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May/June 2003

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Cover Matt Leidecker from his book **Impassable Canyon**



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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 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 1424 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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Forum by Tim Nickles

I'm sitting here in Jackson and it's piking graupel outside my motel window. It's the beginning of March and the spine of the Rockies has been getting killed for about a month now from Taos, NM up to Bridger Bowl, MT. The white stuff is piling up and my thoughts are currently set on flying through the air and snow in the Bridger-Teton National Forest above the Snake River Valley. Those are nice thoughts but not when you need to scramble up a forum for the readers of the American Whitewater journal you just took over.

Luckily, I've been getting slammed myself with some great articles and photos in my inbox and mailbox, making it easier for me to turn my thoughts to paddling. It's obvious to me there are a lot of you out there doing some amazing and interesting things, and lucky for the rest of us you are writing them up so we can share in your discoveries and successes. That's a great thing; writing takes time and so does photography, but the opportunity to tell your story is a rewarding one and worth the effort.

The last several weeks I've been reading through a stack of back issues of the journal with a new interest and thinking about how the heck I'm going to maintain the trend of obvious improvement in quality. Bob Gedekoh, Chris Koll (and their predecessors) have done a great job and deserve a ton of props and especially thanks. These guys were darn good writers too – funny, interesting, insightful. Those are things I hope someone will want to say about me someday, although I think it will take a while for me to get there.

The editorship! I was psyched when it all came together and Risa told me I was "hired" as the new editor of this journal. It seemed like an easy slam dunk and I secretly wondered if I had a big sticker on my forehead that said "sucker" and didn't know it. I mean, why would I take my already fun and busy life and cram a big,



Tim Nickles
Editor - American Whitewater

new, unpaid responsibility into it? I think the group of interviewers Risa assembled were maybe a little relieved to hear I had my own reasons to be excited about the opportunity.

During the past several years I've done a lot of writing both personally and professionally and I believe it's the direction I want to move in next. I see this editorship as a direct way to gain experience, learn about the field, and practice writing both in outdoor recreation and political/environmental activism – two of my favorite topics. Plus, I figure I'll meet a ton of boaters, get more out of the sport, and maybe even get to go on some cool trips (all in the name of promoting AW, of course).

I grew up in Fairbanks, AK in the Tanana Valley and never had any knowledge of conservation until I moved to the lower 48 for college. Life in Alaska is so much more tied to the land and weather, and the wilderness is just so big and encompassing that the idea of needing to conserve it just never entered my mind. I got my first taste of conservation and environmentalism studying Biology in Eugene, OR and it just got better (worse?) when I moved to Boulder. I believe strongly in the mission of AW and other similar organizations and feel it important to work in that vein with at least some of my time.

Three rivers flow through my hometown: the Chena, the Chatanika, and the Tanana. The Tanana is just a big, flat, silty mess but the Chena and Chatanika are cool little clear-running rivers that flow down out of

the hills north of Fairbanks. I grew up canoeing, swimming, and fishing these rivers and they are really where my love of moving water was born. My first multi-day was a 3-day raft trip in 1983 with a friend and his older brother down the Gulkana, which flows south out of Paxson Lake in the Alaska Range. We had quite an adventure on that trip after a grizzly popped our raft and ate most of our food the first night out. The whitewater world is still opening up to me and I'm excited to keep learning and paddling in new places.

Risa came out to my house in Boulder last month and we talked for hours about the journal, its editorship, and American Whitewater's mission and goals. I learned a lot and was left with the impression there is a huge network of people out there who care a lot about AW and what it does. That guy Newton said he could see far only because he stood on top of giants and I think this editorship is no different. There's a huge community that looks to the journal as a forum for their ideas, stories, and causes. In addition to that, the AW staff is super supportive both in contributing and soliciting material.

I want this journal to continue to be a place where members can read about other members' adventures and learn about everything the effective and fanatic staff gets done day after day, in watershed after watershed. I would also like to see this journal continue to be the voice of the paddling community – both private and professional. It should be a place where those with experience can share their opinions about the sport and the industry, or where people just discovering paddling can let others know how easy and fun it is to get started. A place where people who are working towards river conservation or access can share their causes and successes.

Maybe you'll find yourself in these pages in the months to come or maybe you'll have an idea or experience or cause you'd like to write about. I am totally into helping you out if you need it or inspiring you if you need the kick. Write me anytime at editor@amwhitewater.org with questions, comments, criticism, or just to give me grief for tearing around Jackson Hole all weekend with 100 NEW INCHES IN THE LAST WEEK! And yes, it's still coming down – I think it might just be a stellar boating season this spring in the Rockies.

You'd have a big head too...

Ken Whiting is recognized world wide as the leader in whitewater kayak instruction. In 2002 he won Paddler Magazine's award for 'Best Instructional' with the video 'Liquid Skills'. Ken now presents a new instructional video, 'Playboating', which is the sequel to his best-seller, Play Daze.

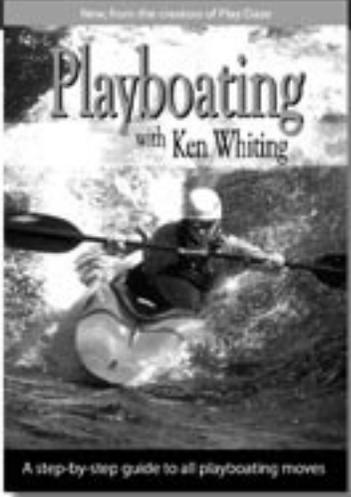
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Corner Charc by Risa Shimoda

Sometimes success wears an interim guise that is labeled a 'five' on a scale of 'one – ten.' We'll take it though, as it represents a sea change in our efforts of having made our message heard, by an organization that one of the country's major industrial controllers of river water.

We have advocated for a public resource, the Upper Ocoee, to run. It belongs to the public, and just a few months ago, the forecast of its drying up for good constituted an abandonment of the public trust.

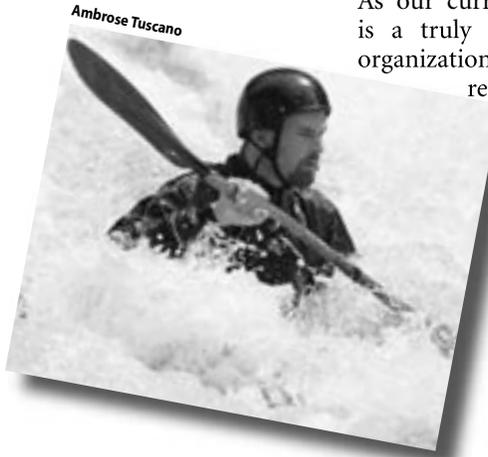
We are now planning to see the Tennessee Valley Authority restore flows to the Upper Ocoee River, and we have you to thank. You wrote letters, you made calls, and you sent emails to TVA representatives. You strengthened the message we stirred in May 2001, coordinating the voices of the Copper Basin Region – outfitters, the Chamber of Commerce and other representatives of the interest in economic development – at the Ocoee Symposium. Since then we have continued to indicate that we want to have this river available for the public, whose needs are likely to grow.

Now for what we want, ultimately: a full complement of releases that correspond to the level recommended by the Forest Service in 1996. Their recommendation would support the increased popularity of paddling on this river that is located just north of Atlanta and within a few hours of Knoxville, Chattanooga, Nashville, Asheville, Charlotte, Greenville and Columbia. This year several hundred thousand will visit the Middle and Upper Ocoee, and thanks to your recent and continued support, will know that they can plan to see the Upper Ocoee, with water through it, in the future.

Note: 'Charc' is a term coined by Jim Snyder, short for 'charging arc,' intended to reference one's line in relationship to the current and how both are addressed by your boat. The seeming contradiction and available discovery that one can in fact 'charge' an arc with intention to create movement, impact etc, in other than a simple linear fashion seems appropriate for the comments I'll be making as ED. I hope to both help us confirm that our work is consistent with our mission, and continue to shake up what risks getting stuck to the status quo....rs



Risa Shimoda
Executive Director - American Whitewater



Ambrose Tuscano

Volunteer Salute

Who says sage direction and thoughtful advice comes only from the minds and hearts of those whose age is greater than their waist size?

American Whitewater has been extremely fortunate to have had the talent and energy of a terrific Interim Editor, Ambrose Tuscano in the preparation of the January/February and March/April 2003 issues of American Whitewater. As he goes off this Spring into the wild to pursue his professional passion as a field biologist, Ambrose will continue to contribute (we hope!) as an author and look back at his stint without excess remorse. As our current and past editors will attest, editorship is a truly exercise in juggling technical application, organization of materials, and aesthetic 'gut checking' regarding articles' appeal to our audience. Then there's the sweet talkin' that's required to make everything come together. Ambrose has pulled it off with unusual grace, and we have really appreciated it.

**Thanks Ambrose,
for the great assistance.
Don't paddle too far away.**

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Access

by Jason Robertson, Access Director

Whitewater Posts Stellar Growth in 2002

American Whitewater has recently reviewed the latest paddlesports participation and market studies. You may not find it surprising that whitewater recreation was America's second fastest growing outdoor recreational activity in 2002 according to a market survey by the Outdoor Industry Association (OIA). However, it is surprising that young Americans, ages 16-25, showed more new interest in kayaking than any other sport in 2002 with a 60% increase in participation over 2001, and that the percentage of women kayakers has grown from 33% to 40% of enthusiasts since 1996. Overall, 49.6 million, nearly a quarter, of all Americans over the age of 16 participated in a paddlesports activity in 2002 and about a fifth of these participated in a paddlesports activity at least 7 times, thereby meeting the

definition of an "enthusiast". The number of kayaking enthusiasts increased by 100% in 2001 from 2000, and the number of canoeing enthusiasts increased by 61.5%. Overall kayaking participation increased 37% between 2000 and 2001, canoeing participation increased 33%, and rafting participation increased 26% despite poor flow conditions throughout the nation. Whitewater recreation participation has grown steadily for 25 years since the large scale production of plastic boats began in earnest in the late 1980's.

