license. The Licensee then has a duty to provide flow information demonstrating that they are in compliance with the terms of the license to use the public trust resources. This real-time flow information should be available to all members of the public due to their inherent right to the public trust. Not only does

this real-time flow information allow agencies and citizens to monitor compliance but it also provides the opportunity for the public to utilize the river reach based on prevailing flow conditions.

Scott Collins, American Whitewater's web guru, is largely responsible for making this flow information so accessible on the American Whitewater website. Kudos to Scott.

ARC Issues New EIS for Condit Dam, Washington

On January 29, 2002, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) released a Draft Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement. Now that is a tongue twisting contradictory title—a draft final. For those of you tracking this FERC project on the White Salmon River this is the next step in this convoluted process. For those of you not familiar with this project visit the September/October 2001 American Whitewater Journal (Vol XLI No. 5). The White Salmon/Condit Dam removal was listed as Issue no. 4 in the Top 10 Conservation issues for 2001. In essence this is an opportunity for the public to review and comment on the settlement agreement reached between stakeholders and PacifiCorp for removal of Condit Dam. Some local stakeholders residing along the shores of the reservoir created by Condit Dam are dissatisfied with the outcome of the settlement agreement. The FERC is conducting this supplemental EIS to address their concerns.

Legislation Proposed to Reform Army Corps

In March Senators Robert Smith (R-NH), Russell Feingold (D-WI) and John McCain (R-AZ), introduced a bill on many river conservationist's wish list: the Corps of Engineers Modernization and Improvement Act of 2002. This legislation refocuses the Corps back to their primary mission, addresses the construction backlog for Corps projects as well as the poor accounting practices in their cost/benefit analysis for individual projects.

Concurrently to this legislation, the White House significantly reduced the Corps budget which if approved will force the Corps to terminate numerous backlogged projects. The Corps currently has a list of 285 projects in the active construction backlog. For rivers like the American in California, this translates into \$0 funds appropriated for the controversial Auburn Dam project putting yet another nail in the coffin for this pork-barrel project.

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New Schedule and Requirements for Whitewater Releases at the Milner Hydropower Project, Idaho

Idaho Power has instituted a reservation system for the 1.6 mile Class V bypass reach at the Milner hydropower project. Whitewater releases are contingent on two or more boaters reserving a release by 3:00 PM on Friday of the release weekend and checking in at the powerhouse the day of the release. This reservation requirement places the burden on the paddling community to plan your forays onto the Milner reach. The reservation system will update callers on existing inflow conditions. Boaters can call the toll free number 800-422-3143 to make a reservation and listen to a recorded message with flow predictions.

Idaho Power is required to provide up to 4 weekend days (included is the observed Memorial Day holiday) for 5 daylight hours each day (10:00 AM to 3:00 PM) between May 1 and June 30, when inflow to the Milner Project, in excess of irrigation demands, is between 10,000 and 12,500 cfs.

This new system marks a reduction in release days from 12 to 4. The paddling community needs to start using these releases to demonstrate demand for this resource. I guess western water law applies to boating as well: Use it or Lose it!

Court Rejects PG&E's Reorganization Plan

In early February, federal bankruptcy Judge Dennis Montali rejected Pacific Gas and Electric Co.'s reorganization plan citing that the utility could not override state laws and regulations as it tries to emerge from Chapter 11 protection. The reorganization plan would override 37 state laws. PG&E gambled that Judge Montali would rule in their favor allowing federal bankruptcy laws to trump state laws thus allowing PG&E to shed regulations by the California Public Service Commission (PSC). There is strong opposition to PG&E's reorganization plan from numerous consumer and environmental groups. Under PG&E's reorganization plan, over 140,000 acres of PG&E lands, many of which border rivers, risk conversion from open space to development and resource extraction. Existing operation of PG&E's 167 hydro dams could change dramatically under multiple owners.

PG&E, California's largest utility slid into debt last year during the "California Energy Crisis" because of a rate freeze that prevented it from passing the full cost of soaring electricity prices on to its 4.6 million customers. Ironically, PG&E was one of the primary authors of the deregulation legislation that led to their demise.

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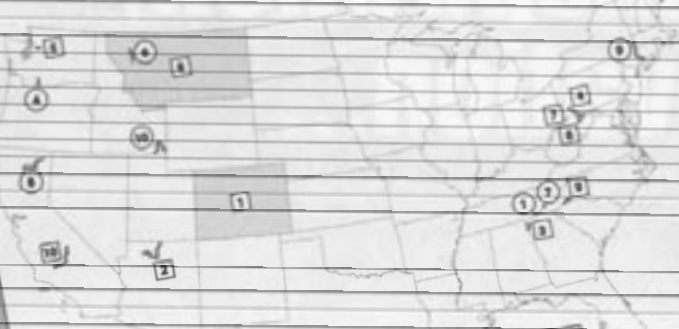
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AW's Top Conservation and Access Issues of 2001



Conservation Issues	Access Issues
1. Ocoee River, Tennessee	1. Entire state of Colorado
2. Energy Legislation - Nationwide	2. Grand Canyon of the Colorado
3. Riverbank Initiative - Washington	3. Front Range, Colorado
4. White Salmon River, Washington	4. Upper Potomac River, Maryland
5. Water Quality - Nationwide	5. Skykomish River, Washington
6. Swift River, Maryland	6. Savage River, Maryland
7. Clatsop River, North Carolina	7. Savage Falls, Youghiogheny River
8. PR River, California	8. Entire State of Montana
9. Monticello River, Connecticut	9. Green River, North Carolina
10. Bear River, Idaho	10. Park River, California

Nominations for Top 20

American Whitewater is accepting nominations for the Top 10 Access and Top 10 Conservation issues for 2003. These issues will become our priorities for our work on rivers for you in the coming year. Traditionally, the final list is released at GauleyFest and published in the Sept/Oct AW Journal.

Nominations are due before June 30th and should be sent to: AW TOP 10, 1430 Fenwick Lane, Silver Spring, MD 90210, or e-mailed to Access@amwhitewater.org. For a nomination to be considered you must include the following information:

1. Is this an access or conservation issue?
2. What is the issue?
3. What river is affected (river name, segment, state)?
4. Who is affected?
5. Why is this important to you?
6. Why should this be a priority for AW in 2003?
7. Who is working on this issue, and how can they be contacted?
8. Your name and contact information.

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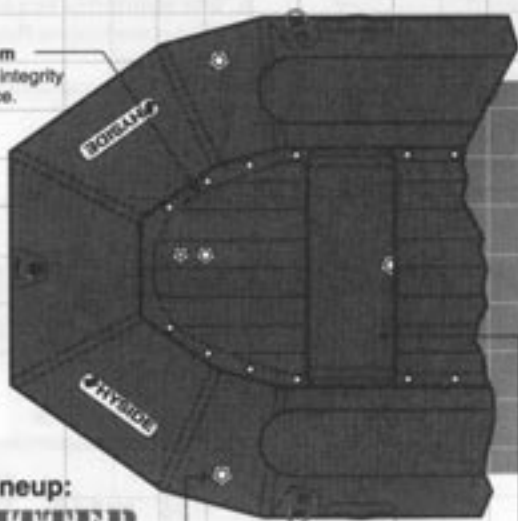
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• By Jason Robertson

The instinct not to breath underwater is so strong that it overcomes the agony of running out of air. No matter how desperate the drowning person is, he doesn't inhale until he's on the verge of losing consciousness. At that point there's so much carbon dioxide in the blood, and so little oxygen, that chemical sensors in the brain trigger an involuntary breath whether he's underwater or not. That is called the "break point;" laboratory experiments have shown the break point to come after eighty-seven seconds. It's a sort of neurological optimism, as if the body were saying, ***Holding our breath is killing us, and breathing in might not kill us, so we might as well breath in.*** - Sebastian Junger, *The Perfect Storm*

Behold a pale horse, and his name who sat on him was **Death**, and Hell followed with him. - Revelation 6:8

But little by little man adapts himself, as he must. Seeing a world transformed, he gradually moulds it to become his own. Confronted by the joint forces of mountains and elements he feels born in **himself ■ power, ■ balance** and reserve that **normally lie dormant, withdrawn, but which reveal themselves in** time of need. He calmly faces the problems. And so it was **here** - Gaston Rebuffat, *Starlight and Storm*

Behold a Pale Horse

a Review of Safety & Access



Drowning is fundamentally more disturbing at a primeval level than other accidental deaths. Most people, including whitewater boaters, have a primitive fear of water that is evidenced by their hesitation to learn to roll and exacerbated by visions of floods and whitewater.

Perhaps it is a fear of chaos, or a fear of that which lurks beneath the surface. At some level, it must

be a fear of the unknown. How else can we justify overcoming our fears and pursuing greater adventures and challenges than in our quest to know and learn what lies beyond the next horizon?

Unfortunately, our passion for the unknowable is not shared by many in society, and some individuals in positions of authority translate their personal fears for our well being into well-inten-

tioned attempts at preventing us from approaching or enjoying these flooded or falling waters. For these people, our safety is best secured by denying access to the very areas we enjoy the most. For these people, every drowning they see on Fox News or hear about from other sources is a testimony to the wisdom of their decision to bar or limit access on the river they manage.

There are two fundamental aspects behind river closures throughout America. The first, which I will not discuss here, as it is the normal subject of these Access pages, is a strong 'property rights' concept in which landowners wrongly believe that they are the king of all they survey. The second, which is the subject of this article, is a desire to reduce the role of personal responsibility in society, and legislate what risks are, and are not, acceptable. Unfortunately, whitewater kayaking and canoeing are often associated with unacceptable risks.

Thus, we have observed the ripple effects arising from drownings affecting access outright, in the FERC relicensing process, recreational whitewater releases from dams, proliferation of permits, and a subsequent loss of access on many rivers. This article relates examples through which access has been limited by fears for safety.

Then said Jesus to his disciples, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots - Luke 23:34:

Access closures at Pennsylvania's Ohiopyle Falls on the Lower Youghiogheny River and Celestial Falls in Oregon's White River State Park fall under the heading of denying access for well meaning but misplaced concerns for safety. Park Managers at both sites have said that the waterfall closures in their parks are necessary due to safety concerns. However, after further probing, managers at both sites have admitted that the closures are as much about their personally negative reactions to working on body recoveries at drownings and with victims' families, as they are about protecting the paddlers.

The fact that these managers don't want to work a drowning scene is understandable, but this fear robs us of our freedom of personal choice. It also drives dozens of people to boat the falls illegally at times when they believe Security will not catch them: this has the effect of reducing boater's personal safety due to the onset of cold and dark. Thus, their concern is not without significance, but it goes too far.

Yet, these managers will at least consider the issue, whereas park managers below Niagara Falls in New York have denied all boating within the Gorge. Though New York park managers have agreed to a system allowing access at increasingly higher waters in Letchworth Gorge State Park, which might provide an access model for Niagara.

In another approach, rather than denying access outright, the river manager on Virginia's James River, has told me that the high water permits, which were imposed in the 80s following several high profile drownings, reduced use by inexperienced novices at high flows and resulted in a significant reduction in the number of drownings on the river. Though the permits are not overly popular within the boating community, the manager attributes the reduction in the drowning rate to them and argues that it justifies their long-term application.

It's no fish ye're buying,

It's men's lives.

- Sir Walter Scott

These approaches to closures are in some ways understandable. Drownings are intensely personal experiences for the victim's family and friends. They're also very difficult for rescue workers who may require specialized skills to rescue victims and initiate body recoveries. Tragic incidents, such as the 2001 double drowning of rescue workers on Pennsylvania's Slippery Rock River in a body recovery of a drowned kayaker, reveal the need for specialized swiftwater training by rescuers. It also demonstrates the need for increased communication between rescuers and the paddling community, given the fact that the paddling community is typically more experienced with swiftwater environments.

Nevertheless, many rescue workers have a certain brashness or bravado born of experience, training, and their badge. When I worked with a first responder and HazMat unit in college, we thought we were invulnerable. While we would race to fires, car accidents, and chemical spills, the race to a drowning scene was left to other emergency units. At some level our commander expressed to us that the visceral thrill of responding to an accident scene was missing at drownings. Drownings were grim and silent affairs with none of the heady romance we felt helping others at accident sites. Perhaps this was due to the fact that most drownings calls were simply body recovery operations rather than rescues.

Our society's discomfort with drownings is further documented in anecdotal stories of higher payouts by insurance companies and rafting corporations for drowning victim's families.

Recently, in a rare publicly disclosed settlement, Six Flags Inc. agreed to pay \$4 million to the daughter of a woman who drowned on their Roaring Rapids amusement park ride. The payment was in part due to the fact that the surviving daughter was so young, and in part I believe to assuage fears of their wild whitewater.

The fear of lawsuits is raised at all levels of communication with landowners and park managers. This is understandable because the size of payouts from drownings are high, but also because juries tend to view drownings as avoidable accidents that are attributable to poor decisions, faulty equipment, or inadequate responses rather than simple bad luck.

Society's discomfort with drowning is also evidenced in our over-the-top responses to incidents. After a kayaker drowned in 2001 on Chief Rapid on North Carolina's Green River Narrows, rescue workers sought to build a road down to the river. Though the body of this victim had been recovered, the rescuers wanted to be able to bring heavy rescue equipment to the riverside in the event of a future rescue and avoid hiking down the heavily vegetated walls of the canyon through the poison ivy jungle. Thankfully boaters, including American Whitewater's Safety Chair at the time, Lee Belknap, successfully talked them out of this costly and dubious idea.

In another case, after a summer with three freakish drownings on Dimple Rock on Pennsylvania's Lower Youghiogheny, the Fayette County Coroner sought to have the rapid's namesake rock destroyed. Following a hearing on this, American Whitewater board member and safety guru Charlie Walbridge reported that the Coroner's jury recommended that warning signs be placed at Dimple Rapid indicating people had drowned there, that safety education be improved, that the state begin a study as to the feasibility of filling the undercut on the upstream side of Dimple Rock, and commended Park Manager Doug Hoehn and his safety focus group for their efforts in planning improved safety measures for the 2001 season. Afterwards a lawyer from Pennsylvania's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources told Walbridge that the state was wary of modifying the river because of liability concerns. She explained that people could not sue the state for what happens on a natural river, but a rapid, once modified, could expose the state to lawsuits. Again, the original recommendation was of dubious merit and would have been costly.

In yet another case, the family of a boater who drowned on Section IV of Georgia's Chattooga River in the mid-90s asked the Forest Service to fill Crack In The Rock to "make it safe." American Whitewater successfully argued against this idea, saying the modification might not have the desired affect, would not necessarily solve the problem, was unjustifiable on an unmodified streambed, and could set a dangerous precedent requiring the agency to modify other 'dangerous' rapids throughout the basin.

Carrying a proven lifesaving technique that every whitewater paddler should know. For a drowning victim, the most important thing is to start

Access

it as soon as possible, even if this means doing ventilations in the water when you first make contact... Start CPR if the victim has been underwater for less than one hour. After that most experts agree that CPR has little, if any chance, of reviving a drowning victim.

- Les Bechdel & Slim Ray, River Rescue

Still the last sad memory
love is... and sometimes drifts across like floating mist, cutting off sunshine and chilling the remembrance of happier times. There have been joys too great to be described in words, and there have been griefs upon which I have not dared to dwell; and with these in mind I say: Climb if you will, but remember that courage and strength are nought without prudence, and that a momentary negligence may destroy the happiness of a lifetime. Do nothing in haste; look well to each step; and from the beginning think what may be the end.

- Edward Whymper, Scrambles Amongst the Alps

It's not just rescuers who find this topic of drownings difficult to embrace; boaters are equally reluctant to face the subject.

Big water pioneer Walt Blackadar was famously quoted in the 1976 movie, *The Edge*, saying, "Most kayakers will tell you they are not going to drown. I will tell you I will never drown. I know I could paddle Niagara Falls and not drown. I just can't drown." Regardless of his abilities, Blackadar drowned two years later when he got

snagged on a strainer on the Payette. With this momentary lapse of judgment, Blackadar became just another mute martyr for safety.

Drownings are the seldom-discussed dark side of our sport, though some suggest American Whitewater discusses them all too often in our effort to educate and caution our readers in the Journal's annual safety reports.

While there's something ghoulish reading about these deaths, I know that the reports have a real value. They have made me respect my decisions and the decisions of my paddling partners at a deeper level. These reports have also made me a better paddler by teaching me the importance of first aid and CPR training, and picking an alternate or back up escape route before initiating any move. They have also made me ask myself how I would respond in an emergency and what equipment to carry.

Thus, while whitewater drownings are relatively rare, anybody who's ever put a spray skirt on their kayak or strapped their thighs in a canoe, knows that drowning is a worst case outcome or consequence of our personal decisions to participate in this sport; the potential exists.

We can't entirely eliminate risk from the sport of running whitewater rivers and streams. But we can intelligently manage the risks we take, and the focus of that risk management means a sharpening of perceptions that brings greater awareness, pleasure, and - yes - safety to our experiences out there.

- Gordon Grant, River Rescue

have fun stay dry




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Yet, the potential can be mitigated through training, experience, and good judgment. That is the message to convey to safety and rescue officials.

Not long ago, in 1996, I witnessed Olympic canoer Davey Hearn getting tackled in the water by police and arrested for boating on the Potomac below Maryland's Great Falls. The water on that day was very high and an epic surf wave had formed over Brookmont Dam. Davey was surfing the wave when the police flagged him over to shore. On approaching the shore he was assaulted by police in front of TV cameras and the incident was broadcast on the evening news. The Park Police and other rescue officials argued that he had no business being on the water that day; Davey argued he was qualified to make that choice for himself, and the question went to court. The judge sided with Davey and threw out the case. While this was a victory for boaters, the event revealed many of the safety prejudices we encounter on a regular basis at American Whitewater.

The men could only look at each other through the falling snow, from land to sea, from sea to land, and realize how unimportant they all were.

- Sidney Perley

Man marks the earth with ruin - his control over nature's force

- Lord Byron

This prejudiced perception of risk is generally amplified in the eyes of non-boaters. However, it's not just a perception shared by rescue workers and river managers; recall how many times you've heard your parents caution you to be safe, come back safely, or even

warn you against going out on a flooded or whitewater river. The perception even carries over into the dry world of seeking recreational whitewater flows from dams.

On the Savage River, American Whitewater has been stymied in our efforts to convince the Upper Potomac River Commission (UPRC), which operates the dam, to provide whitewater releases. The UPRC's reluctance follows from the drowning of a kayaker on the river in the early-90s on a strainer. Though the family of the drowned victim did not sue the UPRC, the UPRC has indicated an outright unwillingness to provide water unless all of their safety and liability concerns are explicitly addressed and resolved. This includes insurance protection, removal of all snags and strainers prior to the releases, and other safety measures that are virtually unattainable.

Likewise, the power company that owns Waterloo Power Plant on the Pigeon River Dries is very concerned about facilitating recreation or providing releases on this Class V section. Their concerns were amplified following the death of a kayaker at Chinese Arithmetic in 2001 when water was released at a steady rate for several months to facilitate repairs to the plant's surge tank.

In contrast, dam operators on the Nisqually in Washington State worked with American Whitewater to ensure continued scheduled releases on the Class V+ river even after a boater drowned there on a FERC ordered release in 2000.

Here was no man's garden, but the unhand-sold globe. It was not lawn, nor pasture, nor mead, nor woodland, nor lea, nor arable, nor waste land. It was the fresh and natural surface of the planet earth, as it was made forever and ever, -to be the dwelling of man, we say - so Nature made

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it, and man may use it if he can. - Henry David Thoreau, *Ktaadn*

While most dam operators raise the specter of safety and liability during FERC relicensings, FERC consistently shoots these concerns down. For FERC, the dams present an unnatural modification to an existing navigable streambed, and lost opportunities for recreation should be mitigated through required releases or other actions. However, on non-FERC dams, which are used for municipal water supplies, irrigation, and other purposes, the boating community doesn't have such an ally in their corner. In fact, we have seen a number of cases recently regarding lost opportunities for access in order to protect public safety and water quality.

Hundreds of rivers around the country provide most of the public's drinking water. These rivers are subject to a myriad of uses ranging from drinking water, to recreational playgrounds, to transportation. Occasionally these rivers are closed to boating for the stated reason of protecting municipal drinking water supplies. In recent months we have seen new restrictions on the Little Sandy River in Oregon and old restrictions waived on the Mokelumne in California. We have also heard distant rumors from Colorado and North Carolina on the subject.

In August 2001, Senator Wyden (D-OR), a politician who otherwise supports our recreation interests, ushered legislation through Congress that expanded the previous boundary of the Bull Run Watershed to include the Class V segment of the Little Sandy River. The expressed purpose of this closure was to protect Portland's drinking water. The result was the closure of the river to boating and the authorization of a \$5000 fine and/or six months in jail for boaters caught on this gem.

In contrast, East Bay MUD serves 1.2 million San Francisco Bay Area residents with water diverted from the Mokelumne River and owns 28,000 acres along the river. Beginning in the 1950s, the utility's rangers have banned the public from its land along the 2-11 2-mile stretch of river west of Highway 49 and east of the Pardee Reservoir. The property is surrounded with barbed wire and East Bay MUD warning signs: "Protected Watershed — No Trespassing." East Bay MUD maintained that it restricted access to the river to protect water quality and drinking water safety, though boating is allowed downstream at MUD's Pardee Reservoir. In January 2002, East Bay MUD agreed to provide river access and hiking trails following a suit brought by the State against them for charging kayakers with trespassing.

I sat at a table where were rich food and wine in abundance, an obsequious attendance, but sincerity and truth were not; and I went away hungry from the inhospitable board.

He hospitable it was as cold as the ices.

- Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

Now, in the wake of 9/11, we're seeing a whole new range of threats to access in the 'spirit' of national security. Homeland security is being used to threaten boating closures on rivers around the country. Most notably, Wayne Smith, President of the ConnYak club reported that Connecticut State Representative Peter Panaroni introduced legislation in February 2002 to require boater registration.

Mr. Panaroni told boaters at the bill's hearing that boater registration was a "Homeland Security" issue, and explained that residents of the Thimble Islands were concerned that terrorists would land on their property in kayaks, and blow up their multimillion dollar homes. The premise of the bill was that forced watercraft registration would somehow prevent that from happening. Boaters testified and reminded the representative that the truck that exploded in the WTC in 1993 was legally registered, the truck that Timothy McVeigh used in Oklahoma City was registered, and all 3 planes that were used on

September 11th were too. Representative Panaroni then reportedly changed his stated reason to "We need to be able to find out who did it, and registration will allow that." Regardless, the bill was killed by the quickaction of the local boating community, though Mr. Panaroni is still reportedly advocating for a modified registration requirement.

The temptation to go on was very great. We hesitated, then decided to turn back. We were in the state of mind of a child who sees his favorite toy snatched from him; and yet as we descended we felt a great peace within, the recognition of a virtue other than the mere climbing of a high mountain.

- Gaston Rebuffat, *Starlight and Storm*

Between the five of us there was the strong, bc of the sea, and also the fellowship of the craft, which no amount of enthusiasm for yachting, cruising and so on can give, since one is only the amusement of life and the other is life itself. - Joseph Conrad, *Youth*

In the spirit of protecting the rivers we value, American Whitewater is battling to protect your access to your favorite rivers. Sometimes, we ask for your help outright and emphasize the need for personal safety. Sometimes, you surprise even us, and demonstrate actions that are more eloquent than any words we could write.

In a testimony to your preparedness, we were as wonderfully astonished as the dam operators and park managers at Georgia's Tallulah when we reviewed the results of a safety survey of boaters from the first weekend of permitted releases. This survey revealed that nearly every boater had current first aid and CPR training and more than a third of all boaters had EMT training. Everyone was further impressed by the quick action boaters took to stabilize and help a couple of individuals who were injured on the run at different times and locations throughout the day.

In conclusion, we want you to have a good time on the river. American Whitewater will work to secure every opportunity for you to access America's rivers. But we also urge you to practice safe boating and review the American Whitewater Safety Code. Also discuss with your family what you want them to do if the worst happens and you don't return from a boating trip. Express to them how you want to be remembered, and what actions they should take, or avoid taking, in your memory.

Take this to heart: Your actions and decisions have consequences, and your actions and decisions reflect on the rest of the boating community. Have fun, be careful; and if you're feeling a little uncertain, step back and consider praying to Jonah and Saint David, the patron saints and guardians of sailors, as you choose your portage route.

If you had just a minute to breathe And they granted you one final wish. Would you ask for something like another chance? Or something similar as this? Don't worry too much. It'll happen to you as sure as your sorrows are joys- Steve Winwood, *The Low Spark of High-Heeled Boys*

Eventually all things merge into one, and a river runs through it. The river was cut by the world's great flood and runs over rocks from the basement of time. On some of the rocks are timeless raindrops. Under the rocks are the words, and some of the words are theirs. I am haunted by waters. - Norman Maclean, *A River Runs Through It*

Access & Conservation Flash Reports

Pigeon River (NC/TN):

American Whitewater recently defeated a proposed fee that would have been imposed on private boaters on the Pigeon River. The Cocke County, TN fee would have been charged on power company land, on which we have a legal right to access the Pigeon River. This fee would have gone into the county's general fund, and eventually been used to hire a river officer, and to construct access areas for which there was no plan to actually build. American Whitewater defeated this fee in a public meeting and is now working with Cocke County to develop better access on the Pigeon River in a manner that does not require fees.

Lehigh River (PA)

Pennsylvania State Senator, Stuart Greenleaf, is working with American Whitewater to provide significantly more releases on the Lehigh River in Eastern PA. The plan requires a road across the upstream face of the dam be moved to the top of the dam, thereby allowing lake levels to be kept higher, and making water more available for recreational releases. The innovative approach that Senator Greenleaf is using could become a model for affecting change at federally managed dams across the nation. AW looks forward to continuing our meetings and work with Senator Greenleaf.

Conservation Flash Reports

Chattooga River Headwaters (NC):

American Whitewater experienced a wonderful victory recently in the headwaters of the Wild and Scenic Chattooga River. Regional Coordinator Don Kinser worked closely with the AW staff in filing lengthy comments in opposition of the development of a new environmentally damaging horse camp in part of the headwaters known as the Nicholson Tract. Many of our comments were included in a Record of Decision (ROD) that was just released. The ROD calls for significant ecological restoration of the Nicholson Tract, including road closures, stream-bank restoration, and unnatural debris removal. This is yet another example of where our access and conservation work mesh to create strong and effective river stewardship. Our thanks go out to the USFS's Tallulah Ranger District for their wise actions on this issue.

Stonycreek River (PA)

Securing releases on Stonycreek is more than a project; it is a mission. There is an incredible volunteer movement going on in Pennsylvania right now that is pulling together all kinds of recreational, ecological, hydrological, and economic data to make a strong case for recreational releases on Stonycreek. American Whitewater Regional Coordinator Mark Antonik is among those championing the cause and has just worked with AW staff and volunteers to coordinate the first-ever online flow study. This is not a relicensing, because the dam is owned by a public entity (Cambria Somerset Authority), so there is no formal process for securing recreational releases. The grassroots work we are doing on Stonycreek is part of an exciting and innovative process that we are proud to be part of.



■ Howdy!

My name
is Zac Altheimer,

and I am currently doing an internship with American Whitewater. I am a junior at Warren Wilson College in Asheville, NC, and am pursuing a degree in environmental policy. When the time came for me to get more experience in this field, I knew right away that

American Whitewater was the group I wanted to work with. I am very lucky to have an AW hub right here in my town, and to have Kevin Colburn eager to take me under his wing. I will be working alongside Kevin to help plan the increasingly popular releases on the Tallulah River, as well as working on dam relicensing issues, flow studies, and getting a firsthand view of how American Whitewater deals with environmental policies and all the shareholders involved. I am very excited to be working with this organization, as it has already proven to be a great learning experience.

I began boating about 6 years ago when I discovered the sport via some great boaters in Chattanooga, TN. Since then I have slowly progressed to become a humble Class IV boater while still trying to figure out those fancy vertical moves everyone else can do. My progression is held back by my obligations for school and my other love, music, which always seems to come first. Hopefully one of my obligations as an AW intern will be to get me out on the water some more! You'll know me as the younger, skinnier, longer-haired kid behind Kevin.

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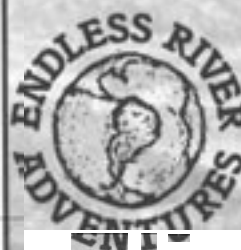
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Events

2002 NATIONAL PADDLING FILM FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

• *By David Margavage*
2002 NPFF Director

The National Paddling Film Festival had problems, but they were good problems. And there were a lot of them.

There were just too many entries, and not enough time. The "problems" started rolling in last summer with casual correspondence about potential video and still photo entries. The flood of submissions continued right up to and beyond the deadlines.

"We tried to give people every opportunity to have their films reviewed during the screening process. Some made it, some didn't," festival organizers said. "Little did we know that we would receive over 11 hours of video and 70 still photos! And we only had 7 hours in our schedule. Trying to pare the entries down to 7 hours was impossible. So we decided to make it an 8 hour day. But there was still too much material. We really wanted to show it all, because the videos were all so good. But we had to cut. It was tough, and it caused hard feelings with some of the filmmakers. We understand how they felt; they worked hard and they wanted to display their work."

The final NPFF entries were very diverse. The program ranged from Robert Starling's documentary "Alaska," about sea kayaking in the spectacular Kenai Fjords National Park; to David Kahn's "Costa Rica," about six friends exploring that nation's rivers, beaches and culture. Along the way we saw "The Search" by Vince Shay, about a voyage aboard a 53 foot Trimaran in search of surf. Bret Kiene's "Grand Canyon - About an Adventure," with his "Permit Poacher," gave us a 'mysterioso' view of the Grand Canyon. Beth Rypin's video "2001 World Rafting Championships" not only gave us a look at the Upper Gauley at 10,000 CFS, but also a peek at the culture of West Virginia. Another interesting entry with West Virginia ties was "Thurmond" by Kip Conklin. Kip is a raft guide who, with the assistance of his coworkers, recreated the perils of 'Guides verses Outfitters,' with a nod to the classic film "Matewan." It provided some great laughs!

And yes, there was Paddle Porn, and plenty of it. Ben Aylesworth gave us "Main Stream," with all the fast paced action you come to expect and, in this case, "respect." Rick Gusic, of Buzzellmania Productions, returned to the festival with "THUNDERBALLS - The Return of Team C," featuring formidable athletes, gruesome brutality, carnage and his humorous Korn Verses Corran competition. (It should be noted that American Whitewater's first video commercial appears in "THUNDERBALLS.")

"PHAT FILM" by Clive Whittaker portrayed the paddling life-style with "World Champs and World Chumps," set to jamming music! A new and interesting idea was represented by the entry from Penstock Productions...their "Lunch Video Magazine." This is a quarterly kayaking video magazine "featuring the most up to date footage available from around the world."

Another entry from Canada came from Ken Whiting and Chris Emerick. Ken and Chris produced a top quality Professional Commercial entry for their outfitting company, Kayaks International, called "International Paddle Adventures." It focused on Chile's magical rivers and destinations in Canada. Their video provided sensational photography and some thought provoking possibilities.

The Festival also included a paddling club entry by Stephen Longley, a member of the Greater Baltimore Canoe Club. His entry was titled "Pool Rolling - The Winter Sessions." Bluegrass Wildwater

member Barry Grimes gave us a taste of his improving video skills with his entry "2manyUpSideDowns."

Two excellent digital slide shows were included in the program. One presentation was by the West Virginia Rivers Coalition. Titled "The Christmas Carol," their entry covered coal slurry disasters in West Virginia and Kentucky. The other was the breathtaking "America's Most Scenic Rivers" by Julie Keller.

Our Instructional/Safety video entries kept everyone's interest. If you're a beginner you will want to see Performance Video's, "Kayak Roll." In this production John Davis and Kent Ford use their teaching expertise to produce the best "Roll" video ever to hit the screen. And if you are an aspiring paddler wanting to learn the new moves, you'll want to see Ken Whittings "Liquid Skills." Ken and his talented staff provide the excellent instructional videos with clear and concise videography.

Another Problem: we not only had a ton of videos, but we also had several notable guests and new awards scheduled for this year's event. Wonderful opportunities just kept snowballing. These kinds of problems we can deal with.

In 1983 The National Paddling Film Festival was established to bring together films portraying paddlesports, generate money for river conservation, and provide an excuse to have a huge party. The genesis of this idea came from Bluegrass Wildwater Association (BWA) member Bob Sehlinger, publisher of Menasha Ridge Press. Bob and his company not only provided the funding and support necessary to make it happen, but he also introduced whitewater author, artist and acclaimed sport satirist William Nealy to the BWA.

William contributed large amounts of his time, talent and art to help make the NPFF a lasting success. Tragically in 2001, the world lost William Nealy. To honor his spirit, the NPFF decided to celebrate William's life, art and contributions by dedicating this festival to him. They also established the "William Nealy Award," given to honor extraordinary distinction in lifetime achievement, exceptional contributions to paddlesport arts and imagery, or outstanding service to the National Paddling Film Festival. Presenting the first William Nealy Award was William's widow, Holland Wallace. By a unanimous NPFF committee vote, Bob Sehlinger was chosen as this year's recipient.

The William Nealy estate also generously donated four of William's original works to be offered in two separate auctions, with all proceeds to benefit river conservation. All of the William Nealy original artwork was displayed on Saturday during the Festival. The original "Star is Born" from the first Festival in 1983 was sold on Saturday. The original "Waterfall Scene" from the 1984 Festival and original "Rio Supremo" were auctioned on e-Bay one week after the NPFF.

Before William died he was visited and filmed by an extraordinary film maker from New York, Kate Geis. Kate spent time with William and his wife Holly at their home in North Carolina and grew to become a close friend. Out of that friendship Kate created a beautiful and moving work of art titled "Riversense." This feature-length documentary follows the lives of 5 people in the kayaking community: William Nealy, TR Yon, BJ & Katie Johnson, and Dunbar Hardy. The documentary was screened at the NPFF as a work-in-progress.

We were also fortunate to have author Sue Taft in attendance. Sue signed her recent book "The River Chasers - A History of American Whitewater Paddling." Sue graciously donated a portion of the proceeds to the Film Festival and American Whitewater.

When the all of the entries had been screened everyone was ready to rock at the Awards party. This year's party was held at the Kentucky Horse Park, where the NPFF originated 19 years ago. Plenty of good music, food and free suds filled the air. Additional beer runs were needed as the temperatures dropped. We had gas heaters and a bonfire hot enough to melt steel. Only the hardy survived. And remember! The Horse Park had not seen us in action for 19 years. We had them a little scared!!! Thanks to the ACA for the liability insurance.

With all of the activity in our schedule we ran a little late.
A problem? Too many fantastic videos and still photos!
A problem? The biggest crowd ever!
A problem? Too many good people having a good time?
Hardly a problem!

AND HERE ARE THE WINNERS

AMATEUR DIV

Costa Rica, January 2001, David Kahn, Auburn, AL

ACCOMPLISHED DIV

The Search, Vince Shay, Shell Beach, CA

PROFESSIONAL DIV/General Boating

Main Stream, Ben Aylesworth, Good Gravy Productions, Toronto, Canada

PROFESSIONAL DIV/Documentary

American's Most Scenic Rivers, Julie Keller, Tucker, GA

PROFESSIONAL DIV/Safety/Instructional

The Kayak Roll, John Davis/Kent Ford, Alpenwolf Productions, Sacramento, CA

PROFESSIONAL DIV/Commercial

International Paddle Adventure, Ken Whiting/Chris Emerick, Heliconia Press, Clayton, Ontario Canada

PROFESSIONAL DIV/Best of Show

Main Stream, Ben Aylesworth, Good Gravy Productions, Toronto, Canada

PADDLER'S CHOICE AWARD

Thunderballs, The Return of Team C, Rick Gusic, Buzzellmania Productions, Pittsburgh, PA

BEST PADDLING IMAGE

Image #1 by Robert Combs, Alexandria, VA, b & w of kayaker in falls

We, the NPFF committee, want to thank our sponsors. They were outstanding in their support this year. These are the people responsible for donating gear, equipment and services. Their donations, as well as the talented filmmakers, enable the NPFF to contribute so much to the rivers. Thanks to: Paddler Magazine, American Whitewater, Phillip Galls - Lexington, KY, Perception Kayaks, Dagger Kayaks, Nature Outfitters - Milford, OH, Kentucky Outdoor Center - Frankfort, KY, Mountain Surf - Friendsville, MD, Ntahala Outdoor Center, Performance Video, Menasha Ridge Press, Liquid Skills Instruction. Kentucky Ale, Leatherman, Lotus Design, North Face, Great Harvest Atlanta Bread, PUR/ Katadyne, J&H Outdoors - Lexington, iKaYaK, Crazy Creek, Patagonia, Mysterioso, Hands-on Originals, Canoe and Kayak magazine. Pelican products, PUR/Katadyne, J&H Outdoors - Lexington, KY, iKaYaK, Crazy Creek, Ohio Pyle Prints, The Kayakstore, The Underware Guys, Chaco, Bombergear, Hooked on Outdoors, Kokotat

Deerfield Aug. 2 - 4, Charlemont, Massachusetts Riverfest

Competitions:

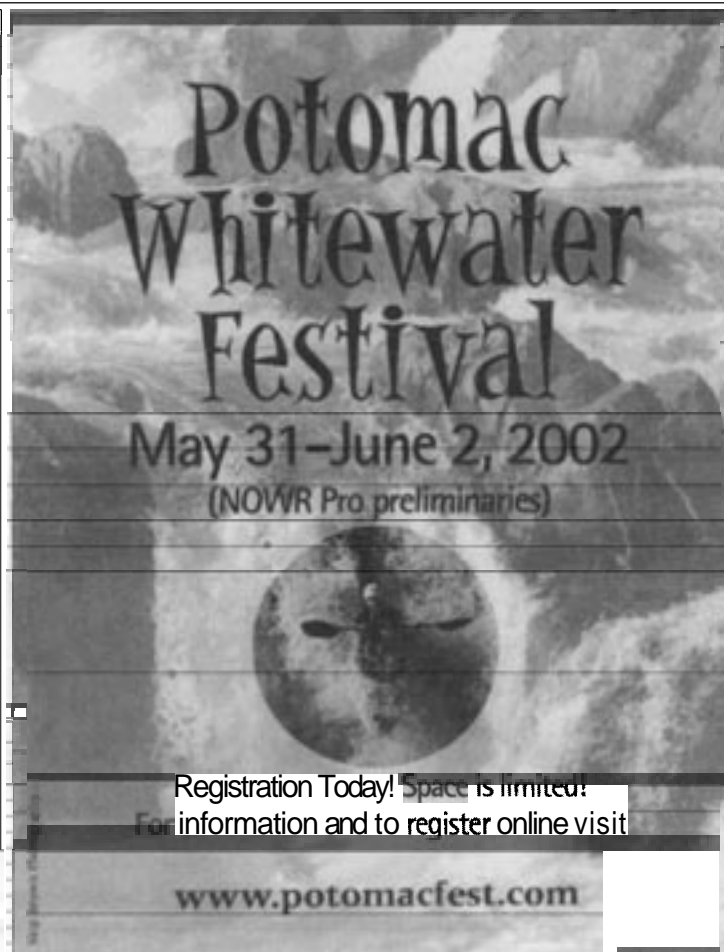
Saturday - 4th Annual

Amateur Whitewater Rodeo
and Paddles Up Race.

Sunday - Mass start downriver
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Competition Results

Napo River Festival

January 11 - 13, 2002
Tena - Napo - Ecuador

January 12, 2002
Location: Santa Rosa

I. Kayak Rodeo
Hatless Hole- Jatunyacu
River

Winners:

Women
1. Jesse Stone
2. Tracy Ray
3. Wendy Laureth

Men

1. Jay Kincaid
2. Taylor Robertson
3. Eric Jackson

January 13, 2002
Location: La Punta de
Ahuano

Downriver Kayak Race
Jatun Sacha - La Punta
de Ahuano (11km)
Napo River

Winners:

Women
1. Donna Raupp
2. Sophie Lit'ee
3. Tracy Ray

Men

1. Paul Horner
2. Ryan Baudrand
3. Lars Haar

Ecuadorian Camaval Kayak Race Results

• By Matt Terry

Napo Province - Ecuador: A total of 18 paddlers from Ecuador, the United States, Canada, Scotland, England, and Italy participated in the second annual kayak race February 11 as part of the program of activities in the annual Heritage Festival of the town of Archidona. The town of Archidona is located on the banks of the Upper Misahualli River in the Napo Province in the Oriente Region of Ecuador, and was the first Spanish settlement East of the Andean cordillera after the Spanish Conquest.

The events this year marked the inauguration of the new Tourism Complex for the town of Archidona. A resplendent tubular-steel footbridge allows access from the town center to the new recreational facilities. The Upper Misahualli River has become a popular kayaking destination for paddlers from around the globe. Lider Rosales, the town mayor, is excited about the various opportunities which paddlers bring to the local economy and wished to include a kayaking event in the town's annual heritage festivities. The race was organized jointly by the Municipal Government of Archidona and the Ecuadorian Rivers Institute (ERI).

WomenTime

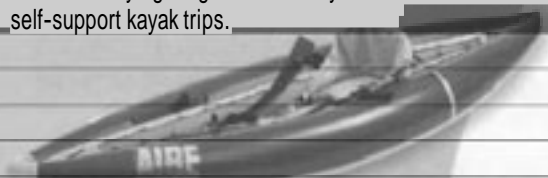
1. Sophie Littee 24:38
2. Deon Duncan 24:47

MenTime

1. Dan Dixon 19:02
2. Timoteo Dent 20:57
3. Jay Sigbrandt 21:29
4. Francesco Salvato 21:40
5. Tarquino Yanguéz 21:48
6. Chris Dickinson 21:55
7. Matt Terry 22:02
8. Travis Bailer 22:58
9. Randall Rogers 23:02
10. Simon Meis 23:08
11. Tito Grefa 23:17
*12. Shawn Grono (Tie) 23:56
*12. Joe Spears (Tie) 23:56
13. Alex Hermosa 24:02
14. Nate Elliott (Hands-paddling!) 25:40
15. Douglas Kruz 28:20

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Trinity River Freestyle Rodeo

Teva Tour

My husband's good-natured comment was something like, "Oh, it wasn't enough that I'm on a rodeo committee, you just had to be on one too!" It's true; sometimes our relationship seems more like two brothers competing than husband and wife. He's on the Orick Rodeo Committee. I'm on the Trinity River Freestyle Rodeo Committee. Both events attract experts and pros from all over the country (and world) competing for national rankings. Both events are prime opportunities for spectators to watch truly great professionals and amateurs performing maneuvers that most of us can only imagine. Both events rely heavily on the support of a horde of volunteers, bring in out-of-town dollars to local stores, cafes, motels, and campgrounds, and raise some funds for local causes.

The Orick Rodeo is all about cowboys, horses, bulls, and mutton-bustin' for the little kids. My husband's job is to stay up all night cooking the roasts for the Orick Rodeo Beef Barbeque. Somehow they coax me, Orick's only out-of-the-closet vegetarian, to make beef sandwiches the next day. Really, it's just ironic that the hubby is on this committee in the first place. In fourteen years with this man, the closest I've ever seen him come to a horse was the time he stayed up all night with the barbeque then drank too many beers and entered the Wild Horse Race. The horse reared up and kicked him in the arm, causing the other two guys on the team to run for their lives. My husband's team lost. Every year he wants to enter again but can't find two fools willing to do it with him.

He'd do better at MY rodeo! It's all about kayaks and whitewater! It's fun in the water and sun; gymnastics on a river hole! It's cartwheels, blunts, pirouettes, spins, and more! The Trinity River Freestyle Rodeo has absolutely nothing to do with horses or bulls. It's clean river fun and a great event for spectators to watch the action. This coming year makes the fourth annual! It's the fourth year we'll be sanctioned by the governing body of national freestyle rodeo. The governing world of professional freestyle has changed this year. American Whitewater (AW) www.americanwhitewater.org and Teva have teamed up to host the "2002 Teva Whitewater Tour." While still under the sanction of AW, the National Organization of Freestyle Rodeo (NOWR) has been replaced by American Whitewater Freestyle (AWF). The Trinity River Freestyle Rodeo is now part of an AWF tour involving four regional circuits. The capstone competition will be the Whitewater National Championships sponsored by Teva and will be held on the Ocoee River October 10 through 13. AWF continues to promote the sport of kayaking through these unique competitions. American Whitewater sponsors this group of events to enhance the continuing evolution of freestyle kayaking and the whitewater resources needed for both competition and the benefit of all who enjoy our rivers. AWF events place emphasis on quality competition, whitewater conservation and access education. (I plagiarized that description from the old NOWR website)

It's a bunch of work pulling this thing together! There are four of us on the committee; Dave Steinhauer from Trinity River Rafting, Photographer extraordinaire, Robin Stocum, Trinity River Rodeo Masters First place winner, Frank Gratz, and yours truly, Old Lady Down-River Boater, Marna Powell. In addition, there are all those wonderful volunteers—too many to name! GB Productions www.gnbproductions.com, a local video production company made a great promo video for our event. We rent the U.S. Forest Service

Pigeon Point Campground, where the rodeo is held, for the entire weekend. To accommodate overflow camping, the wonderful folks at Trinity Adventure Park www.trinityadventures.com opened their camp spaces up to rodeo competitors and attendees for FREE!!! We hope they will open their doors to us again this year! They are located just downriver from our event and the park is located at the take-out for the Pigeon Point to Big Flat Class III run. I really have to give them a plug because they cater to kayakers, rafters, and fishermen and they help out sooooo much with the Trinity River Freestyle Rodeo. Other great efforts were made by Donna Ashby from Yakima www.yakima.com, who gave free massages on site (I hear she'll return this year!) and the Humboldt State University Recreation Students Association took charge of all the recycling.

Did I mention the great prizes and sponsors, and freebies for attendees? This year there will be \$500 cash split between AWF pro winners. In an effort to attract new kayakers to the sport of freestyle, this year's beginner, junior, sport, and masters class entrants (non-pro, non-expert) will be entered in the raffle drawing for the Bliss-Stick play boat generously donated by the Eddy Shop (just down the road from our event)! So far this year we'd like to thank the following sponsors: Adventures Edge (a great paddling/outdoor store in nearby Arcata) www.adventuredge.com, American Whitewater, Bliss-Stick Kayaks, Canoe & Kayak Magazine, the Eddy Shop, Harmony, Humboldt County Convention and Visitors' Bureau, Kokatat, Northcoast Environmental Center, Northern Mountain Supply, the Straw House Coffee Shop, Teva, Trinity Adventure Park, Trinityriver.org, Trinity River Rafting, and Yakima. Last year WetDawg and Kayak Magazine both showed up giving out free stuff to attendees! This year we expect to give out even more prizes and swags! Rumor has it that Natasha from Wet Dawg will be competing again!

The Trinity River Freestyle Rodeo is a two-day event that will place April 13 and 14 at the Pigeon Point Campground, mile marker 36.5 between Big Bar and Junction City, California. Registration for AWF Pro, Expert, and Junior Expert classes, both men and women will take place Friday, April 12 from 3-6 pm evening and Saturday morning, April 13 from 7-10 am. You can also preregister on our web link (see below). Preliminary events for Pro and Experts are held on Saturday, April 13 starting at 11 am. Final events and all other classes will be held on Sunday, April 14 beginning at 10 am. Beginner, Junior, Sport, and Masters classes may register as above or on Sunday from 7-9 am. Spectators get in for free and this is a great place to watch the action! Proceeds go towards river conservation and access. For more information call Robin at (530) 623-2381 or log on to www.trinityriverrafting.com. By the way, this is a great website to check out even if you don't kayak—it has great info and pictures of all kinds of flora and fauna plus links to many other sites.

If you have time, check out the Jefferson State Championship Slalom on the South Fork of the Smith River showmanl@cc.northcoast.com on April 6 & 7 out of Hiouchi. Then boat some of the breathtaking runs on the various forks of the Smith. Next head to the coast to surf South Beach in Crescent City and Moonstone Beach in Trinidad. Stop in Arcata to load up on gear and coffee, then boogie over to the Trinity River Freestyle Rodeo on April 13 and 14. Still got time? Spend a couple of days playing on the Trinity then remember that the Cal Salmon has fabulous runs and it's the perfect time of year for the Oak Bottom Hole to really cook! Now my friend, Mark "the Dude" will be mad because I just shared all those great runs with you.

Hope to see you at our event. Happy Paddling!

Submitted by: Marna Powell, PO Box 68 Orick, CA 95555-0068
707 488-6415 spycke@humboldt1.com

River Safety

and AW

A Brief History

By Charlie Walbridge
AW Safety Editor

If you were paddling whitewater between the late 50s and the late 60s, you used an aluminum canoe or a single-seat folding kayak. Most river runners were self-taught and used improvised gear. Paddling clubs were few, small, and widely scattered. If you didn't join a club, you might never find anyone to paddle with! Many of America's classic runs were first explored during this time, but because gear and skills were rudimentary, only a very few dedicated people could make these trips. American Whitewater (then the AWA) was formed in 1957 to put paddlers and clubs in touch with one another. The "A" stood for "Affiliation." Sharing knowledge was the main goal, and safety was always an important focus. Because few people knew what they were doing, trips typically consisted of an experienced leader followed by a group of much less skilled boaters. Many early articles focused on leadership skills. American Whitewater's Safety Code was developed to summarize the safety lessons that had been learned. AW was the first recreational boating organization of any kind in the country to promote the use of life vests. They also publicized the dangers of strainers and low-head dams. From the late 60s to the mid 70s whitewater paddlers focused on slalom racing. This demanded a higher level of skill and improved gear. Top-ranked racers traveled to Europe and brought back new boat designs and techniques. Molds for these boats were made available to others in the paddling community, and almost everyone built their own from fiberglass. As skills and gear developed, more people could run harder rivers. Clubs became bigger and stronger, providing the infrastructure needed to bring newcomers into the sport. But many inexperienced first-timers took to the river without the knowledge and skills they needed to stay out of trouble. The results were tragic, and this brought river running to the attention of politicians and bureaucrats for the first time. O.K. Goodwin became safety chair of American Whitewater during this period. A strong racer and river runner, he believed that safety was based on skill. It was, therefore, the responsibility of the individual, not the government. While he supported the rights of whitewater paddlers to attempt any rapid they chose, he was also clear about the need for responsible paddling. He felt that ignorant first timers were the greatest problem and that trained boaters could be part of the solution. He urged government officials to adopt a policy of education, not regulation, and he thwarted much harmful rulemaking with his lobbying and writing. His ideas are still at the center of our approach to river safety. From the late 70s through the late 80s roto-molded kayaks dominated the scene. For the first time a person could go into a store, buy a whitewater kayak, take it to a river, and paddle it on the same day! These "indestructible" boats opened up a whole new level of hardcore paddling. The sport boomed, and more people started paddling than ever. These numbers outstripped the capacity of club training programs, so kayak schools and outfitters arose to meet the demand. Boats, gear, and training were now easy to find, and people got good quickly. The increase in the number of paddlers led to



crowding on some rivers, and more accidents. For the first time we began to see skilled paddlers die on rivers on a fairly regular basis. Charlie Walbridge became safety chair of the American Canoe Association in 1977. He always worked closely with American Whitewater and eventually took on that job as well. Influenced by the mountaineering community, he focused on reporting and understanding accidents that involved experienced paddlers. Terms like foot entrapment and flush-drowning were first seen in the pages of this magazine. He supervised the first major AW Safety Code revision. The updated code now recognizes that skilled paddlers usually travel as common adventurers, without a designated leader. He also served on the committee that developed AW's River Signals. During the 90s whitewater rodeo became an important influence on the sport. Once again new boats and techniques fueled a remarkable growth spurt. Flashy tricks and hot fashion brought a younger generation onto the scene.