For more information about American Whitewater's Report on The Economic Benefits of Whitewater (2003), contact Access Director Jason Robertson.



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ACCESS continued
 by Jason Robertson,
 Access Director

Dam Security Continues to Threaten Access

In 2002 AW began processing nearly a dozen reports of river access closures both up and downstream of dams, drinking water diversion structures, and hydropower facilities in the wake of 9/11. The rate of closures was so great that in 2002 we identified this as a Top 10 issue threatening recreational use and enjoyment of America's whitewater.

The problem is that many rivers have been closed or threatened with closure by officials citing undefined "security" concerns, yet a realistic appraisal of these closures reveals that few have actually increased public safety. They have been far too successful, however, in limiting public recreation opportunities. Notably, there is no evidence that recreational whitewater access downstream of America's dams poses a security risk.

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In March 2003, AW wrote to Homeland Security Director Ridge asking for his staff's personal attention on this matter. In our letter, AW asked that the objectives of these river access closures be defined, and the security concerns be examined upfront to determine whether the closures really help with America's security needs and are truly in the public's interest. Further, AW offered to meet and work with the Office of Homeland Security to help develop access solutions and protocols that simultaneously balance both identified security concerns and protect existing public access, privileges, traditions, and freedom of use on America's rivers.

A partial list of closures and boater restrictions made in the wake of 9/11 includes:

- **Mongaup River, NY** is closed below Rio Dam though new access rules are under consideration.
- **Sultan River, WA** is closed below Spada Lake.
- **New River, VA** was threatened with closure through the Radford Army Munitions Plant. New rules that AW advocated for allow continued opportunities for fishing and boating access.
- **Ausable River, NY** is threatened with closure.
- **South Fork of the Flathead, MT** is closed below Hungry Horse Dam.
- **Lower Blue River, CO** below Green Mountain Reservoir was closed but re-opened in July following pressure from AW volunteers. The success of the AW volunteers in convincing the Bureau of Reclamation to re-open the Blue River provides a model for future cooperation and action between the public and dam managers.
- **Connecticut** Statewide boater registration requirements proposed, temporarily blocked in .
- **Green River, WA** is closed for the first mile of the Headworks run to create a security buffer for the new water treatment plant.

As AW argued in our previous article on the subject, it is our civic responsibility to rise and support both our war efforts and the way of life we had before 9/11. We are fighting a war to protect our security, freedom, public services, and a way of life that we value. Whenever we sacrifice any of those freedoms, then in the words of President Bush "We are letting the terrorists win." That is not an acceptable outcome.

AW Helps FY04 Recreation Budget

For the fourth winter in a row, I'm sitting inside watching snow falling through the window, and I'm trying to find a copy of the final budget that Congress passed for the USGS. I've placed a dozen calls, and searched on the Internet; but the information I need about streamgauge funding is simply not available... yet.

It's February 2003, the federal budget for fiscal year 2003 (FY03) has not been voted on by Congress or signed by the President, nevertheless I have to finalize my chapters on the USGS and hydropower relicensing for the human-powered recreation organization's annual recommendations to Congress. Intern Ryan Kellems and I worked on the first draft of these chapters back in October, but without the FY03 numbers we could only be so accurate about the funding history and had to resort to general comments about the overall funding needs for FY04.

The chapters are written by American Whitewater, the American Hiking Society, and other groups who share our interest in conservation and human powered recreation. Our recommendations are based on our "insider's" analysis of the commercial and public recreation opportunities in our cities, open spaces, mountains, forests, and waterways and the overall level of funding required by the federal land management agencies.

It is our observation that outdoor recreation embodies the American ideals of freedom and the opportunity for self-improvement limited only by one's desire. We, the human powered recreation community, add only that this cherished opportunity has become limited for many Americans by the loss, decline in condition,

or lack of safe and enjoyable places and facilities in which to recreate. These limiting factors result from both reduced and flat-funding of the agencies' recreation programs, which fail to adequately account for inflationary pressures, increases in demand, or infrastructure maintenance.

However, what is new for 2004 is that President Bush's policies pertaining to civic redevelopment, concern for obesity among our citizenry, dedication to volunteerism, public investment in government, and support of the Rivers and Trails program (RTCA) with a proposed \$1.5M increase, provides leadership and direction with modest funding increases for the land management agencies that support recreation.

The Wave that No One Knew

Let me tell you where there is a play spot that makes Rock Island look lame. It's on the Keowee River just upstream of Hwy 183 in upstate SC. It's controlled by Duke Power, and the hole is just downstream of where the water comes out of the dam. One day I was driving home and noticed they were finally releasing water from the Dam. So I went home and got my boat, then came back. It was amazing! The water was warm and clear, and the play hole had a huge eddy running back into it. This hole was perfect. It was about 7 boats wide, with a long green face, and a 4-foot foam pile with nice corners. But, there was one big problem.

While I was out there playing I heard someone yelling at me from the bank. I turned to look and saw two heavily armed Duke Power musclemen. They were yelling at me to "get the hell off the water and away from the dam." I ferried over to them and got out of my boat where we were joined by two more guards on the bank. We walked back to my truck where there was yet another pair of guards at my truck running my tags. After scaring me and sending my license and ID information they gave me a warning and let me go.

Someone please let me know if you have any info on how to get this thing running. I have called Duke Power and talked with them but with no luck....

-Wade (Whspin) from a posting on boatertalk.com

ACCESS continued

by Jason Robertson, Access Director

Thus, as the snow rises to two feet, I write the cover letter for our document, and recommend, “a fiscally-responsible, thorough, and effective effort through FY04 appropriations to address this challenge through modest increases for most land management agencies. Thus we encourage a disciplined, multi-year approach to providing and preserving outdoor recreation opportunities.” The well-being of the American people deserves no less.

Now, if I can just find the FY03 budget for the USGS, I can finish my report and go play in the snow.

An electronic copy of the FY04 Recreation and Conservation Funding Request is available online at www.AmericanWhitewater.org; search the site for “FY04”.

States Propose Tidal Wave of Canoe and Kayak Registrations

By Jason Robertson Access Director & John Gangemi Conservation Director

You can always tell a canoer or kayaker from Ohio. That’s because they have been required to register their craft, pay a fee, and place big numbers on the side of their boats ever since the Ohio legislature figured out a way to “cheat” on their federal taxes and get more money from the federal government. The Ohio legislature figured that if they required all canoes, kayaks, and rafts to be registered along with motorboats as recreational watercraft, they would be eligible for more Wallop-Breaux and other federal transportation funding.

The Wallop-Breaux fund was established in 1984 and grew out of the Sport Fish Recreation Program of 1950. The fund is supported by fees and taxes on the sale of recreational fishing tackle and non-commercial motorboat fuel. The revenues are reallocated to the States, on a formula basis, to protect natural resources and enhance recreational fishing and boating

opportunities for millions of Americans. Since its inception, more than \$2 billion has been collected and allocated to the States. While thousands of fish and boat access points have been developed with the use of these funds, the sites are typically designed to benefit recreational motorboat owners, rather than paddlesports enthusiasts. Doug Alcorn of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service wrote in the American Fisheries Society’s journal, “Higher rates of fishing and boating participation mean more license sales as well and Wallop-Breaux funds that support state resource management programs...” Joe Janisch, president of the (AFS) Fisheries Administrators Section and chief of fisheries for the Arizona Department of Fish and Game, concurs, “...As biologists or administrators there is only so much we can do without customer support. Marketing to maintain or increase a recreational market share is where our power base lies. If we don’t have the public (anglers and boaters) on our side, seeing the issues from our point of view, they will be on the other side asking us why.”

Ohio is one of only seven states that currently require canoe and kayak owners to register or pay special taxes on their boats. The other states are Alaska, Illinois, Oklahoma, Iowa, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania. Arizona repealed their registration requirements in 2000 due in part to high administration costs and an ineffective ability to return services to the public.

However, in 2003, the number of states requiring new boater registrations could double! Connecticut, Oregon, Washington, and Montana are all considering new registration requirements and Alaska’s legislature is considering substantive changes to their existing state laws.

The arguments against forcing the public to register their canoes and kayaks are numerous. The simplest argument is that taxes and registration requirements are unpopular. However, there are many

more serious and logical reasons for NOT requiring boaters to register.

Registration fees are rarely used to benefit the paddlesports public. Typical boater registration legislation fails to establish a revenue mechanism for a non-existent program lacking a management plan and associated annual budget. Fees tend to be diverted for use at motor-boat launch sites, to fish and wildlife programs benefiting fishermen, or are returned to the state general fund.

Registration programs are not cost effective. Most or all revenue generated is consumed by the cost of administration and what little remains is consumed by enforcement. Arizona finally dropped

States with Canoe & Kayak Registration Requirements

- Alaska** - Requires registration of all paddlecraft
- Arizona** - Registration requirements repealed in 2000 due to lack of funding, high cost of administration, and ineffective ability to return services to the paddlesports community at a level corresponding to the fees.
- Illinois** - Requires registration of all paddlecraft
- Ohio** - Requires registration of all paddlecraft.
- Oklahoma** - Requires registration of all paddlecraft
- Iowa** - Requires registration of all paddlecraft
- Minnesota** - Requires registration of all paddlecraft
- Pennsylvania** - Requires registration of all paddlecraft using Fish & Boat Commission access points.

States Proposing NEW Registration Requirements

- Alaska
- Connecticut
- Oregon
- Washington
- Montana

boater registration requirements in 2000 after years of operating in the red.

Regulators rarely know who will be impacted. Regulators should not consider a registration requirement without first obtaining a realistic estimate of the number of human powered watercraft meeting the bill's definition.

Regulators rarely know how much will be generated. Without realistic participation estimates, there can be no clear estimate of the revenue potentially generated.

Heavily developed public access and boat ramps are not typically desired. Most whitewater boating occurs in areas where the concept of public boating areas is unnecessary and obtrusive (the many creeks, trailheads, road crossings, pullouts, etc). Simply put, most boaters would rarely benefit from their registration expenditure nor would they want heavy development along the river corridor.

Access typically exists where Wallop-Breaux funds would be used. Typically, the rivers that receive heavy use already have access areas or are located in state or federal parks or forests where access fees are already being charged.

Permanent registration numbers are difficult to apply without damage to the craft and reduce resale values. The large coast-guard approved registration decals do not remain attached to kayak hulls very long because the boats are subject to heavy abrasion from rocks, trees and other objects found on rivers and streams. Further, the use of more permanent identification markings reduces the resale values of boats.

Fees tend to be more punitive for canoe and kayak owners than motorboat owners. Whitewater boaters typically own more than a single canoe, kayak, or raft. As a result, they pay a disproportionate share of boating fees as compared to the

owner of a single, much more expensive powerboat. There is also a high rate of turnover of whitewater boats that make it difficult for both the owners and the administering agency to keep up with registration paperwork.

Registration laws increase the operating costs for organizations. Thus the overhead increases for church and civic organizations, university programs, tour operators, commercial angling outfitters and whitewater outfitters, which might chill participation in the sport and the market.

Registration requirements deter tourism. Since only a small handful of states require the registration and numbering of canoes, kayaks and rafts it creates an inconvenience and added cost for paddlers visiting a state with registration requirements. This discourages paddlers from coming to the

state spending money for campgrounds, motels, food and gas eventually causing a decrease in tourism revenues and thereby negatively impacting the state economy.

Registration does not increase or improve paddlesports safety. For instance in Connecticut, a bill was introduced in 2003 under the premise that it would improve safety; however, a study by the American Canoe Association found that the number of paddlesports fatalities in Connecticut has averaged 1.6 over the past 6 years. A registration requirement will not reduce the number of fatalities below 1.6 from the entire population of the state. Further, in a 1998 study, American Whitewater found that there were less than 2 fatalities per 100,000 participants. Again, registration will not reduce that rate since it is below the threshold for legislative efficacy and response.

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What Are You Doing This Winter?

What should you look for to identify whether a registration bill is in the public interest?

If your state legislators are considering a proposal to require canoe and kayak registrations, you should read the proposed language and determine whether it includes the following elements, if it does not, then the bill is not likely to be in your best interests.

1. A budget dedicating the specific allocation of funds (with percentages) to natural resource protection and non-motorized river recreation programs including safety, education, acquisition, development, and maintenance of river access sites for paddlecraft.
2. The establishment of a single agency with clear jurisdiction for managing river recreation throughout the state and the development with public participation of a comprehensive river recreation plan to manage use and funding needs.
3. The recipient agency for the registration fees must have staff with expertise in whitewater education, safety, and rescue.
4. In the development of potential government regulations, a management plan should be developed first to resolve user conflicts and protect natural resources, and only after the plan is complete should the revenue mechanism be designed and tailored to meet the plan to benefit the user groups being managed.
5. A realistic estimate of the number of human powered watercraft meeting the bill's definition. Without this information, there can be no clear estimate of the revenue potentially generated or impact to the state's residents.
6. A realistic estimate of the impact to the state's economy from negative impacts to tourism.

Whenever a bill is being considered that would require canoe and kayak registrations, AW is deluged by phone calls and email asking how to fight the legislation. Here are our recommendations based on our experiences.

1. Forward an action alert to every boater you know (residents and non-residents); contact American Whitewater and the American Canoe Association.
2. Send a letter expressing your objections and concerns to every member of the State House and Senate transportation committee and the committee where the bill is introduced indicating opposition and reasons. Call the Majority and Minority leaders and Committee Chairs.
3. Send a letter expressing your objections and concerns to the State Tourism Director.
4. Call the media and write a letter to the editor of your paper explaining the negatives.
5. Non-residents should inform Legislators that this registration fee would change your travel plans to the state, that you have other choices, and that the state will lose your tourist dollars
6. Express that this type of legislation should be the result of collaboration between paddling community and boating registration agencies. The legislation should not be drafted behind closed doors by a special interest lobby (such as motorboat owners) without participation by the paddling community.
7. Express that this legislation will hurt the relationship between state boating coordinators and the public.
8. Encourage the legislators to evaluate the potential first, and only then consider action.
9. Express that registration requirements do not improve safety, since the fatality rate is super low, and will not be affected no matter how well intentioned the legislation.
10. Dave Jenkins of the American Canoe Association (ACA) is a participating member of the Titling and Numbering committee of the National State Boating Law Admin (NSBLA). Jenkins has found that making an analogy to bicycling is an effective argument. Under this analogy, Dave asks "why should paddlesports such as canoeing and kayaking be treated any differently from bicycling?" The states put hundreds of thousands in bike trails, but they do not require them to be registered like cars because bicycling is viewed as a public good since it encourages health, is non-polluting, and reduces traffic congestion. Boating should be treated similarly, since it too benefits the environment compared to motor boating, reduces congestion on lakes, and contributes to public health.



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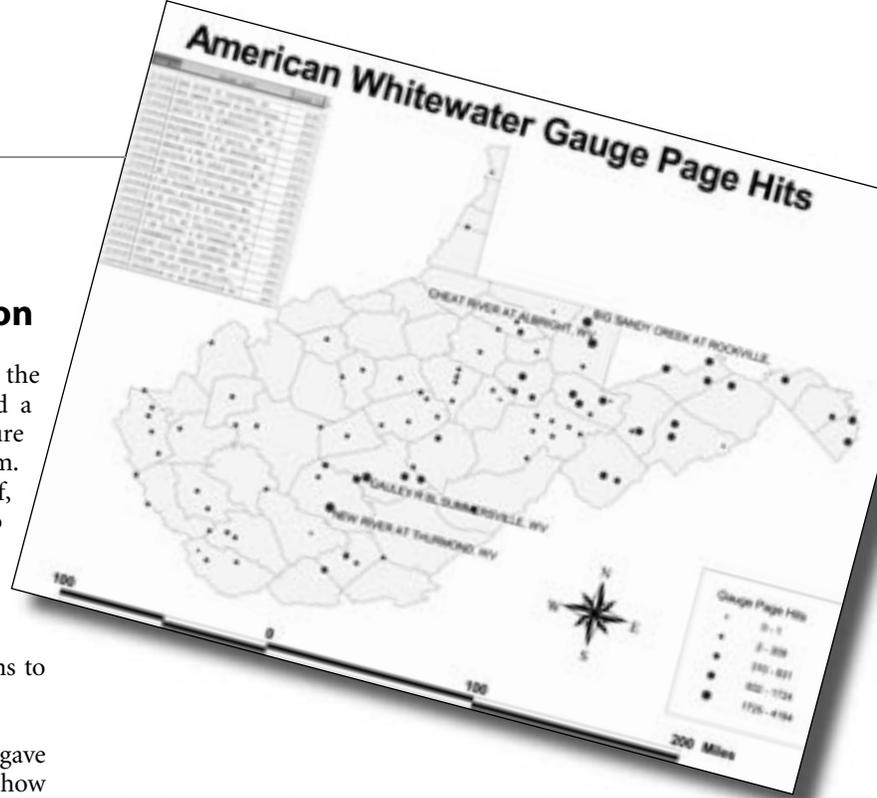
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AmericanWhitewater.org Data Helps USGS Protect Streamgages for Recreation

Do you recall hearing about the snowstorm that shut down the federal government in February? I was supposed to attend a meeting in Charlestown, West Virginia to discuss the future of streamgaging in the state during the midst of that storm. Unfortunately, many of the participants, including myself, were snowed in. Liz Garland, a long-time AW volunteer who now works for the West Virginia Rivers Coalition reported that the meeting was a success as it established an on-going and diverse need for streamgages even though so few people attended and that many of those were tired from working for emergency agencies monitoring snow and flow conditions to warn against floods.

Another positive outcome for American Whitewater is that it gave AW's website guru, Scott Collins, the opportunity to show how our members and the boating public use our website to track river flows. As shown in the attachment, Scott was able to generate maps showing the gauges in the state that were most useful for whitewater recreation. He is now working on a similar map to help AW make an argument for protecting these gages from budget cuts



in the future. Notably, in the past 6 months, the WV River Index page (<http://www.americanwhitewater.org/rivers/state/WV/>) received 74,000 visits and the WV River Gauge Index page (<http://www.americanwhitewater.org/gauges/state/WV/>) got 24,000 visits.

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Focus: Western Rivers and Inflatables

Our story continues after the heroes successfully complete an impromptu run on Montana's Big Timber Creek. After less than a week in the west, Gordon, Josh and Harris — along with a couple of locals — have dropped some serious gradient, and this roadtrip is just getting started....

Montana: Part 2

By Gordon Dalton

Day Six: 6

The next morning the level had really dropped out on Big Timber. Knowing the flow would return to Big Timber soon (this thing runs a lot!) we weren't too disappointed to be, once again, "shopping" for a creek to run.

We settled on the Woodbine section of the Stillwater River, near Absarokee, Montana. The Woodbine section was a relatively mellow day for us, a hefty drop right at the put-in was a nice wake-up call but after that the highlights of the day were some excellent Rocky Mountain vistas and chilling out socializing on some nice sandy riverside beaches. After the Woodbine run, Harris and Josh decide to hit East Rosebud Creek; a low-angle but utterly continuous little ripsnorter flowing out of the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness.