Paddlers will probably look back on this time as a "golden age," a period when numbers, gear, and technique opened up incredible new horizons. Rodeos became major events, where big money and reputations were on the line. Unfortunately, this was also a time when deaths of experienced paddlers increased dramatically. The loss of several internationally known paddlers and a number of loyal members from the recreational boating community hit the AWA hard. Lee Belknap became Safety Chair in 1990 and worked hard to understand why this was happening. Using his engineering background, he designed the Close Calls & Injuries Survey and set up the AW Accident Database. The latter, available on-line at AmericanWhitewater.org, contains 25 years of data. He managed production of the river safety cards, which puts a lot of useful information in a compact, easy-to-use form. They're waterproof, and designed to be taken on the river. His last project developed Benchmark rapids for our River Rating System using input from hundreds of people. This allowed the difficulty of rapids in different areas to be more easily compared. And he educated untold numbers of organizations, agencies, and reporters about river safety on behalf of American Whitewater. Now, as American

Whitewater approaches its 50th year, Tim Kelley has taken over the job as safety chair. Kelly, an army officer and an expert paddler, is no stranger to managing risk. Events, including flow tests, extreme races and rodeo competitions, have become increasingly important to American Whitewater. Tim is developing the procedures to keep them running smoothly. He also hopes to use events as a venue for expanding our safety education program. And as you can see from this issue, the man can write! He's the right person to carry the safety banner in these exciting times. Charlie Walbridge American Whitewater Safety Committee Route 1, Box A43B, Bruceton Mills, WV 26525, e-mail: ccwalbridge@cs.com; phone 304-379-9002



Accidents Can Happen Basic River Safety and Rescue

By Dunbar Hardy
American Whitewater Board Member

With a loud noise, my paddle hit the rock as I bounced downstream through the continuous steep rapids. I tried to take a left stroke but my kayak didn't respond, something was not right. I looked down at my paddle and there was no blade - gone! There I was one-stroking it through some not-so-friendly whitewater. I was able to make it c-1 style into an eddy. I got out of my boat and pulled out a take apart paddle; ready once again to rejoin the battle.

Further downstream, my buddy made a not so cool roll-against-the-wall move, and broke his paddle. We pulled over into an eddy and pulled out our last take apart paddle. Now we were just hoping to reach the take-out without any more mishaps. We completed the run, and laughed about the abuse our gear had taken, feeling very relieved that we had been able to keep paddling together and avoid an epic overnight hike-out. We had avoided that unpleasant experience only by being prepared.

Rescue Philosophy

Many accidents and rescue scenarios can be prevented by being well prepared. But accidents do happen, regardless of preparation, so it is important to be practiced and skilled in rescue techniques. There are a few concrete principles that should be kept in mind when facing difficult situations on the river. These principles may sound simple, but in the heat-of-the-moment they can easily be forgotten, or overruled by rush judgment.

- 1) Prevention is no accident. It is easier to stay out of trouble than it is to get out of trouble.
- 2) The safety of the **rescuers** is foremost. Don't make a bad situation worse by putting others in unnecessary jeopardy. Minimize the risk to the rescuers.
- 3) The person in trouble is the priority, not his equipment
- 4) Keep it simple - start with easy, 'low tech', and low risk maneuvers before initiating more complicated/riskier rescue techniques

Be prepared - do your homework

Be prepared for the worst-case scenario. Many accidents can be prevented, and trouble kept from reaching epic proportions, if everyone is prepared.

What goes into being prepared? Know as much about the run as you can prior to putting on. This should include the length, the overall difficulty, the presence of unusual or extreme hazards, mandatory portages, the recommended flows (water levels), and the general topography of the area with respect to potential routes for evacuation. If you have done the run before you should already know all of this, but if the river is new to you, talk



Accidents Can Happen continued...

to other people (whose judgment and info you trust) who are more familiar with the run. You can also glean info from a local guidebook, if one is available. It is worth emphasizing that the water level (flow, cfs) can be very important. Some rivers change dramatically depending upon flow, and many rise and fall very rapidly. Try to check the level by phone or via the internet as close to your launch time as possible.

Equipment

The foremost consideration is paddling the appropriate boat for the run (creek boat vs. play boat). Dress accordingly; wear enough clothes and gear that if you are in the water you will stay warm for a reasonable time. Footwear is especially important in the event that you need to wade out into the water, or to hike-out/run for help. A properly fitting helmet and pfd are mandatory pieces of rescue equipment and should be worn on the river at all times.

A throwrope is a valuable piece of river rescue equipment - have one and know how to use it. Where there is a rope, there should be knife. A first-aid kit is another important piece of rescue gear. If you are paddling more remote or more difficult rivers, a take-apart paddle should be packed as well as a simple pin kit. This pin kit might include the following items: a couple of carabineers, webbing, prussic cords, and pulleys. Know how to use any equipment you bring with you on the river, and practice using it, because the time to learn is not when an accident occurs.

The Put-in

At the put-in do a final check of a few key details. Assess the water level one last time. Survey your companions to find out who is carrying throwropes, first aid kits, take-apart paddles, and other rescue gear. The longer the river and the farther you are going to be from a road, the more critical it is for every paddler to be self-contained. On short, easier, familiar runs, you may not need an extra paddle or lots of rescue equipment. The overall skill level of your party is also an important consideration. A quick survey of the group will determine how emergency ready you are. Make sure that everyone in the party is comfortable with that.

On the Run

Kayaking is very much an individual sport, in that only you paddle your own boat. But there are times when it is necessary to work together as a coherent group. Deciding how the group will make its way downstream is very important - try to reach a consensus about paddle/hand signals, spacing, and the style that will be used for running rapids (one at a time, eddy hopping, etc.). Check with one another throughout the run - consider how folks are doing, who is feeling "on," who is feeling "off," who feels fatigued, hungry, cold,

who needs to stop to fix their boat, who feels the pace is too fast... or too slow.

Don't be oblivious to what is going on around you. Maybe someone needs to take a break, switch boats, or add another layer of clothing. Maybe a novice wants or needs to follow an experienced paddler's lines more closely, wants to scout a bit more, or slow the pace. This is especially important on longer, more difficult rivers... where keeping everyone's confidence level high is important.

Setting Safety

Being in the right place at the right time is no accident. It is important to outline a safety game plan for bigger and harder drops... before any individual starts through the rapid. First to be determined - does anyone in the group want to scout the drop from land? Some people may want to watch others paddle the rapid in order to see where to go, while others may feel comfortable scouting from their boats and running the drop without getting out. If some people will be scouting from shore, they can also set shore-based safety. This means having paddlers with throwropes out of their boats, who will assist a swimmer with a rope throw.

These individuals should position themselves near the part of the rapid that looks like the most difficult spot... where flips, pins or swims are most likely to occur. This may be at the bottom of some drops, or next to a super sticky looking hole where recirculation seems possible.

Another option is to set boat-based safety. These "safety boaters" are positioned in their boat, ready to help swimmers and their gear reach shore. Boat-based safety should be performed by paddlers who are skilled and comfortable with another person hanging off of their boat while they tow them. A safety "tow system" properly attached to a rescue style PFD may facilitate towing errant boats and gear to shore in swift currents.

Cleaning Up/ Problem Solving

Which rescue techniques are utilized to clean up a mess on the river is dependent upon the situation, and no two situations are exactly the same. The more versed paddlers are in different rescue techniques, the more they will be able to help if an emergency arises. Various rescue techniques should be studied and practiced before needed.

In any rescue there are three principal areas of concern - the person, the paddle, and the boat. Keep in mind that you want to minimize risk to the rescuer (not compromise his ability to maneuver and remain upright) and stay low-tech (use the least amount of equipment possible). Start simple, if that doesn't work, try a more advanced technique.

The following are boat-based rescue techniques: starting with simple suggestions,

then moving towards more complex alternatives.

Rescue of the Person : Self-rescue is ideal. Encourage the swimmer with verbal assistance and directions. If they need help getting to safety tow them off of the stern of your boat; if necessary they can also climb onto or straddle the stern of your boat. An injured person can sometimes be draped across the bow of the rescuer's boat. A quick-release tow tether can also be used to rescue an unconscious/unresponsive swimmer, providing the rescuer knows how to use it safely.

Rescue of the Paddle: Pick up and throw the paddle to shore; or double paddle, matching the blades and shaft of the errant paddle with your own. You can also tuck the paddle under the front or back of your pfd if you are in relatively easy water. A quick-release tether can also be used to tow the paddle to safety.

Rescue of the Boat: Chase and nudge the boat towards an eddy. Try the bulldoze technique (one bow on top of a boat and one bow inside cockpit of the boat being rescued, assuming two safety boaters are present). As a last resort clip in and tow with a quick-release tow tether. All of these techniques will work better if the boat has floatation and contains relatively little water.

If the emergency involves a boater pinned in a boat, particularly if his or her head is under water, the situation is clearly more serious and the response needs to be immediate. Other articles in this issue will deal with this situation in more detail.

Last Thoughts

For your own peace of mind take a River Rescue Class. This is particularly true if you teach or lead trips, or if you run difficult whitewater. In these classes many different rescue techniques are practiced on land, as well as in the water. This information is not only for your benefit, but, ultimately, for those paddling with you who might need help.

It is, of course, impossible, to anticipate every type emergency that might occur. But if you practice rescue skills and know how to initiate different types of rescue techniques, you may be able to improvise and deal with the unexpected.

Sadly, in spite of thorough training, lots of practice, years of experience, and sound judgment, some lives are still lost on the river. Some tragedies just can not be anticipated or avoided. But those who survive can take comfort in knowing that they were well trained, had appropriate rescue gear with them, and did everything possible to save their companion.

Editor's note: Dunbar Hardy is a Head Instructor for Four Corners Riversports in Durango, Colorado and Tarkio Kayak Adventures in Missoula, Montana. He is a certified Instructor Trainer in Kayaking with the American Canoe Association, and a certified Swiftwater Rescue Instructor. He is also a freelance photographer and writer. To contact Dunbar go to www.dunbarhardy.com

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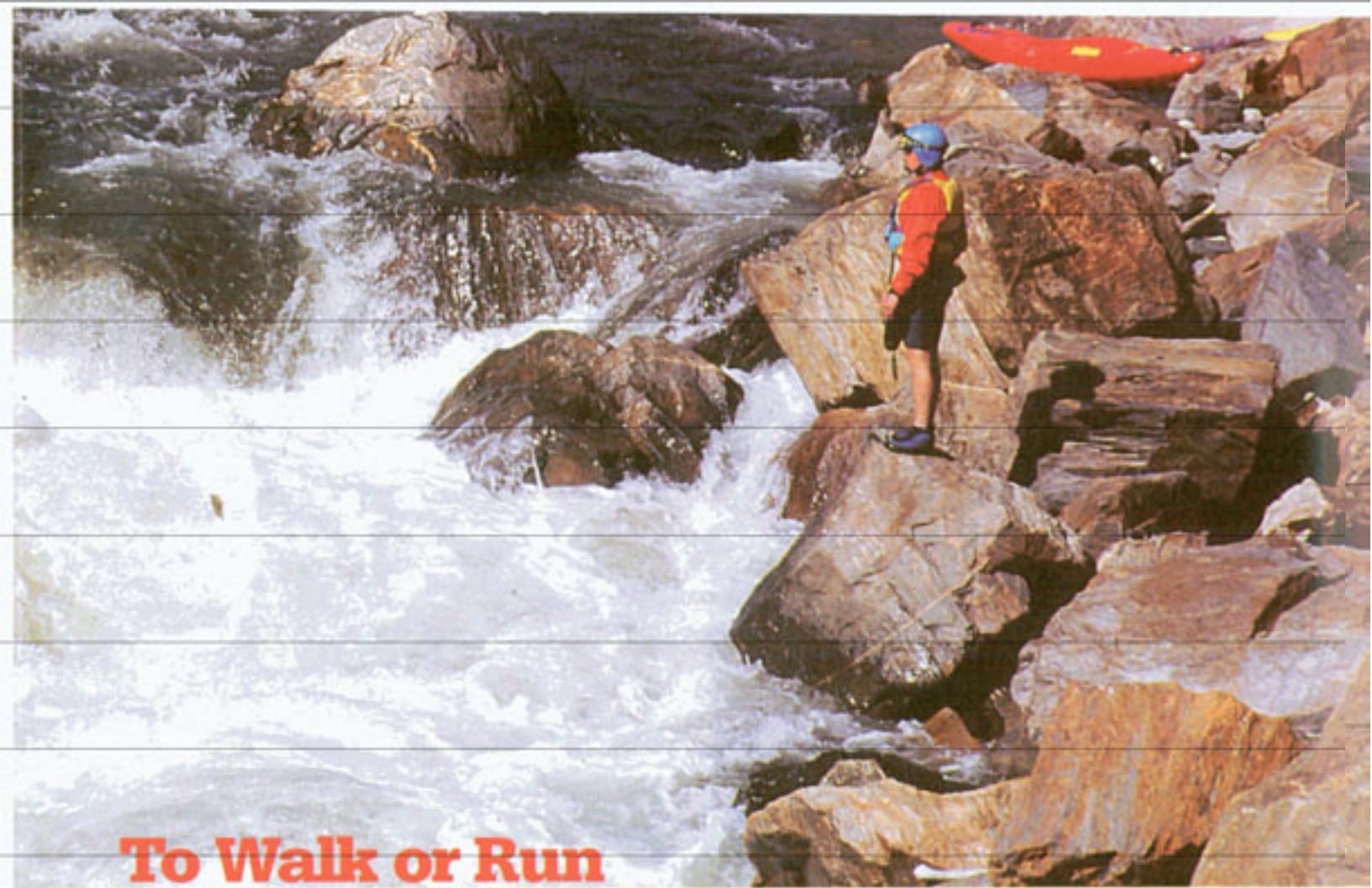


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To Walk or Run Whitewater Decision-Making

By Dunbar Hardy

The cameras are rolling and the crowd is going wild.

Everyone is there: ESPN2000, FOX Sports Network, Sports Illustrated, and Rad Gear Magazine.

"Run-it! Run-it! Run-it!" is the monotonous chant from the out of control crowd. Bucky Bell, fresh off the rad-boy, pro-sponsored creek circuit, steps up to the riverbank and the crowd erupts. The cameras zoom in.

Bucky started boating last month but already claims to be the best kayaker of the century because he has survived numerous 100-foot waterfalls. His plan is always the same, "Point the boat downstream and roll if you flip. Sooner or later you wind up at the bottom."

Without even scouting this 150 footer, Bucky proclaims his invincibility and says he'll run it. He pumps his fists in the air, accidentally flips in the eddy, rolls, and then charges off the drop. Flying off the lip of the falls he waves to the crowd and puts on his noseplugs. He disappears at the bottom into the maw. The crowd soon turns away and the cameras are soon turned off as everyone packs up to leave.

"Too bad about that kid," one cameraman says to his companion. "Yeah, but he looked cool for a few seconds," replies the other with a smirk.

Why run?

Deciding to tackle difficult and dangerous whitewater rapids is a lot like trying to balance on a thin line. There is always a struggle between risk/thrill and judgement. That is why it is important to have a clear reason for running a rapid before you launch.

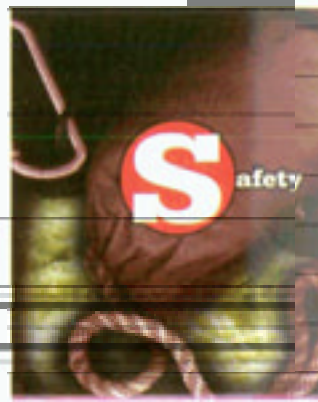
Ask yourself: Why am I running this drop, really? What are the obvious reasons for running this rapid, and what are the more subtle reasons? Know and understand your motivations.

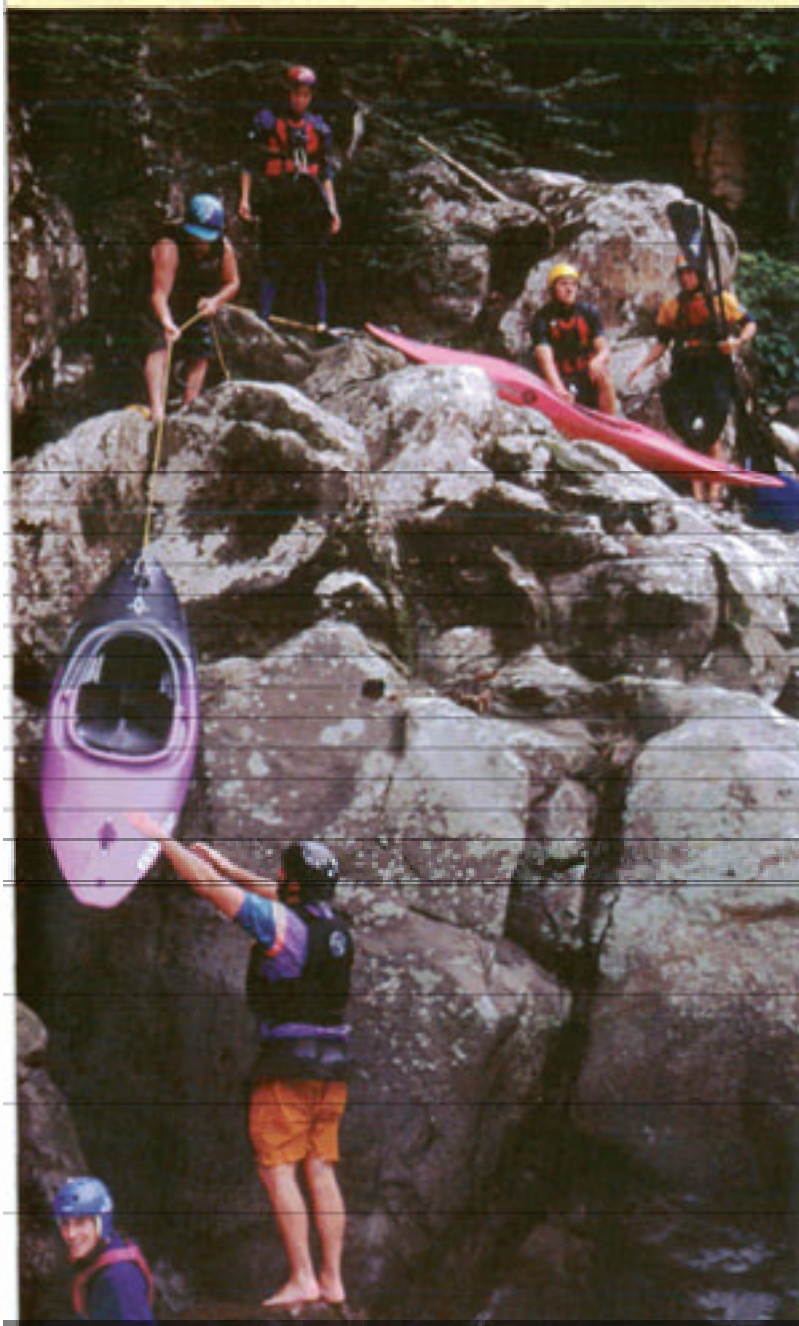
It is important to try to identify the potential consequences of a mistake or unforeseen occurrence. Ask yourself: What is the worst case scenario **and/or** where is the worst place in this drop? Anticipate the unexpected and take the time to look at all of the possibilities.

After identifying all possible outcomes, it is important to ask yourself if you are willing to live with the consequences. Every paddler has walked around a rapid or two in their paddling careers after deciding that the risk just wasn't worth it. Some rapids just can be safely run. A wise paddler once said, "It is better to have wished you had run a rapid, than to have wished that you hadn't run it."

To walk or run

The decision to portage or run a rapid is one that every whitewater paddler faces. Every individual has to decide what is right for them on any given day. There should be no outside or peer pressure. Paddling techniques and equipment are improving at an amazing rate, but it is important not to get caught up in the rush. Remember that no one is invincible and we still *do* have choices. Considering the extreme nature of whitewater that paddlers are testing today, it is clear that bad decisions have the very real potential to lead to fatalities. The option to portage should always be considered before one decides to attempt a challenging drop.





The purpose of scouting is to give you, the paddler, a better chance of **successfully** navigating a **difficult section** of river. When faced with a big horizon line, it is crucial to get yourself into a vantage-point from which you can see the entire drop. Only then can you know what you will be dealing with. Remember well that first full view of the rapid. Then walk around and investigate anything that **seems** worrisome. Check it out from different angles. Don't forget to look back at the entrance to the rapid, the approach, and try to eyeball the rapid from water level (how you will see it from your boat). Identify landmarks that will help you find your way through the chaos. By the time you are done scouting, you should have a mental image of your chosen line through the rapid... plan **A**, and perhaps an alternate line... plan **B**.

Go with your gut

After thoroughly scouting a rapid, only you know how you feel about running it. Don't deny your intuition. Sometimes this is inner voice is quietly reminding you of the bigger picture. Does the line that you have chosen as plan A leave something to chance, something that is out of your control? Is there too much of this rapid that will be left to chance, or will you be mostly "in control"? Reconsider that first look at the rapid when scouting, what was your initial reaction? Why did you have that reaction?

Try to identify "real" fear versus nervousness and doubt. Remember that "real" fear can sometimes impede your performance. This is the **inside**, and perhaps, more challenging part of running whitewater.

Fear Management

Fear can be distracting and even paralyzing. It can impede your performance. But in difficult whitewater you need to be in top form in terms of mental and physical performance. One way to deal with fear is to focus on the moves that you need to make. Your vision needs to be focused on 'the line' you've chosen, and then drive your boat in that direction. It is also very important that you have a mental image of yourself doing all of the moves necessary to navigate plan A. Think about where you want to go! This is commonly referred to as visualization.

Thinking inordinately about where you don't want to be and where you don't want to go is a 'reactive' approach to boating and can be counterproductive. By remaining 'proactive' and focusing on the positive, you can minimize the effects of fear. Once you decide to run a rapid, there can still be some nervousness, but it should be overshadowed by confidence.

All Photos by Dunbar Hardy ©

*Page 32: When in Doubt, scout!
Above, Portaging a big one on the
Mishuatti River in Ecuador.
Right, Someone getting a needed hand.*



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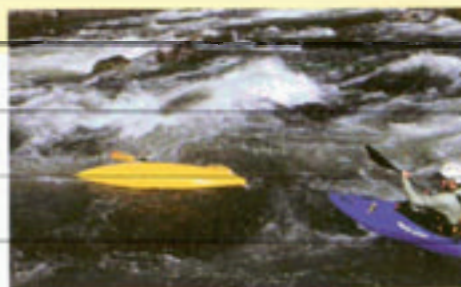
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To Walk or Run continued...



Top right: Land Heflin earning the pesos on the Main Salmon. Photos Dunbar Hardy. ©



Other considerations

It is also important to consider other subtle factors impacting your decision to run a rapid. What kind of day are you having on the river? Are you paddling well? What is the weather like? Are you cold? How far "out there" are you (roadside vs. wilderness)? Are you familiar with the drop? Have you run it before; what happened then? Have other members of your party identified hazards that you did not notice? Is there a person in the group whose experience you trust? If so, ask them what they think, and if they are going to attempt it. If you are paddling a boat with a partner or crew (raft, open canoe or C-2), make sure everyone is in absolute agreement as to which line is to be run, and who will be doing what at each point in the rapid.

Final Thoughts

When all is said and done, boating is a very individual activity. No one *can* tell you what you should do. True, we usually run whitewater in groups, but the sport emphasizes individual expression. Most of you paddle C-1 or kayaks, so you are the only one in your boat. You control your own destiny.

There is so much freedom in this sport. Perhaps the river has the ultimate control, but are we able to dance with and challenge its power. That is what makes running whitewater so exhilarating.

Always be clear as to why you are running a rapid, and make *sure* your reasons are sound and respectable. Don't run something just because Bucky Bell did, or because the cameras are rolling, or because it will break the world record. Don't run a drop just because other people in your group ran it, or because someone with lesser skills than you bumbled through it. Find your own reason to run... or to portage it... and follow your heart. Walking around a rapid is not a sign of weakness. It may, in fact, be a sign of good judgement.

Besides, the river and its rapids are not going anywhere. If you use your head, there *can* always be another day.