East Rosebud flows through the old charred remains of what must have been an awe-inspiring wildfire. The burn happened years ago and in the spring the sunlight streaming through the newly-opened forest canopy creates a crazy profusion of wildflowers that carpet the valley for as far as the eye can see. The scene of wildflowers and super-steep mountains unfolding from around a continuously white and frothy Class IV-V creek is spectacular. The wildlife total for the day includes: 4 elk, 1 moose, a family of 2 foxes and their 3 kits, a load of mule deer, a pheasant and a grouse. By dusk we



Josh Sandage below Mesa Falls
photo by Gordon Dalton

are camped back in northern Wyoming in an amazing ridgetop meadow in the National Forest overlooking the Clark Fork of the Yellowstone River. After dark we are serenaded by coyotes from somewhere upstream.

The next day we are up early and at the put-in for the "Upper" and "Honeymooner" sections of the Clark Fork of the Yellowstone. We have a relatively leisurely day enjoying the warm sun and cold water of this medium-volume, Class V creek, where all the major rapids are named for characters in the 1950's comedy series, The Honeymooners. "Bang, Zoom, Straight to the Moon!" Todd is the only one to attempt "Adrenaline" a long, powerful Class V with sieves bracketing the final ledge. Todd makes it despite obviously having his hands full with a couple of nasty hydraulics near the bottom. He had a fine line but the rest of The Crew elects to take the land line along the left bank. We take out at the put-in for the legendary Box Canyon of the Clark Fork, trodding quietly through an area notorious for its grizzlies. Old, sun-bleached cattle bones carpet the meadow around our take-out vehicles.

8 Day Eight

Ready to get back in the serious creeking mode, The Crew finds itself headed south again, back into the Bighorns. Tensleep Canyon has been one of our objectives since before the trip began. On our first day in the Bighorns Tensleep had been way too high, but a cold front had moved in and slowed the melt enough for Tensleep to return to levels suitable for us mortals. The Virginia boys, fired up by Dan's description of this ancient limestone canyon and its nonstop, technical boulder gardens – and the possibility of a first descent – eagerly agree to backtrack to this Wyoming wonderland. It was a good move. Before we even reach the gage, we know the level is right. The occasional distant glimpse of the creek from the road foreshadowed the experience yet to come: Tensleep drops 400 feet-per-mile without a single drop over 6 feet! Add 400 cfs of cold water, the occasional fallen log and Tensleep's continuous boulder gardens come to life in a big way. Tensleep is an ancient place name for the number of day's travel (the number of "sleeps") between two Indian villages, but for us there would be no rest until we reached the take-out.

The section of Tensleep from Highway 16 bridge down is 5 ½ miles, three miles of this have gradients of 415-430 fpm. This section had been run at least once before. We headed farther up the road to near the confluence of East and West Tensleep Creeks. This would be the first run on this "upper" section of Tensleep. Despite the "unknown factor" we found ourselves working flawlessly as a group; moving quickly but carefully, maintaining good "eddy discipline" so as not to crowd each other, and switching up the lead probe position. Smoothly and with few words we cruised the wood and rock lined steepness down to the bridge. The level was perfect so we continued down the rest of 5 miles to a Forest Service campground near the bottom of the canyon. As we dropped the lower section the rock changed noticeably to predominantly calcium carbonate laden limestone – serious undercut potential and very rough on kayak plastic (and human skin). We walked one area where the entire creek disappeared under two house-sized boulders but otherwise only carried around one or two fallen trees. Later we patronized a great biker bar in the town of Tensleep. The wizened, red-haired lady behind the bar politely watched our video footage but was clearly NOT impressed; a great day nevertheless.

We were sad to have to disband The Crew but we knew we'd be back together on a creek soon enough. Dan and Todd had used up their vacation time and headed east to Spearfish, Harris took off to meet

up with his family who were spending their vacation nearby in Wyoming. As Harris drove away his last words to Josh and I were, "Now it's time for you guys to take it up a notch right?" We laughed; Josh and me were ready for a few "relaxing" and less-exciting creeks and Harris knew it. It had been a long week but we had no idea our excitement was indeed about to "go up a notch."

The next day was a rest-and-repair day that found Josh and me doing laundry, scamming a shower, and shopping for more duct tape and a heat gun (Josh's micro had also succumbed to the ceaseless boulder-bashing of daily steep creek runs). After doing our best plastic welding jobs on both boats we headed back toward East Rosebud. Only Harris and Josh had enough energy left to run East Rosebud the last time and I had been regretting missing the run for a few days. We decided this would be a nice mellow run and hey, Josh already knew the lines.

10 Day Ten

The drops on East Rosebud are all named from the movie, "The Princess Bride." Rodents of Unusual Size, Inigo Montoya and Cliffs Of Insanity are some of the main ones. Even though this run is entirely continuous ("you keep using that word, perhaps it does not mean what you think it means") we only slightly raised an eyebrow when we crossed the first bridge and realized the flow of the creek had almost doubled since we had left. The clear mountain snowmelt water belied the near-floodstage flow. By the end of the run our eyes were fully open. I have never paddled a creek and felt so winded at the end – as if I'd paddled some floodstage big water torrent. But this was a small mountain creek! Looks can be deceiving, East Rosebud this day was 3.5 miles of constant motion. Our leisurely day had turned into hand-to-hand combat. Near the end of the run we pulled over to relax for a second. Suddenly Josh volunteered to jog back up the road to get the truck. You know, since we were close to the end and all. After the run we found a nice campsite, cooked dinner, and crashed.

11 Day Eleven

The next day the Boulder River was the target. It sounded like a fun, but not a big deal run. "Just the thing to help us relax right?" The name of the section we planned to run should have been a tip-off that this was not to be: HELL'S CANYON.

On our way to the Boulder we got a call on my cell phone from Jeremy Laucks, a fellow Virginia boater who was in Idaho working a geology project.

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Focus: Western Rivers and Inflatables

Montana Part 2 continued

Epidemic of State Kayak Registration Bills

Reading the two part series "Montana Melt-down" might just spark your interest in a paddling trip to Big Sky Country but you better come prepared to spend some of your cash registering your kayaks if the Montana Legislature has their way. Yes, the legislature's registration proposal will douse that spark of interest quicker than you can get out the road atlas. The state Legislature is considering a bill that would require owners of non-motorized watercraft to register each boat with a permanent decal. Decals cost \$5.

American Whitewater has worked hard to kill this legislation in its present form. American Whitewater's Conservation Director, John Gangemi, presented testimony in opposition to the bill at Senate hearings. This testimony and arguments against this legislation can be viewed on American Whitewater's website www.americanwhitewater.org/archive/article/738/.

American Whitewater opposes this legislation because it unfairly discriminates against individuals that own non-motorized boats. The bill is intended to generate revenue for acquisition and maintenance of state public access sites by charging a registration fee for non-motorized boats. These public access sites are used equally by land-based recreation users who use the sites without charge. Accordingly, these users should also contribute to the acquisition and maintenance of public access sites.

Similar legislation was proposed for Connecticut but was successfully defeated as a result of strong and constructive opposition by local boaters www.americanwhitewater.org/archive/article/723/. Washington is also considering boat registration legislation reports Tom O'Keefe. According to Tom's report one of Washington's primary incentives is the increased revenue from federal gas tax money that is proportional to the number of boats registered. Clearly the language for disbursement of federal gas tax money needs to be amended to exclude non-motorized boats from the revenue source.

"What are you guys up to?" Jeremy's voiced crackled over the cell phone static.

"Josh and I are in southern Montana, heading to the Boulder." I replied, enunciating so he could hear me over the static.

"Cool. I'm in Idaho. I'll be there in 8 hours!"

"The more the merrier, see you there."

We would have to wait awhile for Jeremy to make it, but at least we'd have two shuttle vehicles and another good boater in our party.

As we waited for Jeremy at the Boulder take-out we dried gear and enjoyed some down time in what had already been a whirlwind of high-altitude activity and excitement for over a week. As we sat around in my truck watching the stinky polypro dry a blue Dodge SUV pulled up with a trailer full of kayaks and gear. Out stepped an attractive blonde young lady already suited up to kayak. Then another, younger, girl stepped out too. Then another girl. Then another...and another. Then another one, until there were 8 or 9 boater ladies decked out in dry tops, PFD's, and helmets. Jeremy and Hell's Canyon were lost from memory as we watched the all-girl crew putting-in for a play run downstream. For a second, Jeremy almost got totally ditched. It was about that time that we noticed the river had gotten a little darker in color and some of the rocks that HAD been exposed were now covered with water. Hmmm...

By the time Jeremy showed up at 4:30 the river had definitely risen and was now downright muddy. We were joined by a guy named Mark who pulled up in a jeep with Pennsylvania plates (the east coast was definitely in the house). We headed for the put-in.

The first bit of Hell's Canyon is flatwater but it was moving fast and milky, allowing us to reach the first whitewater in minutes. Knowing the first drop was a "mandatory portage" and "unrunnable" I was cautious as I led the group through a small riffle and toward the horizon line ahead. We caught a large eddy on the left but still could see very little of the drop. I peeled out and ferried across the whole river to an eddy near the lip of the drop and got out to look. Before I was all the way out of the boat I knew this was our portage. 6000 cfs of brown, silty meltwater dropped away over a series of giant boulders, a 20-foot waterfall, and a

dozen terminal holes, then swept furiously around the corner into a frothy, log-choked mess. And that was just the entrance.

I looked at Josh, Jeremy and Mark across the river, smiled and shook my head. I signalled that this was definitely our carry. With hand signals, Jeremy asked if he should ferry over. I signalled the "iffy-ness" of the ferry and eddy that I had caught. I swept my arm in an arc upstream and back to my side of the river, then shrugged with eyes wide, indicating that going back up river and ferrying there would be less sketchy.

Few boaters like to walk. That's why I had eddy-hopped so close to this monster drop, trying to avoid getting out of my boat until I really had to. Seeing it from shore I knew that move had been a poor decision and I wanted the others to get out, carry up, and ferry from farther upriver. They had not seen the drop from shore like I had. Apparently the guys were as lazy as me, and wanted to postpone getting out for as long as possible, because Jeremy peeled out.

Knowing Jeremy was a good boater I was only moderately concerned that he would make the eddy, but I stood ready nevertheless. As he neared the eddy line, Jeremy's Huka hit a small sleeper rock hidden by the muddy water. The boat jerked downstream but a quick flick of the wrist by Jeremy brought him back under control and into the eddy. Jeremy got out of his boat and got ready to start carrying. I got out the camera to take a picture of the big drop. Josh peeled out.

What happened over the next few minutes was one of maybe a half-dozen super-scary river events I have experienced in my ten years of kayaking - and it is all burned slow-motion into my memory: Josh made a smooth, flawless ferry across the thick flow of current and was about to whip into the eddy as I raised my camera to take a picture. As he slashed into the eddy he hit the same small, invisible rock that had made Jeremy jiggle. But this time, as I watched in horror through the viewfinder of the camera, Josh was instantly flipped over in the fast water leading into the gnarr. I tripped the shutter at the instant he was halfway over. The fuzzy, fogged-up photo that I later got back from the developer shows Josh's body at a near 45-degree angle, paddle out for a brace that never took.

Standing next to Jeremy, trying not to believe what I was watching, I saw Josh's overturned boat disappear over the horizon

line and into oblivion. "Shit." I mentioned to myself. My voice sounded disembodied as I reached for the throwbag around my waist and started sprinting downstream. "Go!" I yelled at Jeremy even though he was already in motion too. "Go, go, go, go!" Racing down the shoreline we came to the edge of a large boulder and, without breaking pace, leapt into the air dropping 8 feet into copse of small pines. Landing hard and pushing through the trees, I looked to the river as we ran along it. No sign of Josh; only massive, scary whitewater. A huge tree, rubbed smooth as glass by the river, jutted out of a giant boulder sieve.

We pressed on at a flat out run downstream and saw another 20-foot vertical waterfall dropping into a gnarly floodstage-hydraulic. Then I noticed Josh's boat bobbing serenely on the river-right dwarfed by the thick flow of water behind it. The boat was upright... and Josh was in it, holding on to the bank looking up at the falls.

Josh would later tell me that after he flipped and rolled up he simply concentrated on keeping the boat upright and pointed downstream. Working near the middle of the rapid to avoid any sieves that might be along the edges (in reality there were sieves everywhere, but Josh hadn't seen any of that yet), Josh managed to run at least one hundred yards of the unrunnable rapid. In the process he also managed to, somehow, work himself from the river-left portage eddy across 6,000 cfs of unrunnable mank to the far river-right bank. And run a seriously sick floodstage waterfall in the process. Flying blind, Josh had somehow escaped the terminal hole at the bottom of the falls.

We all walked the remaining distance to the bottom of the heinous falls – Josh on the right side of the river and the rest of us on the left. Hoping we'd had our full



Josh Sandage - Mesa Falls
photo by Jeremy Laucks

allotment of terror for the day we set off down the rest of the run. We immediately entered into a long big-water sequence that did not let up for 2 miles. The Boulder near the end of this section drops 188 fpm (compared to the Upper Gauley at 48 fpm), and our flow was a rising 6,000 cfs. The only eddies we could catch were the occasional small pocket of slower water near shore where we cold clutch at a root or rock to keep from being swept away. But staying near shore was impossible, and usually downright dangerous – fallen trees and revolting hydraulics lined the bank in most places. Soon I watched Mark as he was swept out of a bank eddy into a strainer – an entire 40 foot pine tree that had fallen into the river, he made it under somehow without swimming.

Josh Sandage - Tensleep Creek
photo by Gordon Dalton



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Focus: Western Rivers and Inflatables

Montana Part 2 continued

At a bend in the river we all managed to eddy out on the left bank. Josh had had enough, he was in a short creeker and it was not responding well to the big water conditions. He began walking down the right bank, all of us hoping we'd hit calmer waters around each successive bend. Each time we rounded the corner to see only more big water.

Soon we were spread out again, I could not see Jeremy or Mark. I found myself in a cliffed out eddy along the riverbank above a huge horizon line; a keeper hole churned below. My only way out, short of a sheer cliff face climb on crumbly rock, was to run the hole. As I stared at the hole, Jeremy came by in a blur, too far out to catch the eddy, disappearing into the hole and reemerging 10 feet downstream still booking downriver. As I mentally prepared to go for the hole I wondered how Josh's walk was going. Lucky bastard. Then I realized he would be looking at the same cliffed-out situation as me. Would he be able to get around the cliffs on river right? Before Jeremy was out of sight an upside-down boat past my eddy. A flash of color closer to the middle of the river caught my attention. Josh! He had indeed been forced to get back on this crazy flooded creek by the cliffs on the right. One of the hellacious holes upstream had put him in the drink and now he was being flushed away. Now knowing I truly had no choice but to punch the hole below, I peeled out too and somehow came through the hydraulic. By the end of the day, we were out one boat and a paddle, and yet still felt like we'd gotten away with something – survival. Licking our wounds, we set out for a few of the area's

more sane runs; the "Quake Lake" section on the Madison River and a quickie West Gallatin lap.

Day Fourteen

Looking to rebuild confidence after the Hell's Canyon debacle, we decided what we really needed was some good old-fashioned park-and-plop. Located on the Henry's just over the border in Idaho, Mesa Falls is guaranteed to satisfy all of your hucking needs. A two-tiered, river-wide 50 to 65 foot vertical falls, Mesa was running at well over 1,200 cfs. Mesa is a handsome drop, and she has graced the celluloid of paddle porn like Nurpu, No Big Names, and other good flicks. We took turns launching off the two curtains. Josh shamed us all by firing a freewheel off of the 35-foot second tier – in my old, cracked Micro! We felt refreshed; Going Big is Fun!

Day Sixteen

Josh had ripped it up for two weeks, but his time to head home was fast approaching so we decided to revisit the best run of the trip: Big Timber. Josh had declined our earlier spur-of-the-moment Big T adventure, and Jeremy had not yet seen Big T either, so we hoped to have another shot at this classic creek. The level was higher than the first run, but still good – and the tree had shifted out of Shakedown. It was a warm, sunny day and this time we hiked up

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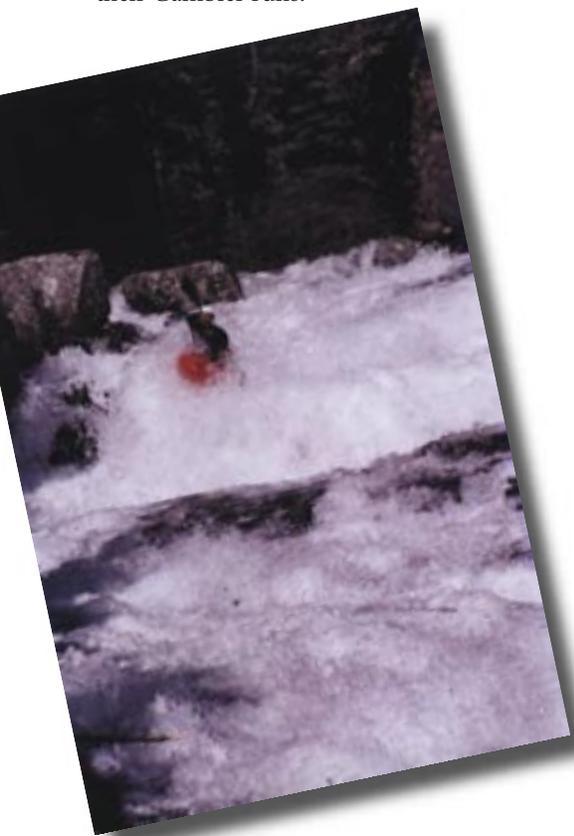
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past the Pinch and found even more slides and big, fun, clean rapids. I had an even bouncier ride through Pinch and it was every bit as exciting as the first. Jeremy had his first Pinch run and did a fine job as well.

Confident from my earlier easy treatment at The Gambler, I briefly told Jeremy and Josh about the supposedly-sticky hole at the bottom and peeled out to "show em how it's done." I hit the top ledge with a wide, flourishing boof slap and dropped into the slide, gliding through the hole at the bottom. Almost. As I blinked my eyes and started to look back at the drop I felt a tug on the stern of the boat - like a strong bungee cord had been locked onto the grabloop. I should have remembered that "know when to walk away/know when to run" part because before I could say "Embudo" my boat was sideways in the hole, rock walls locking me in on both sides like bookends. I had been dealt a losing hand in this game. I struggled hard to draw myself out of the hole, or ender out but no dice. Exhausted and still getting violently surfed, I watched over my shoulder for what seemed like ten minutes, as Josh scrambled across a slippery cliff to give me a hand. As he dangled a rope next to me I pulled skirt and jumped out of the boat. We had no trouble catching my boat - it stayed in the hole until Josh reached in and pulled it out. Ignoring my poor example, Josh and Jeremy both beat the odds on their Gambler runs.



With my swim out of the way I felt the time had come for me to run the falls. Big Timber Falls drops at least 60 or 70 feet in the distance of maybe 100 feet. The entrance is a fifteen-foot, steep sloper into a huge slide split into two channels by a massive slab of stone. At light speed the boater then must hang on as she careens toward a thirty foot vertical falls into a small pool. Liberated by my earlier swim I dropped into Big T Falls and was surprised at how much time I had on the slide - time spent holding on to my line as I rocketed toward the final lip. And then I was airborne, launched by the sweet boof nubbin at the bottom right. Jeremy and Josh followed with their own sweet lines off this amazing drop.

Shakedown was every bit as good as it had looked before, now that the tree was gone, and we all finished the run wide with the grins of three guys who know they've had TOO much fun.

Day Seventeen

Harris showed up today for one more day of western creeking before heading back east. Josh, Harris and Jeremy make a farewell Big Timber run and then it was time to hit the highway.