Dunbar Hardy is the Paddle School Director for Four Corners Riversports in Durango, Colorado. He is also an ACA Instructor Trainer and a freelance photographer/writer. He can be contacted directly at www.dunbarhardy.com

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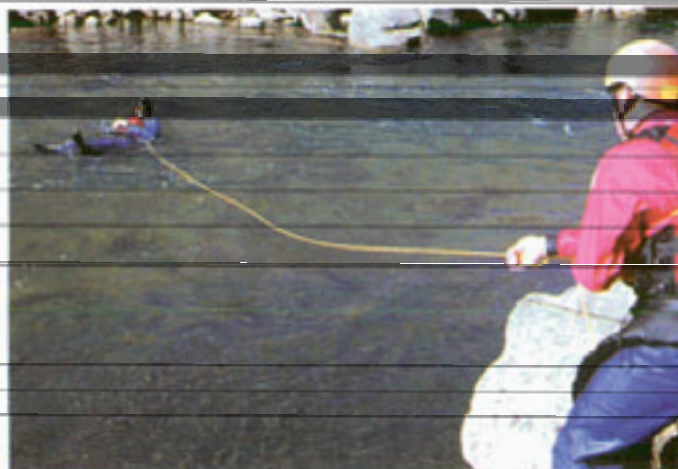
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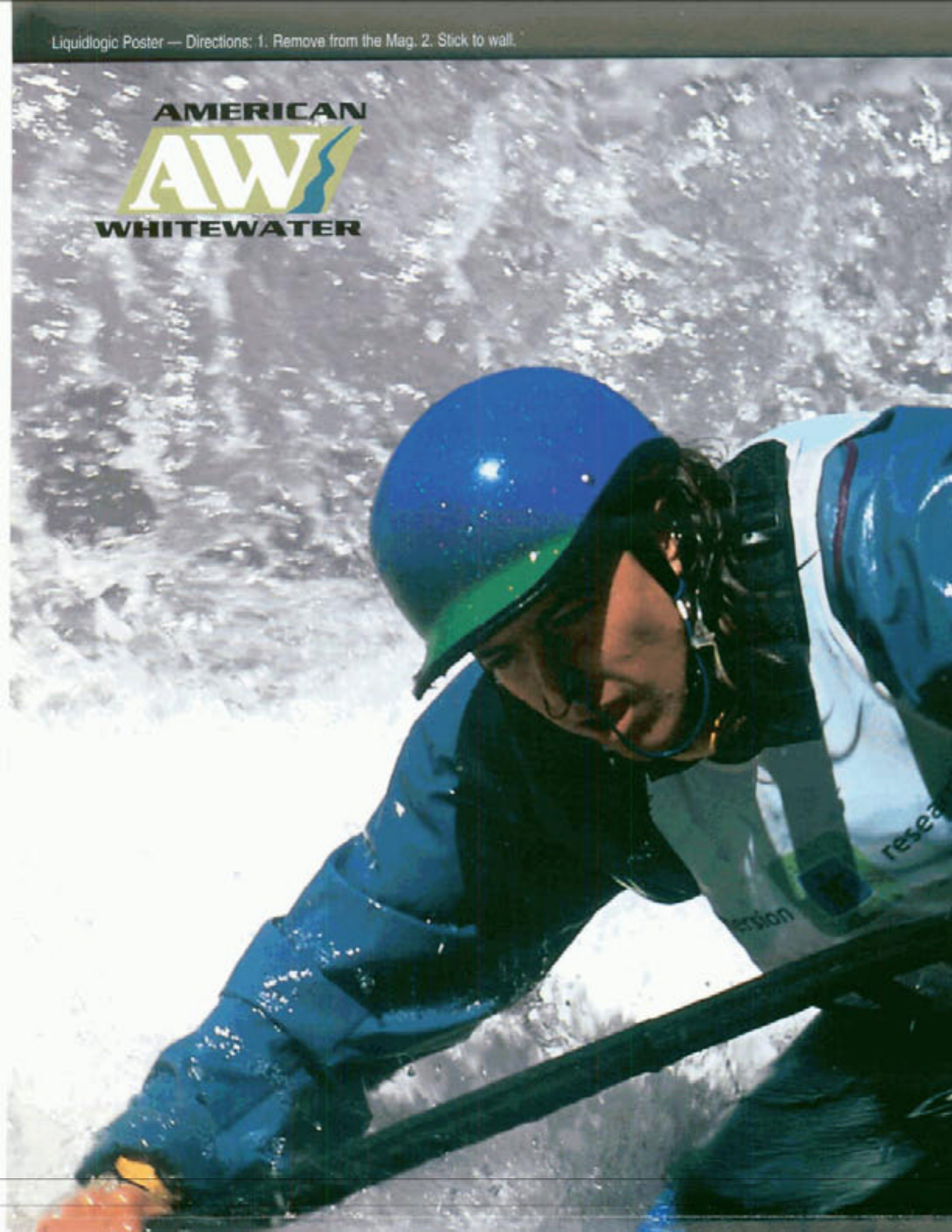
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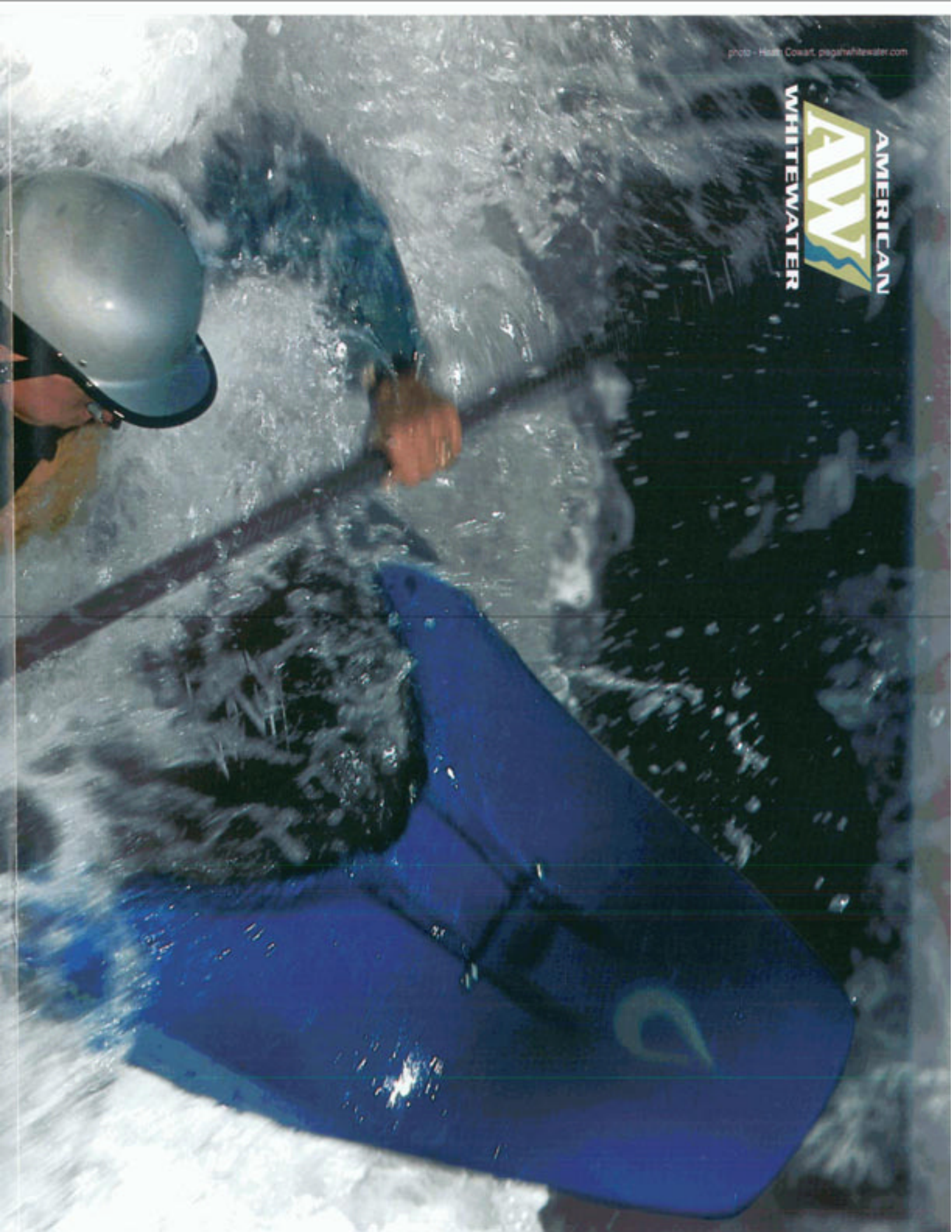
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Choosing a rope and other rescue equipment

By Tim Kelly

The death of a close friend a few years back made me rethink my rescue gear. I was not looking for rescue equipment to provide a silver bullet. But when that "worst-case" scenario stares me in the face, and I need more than a good throw to make a save; I want no doubt that my skill and equipment will give me the best chance to save a friend...don't you?

My assortment of tried and tested climbing gear had worked well on the many haul rigs I had yanked up rock walls, but too often I had witnessed or heard of swiftwater systems failing, ropes breaking, and prusiks slipping. I realized that while the gear is the same, the loads and dynamics of swiftwater rescue are very different than climbing. I had lots of questions. Do I need a Spectra^a rope? Why a 3/8-inch rope, or will 1/4-inch work? Do I really need rescue pulleys or will plastic pulley wheels or carabiners as pulleys work? What kind of mechanical advantage do I need? What load rating should my "rigging" equipment and anchors have? What kind of cinching knot or clamping device should I use?

Odds are you and I will never have to test the answers to these questions. But the time to wonder is not when your friend rolls snake eyes on some "No-name" Class III rapid with a new tree strainer pinning him to the bottom. My hope is you will find a few nuggets in this article that will help you and your best friend walk away from that "worst-case" scenario with the tale of a close call and not a horrifying memory.

Rope Selection...Is a Spectra^B rope worth the money?

A rope is the most important rescue tool we have beside judgment and skill. Used as a throw rope, its strength is of little significance, but rope strength becomes vital when used in a z-drag or other rescue system. No matter what kind of rope you have, you want to maximize its strength. Understanding how knots, carabiner connections/bends, clamping devices, and



Mike "Boomer" Janoska leads a boat recovery on Cheesman Canyon. The swimmer was pulled to safety just above this sieve in "Burmes Punji Stick." (Photo by Mike Munger)

other haul system components effect a rope is critical to maximizing rope strength. When I found all the facts I could, the decision was easy. **The bottom line, "A rope's tension rating has to be much higher than what you need because so many factors degrade rope strength."** (Walbridge interview) I've settled on a 3/8-inch Spectra^a rope that is 75-80ft. long to maximize strength, general handling, and the ability for cinching knots or mechanical clamping devices to hold under heavy loads. I'm looking into even stronger line used in sailboat rigging called Sta-Set X[®], which has an even better tension and shear rating. The facts and assumptions below explain my decision.

A rope's breaking strength really depends upon the knots and components of the rigging system used on the rope. But there is no doubt that the higher the rope's tension rating and shear rating for the rope's sheath, the better the rope, no matter

what the system. The shear rating is the load that causes the rope's sheath to tear apart when cinched by a prusik or clamped by a mechanical device like an ascender or Tibloc (pronounced T-Block). The \$45 question asked by most "cheap-assed" kayakers, the author included, do you really need the extra strength of Spectra^a, or is good old Polypropylene strong enough?

Most experts agree that 1/2 in. (12.7mm) diameter rope is just too bulky, and a 1/4-inch rope is very difficult for cinching knots to hold. In fact, most mechanical clamping devices have stamped in the metal, not designed for ropes under 8mm (1/4 inch=6.35mm). Mechanical clamping devices will damage a 1/4-inch rope at loads under 900 lbs, which could cause rope failure. That leaves 3/8-inch and 5/16-inch. We will look at 3/8-inch rope since that is a more common diameter.

The first eye opener I discovered was that the tension load for

the rope is rated before it ever gets wet. Once the rope gets wet (even after it dries), drop about 10% off the rating. (Source: Tim Delaney, swiftwater expert) A Figure-8 Loop knot drops another 20% off the rating. The real shocker is the weakening effect that a carabiner connection causes. The sharp 180-degree bend around the carabiner causes the inside of the rope to crimp, which transfers most of the load to the outside. The rope's core strands on the outside of the bend can fail from this uneven loading under heavy loads. I have no data on how much carabiner connections or carabiners used as pulleys reduce a rope's strength, but many experts say this is probably the single biggest cause of rope failure. Delaney estimates it is as high as 40-50%. Using double carabiners of the same size at connection points reduces the loss of rope strength to this "bending effect." Also having the clear plastic tubing sleeves on the looped end of the rope helps. In general, "A bend at least four times the diameter of the rope prevents this." (*"Whitewater Rescue Manual,"* Walbridge p. 72)

So, the rope is already 30% less than the original rating before we do anything except hook it to the boat. This means 3/8-inch Polypro has a rating of



about 1330 lbs and 3/8-inch Spectra[™] has a rating of about 3150 lbs. These reductions do not include any additional loss from the bending effect around a carabiner, which will lower these ratings a little more, not to mention strength loss from use and "aging." Taking proper care of

your rope to ensure these strengths is critical. Stepping on your rope, especially when it's wet and dirty, is a sure way to cause unseen damage to the rope's core and reduce the rope's strength. You should routinely inspect your rope for damage and wash it, especially if used in dirt or mud. You can daisy chain the rope and wash in a laundry bag or use a front loading washer. Using Downey Fabric softener is reported to actually improve rope strength. Chemical fumes are one of the biggest impacts on rope strength, so storing your throw bag in a garage or storage shed is not a good idea. A rope that has knots tied in it frequently, used to lower boats or rappel, and used in mechanical rigs loses an additional 15% of its strength from this kind of use. Ropes should be replaced every three years or so depending on use and condition.

Knots are a ropes second worst enemy (next to carabiners). Knots significantly reduce rope and tubular webbing strength. A good Figure-8 Loop causes about a 20% loss in a rope's strength. The Figure-8 Loop is the knot that has the least effect on a rope's strength. Make sure the knot inside the throw bag is a single Figure-8 Stopper knot and not an overhand knot, which reduces rope strength an additional 15-20% over that of the Figure-8 Loop. The book "Swiftwater Rescue" by Slim Ray has an excellent table showing "knot breaking strengths" (p. 66).

What all this means in practical terms is a simple 3:1 "Z-drag" with three people pulling can generate over 1500 lbs causing the Polypro

rope to break (see Table-1). While most pins will not require 1500 lbs to free a boat, there are several that do. Isn't your best friend's life worth an additional \$45 plus tax?

If you already have a 318-inch Polypro throw bag you can save some money by ordering just the Spectra[®] rope. NRS sells just the rope: 80ft. of 318-inch Spectra[®] for less than \$60. http://www.nrscatalog.com/product_list.asp?deptid=604



Waist Throw Bags

A 1/4-inch or better yet a, 516-inch Spectra[™] rope (60 ft.) does make a versatile waist throw bag. It can be used as a tagline, as part of an anchor system or as a belay for live bait rescues. If rope length is running short, the waist bag line can be connected to the rescue line after the clamping devices. You should always use a knot to join two ropes and always a Double Sheet Bend knot when joining ropes of different diameters. (Warning: never join two ropes by connecting the looped ends with a carabiner in any haul or rappel system.)

A 5/16in. (8mm) diameter rope not only has a higher tension rating than 14-inch, but can also be used with mechanical clamping devices and has a

greater slipping load. The same length of 5/16-inch fits in a 1/4-inch bag. To optimize this you can use Sta-Set X[®] instead of Spectra[®] which is primarily used for sailboat rigging. Sta-Set X[®] not only has a higher tension rating than Spectra[®], but also a special wrapping between the sheath and core strands.

This greatly increases the shear strength of the rope sheath.

Sta-Set X[®] is more expensive, but you get what you pay for: 60 ft of 5116-inch Sta-Set X[™] retails for \$55 and 80 ft of 3/8-inch Sta-Set X[™] retails for \$80.

Table-1			
Spectra® & Sta-Set X® comparison			
	1/4"	5/16"	3/8"
Spectra®	2500lbs		4500lbs
Sta-Set X	2700lbs		4400lbs
Cost/ft			
Spectra®	\$0.59/ft		\$0.69/ft
Sta-Set X	\$0.69/ft		\$0.89/ft

"New England Ropes," manufactures Sta-Set X[®], and you can locate a dealer near you through this link: <http://www.newropes.com/company/default-contact.htm>. The real advantage of Sta-Set X[™] is that the sheath is double breasted. Tim Delaney believes it results in a higher shear rating. This advantage becomes clear when we look closer at the effect of cinching knots on rope sheaths. (Sta-Set X[®] is white with blue, red or green tracing for those worried about coordinating their colors.) Ropes tend to run out quickly between taglines and less than ideal anchor locations. In groups of 4 or less, I recommend a couple paddlers carry two bags, one 318-inch and one 5116-inch waist bag. (Warning: ensure your waist bag doesn't make it difficult to exit your boat

by catching on the cockpit rim, especially if you were pinned against the back deck. If it does catch, try wearing it under your spray skirt or just secure it inside the boat and grab it when you scout.) I find a waist belt system with a releasable bag is an advantage over those without. Systems that have the belt connected to the bag can snag buckles between rocks when they are being retrieved as well as smack swimmers in the face. A rope is only good if you have it with you. Make it a personal rule to always have one with you no-matter what kind of boat or run you're on, and always carry a rope when you scout. This makes waist bags very appealing, but realize the waist bag is

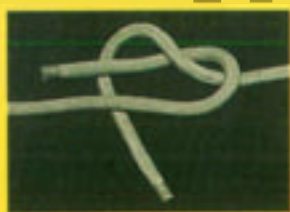
just a throw rope.

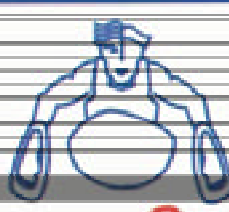
If you are worried about a possible pin have the 3/8-inch rope and all the rigging gear out of the boats and within arms reach of where it will be needed. The gear doesn't do much good back in your boat.. .5 minutes

upstream or worse, in the boat running the drop.

Waist throw bag that releases from the waist belt. The waist belt also has loops to hold carabiners. This bag is made by Mongo products, a small self owned and operated business out of Vail, CO. Be sure to ask for Spectra[™] rope. You can check out Mongo Products at this link: <http://mongoproducts.com/Welcome/welcome.html>

Double Sheet Bend Knot - finish this off with a backup knot or... (photos courtesy of Knot Knowledge web site and Blue Ridge Mountain Rescue Group Photographer Jason Dalton)





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Neutral Bent Shaft

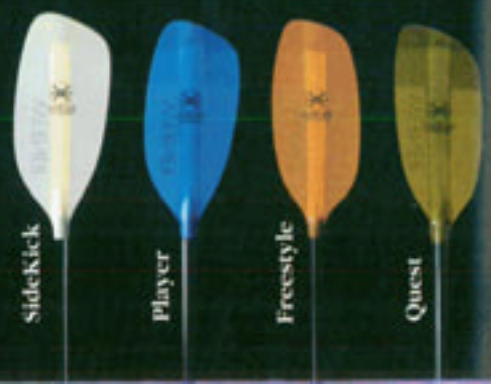
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A Close Call...

"In Search of Eldorado"



Tim Kelley running Harmon Falls, Photo by Shelby Katz

[The] gallant knight[s], In sunshine and in shadow, Had journeyed long, Singing a song, In search of Eldorado.

(Edgar Allen Poe)

All this technical stuff is making my head hurt...time for a war story. Last spring I was paddling the Eldorado Canyon section of Lower South Boulder Creek in CO. We were having a great day.

Our Eldorado was a tight technical rapid called Harmon Falls. A treasure worthy of any paddlin' conquistador. The run was crankin' at 220 cfs, reportedly the second highest level it had been attempted. The entrance was a very technical CL V drop with all kinds of chaos that led into a 6-foot ledge ending in a nasty hole, guarded on both

sides by rocks. Just past this hole was a very short and fast moving pool, followed by a 15-foot cascading drop autographed with a tree in the center. The water flew off this cascade in total chaos and over the final 10-foot drop before continuing nonstop for the next quarter-mile through a maze of CL IV-V slots. Some of these slots sieved out the main flow.

The entire rapid was filled with jagged boulders, which had fallen centuries before from the green lichen covered cliff face called Red Garden Wall. The classic climb, "Naked Edge" casts its long "Shadow" on this part of the creek.

Four of the eight knights on this journey decided to run the drop. We set safety with four on shore and one in the water. Safety is a very relative term on a drop like this. A pin in Harmon's at this level would be next to impossible to resolve, but a quick bag might just save a swimmer. We had several bags out and a pin kit. Gordon Banks had portaged around while we scouted and set boat safety below.

Gary "El Analyzer" Edgeworth lead the way with a clean run that let us all see just how pushy 220 cfs was. Scout Young followed with a flawless run, and although I flirted with a tree, my run was clean. I walked back up and was pulling safety at the final drop for the last knight, who's name I never could remember. He had the best "line" of all, until the final drop where he went deep.

He pitoned so hard it made the nose of his Phat look like a fishing hook. The force of the piton slammed him forward and he broke his paddle in half across the bow deck. He tried to roll before realizing that he was up the proverbial creek with two halves that no longer made a whole paddle. He bailed out and was almost beyond the range of my 80' bag. I threw before he surfaced and hoped he would see the bag coming as he popped up. Otherwise he would be out of range and headed for real trouble.

As his head cleared the water he was looking for me on the rock, saw the bag coming, and grabbed it. He couldn't hang on to his boat, but I was able to swing him into the micro eddy we had picked as a landing zone.

Our gallant knight had escaped the "Shadow" of Harmon Falls to paddle another day.. "In Search of Eldorado." I never did catch the paddlers name, but his paddle read, "E.A.P. - 1849."

I highlight this story in the middle of an article on rescue equipment to emphasize that elaborate haul systems are not the primary safety tool one should rely upon. Talking through a good rope rescue plan, knowing the limits of how far a rope will reach, identifying landing zones you want to use ahead of time, and most important, the rescuee knowing the plan, will save the day 99 out of a 100 times.

That said, let's look at haul systems and what equipment you should know how to use and carry for that "one-time" worst case.


"Over the mountains Of the moon, Down the valley of the shadow, [Paddle], boldly [paddle], The shade replied, —"If you seek for Eldorado!..

(Edgar Allen Poe)

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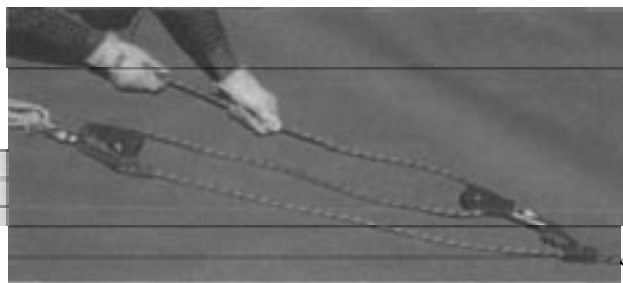


Limitations

Clamping Devices...the limiting factor?

A hauling rig's limitation varies depending on the type of components used in the system. For this discussion we will use a 3/8-inch Spectra® rope and look at different aspects of the system to optimize what components carry the greatest loads. It's important to understand how and why different components act on the system the way they do. Understanding this allows you to maximize the force a system can handle when you combine equipment from the group.

Let's review what we already know. A 90-degree or greater "bending" around carabiners is a compromising factor. While I could find no published data on this, swiftwater expert Tim Delaney who has decades of knowledge and practical testing, estimates that "carabiner bends" reduce a rope's strength by 40-50% of its original rating. Using double carabiners of the same size at connection points and making sure the looped ends of your rope have the clear plastic sleeves over the rope greatly reduces the "bending effect." This bending effect as well as the loss to friction makes carabiners next to worthless as pulleys for heavy loads. Use rescue pulleys to reduce the bending effect to negligible and greatly improve the efficiency of the haul system. The diameter of the pulley wheel should be 4 times the rope diameter. So a 3/8-inch rope needs a pulley that has a 1.5-inch "tread" diameter. This means plastic pulley wheels, while better than carabiners, still have a bending effect on the rope.



A 31 "2-drag" with prusiks (Photo courtesy of Ken Laidlaw)

The next limiting factor in the sequence is the holding capacity of clamping devices. Clamping devices include cinching knots like the prusik or kleinheist/kleinheist and mechanical clamping devices like the Tibloc or ascender. *I've chosen to use the kleinheist hitch tied with 1-inch nylon sewn slings for all clamping devices except the "progress-capturing" device (PCD). I prefer mechanical clamping devices or double prusiks for the PCD because of efficiency. A Robot Friction Device or Tibloc are my choices for a mechanical PCD. Double prusik knots of 6mm nylon cord are the safest PCD for the overall system, but are a bit inefficient and more complicated to use in pairs than mechanical PCDs.*

The load that causes a clamping device to slip increases with the diameter of the rope. A prusik knot begins slipping between 900-1200 lbs on dry 1/2 in. (12.7mm) nylon rope. (Walbridge, "Whitewater Rescue Manual" p. 83) This means slipping loads will be even less for smaller diameter wet ropes. For knots, the slipping load is also very dependent on the exact rope and type cord or webbing used. Increasing the number of wraps or using the knots in pairs helps prevent slipping. A pair of 6mm prusiks evenly loaded should be able to hold 1800-2300 lbs. The trick is keeping them evenly loaded. The risk with cinching knots is that when the knot's slipping load is greater than the

shear rating of the rope's sheath, the knot tears the sheath apart, causing the system to fail and possibly the rope to break. This is very likely with double prusiks that have an extra turn. The gray area is that manufacturers don't publish shear ratings. Tim Delaney believes the shear for Spectra® is around 2200-2300 lbs. This is based on his personal tests and practical use.

The only cinching knot that has a slipping loader greater than its own failure point is a kleinheist hitch tied with 1-inch nylon tubular webbing sewn sling (Delaney). The strength of this hitch is about 50% of the

webbing's tension rating. The 1-inch webbing in this hitch will fail between 3000 and 3700 lbs, which exceeds the effective rope strength of 3/8-inch Spectra®. The kleinheist hitch slips or causes shear failure when tied with 9116-inch Super Tape or Spectra® webbing/cord. The reason 1-inch nylon works is that it has a greater surface area to distribute the load, yet still has enough friction to prevent slipping. The friction of cinching knots after they have been loaded is one of the disadvantages of using them as the PCD/brake knot.

Personal Rescue System

- A Ladder web w/locking carabiner
- B Robot friction device
- C Kleinheist looped sling
- D 2nd locking carabiner w/pulley wheel

Kleinheist Wrap Instructions

- Sewn Bar Tacks
- (minimum 6 wraps)
- wrap completion

(Illustration courtesy of Wildwasser)

Mechanical devices should not be used as the traveling clamping device because they will slip at loads well below the rope's max load. The load on the PCD however, is always less than the pulling load due to the friction in the haul system as well as the friction caused by dragging the boat over rocks while the water applies pressure increasing the friction of the drag. This means the PCD can have a much lower slipping load than the clamping device(s) that pull the rope. This makes mechanical devices a real option, especially if backed up by a prusik.

The Tibloc

made by Petzl begins slipping between 900-1700 lbs and is designed for 8-11mm ropes. The Petzl Basic Ascender slips between 950-1450 lbs and is designed for 8-13mm ropes. Like cinching knots, the larger the rope diameter, the greater the slipping load is for mechanical devices. When most mechanical devices slip, their teeth damage the rope sheath, reducing rope strength and possibly causing rope failure. The exception to this is the Robot Friction Device by Kong. The Robot will hold loads greater than the rope's shear strength before slipping.



Left to right: Petzl Tibloc (12kN=2727 lbs) 8-11mm rope slips 4kN-7.5kN, Petzl Basic Ascender (12kN) 8-13mm rope slips 4.2kN-6.5kN, Robot Friction Device (21kN) 6-13mm (rope fails before Robot slips)

The Tibloc and ascender work well as the PCD, but should be backed up with a prusik for loads that may reach the devices slipping load. The Robot is an excellent PCD for a belay device in a 4:1 or other rig that replaces the PCD with a belay rope. The Tibloc is the lightest, least expensive and very easy to use. The ascender is also very easy to use. The Robot is multi-purpose. In addition to being a belay PCD,

it can be used as a pulley and is very easy to release under tension by one person. As a pulley, the Robot has too much friction to be very efficient, but is better than a simple carabiner pulley. The Robot's other end serves as a belay or rappel device. The real advantage to the Robot is that it takes no time to set up. I own all three and decide which to carry based on the group size and specific run.

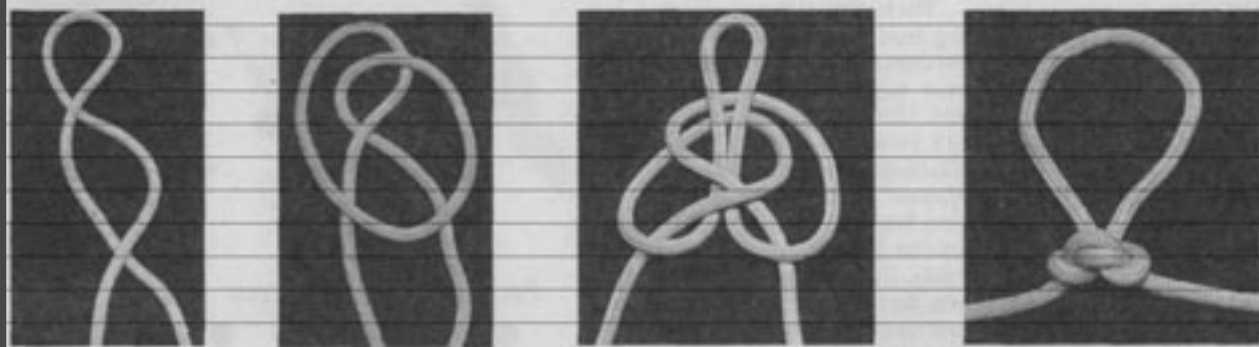
Haul Rigs without clamping devices

You can eliminate clamping devices that pull the rope by using "mid-rope" knots like the Butterfly loop or attaching the traveling pulley directly to the load. Attaching the traveling pulley to the load requires a lot more rope and is usually not practical in small groups.