With Josh and Harris headed back to Virginia and Jeremy back at work in Idaho I found myself alone in Montana with a bunch of boats and some time to kill. Heading west to Idaho's Lochsa I finally got a chance to use the playboat I had carted out from Virginia. After a few more creek runs in Idaho and then Montana's Bitterroots, I will head home.

Day Twenty-Two

Wondering what I will do for the rest of the summer in the drought-ridden east I started missing the Rockies while they were still in my rearview mirror.

Somewhere in the state of Missouri I got a call from Wendy. Her voice sounded upbeat, "The Gauley is at 3,000 today. We're having fun over here. Where are you?" I looked through the bug-splattered windshield at the sun-baked plains around me. "I'm in Misery" I replied.

Wendy's response, "We can run the Gauley tomorrow if you make good time"

I pressed the gas pedal a little harder. 



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THE QUADRUPLE CROWN

By ZoneDogg

ZoneDogg Tip For Picking Up Women #352: Shove a tube sock down your pants. It lets the women know that you mean business.



Now, the ZoneDogg has always been a living legend on the east coast for his steep creek descents and dominance in the sport of rodeo but I've always known that there was more than the creeks of West Virginia. Since I'm always thinking of you, my fans, I decided you might be getting tired of articles about West Virginia. Let's face it, I've written about a gazillion articles on various West Virginia creeks. My goal here is not to beat a dead horse, why do that when you have a live one?

It was time for something new, somewhere far away from my stomping grounds. Yes, there comes a time in every man's life when he has to branch out and try new things, explore new frontiers, and at least temporarily leave the old behind. But enough about the women in my life... this article is about kayaking.

On June 3rd 2002, the ZoneDogg ventured out, much in the footsteps of Lewis and Clark, heading west of the Mississippi and into the great state of Colorado. It was a big event for Colorado since it was its first chance to go ONE ON ONE WITH THE GREAT ONE! One might even say it was a small step for the ZoneDogg and a BIG step for Colorado. In short, this was the biggest event in the history of man since the invention of curly fries.

The trip to Colorado worked out perfect because I had a few weeks of free time before starting my new job as Event Coordinator for an all female nudist colony. I was all set and it just so happened that Ian Devine and Andy Maser also had the summer off from school and were looking for a break from their usual routine of punching the clown. Things were falling together and we were ready to have a spectacular trip full of new adventures, SIK drops, and loose women. Besides, it was either take a trip out west or get lit and go jump off my roof. Since Ian injured himself the last time we jumped off the roof, we decided that the Colorado trip was the best option. It was time to break out the kegs, fire off the cherry bombs, and lock up the women cause the ZoneDogg was comin out west!

We drove nonstop from Maryland to Colorado, stopping only for piss breaks, food, and the occasional stop at a local brothel or gentleman's club. After about 30 hours in the car we arrived in Colorado and paddled several fun warmup runs before heading over to Crested Butte to tackle the famous creek runs in that area.

Crested Butte is home to the infamous Quadruple Crown, 4 great creek runs all in the same area and all certainly doable in the same day. These 4 runs are the Upper

East, Oh Be Joyful, Daisy, and the Slate. All promised good sections of Class V so I was definitely stoked for a schweeet day of creeking. Yes sir, it was going to be a real broohaha, a melee, a rock'em sock'em good time. I know, the idea of so many good creek runs so close together seems a little far fetched. I too was unsure if these runs were real or make believe, like elves, gremlins, the Tooth Fairy, and Eskimos. I would soon find out, for as we pulled into the Oh Be Joyful Campground, I could see water cascading down the mountainside and snowmelt feeding it all. I knew at that moment that I was in for a treat. Now, conventional wisdom might say that four good creek runs in the same day might be biting off more than you can chew. Well, conventional wisdom doesn't have the millions and millions of ZoneDogg fans rising to their feet to cheer every boof, schweeet line, and SIKy! Besides, I didn't become Your Kayaking Hero by tucking my tail between my legs and running scared! No sir, the Dogg's bark is as tough as his bite!

In order to make sure that we had enough daylight to complete the Quadruple Crown, we made sure we got up at the crack of noon and rolled out. The first stop was the Upper East, which we had heard was the easiest of all the runs but still worth

Photos - From left to right:

Bobby Miller scouting Stupid Falls, Upper East
photo by Andy Maser

Bobby Miller on Big Wood Falls, Daisy
photo by Andy Maser

Andy Maser on Oh Be Joyful
photo by Bobby Miller

Bobby Miller on Big Wood Falls, Daisy
photo by Andy Maser

Andy Maser on Oh Be Joyful
photo by Bobby Miller

Ian Devine on Oh Be Joyful
photo by Andy Maser

doing. The creek looked low at the put-in but there appeared to be enough water to float a boat so we suited up. The scenery, with snow covered mountain peaks, was absolutely breathtaking as we floated downstream through continuous small rapids. Soon, we were out scouting the first of several good slides. There were no real major drops, just fun, open slides that generally dropped 10-15 feet each. After this delightful series of drops, we came to a large horizon line that signaled the end of the run. The horizon line was Stupid Falls,



a pretty famous cascade of about 60 feet. It looked like it would be a lot of fun if you aced it and a world of hurt if you messed up due to the fact that it all crashed down onto rocks. The drop didn't seem worth it to me at the time and, neither Andy nor Ian was real interested in running it, so we headed back to the car and prepared for the second part of the Crown, Oh Be Joyful.

Now, at this point, I was starting to wonder about how hardcore the Quadruple Crown actually was. Granted, the Upper East was a lot of fun and was very pretty but, other than Stupid Falls, it lacked big, gnarly drops. I was beginning to think that the reputation of the Quadruple Crown was just something that grownups made up to scare little kids, like the boogie man or Michael Jackson. Luckily, my time as a Doubting Thomas would soon end as we found ourselves climbing up some very steep terrain past large cascades to get to the put-in of Oh Be Joyful.

The only problem now was that there happened to be a bear that had decided to rest in the middle of the trail to the put-in. This could have been a major problem so I decided that action needed to be taken. I pulled out my Glock and prepared to fire a warning shot into the bear's bulbous ass.

However, as has happened to several of my dead homies in gang fights, the Glock jammed and I had to resort to a display of muscle flexing to scare the bear away. I just did the same routine that I followed back in the 80's when I was a world champion bodybuilder and, sure enough, the bear was scared away by my massive physique. We carried down the hill and prepared to get SIK! We had big cascades and we had water. There was nothing left to do but wobble, wobble and drop it like it's hot!

Oh Be Joyful Creek started off quickly with a 20 foot falls into a shallow pool called Ankle Breaker. We decided to start not far below this drop since the flow was a little low and I figured that a good piton right off the bat would have taken the stuffing out of your turkey. The first drop we ran was a sweet 15 footer into a clean pool of beautiful Colorado water. This set the tone for one of the most spectacularly fun streams that I have ever paddled. We bombed down this run descending slide after slide with a few vertical drops thrown in for variety. Soon, we were out scouting a 25 foot falls that landed in a deep picturesque pool.

Some hikers had us worried with reports of lack of depth but Andy had done the run before and said it was deep. Still, we decided that you can never be too careful and took a little more time to scout. However, we scouted so long that, before we knew it, we were knee deep in our own droppings. We figured it was a good time to start paddling again. Andy decided to go first since he had done the run before. I'd have done it myself but I had thrown my back out the night before helping your mom screw in that lightbulb. Andy lined it up at the lip and took the Nestea Plunge deep into the pool below. Ian and I followed quickly after with smooth runs of our own, much to the delight of the crowd of hotties that had



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The Quadruple Crown continued

gathered. There's nothing like plunging off a big falls and landing softly in a deep aerated pool at the bottom. That falls was a big'un and was definitely one of the most enjoyable drops that we ran during our tour of Colorado. I must say that I haven't had a smile on my face that big since I nailed that mouse with an ice pick.

The rest of the creek went down a continuous series of long slides that were extremely enjoyable to run. One slide was particularly steep and had a log pile on the left halfway down. You could get yourself into a pretty hairy conniption if you got stuck in the log pile. This didn't worry me too much because, as they say on the corner of old 42nd street, the hairier the merrier. Andy and I flew down the slide, keeping the proper right angle to avoid the logs. Ian followed right behind us but came down the slide with too much angle and caught a weird shelf. He rolled face first into the log pile before pushing himself back upright and finishing the slide. Luckily, he only ended up with a bloody mouth from the event. I figured that, since Ian is no stranger to wood in his mouth, he probably didn't mind too much.

A few more long slides carried us to the takeout and back to the campsite. What a spectacular run! The rapids aren't real hard, it's just a schweeet fast ride down continuous slides and falls. The day was still very young so we decided to break for a healthy lunch consisting of Milwaukee's Best and Moon Pies. What a time to be alive! After a quick but effective power hour, we were good and sloppy for our final run of the day, Daisy Creek into the Slate River.

We waited until the late afternoon to guarantee that we would be at peak snowmelt for our run down Daisy. Daisy is smaller than the other Crested Butte creeks so we knew the extra flow would help. When we arrived at the start, there was a guard there checking for regulation creek boats. Seeing how we were paddling Micros and since I am the ZoneDogg, he let us pass without any problems. We walked down the hill and put-in below a horrendous 40 foot cascade. A small pool led to the first

of a series of drops that would be typical of this run.