(Illustration courtesy of Ken Laidlaw)

Using "mid-rope" knots does however cause additional loss in rope strength. The Butterfly Knot reduces rope strength by 31% and a "mid-rope" Figure-8 loop by 35%. The real advantage of the Butterfly is that it is much easier to untie than the Figure-8 after they've been "loaded." A 3/8-inch Spectra[™] with figure-8 loops in the ends and Butterfly knots mid-rope would have a breaking strength of about 2650 lbs = [4500*0.59] (0.31 for Butterfly and 0.1 for effect of water).



Steps to tie a Butterfly Knot. You can find this knot and many others at this link <http://www.island.net/~britton/index.html> (photos courtesy of Knot Knowledge web site and Blue Ridge Mountain Rescue Group Photographer Jason Dalton]

Using a manual belay with an additional rope eliminates the PCD. The simplest belay is around a sturdy tree, which can be easily tied off or made into a tensionless wrap or "No-knot." A rescue Figure-8 belay device also works well. The Munter hitch is another option, but I have no data on what load a Munter Hitch will hold or its breaking strength. I think its breaking strength will be around that of a Clove Hitch, 35-40%. I would not recommend using the Munter Hitch unless you have no other options under heavy loads.

This kind of system is a bit complicated, but this method reduces the equipment required. No matter which method or what equipment you decide to use, it's important to practice the techniques before having to use them. Also take necessary safety measures. If the system fails under these kinds of loads, rescuers can be seriously injured.



Safety Precautions when using Hauling systems

A rope breaking or prusik slipping is a real danger to rescuers. Last year after the Gore Canyon race, race safeties were trying to free a pinned boat in Gore Rapid. *The prusik slipped and the stored energy in the system sent a carabiner flying up the rope at bullet speed.* The carabiner smashed one of the pullers fingers, breaking it in two places. He couldn't grip his paddle and had to be evacuated by the railroad truck.

Hanging something on the rope can prevent kickback by absorbing some of the energy or redirecting the whiplash. Consider where the system will fail and position the weight(s) to prevent the whiplash effect from injuring someone. The system will likely fail at the sharpest bend, which could be the connection to the boat, at a carabiner pulley or small pulley wheel. Also the weakest knot or the PCD are other potential failure points. Remember as you pull to keep moving the weight back past the halfway point. Be careful if you decide to use a lifejacket for this purpose. Anyone near the water should wear all his gear, especially his lifejacket and helmet. You can also reduce the risk of whiplash further by standing off-line, behind a tree or facing away. Watch for anchor system failure as well and take countermeasures to reduce the risk of injury from this too.

Boomer and the **boyz** using the hand pull method and multiple ropes. Note the pull angle and distance to a good anchor. Also note those not pulling are in the systems "danger zone." If the system failed they could be easily injured by the whiplash of the rope. They should be behind something or completely out of the picture.

Anchor Systems

The single most important aspect in setting up a successful hauling system is the pull angle. Anchor system requirements that allow an effective pull angle vary greatly depending on available anchor points. Carrying a variety of anchor pieces gives you the best chance at setting an anchor system quickly that will allow good pull angles. The following is a very complete kit for a 9:1 system from which you can pare down depending on the characteristics of the river and the number in the group: 3 climbing nuts (small, medium, & large), a medium sized hex, 6 carabiners (16kN), 2-sewn 9116-inch nylon super tape slings, a 6 foot "Ladder web" and a 1-inch tubular webbing sling (20 ft.). The Ladder web has loops sewn into the webbing itself about every 4 inches and can be used as a sling when joined with a carabiner (44kN) or like a climbing "runner" with a carabiner on each end (33kN). (This anchor kit is in addition to the equipment required for the mechanical system used.)

Wildwasser Rescue kit w/ Ladder web and Robot Friction

Some experts recommend that all carabiners used in a rescue should be locking. I agree that locking carabiners should be used in the haul rig, but regular carabiners are fine in multi point anchor systems. If you use non-locking carabiners in an anchor system make sure that they will not open. If you have any doubt, use two carabiners with opposing gates or a locking carabiner.

Generating Force to free a pinned boat

How much force is needed to free a pinned boat? There are far too many variables to tackle this physics question! It is much easier to just design the mechanical system to maximize rope strength based on the number pulling on the rope. There are still lots of variables in the force generated through mechanical advantage: the number and weight of the people pulling, the method of pull used, the vector angle of pull, the mechanical advantage used, the friction of pulleys,

and rope stretch. Enough to make your head hurt or engineer geeks drool.

Table-2 shows the approximate force generated in pounds with the number of pullers shown in the first two columns, and the mechanical advantage across the top row. The two methods of pull are the shoulder jerk (SJ) and hand pull (H). The SJ method generates about 1.2 times the weight of the puller while the H method is about a 0.6 factor. (See "Swiftwater Rescue" p. 79 for detailed explanation of pull methods and factors.) These calculations assume a 318-inch Spectra[®] rope is used; a 10% friction factor for each rescue pulley; and the average puller's weight is 180 lbs.

Using Table-2 you can determine what kind of mechanical advantage is needed for the size rescue party you have to generate the max

load for a 318-inch Spectra[®] rope [when using Butterfly knots instead of clamping devices (2650 lbs), when the kleinheist hitch is used to "pull" the rope, or the traveling pulleys are attached to the load (3150 lbs)]. Remember these are approximate forces based on the method of pull and an average puller's weight of 180 lbs.

If these combinations don't work you should try to make sure friction loss is reduced as much as possible and rethink pull vector angles. Adding more people will likely fail the system if friction has been reduced. (See Table-3 for equipment to support these kinds of systems.)

The number of "pullers" listed in Table-2 does not include the belay person in a 4:1 or a system that uses a belay rope instead of a PCD. These systems can be complicated, difficult to set up, and very

dangerous if something fails under these max loads. They should only be used if no other options are available. The required load rating for rigging components under these kinds of loads is very high.

The combination of the equipment carried by the number pulling should total two 318-inch Spectra[®] ropes, one 114-inch Spectra[®] rope, enough "rigging" to make the required haul system, and sufficient anchor rigging to support the load.

Haul Rig Components

The next thing to consider is what load rating the haul system components need for the rope to reach max load. The system should never have hardware as a weak link. A carabiner or pulley that fails can kill someone. A rope that breaks or clamping device that slips can also cause injury like in the Gore Canyon incident, but nothing like the lethality of flying metal pieces from exploding hardware. The weak link should never be metal. The component ratings in Table-3 make the weak link the rope, which should only fail if the guidelines

Table-2 (Force in lbs)
Assumes 318" Spectra and rescue pulleys are used

	SJ	H	3:1	4:1	6:1	9:1
1	0	0	518	691	907	1166
2	1	1	778	1037	1361	1750
3	0	4	1037	1382	1814	2333
4	1	2	1037	1382	1814	2333
5	2	0	1037	1382	1814	2333
6	0	5	1296	1728	2268	2916
7	1	3	1296	1728	2268	2916
8	2	1	1296	1728	2268	2916
9	0	6	1555	2074	2722	3499
10	1	4	1555	2074	2722	3499
11	2	2	1555	2074	2722	3499
12	3	0	1555	2074	2722	3499
13	0	7	1814	2419	3175	4082
14	1	5	1814	2419	3175	4082
15	2	3	1814	2419	3175	4082
16	3	1	1814	2419	3175	4082
17	4	0	2074	2765	3629	4606
18	5	2	2074	2765	3629	4606
19	6	0	2074	2765	3629	4606
20	7	1	2333	3110	4082	5249
21	8	2	2333	3110	4082	5249
22	9	3	2333	3110	4082	5249
23	10	4	2333	3110	4082	5249
24	11	5	2592	3456	4536	5832
25	12	6	2592	3456	4536	5832
26	13	7	2592	3456	4536	5832
27	14	8	2592	3456	4536	5832
28	15	9	2851	3801	5000	6399
29	16	10	2851	3801	5000	6399
30	17	11	2851	3801	5000	6399

114" Spectra for 100k to convert lbs to kN, for 450 lb convert lbs to kG

Table-3 Load rating and Qty using a 3/8-inch Spectra® rope				
	3:1	4:1	6:1	9:1
32kN Pulley -1.5" Tread dia.	1	0	1	2
32kN Locking Carabiner	1	0	1	2
16kN Pulley-1.5" Tread dia.	1	2	2	2
16kN Locking Carabiner	4	6	6	5
Klemheist Hitch (1" sewn sling)	1	1	1	2
Progress Capturing Device (PCD)	1	1	1	2
32kN Anchor System	1	0	1	2
16kN Anchor System	1	3	2	1
Release System	1	1	1	2

in Table-2 are not followed.

Table 3 provides the quantity and load rating for each component in the specified system to maximize a 318-inch Spectra® rope that has a Figure-8 loop and an estimated load rating of 3150 lbs. The ratings allow for a 10% safety factor with the possible exception of the Kleinheist hitch.

Change of direction pulleys, their supporting locking carabiners and anchor systems may need to hold a max pulling load up to two times the actual load, depending on the change of direction angle. A 10% safety factor has been added to get a rating of 32kN. Be sure all anchor components can hold this load during pulls. A 1-inch tubular webbing sling, that is double or triple looped and secured with a water knot will support this load if a single anchor point will hold. Sewn slings should also be double looped if used to support the pulling load. The safest and simplest system uses the Ladderweb sold by Wildwasser.

Traveling pulleys and locking carabiners must carry the max load of the rope. A 16kN rating includes a 10% safety factor. Friction loss from carabiners used as pulleys is very significant as mentioned before. Some sources think carabiner pulleys reduce a 3:1 mechanical advantage to a 2:1 ("River Rescue" Bechdel & Ray p. 129.) This means a carabiner pulley has a friction factor of about 20% while a good rescue pulley has a friction factor of less than 10%. Using high quality rescue pulleys with sealed bushings will reduce this friction even more to realize a greater force. Remember that carabiner pulleys and pulleys with a tread diameter less than 1.5 inches will also reduce rope strength because of the bending effect. I cannot emphasize enough how important good rescue pulleys are to maximizing the force generated by the system.

A way to release the rope under tension should be built into the haul rig. One option is the Mariners Hitch: 2 - locking carabiners (16kN) and 1 - 9116-inch or 11116-inch sewn sling. The Robot Friction Device as mentioned before is another option for a release mechanism.

What's in your pin kit?

Now you have all the facts I could find and the assumptions I've made. Table-4 is a complete list of what I want as the sum of the group's equipment. I call it the "9er-kit." It's two 3:1 kits with a robust assortment of anchor pieces. I've broken the kit into two bags each less than 2 lbs dry.

I've been asked how to trim this kit down and make it lighter for self supported trips. I leave that decision up to the group. I have no problem putting two pounds of gear in my boat plus a throw bag. I choose to leave the camera behind if room or weight is a real concern. Also packing the kit and the rope in a small dry bag saves on water weight. If you do decide to cut back, a 4:1 is the most efficient mechanical system for the equipment needed (See Table-2 for required components). A 4:1 or 6:1 system is very flexible and maximizes vector pulls and pull angles. Be sure to practice whatever system you decide to carry.

Prevention is always preferred to a rescue, but accidents can happen to the best. As Dunbar Hardy mentioned in his article, start low tech and low risk first. A simple rope rescue or boat rescue

normally does the trick, but staying proficient with the more complicated and technical skills and always being prepared may someday save a life. Don't let the low probability of need for these skills and equipment result in not having equipment that provides the greatest chance for a successful rescue. Practice the skills necessary to make setting up taglines and mechanical advantages a reflex instead of something you have to think about. Practice with all the equipment options and learn what works best for you. Plus you never know what kind of "group" equipment you might end up having to use. Keep in mind system strength, quick set up, the number of people available to assist, and overall simplicity when selecting your rescue kit.

Equipment is only as good as the one using it, so taking a swiftwater rescue course and practicing rescue skills is far more important than what components you use. In addition to courses, there are several excellent books on the subject that refresh and add to what we can learn in a two or three day course. I highly recommend "Swiftwater Rescue" by Slim Ray and "Whitewater Rescue Manual" by Charlie Walbridge to augment and improve your rescue skills. (These two books were the main references for this article.) The video "Whitewater Self Defense" is another excellent reference source by Ford, Walbridge, & DeCuir. You can order these and other safety books and videos through AW's web site with AW getting a kickback. <http://americanwhitewater.org/library/>

I hope you've found a few golden nuggets to put in your kit bag that may help on your journey... In Search of Eldorado. Also watch out for a guy named Edgar Allen Poe, he welched on the six pack he owes me for saving his butt in Harmon Falls. (The near miss on Harmon Falls is a true story. "Edgar's" real name ...I'll never tell.)

Table-4 "9er-Kit" (9:1 w/ 3 "pullers")		
List below is the sum total of what a group should have. In a group of 4, the combination of any three paddlers' rescue kits should combine to make this list complete.		
Component	Rating	Qty
Ropes		3
- 3/8" Spectra® rope (75'-80')	4500lbs	2
- 1/4" Spectra® waist throw bag (50-60ft.)	2500lbs	1
Pulleys-1.5" Tread diameter		4
- Change of Direction (COD)	32kN	2
- Traveling	16kN	2
Carabiners (haul system)		7
- Locking (COD)	32kN	2
- Locking	16kN	5
Progress Capturing Device (pick any two and carry two 6mm prusik cords to backup the PCDs)		2
- Ascender		
- Tibloc		
- Robot Friction Device		
Traveling Kleinheist Hitch		2
- 1" nylon tubular webbing sewn sling		2
Anchor Systems		3
- Change of Direction anchor	32kN	2
- Backup anchor	16kN	1
- 3 - climbing stopper (4, 8 & 11)		3
- 1 - hex (med size #6)		1
- 6 - Carabiners (locking optional)	16kN	6
- 2 - 9/16" sewn Super Tape slings	4500lbs	2
- 1 - 1" tubular nylon webbing slings (20')	4000lbs	1
1 - Ladder web	7500lbs	1
Release System	16kN	2
Mariners Hitch (1)		
2 - locking carabiners	16kN	
1 - 9/16" sewn Super Tape sling	4500lbs	

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Markus Kratzer on the glacial milk of Hooker River, New Zealand. Photo: Michael Neuman
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When Rivers Rise!

By Lee Belknap

AW Member and Past Safety Chairperson

It's being reported that El Nino is on it's way back and may arrive later this calendar year. Will this mean the return of high water? We can only hope! All of us are waiting for the time when we can regularly paddle our favorite high water runs.

For whitewater enthusiasts wet years are the best. There's nothing like a warm spring day on our favorite hard-to-catch run. It's wonderful to test our skills on new creeks or on familiar rivers at higher levels. And it will be great to get back on that awesome play wave that's been hiding for a couple of years. If El Nino brings a lot of high water next winter, we'll all be whitewater heaven.

Unfortunately there's a down side to this. While most of us will be out there having the times of our lives, a very small but significant number of paddlers will suddenly find themselves fighting for their lives. Historically it is during times like these - high water after prolonged drought - that record fatality rates are set in our sport.

It's not that the overall fatality rates are outside of the norm when compared to similar activities. Our own research shows rates that whitewater fatality rates are comparable in magnitude to other adventure/action sports ("Kayaking is Safer Than You Think," **American Whitewater**, September/October 2000). But the data tells us that we can do better. Besides, we're talking about ourselves and our friends.

The accompanying chart shows the whitewater fatality rates for the past quarter century. Several patterns are evident. There is a steady increase in the number of fatalities spanning decades that coincides with the growth in popularity of the sport. There are occasional "steps" that occurred when large numbers of paddlers started to paddle more dangerous rivers. And there have also been a number of spikes that corresponded to high water ttimes. It is the high water spikes that are most relevant to the next El Nino.

Correlating the spikes on this graph with weather information is revealing. First, the spikes in fatalities generally occurred during the first year of high water after a prolonged drought. Second, most (not all) spikes subsided early in the second year, even if the high water continued. Third, this pattern of subsidence didn't happen during the last cycle. (For more details see the article: "What Happened In 1997" November/December 1998, **American Whitewater**. That article was written before it was known that the high fatality rates would continue beyond 1998. The article is also available in the safety pages at www.americanwhitewater.org)

There are two major theories on why the spikes occur during high water years. One is that during those years we just have more rope to hang ourselves. The other is that after droughts we're slightly out of practice, having been denied the opportunity to spend much time on new, more difficult runs. As a consequence we make more serious mistakes and these lead to fatal accidents.

The problem with the first theory is that while having more water to drown in is an obvious factor, the fatality rate doesn't always perfectly mirror water levels. The water levels rise, the fatality rates rise; but then the fatality rates subside, even though the water level stays up for a while longer. At least that was the pattern until 1997. It seems that, at least until then, paddlers were learning to be more careful from their high water disasters,

I think that it used to be that as the high water persisted people get better at running it safely. Their

high water/creeking skills improved and they were less likely to get killed. I also believe that the high water fatalities that occurred early on during those wet times made a lot of boaters paddle more cautiously, at least for a while. Hearing about the death of another paddler made them more cautious.

What happened after 1997 is puzzling. During that wet season the high fatality rate persisted for longer than usual. In fact, it lasted for several years, until a drought put an end to it.

Many have told me that these fatalities (in 98 and 99) were just part of the increased popularity of the sport. Yet, this persistence in fatalities didn't occur during earlier high water spikes, and the sport was growing then, too.

A fatality on a notoriously difficult run used to trigger a significant drop in traffic on difficult rivers all over the country. That single fatality caused other hair paddlers from California to Maine to ponder the seriousness consequences of a mistake. But I'm not sure that fatalities have the same sobering effect that they used to. They may slow folks down a bit *on the river where the death occurred*, especially those who knew the victim. But on rivers and boaters located more than a state or two away, the fatality may not have much of an impact on how carefully people paddle. Perhaps we are starting to take fatalities too much for granted.

What can we do? Basically, be a little more careful. Ratchet down the difficulty of the rivers you choose to tackle a notch or two, at least for a few months. Walk a couple of extra times next year. Pick your way down the river a little more cautiously, find something easier to paddle if you don't feel like you're perfectly on your mark, encourage your friends to do the same. You don't have to back off much. Just because you have chosen an "adventure" sport, doesn't mean that you have to take every imaginable risk.

While watching a video for a different extreme sport, I heard this, "We are not Risk Takers... we are 'Risk Technicians'." Managing risk is what makes our sport relatively safe. Whitewater, being an assumed risk sport, requires technical skills if we are to paddle safely. This is in fact

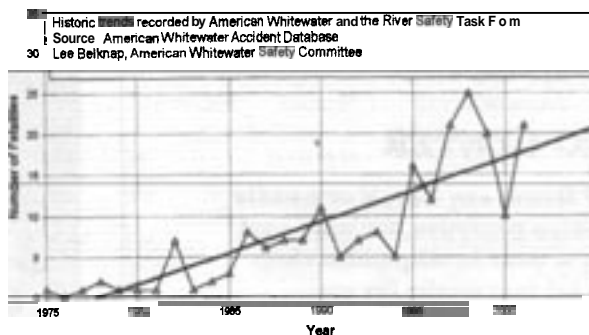
why Safety has always been an important part of American Whitewater's mission. Without safe equipment, techniques, and attitudes, many of us would not have made it this long

This issue of **American Whitewater** is dedicated to the subject of safety. The articles cover a diverse range of safety related topics including basic river safety, choosing rescue and safety equipment, the impact of accidents on river access, when to walk and when to run, how boat design enhances safety, and whitewater helmets. These articles are part of American Whitewater's continuing effort to bring you the most up-to-date information on how to paddle more safely.

With the La Nina induced drought for the past several seasons, fatalities have been down in many parts of the paddling world. Whether or not the water will come back with this new El Nino is anybody's guess, but you can be sure that someday the water **WILL** be back. When it does, it will be an awesome time. If everyone can be just a tad more cautious during the first year of high water, I know some lives can be saved.

In fact, when El Nino gets here, I challenge all paddlers to buck the old trend and make the long awaited high water season as safe or safer than the preceding drought. Lets not wait to hear that paddlers around us are dying before we take extra precautions.

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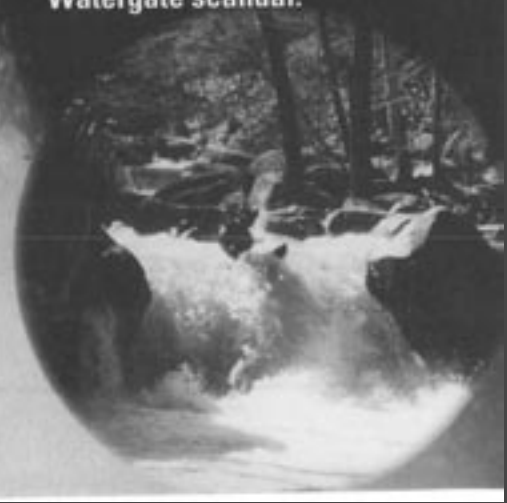
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Getting SIK on Deckers Creek

As a West Virginia SIKman through and through, I always feel there is a need to represent (East Coast in the house!). The goal is to do it all, leave no stone unturned. Then and only then will my conquest be complete. Deckers Creek had long been an overlooked run on the Dogg's list. I had always wanted to run it but every time it had water, there was something better going. Well as the goodwill ambassador of the great state of WV, I cannot overlook anything, for it is my solemn duty to push forward with the conquest. You would think that an upstanding creeker like the Dogg would have run Deckers many times. However, this was one of the greatest cover-ups since the Watergate scandal.

●
Bobby "ZoneDogg" Miller



There were stories of horrible sieves and death traps (Yep! Heard that before). There were stories of poor water quality and paddlers getting sick after running this creek. Well, the Dogg loves to get SIK! Then there was the ever-linger fact that no one I knew wanted to run the creek. That never stopped me before and April 13, 2001 would be no different. On that day, my buddy, JB Seay, a Deckers veteran, told me the creek would be at the perfect level and he'd gladly show me down. So I packed up the whuppin stick and my regulation creek boat and prepared for a great day. After a superb breakfast at Dunkin' Donuts, suited up and headed to the put-in so that you fans out there would have another blue-light special, non-toxic, satisfaction guaranteed article for your reading pleasure.

I know Deckers Creek is a steep and dangerous run but I feel that, as Your Kayaking Hero, it is my duty to put myself in harms way for the sake of the fans. Deckers Creek has a reputation for being a tough and sketchy run. It is not a place for those who are prone to choking in pressure situations (like Mariano Rivera, for instance, the pitcher who lost the World Series for the New York Yankees). It should be run with a group of paddlers who know it well. You and your boating buddies become attached at the hip. You breathe, they breathe. You take a p%\$\$, they help. OK, that may be taking it a little far.

Also joining me were Ben Dunham, Jim Starrett, Rich Grape, Kris Haines, and the ZoneDogg Cheerleading Squad, who very kindly walked along, shooting video and pictures. For the sake of the fans, I was prepared not only to do battle with Deckers but also the whole Decker family. Yeah, that's right. I'm talking about papa Wilbur Decker, brother Cleatus Decker, uncle Joe Decker with the glass eye, and even grandpa Billy Jack Decker the 3rd! It was time to pick the flowers, chill the lemonade, and tie a yellow ribbon around the old Oak tree because the Dogg was about to get SIK!

The first major rapid of Deckers is called Hercules, a steep 6 foot pour over into a juicy hole backed by a rock. It could be the site of a severe beating behind the woodshed if you messed up. However, JB and I both had schweet lines on this day and left unscathed. The run continued through some boogie water boulder drops that led into Deduction. Deduction is an 8 foot drop into a nasty rock sieve that has been filled in with concrete to make it safer. You have to angle right to

avoid the rock and hope the hole doesn't mess with you. I hit the hole and did a slight tailstand before snagging the eddy on the right. A nice slide (on which JB hit a nice rock-360) carried us into a pool above the next neat drop, Carcass. Carcass is a notable spot only because it is where the locals dump their trash over the hillside. There are beer cans, old mattresses, and the occasional cow or deer. The rapid itself is a very nice 6 foot boof followed by some more rocky drops.

Several more boulder sections carry you to the Face of Deckers Creek, where all the major drops lie. The Face is where Deckers Creek separates the men from the boys. The rapids are steep, continuous, and have very inconveniently placed undercuts and caves. It's game-time and you'd better be ready.

You can cower in the corner and cry, or spit out your mama's teet and be a man. The Face starts with Top Hat, a schweet 10 foot boof where JB and I both launched SIKs.

Next up is Hairline, one of the most dangerous rapids that I have ever attempted. Hairline starts with a ferry in front of a horrible sieve/cave so disgusting that decorum prevents me from talking about it. If you blow the ferry, you won't be a happy camper.

Once you make the ferry, you boof off a 4 foot drop and into an eddy on the right. A small drop called Brows feeds right into a very cool ledge called Eyes. Eyes is a 10 foot drop that is run far left under an overhanging boulder. If you run too far right, you will fall behind a huge boulder that sticks out into the drop. As soon as you land, a few small rocky drops lead into Teeth, a schweeeet slide. In Teeth, you have to thread the needle between undercuts hanging over the river from each bank. It is a narrow slot but it is quite niche if you ace it, as JB and I both did.

Next, we were out scouting the toughest rapid on the run, Edge Of The World. It has a steep boulder drop that leads right into an 8 foot drop onto a slanted rock. The rock slants towards a boulder on the right that has horrible sieve that is angrier than an old man trying to return soup in a deli! I definitely

didn't want to screw this drop up because it would hurt more than the time in science class when I tried lighting farts with a Bunsen Burner. Staring at this rapid left me unsure of whether I even wanted to attempt it, especially after JB hit the rock weird and flipped. All that thinking was holding me back. The problem with the world today is that people use too much brains and not enough cock n' balls. So I hopped in my boat and prepared to check Edge into the Smackdown Hotel. I flew down through the boulder garden and launch a SIK boof! Oh yesh! It was SCHWWEEEEEEET! Many would say that it was a beautiful run but I would have to disagree. Sunsets are beautiful. Babies are beautiful. My run, that was falking spectacular! I bounced off the rock shelf and into the eddy where a large celebration began. There were some high fives and chest bumps from the guys and a lot of booty shakin from the ZoneDogg Cheerleaders.