The first drop was a beaver dam that required an 8 foot boof to negotiate. The creek quickly headed downhill through continuous small slides and cascades. The creek was pretty small so the rapids came up quickly. The scenery that surrounded the stream was once again absolutely breathtaking, further adding to the charm of this run. Soon, we were out scouting THE big rapid on this run, Big Wood Falls. This drop has a simple slide approach to a 15 foot falls that lands in a small pool created by a log pile. This pool empties immediately down a fun cascade. This was definitely one of the coolest drops that we ran on our tour of Colorado! I came down the approach slide and took a wicked boof stroke as I went off the lip of the falls. Oh Yesh! I fell 15 feet flat into the pool below and descended smoothly down the cascade. Andy and Ian followed with nice runs and we all left that drop with huge smiles on our faces. That was, simply put, a super fun falls. It was sooooo good that I had to carry back up and run it again. I flew off the falls and launched yet another incredibly perfect boof. You know how spectacular my first run of the falls was. Well, take that and double it, add 7, and multiply by 5 and you'll get the magnitude of just how great my second run was.

Now, I know what you're thinking. Big Wood, here's a perfect opportunity to make a joke full of innuendo. Well, the ZoneDogg isn't gonna fall into that trap. Oh no! I think that you and I both know that the Dogg is far above making a cheap joke. I only make high quality, well thought out wisecracks. Get your mind out of the gutter.

More cascades carried us to a stretch of calm water near the end of the run. We knew that we still had one more major drop called Rip Your Head Off before we would reach the Slate. Soon, there was a large horizon line in front of us and I started to get out to scout. Andy yelled something about the drop being nothing major and that we should just go for it. I saw him angle right down a cascade and

disappear from sight. I decided to follow and flew down a 10-15 foot cascade that banked into the left bank and headed right. Very fun but the rapid continued down a slide that ended in another horizon line. This was kinda crazy since I had no idea what to expect but I was committed nonetheless. The creek pinched down into a narrow slot on the left and went off an 8-10 foot ledge. I came through flawlessly but still think it would have been a wiser venture to have scouted beforehand. By the look on Ian's face as he bounced through, I could see that he agreed. Nonetheless, it was a very sweet rapid and a fitting end to what I thought was the best creek that I did in Colorado.

Not long after, we emptied into the Slate and floated down a long stretch of wide Class I rapids. Andy mentioned something about the whole run being like this and that he didn't think it was worth doing. It was too late now, our car was already at the Oh Be Joyful Campground so we had to paddle down to there. I wanted to run the Slate for the sake of running it, if nothing else. The guidebook made it sound like a fun run and even named a rapid called Wicked Wanda that was supposed to be particularly nasty. This became a joke amongst us for we were having a hard time believing that any of the rapids on the run were that bad.

Much to our pleasure, the creek soon went away from the road and flowed through a gorge, where there was some actual gradient. There were many small slides and narrow ledges up to 5 feet in height. After each drop that we ran, we joked that it must have been Wicked Wanda. Despite our goofing off, we were having a spectacular time on this really neat run. We negotiated about a mile or two of good rapids and the creek appeared to be letting up. However, it still had one more trick up its sleeve.

There was a narrow slide that led into a small pool that was gorged in. We could see a horizon line at the back of the pool and we figured we could boat scout like the rest of the rapids. I ran the approach slide and started to boat scout the next drop. I could see that it was fairly steep and was full of wood. There was a boat pinned at the top of the rapid and a paddle pinned in the

meat of the drop. It looked like bad news but I was gorged in and unsure of what to do. Before I knew it, Andy came down the approach slide and did a tail-stand that he almost rode into the main drop. Luckily, his boat flattened out and he snagged the eddy. Though you could probably run the drop, we decided that there was too much wood in there to make it safe. We decided that the only way out was to climb up the rock cliff. It wasn't real tall but it was steep and any false move could have resulted into a tumble into the creek, where Wicked Wanda would be waiting anxiously. We climbed out of there and walked downstream to put on. Ian walked the whole shooting match and joined us in

the eddy at the bottom. We had poked fun at this rapid throughout the entire run but Wicked Wanda got the last laugh.

.The rest of the way to the campground was a pleasant float and we made it in just before dark. The Crested Butte Quadruple Crown was definitely a spectacular set of runs, all fun in their own way. I had added a new group of runs to my ongoing list of streams that I've layed the smackdown on. Yep, I aced it all and the fans were dancing in the street back in ZoneDoggyville. I would say that Daisy was my hands down favorite. It was very small, the drops were fun, and the scenery was spectacular. The other runs, especially Oh Be Joyful, packed

plenty of punch as well and were absolutely incredible. This area is truly magical and I know that I will rush back here to paddle the next time I am in Colorado.

It had been a magnificent day, one that was worthy of celebration. I'd have drunk a beer but, because it was such a momentous occasion, I downed a Schiltz Malt Liquor 40. Afterwards, I headed off into the Red Light District of Crested Butte to sample the night life. That turned out to be an adventure all in itself. I'll let your imagination fill in the details but I must say that you haven't lived until you've experienced the joys of a monkey knife fight. But that is another story. AWP

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LES JONES Pioneer Riverman

By Rod Huck

As I crossed the Provo River bridge, within a stone's throw of Les Jones' house, I downed the dregs of my coffee. The rays of the morning sun were breaking through a light mist and highlighting Mt. Timpanogoa, magnificently overlooking Hever valley on this brisk spring day. I was thinking about the evolution of river running, a sport that has become such a passion for so many of us.

Within minutes, I was firmly shaking Les Jones' hand, as he, with resonant baritone voice, welcomed me into his home. Les's weathered, Welsh face and wiry unimposing frame, reminded me of a character out of an early western Remington painting. Despite his 72 years, he had as much spark and spunk as a 20-year old. I attributed this to many happy years of river running.

Les, a humble man, has numerous first descents and is credited with mapping many of the rivers of North America. He has made several technologically innovative contributions to boat design and was instrumental in the formation of major national conservation groups and river guide organizations, yet few in our sport are aware of his accomplishments.

As he shared his experiences, I couldn't help but think that Les's life was a bridge between the past, present and future of river running. Born in Montana in 1932, Les grew up on Wash Ranch on the south side of the Missouri River. In order to get to school each day, Les crossed the 400-yard wide river in a rowboat and this daily ritual and proximity to the river nurtured his lifelong love of it. Rowing up and down the river to and from the islands and catching catfish in the moonlight foretold his destiny to become a riverman.

In 1953, following civil engineer training in Montana, Les moved to Salt Lake City. That same year, Les and his cousins Bus and Don Hatch rafted Lodor Canyon of the Green River in support of the Sierra Club's public awareness campaign about a proposed dam within Dinosaur National Monument. This marvelous river corridor was preserved through the commitment of individuals such as the Hatches and Les, as well as the organizational strength of the Sierra Club.

It was during the Lodor trip that an argument among the boaters over a broken oar left Les with the resolve to develop a self-support single-person craft. On Les's return to Salt Lake city, he started modifying his Penyan canoe with aluminum sheeting on the bottom, a canvas spray deck, bulkheads front and back, and oars mounted on the boat.

In August of that same year, in his newly modified Penyan canoe, Les ran the first canoe solo trip through Cataract Canyon, setting a record time. (Buzz Homstrom ran it solo earlier in a Galloway-style boat). Leaving Moab at 5:00 a.m., Les arrived at the confluence of the Colorado and Green rivers by 11:00 p.m. (which included a sidetrip up one canyon). The following morning he entered Cataract Canyon at 6:00 a.m., running his canoe through some of the biggest whitewater in the United States backwards (in order to avoid swamping his boat). He reached Hite by 6 p.m., having rowed solo 96 miles in a total time of 37 hours.

Les remembers one of the most fearsome rapids on the Colorado, Dark Canyon Rapid. "The renowned Big Drops deserved their hype, though Dark Canyon Rapid was

more challenging," he recounts. "Similar to Big Drop 3, Dark Canyon had a single big drop at the top and three giant teeth sticking out below in the middle of the rapid, which you needed to run across above and then jog to the middle to pass the three teeth."

Dark Canyon Rapid was buried with the completion and filling of Lake Powell several years later in 1963. "Too bad it's buried," he said. "I have run the canyon since and didn't appreciate the 3-4 mile log jam sometimes found there from backup of Lake Powell."

Following his successful run down Cataract Canyon, Les set his sights on the Grand. Launching one day prior to Thanksgiving in 1953, he ran solo down to the Bright Angel bridge, where he cached his boat and hiked out; he had used up all of his vacation time from work. Returning in April of 1954 and followed in two separate boats by Bus and Ted Hatch and Smuss Allen, Les successfully completed the trip. Les only flipped his boat once while filming near the end of the run, though unfortunately damaging his film in the process.

Les's third Grand Canyon trip was perhaps the most interesting, running the river at 1,000 cfs in 1963, the lowest level it had ever flowed. This low flow was due to the closing of floodgates at the Glen Canyon Dam while filling Lake Powell. Accompanying Les in a fiberglass kayak was Ulrich Martins, an electrical engineer from Germany.

"Most of the canyon's rapids, at 1000 cfs, consisted of sheer waterfalls. We investigated all of the rock structures in every rapid, like no one has ever been able to do before or since. While running Hance Rapid, we felt we were in a jungle of rocks, with our vision being blocked by these giants in almost every direction. In this rapid I observed a rock shaped in such a fashion that the more soluble rock had dissolved and left a honeycomb with razor-sharp edges, just like a beehive all over.

Continued on page 26

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Les Jones Pioneer Riverman continued

Continued from page 24

“Below Mile 237 Rapid was a big travertine waterfall which had been stalactized. We floated our kayaks underneath this waterfall. At Mile 240 Rapid, we encountered a balustrade of rock with compartments for your kitchenware and camp gear, beautiful sand areas for your sleeping bag and replete with a bathtub to bathe in. Right behind this was a cavity in the rock that held a skull shaped white rock, eaten in such a manner that it looked like a human brain. This was one of the most fantastic river camps I’ve ever had.

Unfortunately with the erosion of the beaches created by major fluctuations from Glen Canyon Dam, this place will never be the same.”