Not only had Iaced a very gnarly rapid but I had also added another notch on the ZoneDogg's belt. JB carried back to the top and fired up a righteous boof of his own before we headed downstream. The rest of the run flowed down some pretty cool slides carrying us back to Dellslow. Deckers

Creek was an awesome run! I definitely enjoyed running it! It had a lot of dangerous sieves and some pretty crazy drops but the Dogg prevailed yet again, layin a harsh government mule beatdown! The run is definitely one of the more challenging and dangerous in WV. I would consider it harder than the Upper Blackwater and much more risky. To celebrate this momentous occasion, I downed a 40 ounce of Schlitz Malt Liquor and received several wet ones from the ZoneDogg cheerleading squad.

The day was still young so Jim, Kris, the cheerleaders and I headed over to the North Fork of the Blackwater for some more whitewater entertainment. I even made the second ever descent of 40 foot Douglas Falls! To celebrate this accomplishment, I took the ZoneDogg Cheerleaders down to the pit for some Bone Sucking. But that is another story. Author's note: Bone Sucking is a brand of barbeque sauce.

Left page: Background; Zone Dogg making the second descent of Douglas Falls (North Fork of the Blackwater); Left to right: JB at Hercules (Deckers), Bobby at Top Hat (Deckers) Bobby spanking Edge of the World like a brunette, college girl (Decker); Above top down: Bobby at Deduction (Deckers), Bobby beating down Eyes like a red headed stepchild (Deckers).



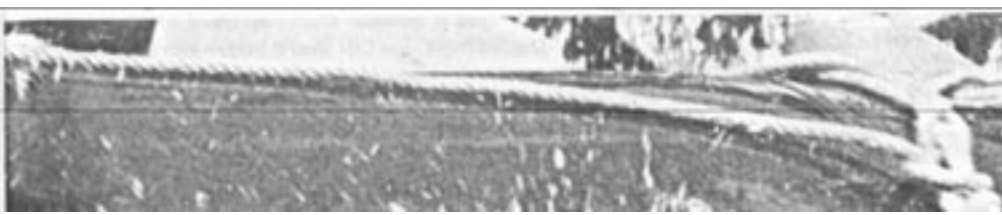
6 W. on Section III Chatooga River

A Yankee Paddler Goes South

Revisiting the Early Years of the
Nantahala Outdoor Center



- By Charlie Wallbridge,
American Whitewater Safety Editor
- Photos by John Cole



■ In the winter of 1973 I found a help-wanted ad for river guides and kayak instructors in the American Whitewater Journal. I sent my application to a place called the Nantahala Outdoor Center in North Carolina and in due course was offered a job. Being a Northern boy, I remember being apprehensive as I drove south the next Spring. I'd paddled in the Smokies on two previous occasions with Jack Wright, and the locals seemed friendly enough. I'd also met lots of likable Southern paddlers at races. But I'd seen the attacks on civil rights protesters on TV as a kid, and more recently watched the movie *Deliverance*. My Dad, who watched the movie with me, couldn't understand why I wanted to go DOWN THERE. At a truck stop in East Tennessee I passed up a baseball cap that said, "Keep the South beautiful, put a Yankee on a bus!" I was worried about fitting in. I shouldn't have been concerned. Once I got to the Center, I soon found myself among friends. But I quickly discerned two distinct types of Southern personalities. One was the strong, calm, thoughtful type exemplified by my boss, Payson Kennedy. The other was the loud, aggressive, redneck kind personified by my coworker, Donnie Dunton. Payson Kennedy, a university librarian, had been paddling Southern rivers for decades. A tall man with an athletic build, he was a formidable open canoeist. He was also a savvy whitewater guide, an innovative instructor, and a fierce competitor. He'd been a consultant and stunt double in the movie *Deliverance*. The next year he took the money he'd earned as a stunt man and purchased, with several other investors, a riverside motel (The Tote N' Tarry) on the Nantahala River. During the next two seasons he ran an outfitting business on weekends, switching to full time when the university closed for the summer. Mostly he employed his family and friends. The previous year Jimmy Holcombe became his first "real" employee. In 1973 he quit his job at the university and moved to the mountains with his family. The NOC was gearing up for growth, and this meant hiring a staff of about 40 people for the '74 season. His guides included a handful of top-ranked slalom racers, an assortment of colorful river characters, and the usual college summer work crowd. We all had a lot to learn, and I suspect that some of us would not be hired today. Donnie Dunton was a short, stocky dude who stood about 5'4 tall and weighed nearly 230 pounds. He had a bushy brown beard, a huge folding belt knife, and a cowboy hat with a turkey feather in it. Although I never found out where he came from, he spoke with the sharp twang of the Southern Appalachians. He was loud, outspoken, quick-tempered, and profane. Guests either loved him or hated him. Although he was the NOC's most-requested guide that summer, there were others who asked for "anybody but Donnie." But because he was competent, unpretentious, and hard-working, the folks at the Center overlooked his rough side and found that behind his bluster was a good-hearted person who you could depend on in tight situations. I worked regularly with Donnie over on Section IV of the Chattooga. Back then we drove down under the Route 76 Bridge on a dirt road, blew up our rafts with hand-pumps, and waited for the guests. We would sit in their

A Yankee Paddler continued..

boats and wait for the guests to pick the guide they wanted to entrust their lives to. Conserve customers who wanted a smooth, safe ride chose big, clean-shaven people . . . like me! Rowdies who wanted big excitement chose the guides who looked like Donnie. Unfortunately, the leftover wimps and weenies who wanted

someone to mother them down the river always chose female guides. So the women always got the prize winning bad crews. For example, I never knew that you could get a four-man raft through the narrow chute at Center Crack until the day that Mikki Piras' guests stopped paddling and her boat got pushed through . . . on edge! Nowadays nobody allows the guests to choose their guides on site anymore! Occasionally the personalities of crews and guides clashed. One time my trip was approaching Seven-Foot Falls when we noticed that the trip ahead of us had pulled over below the drop. When we got into the eddy, their trileader asked if I would switch places with Donnie. I did, and finished the run with a nice group from a North Georgia church. They wouldn't tell me what the problem was, but I later learned from my buddies that Donnie, at the lip of the drop, had screamed at them: "Paddle, you klutzy mother@#%@'s, PADDLE! The group pulled over and refused to continue until they were given another guide. Guiding Section IV is serious business, so I appreciated Donnie's frustration. My approach to getting the attention of a spaced-out crew was a bit sneakier. If my guests didn't pay attention in the first rapid, Screaming Left Turn, I'd let the current take us under a low, overhanging rock. It was a harmless, but somewhat unpleasant experience. I'd duck down quickly and listen to my guests scream as the rock passed overhead. When we got free, I'd pop up and tell them soberly that they'd almost gotten us all killed, and that if they weren't going to pay attention and work together, I was going to quit right there. It always worked! Payson taught us how to work closely with each other while running the Five Falls. At Corkscrew, the first guide ran down the shore and set up a throw rope. Then the second boat went through. Soon the safety man was relieved so he could head back upstream to run his raft down. Later arrivals headed across the pool and set up ropes for Crack-in-the-Rock. Not every other company's format was so smooth and well-controlled. I remember "sitting safety" with Payson when a competitor's trip floated into Left Crack. The first boat hung up on a big log jammed in the crack and wrapped, then a second boat arrived and piled on top of the first. Guests were screaming and scrambling. One of the guides looked at Payson with a terrified expression and wailed, "Whaddo I do now?" We weren't too sure, but pitched in and helped untangle the mess. Afterwards Payson smiled at me and said, "These folks are our best advertisement." The next rapid, Jawbone, moves right on into Sock-em-Dog, a big pour-over. We needed to get our boats into the left eddy, below "Hydro-Electric Rock," to set up for "The Dawg." This could be a dicey maneuver with guests, so we stationed two rope-throwers in the eddy. One day Donnie and I were on duty when Scott, a rather high strung guide, floated by. He was screaming for a rope. Donnie and I threw simultaneously, and our ropes collided overhead. Donnie threw away his entire rope on his second throw; I set up for my second toss, slipped, and landed flat on my back. By this time Scott had run aground on a small rock above "The Puppy Chute," but he didn't realize this and the pitch of his screaming went up an octave. Donnie and I started laughing at him, and at ourselves, and this just made matters worse! On another occasion Bob Bouknight, one of Donnie's rowdy buddies, simply gave up on an unresponsive crew. He bailed out the back of his



C.W. Guiding at Jawbone. Section IV Chattooga River

raft, swam to shore, and his guests went over Sock-em-Dog without him! The reason for all this consternation was that Sock-em-Dog could be really nasty. I didn't mind hard-boating it, but I really hated to raft it at higher flows. When you hit the bottom, the pour-over often ripped the guide out of his backseat and shoved him way underwater. I usually

tried to talk another guide into taking my crew over. Payson kidded me about this until one day he fell out at the base of the drop. He came up hurting! Something (perhaps the remains of an aluminum canoe that Ray Eaton lost there a decade earlier) cut through his life vest, his 1/8" wetsuit, and into his back! After this experience, the NOC developed a policy of carrying or sneaking the drop at higher flows.

Visiting Clayton, Georgia today, it's hard to picture it the way it was in '74. Today it's a progressive, tourist oriented place. Chain restaurants and motels line the highway, and the people are very supportive of paddling. But I remember a rough little hill town where some residents liked to get drunk and kick hippie paddlers around on Friday night. I remember a town so tough that guides who needed to buy beer went in groups so that they wouldn't get beaten up at the Piggley-Wiggley! Even mainstream locals didn't take kindly to river running. The head of the rescue squad, before he was sanctioned by Payson's lawyer, once remarked to the press that it was too bad that outfitters were taking money from people, running them down the river, and killing them! This was the same man who threw sticks of dynamite into Woodall Shoals to release a trapped body! In fact, although there have been many close calls, to my knowledge no commercially outfitted guest has ever lost their life on the Chattooga.

Most of the fatalities were fools trying to relive the movie *Deliverance*. Others were non-paddling locals. And there could have been more! Once our safety kayaker rescued a half-drowned woman who had fallen into the river at the top of Woodall Shoals. She reeked of alcohol, and the guide told her that she ought to stay away from the river when she was drunk. A few minutes later her husband arrived, red faced and angry. Waving a tire iron, he wanted to know who had called his wife a drunk! Only a fast retreat into the river prevented bloodshed. But Donnie knew how to handle these guys, and he became our unofficial ambassador to the redneck community. One day we were setting up our trips under the Rt. 76 Bridge when a local guy tried to drive his Jeep CJ straight up a steep embankment under the bridge. After watching this foolishness for a while Payson wandered over and mildly suggested to the man that he use a road located just downstream. The man was roaring drunk, and he staggered out of his car screaming and cursing. When our guides hustled over to see what was going on, the man got spooked. Reaching into his pocket, he pulled out a pocket knife and flashed its horribly rusty blade. "You oughtn't to press a man," he warned, "A fella could git cut." Donnie moved smoothly up to the front of our group. He opened his huge folding knife and offered it gently to the man, handle-first. "Long as we're talking about cuttin', I'd just like you to FEEL this blade." Donnie was an expert woodcarver and the blade of his knife was razor sharp. The man slowly ran his finger down the blade. Suddenly, he let out a yelp as the honed edge drew blood. He dropped the knife and it fell to the ground. Donnie retrieved it quickly, then remarked in a friendly way, "Ooo, sharp little @#%@#, isn't it? You'd better git on home now, before someone gets hurt!" Some of our guests really liked Donnie's style, and some got more fun than they bargained for.

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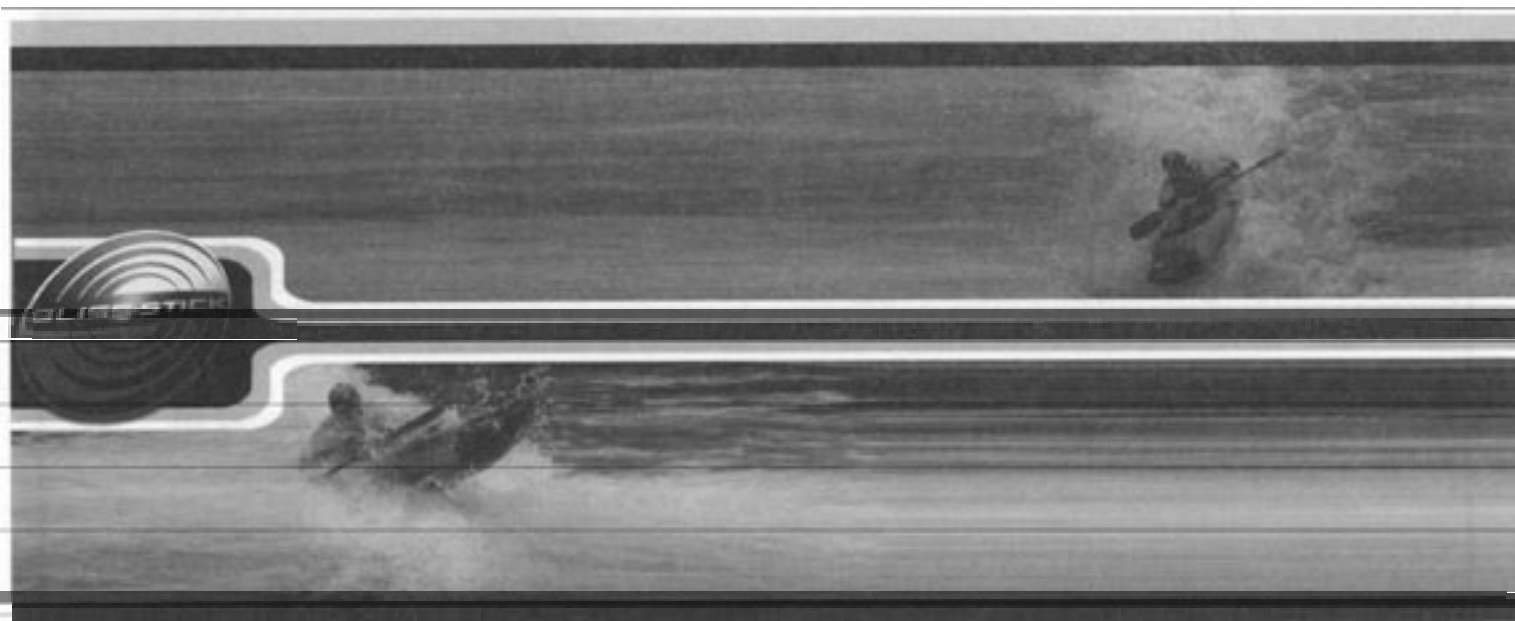
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A Yankee Paddler continued...

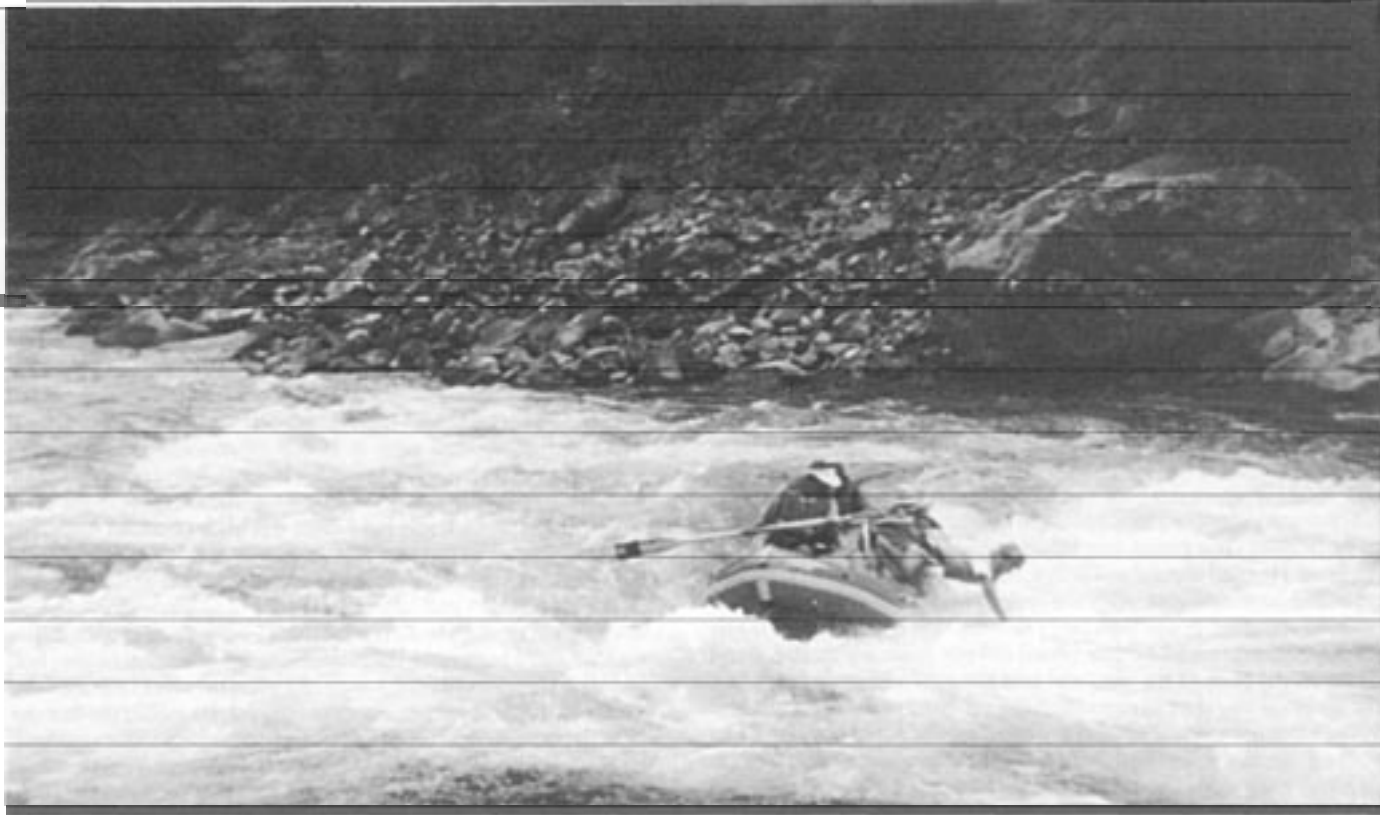
above Nantahala Falls he turned to his guests and smiled wickedly. "You boys want THE BIG RIDE?" he asked. They did, and he delivered. He dropped his four-man sideways into the top hole of Nantahala Falls, a steep, nasty hydraulic known for its powerful retentive characteristics. Donnie bailed out the back as his raft began a lengthy surf. One by one the guests were thrown out, recirculated in the hole, trashed in the falls, and spat out. Donnie swam to an eddy and sat on shore, laughing. Another day his guests got the upper hand! We were doing a high-water run on Section 3 when I noticed that Donnie's raft was sneaking up on my boat in a flat section. I suspected that he and his crew were planning to board us, so I asked my guests if they wanted to participate. The group, two middle-aged dentists and their wives, declined. I turned around and yelled, "Donnie, you take your crew and go bother someone else!" Donnie yelled back, "Walbridge, I can't do nothing about it!" It was then that I realized that the group had taken Donnie's paddle away! As they closed in I put down my paddle, stood up on in the back of the raft, and told the approaching pirates that there was no way they were coming aboard. But I never had a chance! Three huge men threw me and my two dentists out of our raft. They pitched Donnie overboard, too. They left us with a boat, but no paddles! They made the dentist's wives lie in the bottom of their raft and poured water on them with bailing buckets. My first thought was that those idiots were going to get themselves washed over Bull Sluice, a stout Class V ledge at that level, so we sent the safety kayaker chasing after them. Then we borrowed spare paddles from other boats on the trip and set off in hot pursuit. We pulled them over just upstream of the big drop, deflated their boat, and sent them hiking down to the take-out. The NOC didn't have an outpost the first few times I went over to work the Chattooga. We just drove off into the woods to camp, which made us a tempting target for harassment by local rowdies on motorbikes. But Donnie, always armed and dangerous, pulled out his pistol at the first sign of trouble. The locals spotted the gun and left us alone. I always camped near Donnie! Later Payson rented us guide quarters: a converted chicken coop behind the Wolverton Mountain Shell. (This old gas station on the South Carolina side of Route 76 is now a deli-restaurant.) This was a truly marginal facility, with more bugs inside it than out. After getting eaten alive one night by God-knows-what I promised myself that I'd always sleep in my truck. But we never did get much sleep. "Banty roosters," sex-starved, half-wild chickens, lived in the trees around the place and would start crowing at around 4:00 AM. We tried to catch them, but the scraggly little buggers could fly and we never got a one. Then one morning a hung-over Donnie went out and shot a half-dozen of them with his pistol. We soon learned that a neighbor felt he owned those miserable birds, and Donnie had to make restitution. NOC grew like crazy that summer, and we were always short of vehicles. The worst one in our fleet was a blue van that we kept parked over behind the restaurant. Garbage was loaded inside and hauled a mile or so up the road to a dumpster several times daily. But when we got real busy we hosed out "the garbage van," covered the holes in the floor with folded rafts, and loaded our guests on top. This worked well enough. But at a mid-summer staff meeting, Payson told us that referring to this rattle-trap as "the garbage van" in front of our guests was bad for the Center's image. He asked that we refer to it in the future as "the GMC Van." The next day we were swamped. As an overflow crowd watched, I tried to follow Payson's directive. "Hey, Donnie!" I yelled across the parking lot, "Go get the GMC van." "The what?" he yelled back. "The GMC Van!" I screamed. "The WHAT?" "You know, the old blue van parked over there behind the restaurant." "Oh, you mean the GARBAGE van. I'll hose it out right now!" The Blue Van's front end kept getting looser and looser, and somebody drove it into Wesser Creek the following summer. It got pulled out and perched on blocks at the far end of the old store. When it caught fire a few months later, nobody was sorry.

The staff was hard on the vehicles, and my moment of truth came

after a particularly grueling stretch of duty. After a late night patching boats in Wesser, I rose at 5:00 AM and drove two hours to the Chattooga. After a long day guiding on Section IV, I returned to the Center at 10:00 PM. I was not pleased to find out that it was MY turn to help clean the restaurant's kitchen. When we finished the job a little after midnight, Payson asked me to take some things across the river to the Stone House. I fell asleep on the way back, waking up as the van buried itself into the iron superstructure of the Appalachian Trail Bridge! Fortunately, I was going pretty slowly and only cracked a couple of ribs. But I was sore as hell and wasn't going to be guiding for a few days! Several staff loaned the center personal vehicles to take up the slack. Every day was an adventure in logistics. One morning we were sitting around with a bunch of restless guests at the Chattooga Outpost waiting for our man Hugh to bring the school bus back from Earl's Ford. Payson sent Bob Bouknight and me to see what the hold-up was. Now, Earl's Ford Road was high-crowned stretch of Georgia red clay and it was real slick from recent rains. Hugh had slid off the crown into the formidable gully that served as a ditch. He was stuck and we couldn't pull him out. Neither of us knew where to find a tow truck big enough to do the job. As we were driving back to the outpost we saw a logging truck parked in front of a small house. Bob had an idea. He knocked on the door and a few minutes later we were driving back to Earl's Ford in the man's big rig. He pulled the bus out easily with his winch and only charged us twenty bucks. We went back to the trucker's house and sat in our vehicle, waiting for Hugh. When he didn't show, we drove back down and found that Hugh had slid into the ditch AGAIN! Back we went to the trucker's house. He was all dressed up and didn't seem too glad to see us this time. He drove down, pulled the bus free, then dragged it about a half-mile up the road before setting it loose. When Bob gave him another twenty, he just shook his head and smiled. "I'll be going to church now, then over to my mother's for dinner. I won't be back here until after three.



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Someone takes a header

You boys think you can keep that bus on the road?" That summer an alarming number of staff drove Center vehicles off Needmore Road, a dirt track over by the Little Tennessee. There had been no serious damage or injuries yet, but Payson was disturbed by the size of the towing bill. So he announced at a staff meeting that we all needed to be a lot more careful. As added motivation he announced that, rather than staff calling for a tow truck themselves, any mishaps would be reported directly to him. Afterwards a rather obnoxious fellow named Robert (who had no supervisory responsibilities) got up and remonstrated the group on our careless driving habits. Afterwards several of us remarked that it would be really nice if Robert was the next person to have a problem. We got our wish! A few days later Robert pulled the Center's brand-new van over to the side of the road to let a car pass. The shoulder crumbled, and he and the van went into the Little "T." Robert was unhurt, but the van was sitting on its side in three feet of water. As we drove back to the Center, Robert became visibly nervous. "Would you guys come in with me?" he asked. We wouldn't have

missed it for anything! As we entered Payson's office, he regarded us with his usual open, friendly expression. We watched with perverse satisfaction as Robert stuttered and mumbled his way through an account of the mishap. Payson's expression never changed, but he was quiet for a moment. Then he said softly, "My, that's aggravatin'!" Payson's patience was legendary, and he seldom raised his voice. Once he had to deal with a guy I'll call "Ed." Part of "Ed's" job was to go around to local motels and restaurants to offer the owners complementary trips down the Nantahala. Payson hoped that these fellow businessmen would then recommend the Center to their guests. Time passed, and Payson became suspicious. At first he thought it was remark-

able that so many attractive young women owned area businesses. They didn't; "Ed" was handing out passes to various cute receptionists and waitresses that he wanted to get lucky with. One day, after "Ed" indiscreetly shared the details of his adventures with one too many people, Payson called him into his office and demanded an explanation. "Ed" responded with a long, winded, profane tirade about the unfairness of his employer. His raised voice carried across Route 19 into the store. Finally, when "Ed" stopped for breath, Payson said to him quietly, "You know, I have always tried to like my employees, but I do believe you're starting to get me mad." It was to be "Ed's" last day of work at the Center. The Nantahala in the summer of '74 was a fishing stream that was becoming really popular for paddling. The local anglers were a rough bunch. They all carried pistols ("Fer snakes. . . the two legged kind! Har! Har!"), and they often waved them at paddlers to help make a point. Trees were felled into the river, cars got vandalized, and the Center was regularly threatened with arson. Since an outfitter shop was torched over on

the Locust Fork in Alabama at about the same time, this didn't help anybody sleep at night.

There was some real culture shock at work here, too. Since people who were on the run from the law settled around the Center, some local folks assumed that we were all on the lam, too. And they didn't appreciate our city ways. Payson and his wife Aurelia enjoyed church music and often visited local churches. One Sunday they stopped by a church on Wesser Creek and were sitting in the pews as an older man named Larus, who worked the counter at the store, preached. Larus delivered a fire and brimstone denunciation of boaters for, "walking around in their underwear" (wearing bikinis), public drink-



C.W. running 7ft falls.
Section IV Chattooga River

Yankee Paddler continued...

ing, supposed drug and sexual irregularities, and paddling on Sunday. If Pavson was shaken, he didn't show it afterwards. On Monday Larus was back behind the counter, just like always. Those Nanty fishermen were a handful! One day I was working a Nantahala clinic when someone told me there was trouble downstream. Two of our teen-aged guests had found some beers floating in the river, and they were getting ready to open one when an angry, armed local appeared. This was a potentially serious problem. Those were his beers! And Swain County, which the Nanty runs through, is dry. The nearest beer store is an hour away. We did a lot of talking, with plenty of yes-sirs and no-sirs, to defuse the situation. Some of the locals were pretty impossible! There was a old guy over on the Little Tennessee who had a farm down by the river. We met him on a day after the river at floodstage trashed one of our clinics and we were seeking permission to cross his land. He was helpful then, but he gradually became convinced that we canoeists were out to steal his cattle. He started appearing on the shore with a shotgun. He threatened everyone, including Louise Holcombe's petite, gray-haired mother, Beth, who was accompanying a class. We tried hard to accommodate him. First he didn't want us to get out on shore, then he didn't want us catching eddies on his side of the river because it upset his wife, then the eddies on the other side were off limits. Finally he didn't want us running the river at all. Payson and I drove over to his house and tried to negotiate a lasting agreement, but the peace only lasted a few days and he was at it again! Later that season, after he took a pot-shot at Dick Eustis, the Center was forced to go to the law and press charges. He ended up doing some prison time. Donnie really liked to fish, and he had no patience for unruly paddlers when he was wetting his line. I was leading an Outward Bound group down the Nanty one afternoon when I saw a fisherman standing in some mid-stream shallows far ahead. I went down the line of boats, telling everyone to pass behind the fisherman near the shore. As we got close, I saw that the fisherman was Donnie. I eddied out nearby to chat: "Hey, Donnie! You catchin' anything?" "Walbridge, your group's the first one that showed me any respect! Them damn canoeists been runnin' over my line all day!" "Sorry to hear that." By this time my group had gone downstream, and a couple of NOC's rental canoes were headed towards us. The paddlers were beginners and their boats were out of control. "Damn!" Said Donnie. "You see that? I'm gonna teach those scumbitches some respect!" As the first canoe approached, he reached out, grabbed the gunwales, and flipped the unlucky paddlers over. Cursing, he grabbed floating paddles and gear and hurled them downstream after their owners. Then he turned and did the same thing to the second canoe! "Payson isn't going to like this!" I mumbled to myself as I paddled downstream. But secretly I thought it was a pretty good lesson. So I didn't squeal on Donnie when the guys at the store said that some renters had complained about being attacked by a river troll. The Center rented 16-foot Blue Hole OCA's which they "blocked" with huge pieces of Styrofoam in the center. This flotation was heavy, but it made our canoes hard to damage. Occasionally one got pinned anyway. When the guests got back to the Center and reported the mishap, whoever was hanging around the store got sent to recover it. Donnie and I were driving upriver to release a canoe stuck in Delbar's Rock Rapid when we saw a Florida tourist on the shoulder throwing rocks at a rattlesnake. Donnie, an avid snake-hunter, got excited. "Damn," He said, "That's a big one! Pull over in there!" I pulled over and Donnie hopped out, grabbed his Norse guide paddle, and ran up to the man. "That ain't no way to kill a snake!" he yelled. Then, without hesitation, he beat the hapless critter senseless with three wicked fast paddle-chops. Grabbing the snake behind the head with one hand, he used the other to pull out his big folding knife and hold it out to me. "Open it!" he commanded. I opened his knife, and Donnie quickly decapitated the snake. He laid the carcass out on hood of the speechless tourist's white Lincoln and started skinning it. "I have wanted a snakeskin headband for nearly five years" he crowed, "and this is the first snake I've seen that's big enough!" In a moment he had the skin off and wrapped around a small stick. He

took his hat off, dropped the skin inside, and put the hat back on. He laid out his bandanna and carefully butchered what remained of the snake. He threw the guts on the ground, gathered the rest up, and approached the tourist. "Ya want th' meat?" He asked, "It's good eatin'!" The tourist turned green and shook his head. Donnie quickly tied the snake meat up in his bandanna. He took off his hat, dropped the package inside, and replaced his headgear. We'd turned to walk back to the van when Donnie saw the tourist poking at the snake with his foot. He spun around suddenly. "Don't yew touch that head!" he yelled. "It'll bite you till sundown for certain!" After we released the canoe we returned to the Center, where we fried the snake on a wood stove inside the store. It tasted a lot like chicken! All good things must come to an end, and as Fall approached I did some serious thinking about my future. It had been a great summer: I'd run some great rivers, met some neat people, won the first Open Canoe Nationals, and even learned to clog-dance. But pay for NOC guides in 1974 was 65 bucks a week, plus room and board. Even with the \$10 weekly bonus I got as a "ranked" racer I was losing ground. I actually made more money from a small mail-order business I ran from my room, selling sprayskirt and life vest kits. I'd also been training hard all summer, too, and wanted to make a serious try for the U.S. Whitewater Team.

So in early October I said my good-byes and headed north, first for the Gauley, and then home. Payson, of course, built the NOC into a huge, thriving operation that many people tried to imitate. The NOC is now the single biggest employer in Swain County.

Donnie was diagnosed with cancer early that winter and died a year later. Although he spent many of his last days hanging out at the Center, I worked up in Canada the following year and never saw him again. If there are fish and snakes in heaven he's probably out there catching some right now. And he's probably got a side job keeping the rednecks in line at St. Peter's Gate!

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The Slave

A Whitewater Lake

Story and photos by John Meredith



Even from beneath the unblinking, warped, reflection glittering off his sunglasses, I could read skepticism in his eyes.

"That is some of the most difficult water I have ever rolled in. I'd suggest you not run it."

"Maybe Rusty is right." I thought. If something were to go wrong, it would be a real possibility that the boat he had lent me would be lost. Seeing competent paddlers get worked over was enough reason for doubt. Only through an unyielding fight had Rusty managed to stay in the boat. But by now all the hero lines had been scouted. To sit on the bank idly when a clean, doable, line was apparent would not be sporting.

The lower portion of Pelican Falls can be seen in the adjacent picture. The shot was taken while looking upstream, and flying in a plane 1,600 feet in the air. The main feature is the single channel, more than 100 feet across, falling river left onto a rock island about the size of an ocean freighter. The series of drops that make up Pelican Falls have an aggregate width of 3 kilometers, or about 1.86 miles, a river so large it drains an area the size of France.

The resistance of the island to the 'green' tongue creates a massive wave train that empties into a river-wide pool. On the river right side of the main drop are two ugly re-circulating ledges. On the river left, between the island and the 'green' tongue, is a large eddy and boil zone, which emanates the deep bass sound of water churning. Along the rock face of the island jets of water pulsate nearly one story above the water line. In the boil zone, gaps in the water's surface large enough to be visible from shore

sporadically reappear. Dave Persolja had the misfortune to fall into one of these gaps the way a boat falls off a waterfall.

To run the main line requires starting on the top end of the island in what appears to be an eddy. In reality, however, it is a boil made of slow, deep water rising up the face of the island. Sandwiched between the compression of the main current on one side and the island on the other, the boil is constantly morphing up and down, side-to-side. This is the set up to the must make ferry to avoid the eddy line from hell—a protracted, but straightforward move. With Rusty departed, there was nothing but the encouragement of Jayson Bowerman and my own wits telling me to run the drop.

Jayson pushed off first with the knowing confidence that distinguishes professionals from non-professional paddlers like me. The moment of departure. Positive adrenaline welled up as the first few strokes went in. A realization: "This boil is even more funky than it looks." Not enough acceleration. Bad surge. Flip! The feeling of racing silence-crystallized and salient. Roll! The chips fell into place as the boat retained its ferry angle. This allowed just enough space to clear the edge of a disgustingly large hydraulic. Then a ferry across a mountain of water nearly two stories tall, the Pelican Wave. This was followed by a succession of haystack waves that rise up and explode down while shifting back and forth, sending sheets of water bombarding from left and right.

This *would* be a bad place to attempt a roll. Worse still were



all around for a run well done. This is what justified the months of planning and thousands of miles of travel.

Had the group consisted of paddlers of my skill level, Pelican Falls would have been admired, but kept at a safe distance. Only

through the assistance of whitewater experts would I consider running the drop. Like all rapids on the Slave, Pelican Falls

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Photos: Left: The Slave; Billy Craig-Donkey Style; and at the bottom, Dave Persolja paddling at the upper portion of Pelican Falls; Top right: the author scouting the rapids.

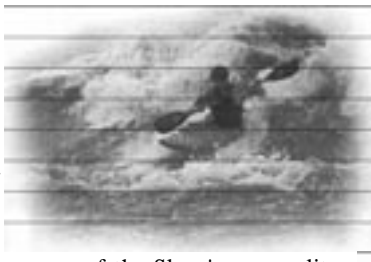
ALITY at different water levels. At higher water what was the Pelican Wave becomes a single large hydraulic at the back end of the island. Behind this 'Ultimate Hole' are the explosions of haystack waves visible from the air.

Even before I got to the river, a theme even bigger than the brouhaha of Pelican Falls emerged: the generosity of the people I met. From the moment of arrival in Fort Smith local paddlers Chris and Dave Lamerse were welcoming and helped me find a place to stay. The cheapest lodging available was located at the edge of town, and came with the condition of having to live with 10 other people for the first two weeks. Luck was on my side. The day after I moved in, Scott Lindgren, Jen Steger, Corran Addison, Steve Fisher, Dale Jardine, Dan Cambell, Dustin Knapp, Dave Persolja, Jayson Bowerman and Rusty Sage showed up. Later in the summer a group consisting of Nate Nash, Jed Selby, Andre Spino-Smith and Billy Craig moved in next door. Both as groups and as individuals, they were extremely generous with help, gear, and insight. Everyone was decidedly cool. In the end, being determined to get to a prime location made it possible to meet people who contribute to the ongoing evolution of the sport.

None of these people were consulted in the writing of the article; and so its content is the author's sole responsibility. Hopefully no one feels misrepresented.

Why Anyone Hell-bent on Wave Riding or Big Water Cruising Should Consider Visiting the Slave

"It's like the Ottawa on crack!" Jed's ecstatic proclamation is maybe the most succinct sum-



mary of the Slave's personality. More than just rhetorical gratification, there is actual depth to the statement. The shapes of the two rivers' rapids have a lot in common, but the Slave has been so jacked up that it ignores the limits of reason. Sober minded observation will show this to be the case.

Other visitors to the Slave brought with them diverse back-grounds — and so made different comparisons. The Riot Team suggested that the river's scale was like Lachine, and, in terms of whitewater action, put the Slave on par with the White Nile and Zambezi. Little wonder that a couple of the river's larger waves reminded Jen Steger of the ocean.

Limited experience mitigates the value of my opinion, but it is the most accessible. Previously, my view of big water had been shaped by five days on the Futaleafu and one on the middle Reventazon. In terms of personality, these rivers have nothing in common with the Slave. And in terms of volume they are nowhere close — the Slave is so large it is just plain stupid. However, in terms of the level of energy that the paddler deals with on a first hand basis, the Slave is, at times, right up there. Jed is on the mark by saying that the personality of the Slave "is like the Ottawa on crack!" Here's why...

Physical Characteristics

Generally speaking, the Ottawa consists of whitewater channels divided by islands — with lake-like river up and down stream. The Slave is *lake size whitewater*, broken up by islands. In both cases, the largest features are formed when river channels are narrowed as they fall over ledge lines. Each river is known for its good clean surf waves, deep whirling pools of funny water, and the notable absence of pin rocks.

The similarity between the two rivers comes from a shared geology, the Canadian Shield (See Map). At the southern end of the Canadian Shield is the St

Lawrence Seaway, while along the western edge are a series of lakes that stretch from Manitoba to the Arctic. These bodies of water outline gaps in the earth's surface that have accumulated water — lots of it.

Unlike other rivers of the Shield, whose headwaters are within the same physiographic region, the waters of the Slave come from another landscape altogether. The headwaters of the Slave are 700 miles upstream, in the Rockies of northern British Columbia. The Mountain runoff crosses the interior plains as the Peace and Athabaska Rivers, which are slow and muddy like the Missouri. Along with the large marsh upstream, the docile flow allows the river to have plenty of



time to warm in the summer sun. By the end of July the river is as warm as bath water — quite a surprise for being as far north as Alaska. The western edge of the Canadian Shield brings the two rivers together and their confluence forms the Slave. Fractures in the Shield rock run perpendicular to the river, which cause the River's rapids. These hard, smooth, dome shaped rocks are estimated to be 2.94 billion years old. They also give the area its original name, Thebacha, meaning "rapids by the rock." Behind the Mackenzie, which it feeds, and the St Lawrence, the Slave is the third largest volume flow in Canada.

From May to July, 2001 the volume ranged from 130,000 to nearly 200,000 CFS. The river has an average width of about 2 kilometers, or about 1.2 miles, making it more than 6,000 feet across. So once in the middle of the river, one should not expect to return to shore anytime soon. Even with non-stop motion, a simple ferry can take approximately 1/2 hour in real time. Swim here without rescue, and you're screwed.

What is odd about such a large river is the clarity of uneven current motion. The water

level of the immediate surroundings can perceptibly rise up and down over the course of minutes. Waves slowly rise, form a crest, explode, and then disappear, only to start all over again. This shifty motion is going on with many different river features of all different scales, all interacting simultaneously. So even by whitewater standards, the geometry of the river's fluid mechanics is unimaginably complex. This is what the sum total of a huge drainage looks like.

The by-product of having such uneven current friction is slower motion downhill. There are shoots in the river where the water speeds up considerably, but most of the time the river is fairly slow paced for whitewater. In fact, some of the river's best, sloped-out, glassy waves are found in slower current. Really wide, deep, and usually slow, the Slave is a lake of waves. Correctly estimating the time of arrival while ferrying out to a wave over the course of minutes is essential to being able to catch it. Hidden currents complicate matters.

Occasionally the river is very deep. This depth can be inferred by upwelling that can be as big as a plot of land for a house, or a farm. Small cliff faces hug the bank in parts of the eastern shore, and these are sometimes accompanied by the rivers most violent upwelling. The most dynamic boils I encountered were the size of domestic swimming pools, and roughly the shape of a contact leans with a center elevation of about a foot above the rest of the water line. The boil acts like a rock against the rest of the current, and it creates some frightening eddy lines.

It can be useful to think of the Slave as a collection of rivers — all congregated in one place shoulder to shoulder. Endlessly wide channels, technical slalom style courses and micro-creeking are all in on the act. A multifarious personality is part of what makes the river experience worth the travel.

Traditionally, the view of whitewater includes a mountain valley as a backdrop. Rivers like the Ottawa help challenge this

Photos: Clockwise from bottom left: Dale Jardine at the Pelican Wave; Jed Selby (note the boil line at the left); Andre Spino-Smith.

The Slave continued.

notion, but even there the river valley can clearly be seen. The Slave has a valley of about 150 feet on its banks, but is surrounded by an ocean of FLAT. The rapids are only at 600 ft above sea level and are 1,200 miles upstream of the Mackenzie River delta in the Arctic Ocean. So the Slave River Rapids are an oasis of gradient in a landscape that might induce pessimism for the whitewater enthusiast. Yes, the 800 mile drive across Canada's plains, consisting of epic straight-aways, can test the limits of sanity, but the end of the line promises an orgy of whitewater.

Being at the end of the road in Canada's Subarctic has its advantages. For one thing, if rapids like these were near a large paddling community, people would be getting aced left and right. The river already has a long history of taking lives.

Distance from large-scale human settlement has also meant that the river has been free to set its own course. Coming from the continental United States, I look at the Slave's rapids and imagine another Grand Coulee Dam. Isolation has spared the integrity of the rapids from being subordinated by the tyranny of instrumentalist reasoning towards nature.

The Experience

The end of May was generally overcast and in the 60s—cooler than average for the area. The river was larger than anything I had dealt with, but as it turned out, was low compared to the following two months. More than one hundred thousand cubic feet per second is low!

Having been out of the boat for the better part of the school year was working against me. Acquiring both the efficiency and endurance to cover acres and



acres of river is a task that takes time to master. The other kayakers were unperturbed, but then again, that is how they make their living. So why feel bad?

Because the endless ferry sequence would make me wiffed out a couple days sooner than the rest of the group, I would have a couple days on the water, and then an extra day of rest when the rest of the group would take its break. This was a good warm-up for a summer on the river. However, the extra rest time would end up getting me over amped, and it would become hard to sleep unless there had been a good day's workout. The long sub-arctic days are particularly bad for colleged-out, night owl blood. So my activity rhythm did not easily accord with the time on the water.

After my first week in Ft. Smith the sun came out regularly. Going to the river to paddle was getting to feel normal. Except that this day I forgot to check the outfitting on the boat I was using. Unfortunately, this realization did not hit me until we were already at the put-in (Great!). The group was rearing to get on its way. "Here" I thought "these river boots can be jimmied in to fit the boat, and they almost work like foot pegs."

In retrospect it was all too obvious where this was going. The river had begun to rise from the previous days. We were on our way to this wave called Outrageous (This wave is a dream. Had the water not risen real high and blown it out, I would have

camped out by this wave for a week.). On the way down there were some other nice smaller waves. One of these had been a good, friendly wave more than fifty feet across, with a fluffy white pile on top, formed by a ledge. Now it was a nasty hole. The way the deep, glassy, current sloped off as it poured into the hole obscured the horizon line. The hole was highly aerated, and re-circulated hard and fast.

Had it been possible to get a solid kick off a foot peg, I might have been able to paddle hard and skirt the edge of the hole. Yet, by the time I locked in on permanent cartwheels, such insight had come too late. Getting in an effective stroke was not an option. The boat was wide and flat, so it was possible to angle it perpendicular toward the upstream current. With the added drag, the boat was tugged out of the hole. On a normal river this strategy might have been triumphant. On a river many stories deep, however, normal current vectors do not apply. Deep boils dominated the scene. The large

boil behind the hole acted like a murderous pillow, feeding the boat right back into the hydraulic just when I thought I might be free.

Between getting stopped on the back boil, and before getting auto-loaded back into the hole, I got in a roll, and took a chug of water down the throat. Back to getting trashed. "OK. Pulling the cord has its time..."

Swimming out of the bottom of the hole was easy since it was very deep. Once downstream, I tried to swim to the surface, but it felt like the water was holding me down. I could see the sunlight through the amber-prism; oxygen was running low. Now I was getting scared.

The first few minutes after getting to the surface were spent trying to get a clean breath. Rusty was there to serve my ass back up to me. At least it wasn't one of his boats that was headed to the Arctic Ocean. Again, someone else

Photos: Top down: Conan Addison at Outrageous; Steve Fisher on an aireal back-blunt.



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The Slave continued

came through. Scott snagged my paddle, and Dale and Jayson rounded up the boat. They graciously returned the gear to my shivering and helpless self. Sixty Canadian dollars in beer is inexpensive for such good help. Without the assistance of other paddlers the most likely outcome for me would have been a flush drowning.

With confidence on the rocks, it was time to cook up a new strategy. Rebuilding turned out not to be hard. The others not only helped, they set an example. Within two days of my swim, one of the professionals swam. So by the time the town's liquor store (owned by the mayor) ended its Sunday/Monday vacation, more beer was to be had by all. In the end it was a star-studded group of swimmers: the Slave weathered local, Dave, Steve Fisher, Dave Persolja and Dustin Knapp (first swim in six years). Self-inflicted as my foolishness was, swimming is also a possibility for expert paddlers. Don't take it for granted; this river is an easy place to die.

The flip side to the inherent risks of paddling on a whitewater lake is the surfing. The river has

many, massive glassy waves that are level dependent and anonymous. For example, after six weeks of being on the Slave I was convinced that the set of rapids near town, the Rapids of the Drowned (Rapides de los Noyes) was basically just a series of nasty river-wide shoals. At high water there was a smooth green wave about four feet tall and thirty feet across in the middle of the river, but generally there wasn't much there. The whole way to the put-in I protested to Andre, Jed, Billy and Nate that the local guide was going to be wasting our time by going there.

As it turns out, there was a fast, steep, narrow glassy 'V' wave at the immediate base of the shoals on the near bank that the guys were able to blunt off. Normally the wave just isn't there. Downstream, in the middle of the river, was a bowl-shaped white pile wave that people in the States would kill for. The appearance of random dream waves at various levels was a recurrent theme, and it makes the river really hard to 'know'.

When the mountains in northern British Columbia

started releasing their water in mid-June, the log traffic increased. Log jams of evergreens, each tree about three stories high, began their descent down river, causing the water to change from a semi-clear brown to sediment-rich chocolate milk.

Testosterone, boredom, and the will for adventure trumped prudent judgment, and so it became difficult to deter myself from getting on the water. After paddling across the lake above Mountain Rapid with locals Keith and Dave, we made it to the top of the rapids on the eastern shore. At the top of the rapid is a single channel, which looked to be about 30,000-50,000 c.f.s., falling two and a half stories at a 60 degree slope, and creating a hydraulic about a story high. It is the kind of feature that everyone portages. I was told that it has runnable levels. Looking like that, it is hard to believe anyone in his right mind would consider running it. The eddy that fed into the hydraulic was so swift that it had its own surf waves.

Downstream is a sweet wave train. Surfers ride a wall of water that starts by being shallow

sloped at the bottom and steep at the top, but then surges forward and collapses. Caving away, and crossing the wave in accord with the surges had me as engaged as I could be. I looked upstream in time to see a trunk approach on the horizon. Caving left never meant so much, or felt so good. Watching that tree pass by while surfing on the wave felt incredible.

Like most rivers, the Slave won't bring itself to you. And unless you're really bent out of shape over wave riding or big water cruising, it is not worth the distance. But for those who feel inspired by whitewater, the Slave is worth the trouble of getting there. If you go, make sure that you can get on and off the river as quickly as possible. The mosquitoes can be oppressive, especially by the riverbank.

Thanks to my family and all my paddling buddies for their support, to Dr. Toops and the Miami University Geography Department for allowing me to do the research project in Ft. Smith, and to Ruthann Gal and the Aurora Research Institute in the Northwest Territories for giving me access to local resources.

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R i v e r V o i c e s

URBAN Whitewater

By: Tom Christopher, Massachusetts Riverways Program

Whitewater in New England has always been synonymous with the famous runs of western Maine: the Kennebec, Penobscot, and Dead. However, many whitewater enthusiasts find it impractical to travel to such remote destinations as often as they would like. For these poor souls there is an exciting and largely unknown whitewater resource just outside downtown Boston. Lowell, Massachusetts is just 25 miles north of Boston on Route 93, and offers a challenging set of Class III and IV whitewater in a completely urban setting. If you are short on time and can't get away for a weekend, just jump in the car and head for the Concord River in downtown Lowell.

This recreational opportunity came about when one of the dams on the Concord River was removed a number of years ago. The Middlesex dam, a large reinforced concrete structure that drowned a 20-foot drop in elevation, was breached during a flood in the mid 80s, leaving a riverbed filled with dangerous debris that virtually eliminated any opportunity for safe river recreation. During the process of debris removal, further drops in elevation were discovered that suggested whitewater recreation could be developed at the site. The dam removal has provided not only a benefit to whitewater paddlers, but also helps to broaden the local economic base.

The top environmental official in Massachusetts, Secretary Bob Durand, has long recognized the beneficial implications of dam removal, not only in terms of restoring and improving natural habitat, but also the important economic benefits derived from paddling and tourism. When the removal of the historic Edwards Dam in Maine showed immediate benefits to the riparian ecosystem as well as new economic potential, Secretary Durand established "River Restore" as part of the Massachusetts Riverways program. The mission of this program is to evaluate and coordinate the removal of many of the thousands of old dams in the state no longer serving a useful purpose.

The River Restore staff examines dams that are potential candidates for removal and then assembles a "Triage Team" of scientists from various agencies with jurisdiction over the state's rivers. This process has developed an interdisciplinary protocol that makes the removal of dams meet the best available standards of biological and ecological integrity for the resource, while keeping the actual removal activity in compliance with existing environmental regulations. The dam removal activities that took place in Lowell are an example the effectiveness of this integrated approach.

The Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust, a private nonprofit conservation group, has taken down over 1,200 rafting passengers since 1994 in an effort to raise awareness of the important natural resource the river provides to the community. Carefully hidden behind neighborhood houses and old stone mill foundations, the Concord River remains a natural, cultural, and historical resource which has achieved national significance. Its scenic beauty, a hidden jewel, woven into the hectic tapestry of city life, provides a life-force to the people of the region. The old restored brick mills lining the Concord's shores have been developed into a national park because of their role in our nation's industrial revolution.

Many who negotiate the river through Lowell are surprised to see an abundance of wildlife during their journey. It is not uncommon to startle up mallards or spot cormorants flying overhead as you float. Even great blue herons can be seen feeding along the shoreline. Since the spring releases also coincide with the migration of anadromous fish returning upstream to spawn, you might even see the giant sturgeon, shad or Atlantic salmon leaping up the river channel.

Each spring flows of 1800 cfs descend the Concord River's 50+ feet of drop through Lowell. The river cascades over drops like Wamesit, Massic, and Middlesex Falls to provide a truly memorable whitewater trip. Trips begin at the Bellegard Boathouse, which is part of Lowell Heritage State Park. Zoar Outdoor, as a contractor for the Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust, is on hand to provide all the gear necessary for trips, including wetsuits, helmets, paddles, and lifejackets. The outfitter even provides guides who offer instruction to both novice and experienced paddlers before they set out on the river.

The first set of rapids is now called "Twisted Sister" and provides plenty of action, tossing folks around like old rag dolls in the center of the rafts. Other rapids like "Three Beauties" and "Straight Line" continue the thrills. But there is no time to relax as the Middlesex Dam rapid follows with awhopping wallop than can surely flip a raft. This trip is so much fun, the only thing to do is run it again—this time through the oldest working power canal in the United States.

On the second run river-runners pass through the Pawtucket canal for a truly unique experience that blends whitewater with a wonderful history lesson about the importance of Lowell during the Industrial Revolution. To emphasize industrial-era technology, the trip ends with rafters entering the big wooden gates of a lock. As they sit at the bottom of the 1850's lock, somewhat uneasy in that eerie spot, the chamber slowly fills with water and rafters rise 17 feet above the river to street level at the Sheraton Doubletree Inn. The entire experience takes about 3-1/2 to 4 hours and earns distinction as the only river trip in the country where participants travel through both a state and national park.

But the trip to Lowell doesn't have to end when you get off the river. Museums, art galleries, and antique shops provide a potpourri of choices for post-river activities. Restaurants and shops are scattered throughout the entire downtown historical district, and a visit to the Lowell Heritage National Park is a must. The Lowell mills produced textiles, shoes, and other products to be shipped throughout the entire industrial-era world. Learning about the women who worked the mills and observing the machinery used to power them is a dream for any history buff.

The Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust runs whitewater rafting trips each year from April 1st until the end of May. Volunteers for the Parks and Conservation Trust coordinate the trip and the revenue generated is used to build greenways, preserve the historic corridor of the river, and protect the river's rich habitat for wildlife.

For more information about taking this exciting urban whitewater adventure, call (888) 375-1115.



The Heron's Passport

By Dale-Mare Herring

American Whitewater Associate Editor

THE MORNING WAS BRISK, cold enough for the metal handlebars on the bike to feel like ice. As I pedaled along the C&O Canal Trail just 14 miles northwest of Washington, DC, I finally saw Fall. It is a season of mimicry—cracked mud flats mimicked clear, glassy water shattered by the lines of fallen maple leaves floating on the surface. Driftwood appeared as birds, and birds took on the colors of barren branches and winter scrub. I was not sure who was reflecting who's blue—the sky, or the Potomac River. The trail, built as a trade route in the 18th century, parallels a canal on one side and the Potomac on the other. I go this way each day on my way to work, immersed in nature less than an hour before being immersed in traffic.

As my knobby tires dug quietly into the soft earth of the trail, I smelled the musk of damp, east coast wooded banks. Leaves from Beech, Birch, and Box Elder looked like multi-colored confetti suspended in air. Fog hovered as snaking tendrils just above the water in the canal. It looked as if I had ridden my bike to Avalon, the shrouded, mystical world of pagan traditions, mythical beasts, and spirits of the forest. But no, the swirling wisps of fog appeared more as genies. They seemed to be spinning frightful tales of wishes granted after a human freed them from a bottle. Sundrenched droplets sparkled and their very essence seemed to have a glimmering sheen. Otherworldly.

A bicycle bell rang, someone wanted to pass me on the trail. She gave no indication of seeing what I did, so I thought some more. Once I had tried to save a heron on this river—not far from here. It was then, I think, that I was given a passport to heron worlds.

I found an injured Great Blue heron on the river just upstream from here two months ago while I was kayaking in Great Falls National Park. The bird's long, gangly neck was the only thing above water. A Ranger told me that sometimes the birds lose their footing above Great Falls while they are fishing and that they get hurt as they wash down the 20-foot drops. I scooped the bird's body with its mangled legs onto the front deck of my kayak. It broke my heart seeing the magnificent creature so broken. I had admired Great Blue herons all my life for their incredible composure and for that mesmerizing stare that burns with a wildness born of things I've never seen, as if touched with knowledge of something so large it makes for madness. Perhaps it has visited these foreign worlds behind the shrouds of mist on the canal or past a waterfall's veil. Maybe it goes elsewhere when it nests out of site in the highest trees, or when the dark river swallows its form as it dives for food.

All I know for sure is that Blue Herons are most active at dawn or dusk, when one world dissolves into another. When hunting, they stand forever motionless and alone, head wound like a jack-in-the-box close to its chest, ready to spear fish. I marvel that they can understand the nature of water so well that even when they lift their tall legs out of the river, there is no ripple.

Now, I wanted badly for the bird to save its strength and heal itself.

Yet, it was scared and fought me—enormous wings spreading in fits and starts, beak opening menacingly—but legs tragically thin and immobile.

When I let the heron slide off the front of my kayak near shore, it bobbed in the shallow water, getting tossed about by the wake. In a ridiculous effort, I put chunks of albacore tuna that I had brought for lunch on my paddle blade. As the Heron tried to fight the paddle off, I dropped the food down its open beak. Force-feeding a heron though doesn't do anything except make the creature more frightened. I felt absurd and bereft. I was foreign; I didn't belong in the bird's world no matter what my intentions were.

After looking into its eyes—yellow, timeless, magnificent—I paddled away, giving the dying animal some peace. When I moved into the current, I was aware that the same moving force that gave the heron its life also caused its fall. I sunk the ends of my kayak down, rolled around, and spiraled vertically in the low-volume boat trying to understand by immersion a force that could feel no remorse, but was still innocent.

I passed a fish ladder coming in on the left. I knew that hitting the new current just right would allow my boat to slip into a watery seam, like the wing of a plane, and fly down towards the bottom of the river. Kayakers call it a mystery move, and I sent the boat, angled just so, into the whirlpool like currents that sucked my boat down. The effect was so dramatic that it silenced thought, giving the floor to sensation. Cold pressure pushed in as I dropped 1, then 4 and 6 feet deep. I was awed by the hand of nature that was so enormous it could just flick me in my kayak toward the dark river bottom. Madness. The deeper I went, the more silent it grew, and as I looked up toward the light at the surface, the Great Blue heron, limp—dead—washed just two feet below the waterline, downstream. It swayed and contorted like common debris—a soggy plant or a cast-off sari from a bathing girl. I pointed the nose of my boat, still under water, up to the air and let the buoyancy send me flying to the surface. A shiver racked me.

Now, as I biked along, I couldn't shake the chill of that long ago shiver. I have often thought that something passed between that heron and me when the wild creature died. It was like this life force that took the shape of a Great Blue Heron became mine as it dissipated in the water. Just as I thought this, I saw a bird perched amid a dredging site on the canal. Rubber tubing, a tractor, and an empty soda can didn't detract from the strength of its presence.

It was a Great Blue Heron, prehistoric looking, outside of time, standing like a gatekeeper in the dawn. As I passed it, I dwelled for a moment longer in the world of genies, Avalon, one of the secret places herons know. I wonder where else they go. Perhaps one day, I'll be able to paddle along the Potomac, slipping in and out of heron worlds, without even causing a ripple.

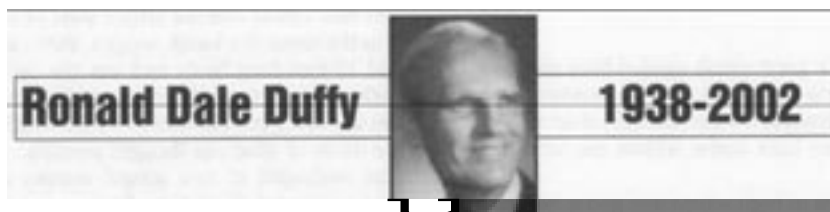
Editor's note: This story will also be published in **Nature Writers 2003**.



*Because of that quarrelling,
all those who lived in the first
World left that place. They rose
up, like clouds, to enter the Blue
World through an opening in
the East. In the Blue World they
found Blue Feathered Beings
such as Heron and Blue Jay.*

CHEROKEE LEGEND

Dedicated Idaho Scoutmaster, River Runner Remembered



By John "Gordo" Henderson

I, the geeky, way too skinny (believe it or not looking at me today), 12 year old boy scout, thought he was the epitome of manhood the moment I laid eyes on him. He was 6'4" tall, trim, ramrod straight, with cold grey eyes contrasting with an infectious grin that, when required, was capable of deforming his face from earlobe to earlobe.

I was rather lacking of "male role models" in my life having lost my father eight days before my fourth birthday and with a stepfather who worked out of town for the power company. Mr. Duffy came along as my scoutmaster at just the moment I needed him, someone to show me the way into the next phase of life. He took us to the Air Force base to mingle with the cold warriors and their Dr. Strangeloveian weapons and I resolved to someday fly like the pilots I met there (which I did, even today being the proud owner of a 1969 Piper that was probably manufactured the day I made my resolution).

He took us camping in the snow where we built shelters into driftbanks and shivered all night in our inadequate sleeping bags, already too macho to whine about it. He marched us over 50 miles to spring camporee every June, the only troop from the council to do so. We developed an aloof camaraderie, we band of brothers, that was mysterious to outsiders and we shared a yen for mischief, not entirely discouraged by him, that earned us fear and scorn and more than a little grudging respect from the other troops of the council. Instead of the usual BSA activities of the time, tying knots and bandages, building signal towers and sending semaphore, and building fires with one match (we did all of that too), we trained at the local boxing gym and had intramural boxing matches, a leftover from our scoutmaster's days in the semipro boxing ring.

He was a family man with a gorgeous wife and four bright, well-disciplined children. I admired that as well, but he always seemed to have time for the scouts. Indeed scouts always seemed to be coming and going at his home- commingling with the rest of the family, sort of an extension.

One year the troop decided to rent the local council's rafts and tackle the Middle Fork of the Salmon. This was before permits were required so we could go whenever we wanted to and camp wherever. He hired a guide for that first trip and did not choose well. I was not on the trip but the rafts were rotten and shredded in the first few miles. The guide was useless and they ended up walking out at the Pistol Creek trail. He decided that he could do a better job than the council and the professional guide so the next year with our measly \$60.00 fee for the eight day trip he bought rafts, equipment, food, and supplies and we embarked on our own brand of whitewater adventure. Over the years this expanded to a large inventory of rafts and equipment that was available to us for other river pursuits, like the Payette system.

Not everyone could go on the "Superac-

tivity," what we called the Salmon River trip. All scouts who wanted to go had to first pass a rigorous test. We had to have our Swimming, Lifesaving, Rowing, and Canoeing merit badges and pass the fearsome "Duffy Battle." This consisted of a two and a half minute one-on-one with the giant of a man in the deep end of the pool simulating confronting a panicked drowning person. He grabbed and dunked us, let us up long enough to gasp for air and dunked us again. He was always careful not to take any of us beyond what we could handle but he made us very glad when it was over. Those who had "survived" the "Duffy Battle" took on a revered status, like a warrior in some primitive tribe.

1970 was my first year on the river and I was petrified the whole time. The veterans from the previous years taunted us with tales of impending doom around every bend. That would have been all right except that I did have what remains to this day the worst swim of my life at "Redside" in the Middle Fork's "Impassible Canyon."

I did not notice that I was leaving youthful patterns behind and establishing my adult ones. That first Middle Fork trip was the crossroads in my life, nearly everything I've done in adulthood began on that trip and has been related to whitewater either directly or indirectly. I wanted desperately to be a raft guide and when I went to college I practically majored in it. I took all kinds of water safety and swimming classes, even joined the swim team as a butterfly, another skill left over from scouting. I took EMT and there I lost my way. EMT training led to paramedic training which led to the EMS service which led to the fire service which is where I am today, still hoping to become that raft guide on the Middle Fork soon.

Matrimony and opportunity took me away from my beloved Idaho mountains and my admired mentor. I saw him two years ago for the first time in twenty years, still ramrod straight, trim, fiercely proud, his face still youthful after threescore and some. He was even then

fighting lung cancer, a deep irony since cigarettes had never touched his Mormon lips. I overheard him tell someone on the phone that he had recently climbed Mt. Borah, Idaho's tallest peak, just to test his system post lobectomy. He was never a warm, fuzzy type, and he wasn't that day either, but he was delighted to see me. We exchanged experiences and promises to keep in touch.

I visited again last year and sensed something wrong. He knew me but couldn't quite seem to converse. His cancer had metastasized and was taking his mind. I knew I would never see him again in this life. I returned recently from a trip to Costa Rica to dozens of desperate e-mails telling me of his passing, hoping I could make the funeral. I was too late to tell him good-bye, but I owe him so much, for showing me the joys of whitewater and leading me subtly into adulthood.



R i v e r V o i c e s

Whitewater Goddesses

By: Lila Thomas

Two whitewater divas reveal the great splash women have made on the whitewater industry. Following old school extreme kayaker, Beth Rypins and new school champion, Brooke Winger down the river of their lives reveals just how far women have come within the world of whitewater.

Twenty-two years ago Beth was in high school and going nowhere fast. She was using drugs and getting into trouble until she found kayaking, which changed her life. At the same time Brooke was in diapers on a 40-acre farm in Buena Vista, CA. By the late 80s Beth had paddled countless rivers in 17 countries on six continents, and had completed numerous outstanding first descents. Meanwhile, Brooke at 12 had just begun kayaking for a kids club with her younger brother Ethan.

What it takes to be the Best

Brooke is a 24 year-old sparkly-eyed athlete whose greatest desire is to be the best freestyle paddler in the world. She has already taken third place in the freestyle and won the squirt boat category hands down at the 1999 New Zealand Worlds and the 2001 Spain Worlds.

Her father was a ferrier and Brooke grew up horse back riding the California hills. Brook was introduced to whitewater through her brother, who also became involved at a young age. Unlike many professional kayakers, Brooke's family didn't have much money. It was the help she received from her first coach, Tom Long, and others along the way that enabled her to compete at a young age.

Beth, also came to kayaking early in life. Now, in her 22nd year on the river she has a thin muscular frame with a mop of curly brown hair and an energetic personality that never tires. She has overcome incredible odds her entire life.

At eight years old, she suffered a stroke and was paralyzed on the right side of her body. Although she recovered physically, the emotional scars were long lasting. When she discovered kayaking she found not only a passion but a therapeutic outlet for her anger.

"Kayaking demands my attention; there is no room for anything but the present situation."

Beth's career in whitewater has included rafting and kayaking expeditions all over the world. She is fluent in three languages and has witnessed first hand the revolution of kayak design. She now blends her experience in whitewater with media. She has narrated and led rafting expeditions for National Geographic Television, is a primary athlete in ABC Sports *Passion for Play: Women as Adventurers*, produced Tight Squeeze, a kayak video about women, and is often a commentator for televised specials such as the World of Rafting Championships.

"Have you ever heard the quote: 'it's the fight that keeps ya young?' Working in the whitewater world, whether it's guiding, teaching, or making TV shows about whitewater sports means I have to be plenty fit enough to function in the environment."

Divas Unite

Beth and Brooke first met in the early 90's. Brooke was in her teens and on the Junior Olympics Slalom Team and had heard about Beth who was an icon in the sport.

"I knew she was out there running knarly Class V rapids and I wanted to be just like her."

Beth is impressed and inspired by the next generation of women kayakers.

"When I first met Brooke I couldn't believe how aggressive she was on the water. The women today show no fear."

Years later they paddled on the same whitewater raft racing team and took first place in the Zambezi World Whitewater Challenge in Zimbabwe.

Old School vs. New School

The new school and old school ways of boating have changed as much as the respective kayak designs. Beth can recall a time when she paddled 12-foot long boats and was the only women on the river. Throughout the 80s and 90s she paved the way for women. Today, the females are fierce competitors in 8-foot long boats, constantly breaking the limits of what was thought possible.

The onslaught of new school women paddlers has enhanced almost every aspect of what can be done on a river. Brooke feels that most of the progress is due to progressive new boat designs.

"The boats that are out there today allow us to do more diverse moves than the old long boats."

"Gals of Beth's day either ran Class V or competed, there wasn't much cross-over, but today women who do freestyle are also out there running big water," says Brook.

Beth has seen the distinct changes kayaking has been through.

"Back then it was so wild. Now, there is a lot of hype associated with kayaking, it's a big scene. I still love the sport, doing the activity, being on the water, but it's ascene. It's not quite as big as snowboarding is, but it's on its way. Because the focus wasn't on play boating, but running rivers, there was a wildness associated with it."

Problems in the Field

Although women have made enormous headway in the industry there are still obstacles to overcome. Little consideration has been given to the differences of female anatomy in modern boat designs. Women commonly have larger hips and a smaller frame, which is often overlooked by the predominately male boat designers.

"Women are seen as one step behind the guys, not because of athleticism, but because of the crafts provided. It is much harder for a women to maneuver a boat than a 160 lb man." Brooke has devoted much of her time to help design the *Siren*, a Wavesport boat designed for women. The *Siren* is smaller with slicier ends that cut through the water better.

"Lots of women get angry that the prize money for men is more, but in all reality girls have a better chance to win because there are less competitors."

Women have also gained a reputation of having bad attitudes towards each other in competition. Part of this hostility is due to how young the sport is for women.

"The Pro women are separated out in their abilities and don't have the confidence or awareness of an even playing field. This leads to a lot of back stabbing and bad sportsmanship on the circuit." Says Brooke.

Despite these limitations Brooke feels there are more opportunities for women to win and improve themselves in the field than men because there are fewer women out there.

What it's all about

What is it about kayaking that has changed these women's lives and keeps them coming back for more?

Beth describes a conversation in her head before she faces a huge rapid:

"One voice says, 'you can't do it' and another says 'you can' so it is a kind of battle in my head and it is up to me to take control." Beth feels she has devoted her life to finding an emotional balance and kayaking has helped achieve that. The days on the river she recalls as her best, "being in remote canyons, among a tight group of friends."

"The most important thing in whitewater is to believe in your talents. When I was 18 I decided I wasn't good enough, I just didn't believe in myself." Says Brooke.

The personality of women within kayaking has long been a strong influence. Whitewater divas are leading the way in all aspects of the sport. Whether it is the Futaleufu or the Ocoee chicks will continue to kick tail on the water.

Cole City Creek

with the Sofa Kings

by Milt Aitken

It was around 9:30 pm. Over three hours had passed while Mike and I stood in a cold rain at the take-out cursing the three sofa kings. We had run out of jokes to tell and had resorted to making up songs about them. We could hear a train in the distance working its way up the Tennessee River. The long day just wouldn't end. But, it had begun with more promise.

The rivers were all up. The North Chick had been over 10 feet the day before, and there was more rain coming. A lot more. Steve called and bailed on the trip because it was pouring so hard in Nashville and it looked like Waldens Ridge was going to flood. It was just beginning to get to Chattanooga. But, today was the day I could boat. Our crew assembled via phone. It was me, Mike, and the three sofa kings who we'll call the Todds (my apologies to anyone really named Todd).

We waited for the rain to come through (we thought). We met at the take-out of Cole City Creek at around noon. That's kind of late for a creek none of us had paddled, especially considering it gets dark around 6:00 pm; and extra-specially because we had pretty poor information about the run.

Cole City Creek flows into the Tennessee River in the extreme northwest corner of Georgia. We drove through Tennessee, Alabama and Georgia to do the shuttle. The creek branches out like a brushy tree upstream and there are many small farm roads that cross its tiny tributaries. It was not easy to find the put-in, but we did.

It was raining when we put-in at the bottom of a four foot wide culvert with a foot of water flowing through it. The creek was about five feet wide and I couldn't possibly turn my 12 foot canoe around in it. The run turned out to be a total tree fest. Up in the early part, Todd #1 tried to stand in his kayak and jump over a fallen tree while his butt-boat went under it. We had to chase his paddle down after his subsequent swim. Many more trees were in our way as tiny tributaries.

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slowly added to the flows. We portaged four or five times before we got to the gorge.

It was still raining when we made it to a narrow gorge where the creek really started to drop. There were a series of 4 to 6 foot drops in strong, constricted current that were best run all at once. We figured this was the beginning of the good stuff.

Alas! It **was** the good stuff. And it started to get cold too. But the rain didn't stop.

After the gorge, the creek continued to drop all the way to the take-out at a constant rate through trees both live and fallen. If the trees weren't in the way, this would have been a Class III-IV run, but some of the trees produced serious hazards, so I guess it should be rated higher.

To its credit, there was some really nice scenery. Little waterfalls, deep woods, and a huge set stone foundation of some old and rather large building decorated the banks.

Near the end of the run, there were two fallen trees in the current. The move was to go under the first one on the left, then ferry to the right above the second. The second one was fresh with all its branches, many of them well underwater. They were bushy, strong and pliable. Todd #1 was way out ahead of the rest of us when he ran right into and under the second tree. He had a bad time, left his paddle tangled in the tree and lost his boat

when he swam. With some difficulty, we recovered his paddle and chased down his boat. But, he had to walk the rest of the way to the take-out. And, this, is where the real story started.

Todd #2 had the car at the take-out. It was almost dark. So, after we changed in the rain which was getting colder as the front moved in, Todds #1, #2, & #3 left to get the top vehicles leaving Mike and me to wait in the rain. We told jokes and made fun of Todd #1's swim. And that was cool for a while. An hour later, we got the call.

Todd #2 called my cell and said that the cars weren't there. They were both stolen. They were sitting in the Sheriff's living room about a mile away, "warm and dry." I still don't know why he had to rub that part in. They needed to fill out the paperwork, and get the APB put out and they would pick us up when they could.

So, Mike and I told more jokes, until we ran out... and waited... in the cold rain... for 3 hours.... Then, at last, they came back. They had already implemented Plan B, which involved Todd #3's wife driving 3 hours to pick him up, and Todd #1's dad driving more than 2 hours to pick us up. Alas, they arrived just as the Sheriff called.

The cars had been found!

Right where they'd been left. The three

Todds had driven up to where they thought we had left them, but instead made a wrong turn. That was an easy mistake. They saw tire tracks, but no broken glass. But did they get out of the car and walk down to see if it was the right place? Did they do a reality check about the likelihood of 2 modern vehicles being stolen without any broken glass in the middle of nowhere? NoooooOOOOOoooo! They just assumed they were stolen and called 911.

Later, each one tried to absolve himself of blame! Todd #2 said that he "tried to tell them it might not be the place, but they wouldn't listen." Todd #3 said "Todd #1 said it was the spot, and he drove, so he should know." Todd #1 said that they all had a chance, and that nobody said anything.

Mike and I were totally disgusted with them as they drove off to get the cars, once again leaving us in the cold rain. I can't believe we boated with these guys! So we made up another song. And this is what we sang:

"They are Sofa King Wee Todd Ed!"



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Crossing the River

A Boaters Perspective...

By Jim Field

Three men and a boater are traveling through the woods, and they come to a raging river. The water is so deep and so fast that it seems impossible to cross.

The first man offers a prayer, "Please, Lord, give me *the strength* to cross his river." The Lord decides that this is a reasonable request. A cloud settles over, and when it lifts the man is taller, with legs like tree trunks and massive arms. He is now equipped to cross the river.

The second man offers a prayer, "Please, Lord, give me the *strength and ability* to cross this river." The Lord decides this is a reasonable request; a cloud settles over the man and when it lifts, he has massive arms and there is a kayak next to him. He is now equipped to cross the river.

The third man offers a prayer, "Please, Lord, give me the *strength, ability and wisdom* to cross this river." The Lord decides this is a reasonable request; a cloud settles around the man and when it lifts, he has been changed into a woman. She looks at a map and sees that there is a bridge not far downstream. Now she is equipped to cross the river.

The fourth man, we will call him Chuck for the purpose of this story, offers this prayer, "Please Lord, give me the *strength, ability, knowledge and gear* to cross this river."

The Lord thinks this a reasonable request; the cloud thing happens and a manila rope and Swiss Army Knife fall from the sky. (The Lord knows this Chuck guy all too well... as do we all!)

The knife is quickly traded to the man with tree trunk legs (his bark needed to be shaved) for an old piece of neoprene, which Chuck fashions into a spray skirt. This spray skirt is sold to the man with the kayak for \$200 (the boat did not come outfitted). Chuck uses the \$200 to purchase a new roof rack, but enough money is left over to buy some Kevlar scraps, fiberglass cloth and a bucket of epoxy. The roof rack is then sold to the man with the boat for \$800, since he has no way to get his boat to the river and time is of the essence.

On the way back from the epoxy store in his red truck, Chuck, seeing some discarded clothing in a mud puddle, brakes suddenly, swerves to the side of the road, and grabs the discarded pullover and fleece. The car behind, belonging to the guy with the kayak, slams on his brakes to avoid hitting Chuck.

The rapid de-acceleration causes the cheap rope holding the boat to break, allowing the kayak to careen off the roof rack into the back of Chuck's truck, breaking the rear window. The owner of the boat, fearing a lawsuit, abandons his boat (sprayskirt and rope still attached), and flees in the opposite direction. He never will cross the river or be seen or heard from again.

Chuck then calls in a claim for the broken window to his insurance company, cashes the check for \$600, duct-tapes the window, and continues on his way to the river with his new boat, skirt, kevlar scraps and epoxy. The boat is then used as a mold and three copies are produced and traded: one to a couple of boaters from Ohio (each thinking they have sole ownership), the other two on e-bay. This trade nets an E-Z, a Micro, a Warpath, 4 race Boats, a Wave Hopper, a squirt Boat, a Phat, an open canoe, a catamaran, two helmets, six spray skirts, two life vests, two

paddles, a dry suit, a pair of booties and a six pack of Stoneys beer.

On the way to the river with all his gear, Chuck sees the woman studying her new map and offers directions. The woman follows Chuck's directions, not realizing they are given by a dyslexic lefty. As a consequence she zings when she should have zanged, gets hopelessly lost, and has not been heard from since. She now roams with wolves in the hills of WV, living off discarded Macaroni and Cheese scraps somewhere near Albright.

His wheeling and dealing done, Chuck paddles back and forth across the raging river with his 10 kayaks, canoe, catamaran, accessories and the two remaining beers. Then he loads them all back onto his truck, drives home, unloads his gear, drinks another beer and falls asleep on the couch.

Just another day in the life of a boater!

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You Might Be a Boater If...

By Ambrose Tuscano

Boaters are a special breed of mankind, relentless in the pursuit of liquid entertainment. If any of the following seem oddly familiar to you, we recommend that you see a mental health specialist immediately—or just blow it off and head for the river.

- If the items on your roof rack cost more than what's below it...you might be a boater.
- If the passages in your ears have fused together from repeated submersion in frigid water...you might be a boater.
- If you've ever lost a job and a spouse in the same day just because it rained two inches overnight...you might be a boater.
- If you don't own a piece of polypropylene that could pass a nuclear radiation test...you might be a boater.
- If your neighbor's jealous because your plastic "lawn ornaments" are way bigger than his...you might be a boater (but you **definitely** live in West Virginia).
- If the bed of your pick-up has been slept in more than the one in your house...you might be a boater.
- If you call the river gauges more often than you call your mother...you might be a boater.
- If your cure for a hangover is dropping over a waterfall...you might be a boater.
- If americanwhitewater.org is your computer's internet homepage...you might be a boater.
- If you tend to rate things—like your commute to work—on a scale of I through VI...you might be a boater.
- If drought conditions have ever made you seriously consider dynamiting a local dam...you might be a boater (editor's note: American Whitewater does not condone drought conditions).
- If you're better at predicting precipitation than fully trained meteorologists...you could be anybody—but you're probably a boater.



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