Of First Descents

Life in the West was different for pioneers – especially without designated campsites,

the required groovers and firepans, and other sundry regulations. Les recalls back then at Lee’s Ferry, the put-in for the Grand Canyon, “the boating was scheduled through the Park Service at the time, though their only requirement was that one should run with at least one other person. When that person didn’t show up, they didn’t say boo. Private and commercial outfitters could run on an equal basis. There wasn’t a crowd to create a need to limit users.”

In 1955 Les, with Bus and Don Hatch, ran the Charlie Eggerts filming expedition, successfully navigating the entire length of the Green and Colorado rivers from Wyoming to lake Mead. By July, he was back, and following his marriage to Katherine Axman, Les and Katherine set their sites on running the Middle Fork of the Salmon river. Once again constrained by vacation time, Les and Katherine cached their boat at Dagger Falls. Les returned by himself in September to run the entire

Middle Fork and Main Salmon, in a 17 foot Grumman canoe to which he had mounted oar locks. The 203-mile trip to Riggins, Idaho took him only seven days.

“While camped near Mackey Bar on the Main Salmon, during the night a bear chewed up an inner tube that I had used as a splash guard. I was awakened at 5 a.m. by gunshots, Startled, I walked to the main ranch building nearby, where I was invited to join the ranch hands for a hearty breakfast of bear liver. I told them I’d love to join them provided that I got the last bite of bear liver, since that bear had chewed up my splash guard.”

In 1957 Les and Allen Neal left for British Columbia, Canada, to run one of the mightiest of all rivers in North America, the Frazer. This river, fluctuating in volume between 200,000 and 700,000 cfs (for comparison the Colorado at its peak rarely exceeds 100,000 cfs) with a depth of

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200-400 feet, had never been successfully navigated from Prince George to Yale. In the first two days on the river, they covered 190 miles, successfully negotiating their way through the treacherous Moran Rapid.

“The Moran Rapids were huge,” Les recalls. “The water hit the cliffs on river left with huge breaker waves, boiled off to the right around the bend, and went down 300-400 feet to the bottom of the river and came up, creating boils about eight feet above the surface on the inside of the bend with a 50-foot deep opening whirlpool on the inside. Between the big boil and the incoming water, was a rip of standing waves and whirlpools.”

“As we came in over the waves to get over the rip, I said to Allen, ‘this is the biggest cotton-picken wave I’ve ever seen,’ as he looked up at the head of the wave looming another seven feet above him at that point. The boat was standing on end. At this time, Allen looked back at me and resoundingly told me that he had just lost his confidence in me. I retorted, ‘don’t talk, paddle!’” Our 17-foot Grumman canoe sat in a whirlpool in the rip as we attempted to reconnoiter. When I tried to settle him down, telling he that we had only ten miles to camp, Allen pulled his spray skirt and said ‘you take it down, I haven’t got an ounce of energy left.’ I complied and we reached camp.”

“Further down the river, Whirlpool Canyon had whirlpools that were about 500 feet wide from wall to wall. When in the middle of one of these, it was approximately 200 feet to the rim of the whirlpool and about eight feet above our heads. We gathered our energy in the eye of these whirlpools before paddling for all we were worth, trying to get out downstream. We ended up in about a dozen of these things. From here on downstream to the end of the run, was an easy float. Within a few years of our epic first descent, commercial outfitters started running the Frazer and Thompson rivers.”

Les has many first descents of small creeks to his credit in the Western states, particularly in southern Utah. “In the 1970’s Cal Giddings and I explored a number of southern Utah creeks, including the

Muddy River, Black Box of the San Rafael, the Escalante River, North fork Virgin and Main Virgin Rivers,” Les recalls. “I like the desert rivers for their steep-walled canyons and the surrounding environment, though I prefer the mountain rivers because of the clear, clean water and the wealth of vegetation.

“Having heard about the beauty of rivers in the Uinta Mountains from a fisherman co-worker I decided to explore this area. I started on the Yellowstone river, on the south slope of the Unitas. Over the next few years I ran many small creeks throughout the Uintas including all 75 miles of the Provo river. The Hayden Fork and Stillwater Fork of the Bear River, as well as the Henrys Fork and Blackfork are some of my favorites.”

A Pioneer’s Credo

Les’ professional background in civil engineering made an easy transition toward the development of innovative concepts that would become the standard in the industry over 20 years later. With safety always a major consideration in Les’ boat designs, he developed the prototype “keyhole cockpit,” allowing a boater to easily exit without risking leg entrapment in a pinned boat. Les created a bulkhead in his kayak designs, to secure the structural integrity of the boat. Les also designed life preservers and lightweight aluminum paddles.

Les used his engineering skills to create some of the first and finest river maps of western rivers ever made. He has mapped the Grand Canyon, Lodore, Desolation and Grays’ Canyons of the Green River, Middle Fork and Main Salmon as well as all the big western rivers, including the Frazer.

At 72 years of age, Les continues to be very active in efforts to preserve the rivers he loves so much through conservation efforts he was an integral part of establishing. He was one of the founders of American Rivers, one of the largest and leading river conservation organizations in the country. In 1959, he was instrumental in the



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Western Rivers and Inflatables

Les Jones Pioneer Riverman continued

creation of Western River Guides Association. WRGA was the largest guide organization in the world for over 40 years. Les contends the best support the boating public can give for river preservation is to "join and be active in a national conservation group such as American Rivers."

Les feels the tremendous growth in whitewater boating "has been both encouraging and discouraging. Popularity of the sport has driven improvements in safety innovations as well as many new designs. On the flipside, the growth appears to be too much too fast. By that I mean so many people are getting into the sport without proper training and understanding of the hazards inherent in the sport."

"Despite the improvements in safer boat designs, entrapment continues to contribute substantially to boating deaths. A key to reducing the increasing number of river deaths is education. Growth of the sport is inevitable. We need organizations and knowledgeable individuals to contribute their time in

educating neophytes not only on technique but equally important safety and awareness of river hazards. The media needs to provide more accurate and balanced coverage. If we don't privately handle the safety-educational issues, we will be faced with intrusive governmental involvement and regulations. I can't emphasize education enough."

Of all the reasons to boat whitewater - thrills, solitude, friendship, challenge and adventure - Les describes his in two words: "Beauty and Friendship. These are the most rewarding and meaningful aspects about the sport to me. These incorporate all of the other elements. Too much commercialism and too much competition will kill the camaraderie," Les fears. "The friendships should always be first and foremost. You lose this and you lose the sportsmanship."

In recent years a combination of technologic design improvements coupled with ergonomic developments have led to individuals running rivers and creeks heretofore considered unrunnable. "People at the cutting edge of

the sport, sometimes referred to as 'hair boaters,' need to act responsibly since they are representatives of our sport and in the public eye," says Lee. "Hair boating is okay as long as those that do it go out as prepared as absolutely possible."

"We should push the limits, do all that we can do, but never do so without maximum preparation and without educating friends and the public about the inherent risks of these activities. The public needs to be made aware of how hard the hair boaters work to perfect their skills and prepare themselves for these challenges. The average boater is unwilling and incapable of dedicating themselves to the sport to this degree of preparedness, therefore it is inappropriate for them to attempt to duplicate those feats. Unskilled individuals attempting to emulate boaters at the top end of the sport will unfortunately add to the statistics of mortality on the river."

What are the limits? "Who knows," he says. As to what river he intends to boat next, Les says, "hopefully one I haven't done before." 

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The Hilarious GILA

by Joannie Williams

I had come to Arizona in March with 2 purposes in mind. The first of course, was to see my youngest offspring who has very definitely flown the coop. My nest is now officially empty, although in reality she left home in 1990. Buying her first home 11 years later has made the transition a bit more final. The second was that I longed to see the desert in bloom as I'd been told I "must see the desert in bloom in March".

Having never traveled to the American Southwest before, I was delighted with Megi's move to Arizona. Since May of 2001, I have been to Arizona four times. This fourth time I was going to see the desert in bloom. One minor obstacle was that flowers require rain, and the heavens had not provided for my desire. Rain, rain, not today, flowers will come another day.

When Megi and Hut picked me up at the shuttle bus stop in Tucson, however, they did not take me home right away. I did not Pass Go. I did not collect \$200. Nope. I was taken directly to jail... No wait. I was

taken directly to the Tucson Kayaking Club meeting. Yep! You heard me right. After traveling all day, my charming daughter and her equally charming housemate took me to the monthly kayakers' meeting where I got to watch slides of a river trip through the Grand Canyon and listen to the surreal experiences of desert kayakers.

Tommy was at the meeting and asked if Megi would like to take a river trip down the Gila on Saturday. At once there is a sudden metamorphosis of Megi's calm demeanor. She becomes animated as she thinks about this offer, then looks at me. I know she is torn between her dear sweet mother, who has come all the way from Wisconsin to visit her, and her passion for kayaking which surpasses all affection for her main parental unit. How could she leave me behind to deal with her boxes while she goes off to kayak?

How indeed? Tommy, of course, is another kayaking freak. I mean everyone I know who kayaks is possessed by the same demon. These are people who use divining sticks to find water in the desert, not to drink, but to float on! Megi agonizes for about 3 seconds before she comes up with a solution. Mom will go kayaking with the club. The arrangements all are made before I can ask, "Will I get to see flowers in the desert?"

Tommy must be in cahoots with Megi, because almost magically he has come up with an inflatable kayak for me to borrow. Before I go on any further, I must tell you that Megi is a very bad influence on me. She talks me into doing things that her mother would never approve of, which is really something considering that I am her mother. For example, a year ago she had me in a kayak for the first time in my life. We were in Florida going down the Estero River, which flows into the Gulf of Mexico. It was March. No flowers blooming in the desert there either. Instead it was alligator mating season.

Picture this idyllic scene. Megi and me in an open tandem kayak floating peacefully down the river. The Spanish moss is hanging over the river creating a tunnel of greenery. No one else is in sight. All of a sudden, a paddle-length away there is a huge crash and the tail of a monster alligator slaps the quiet water causing the boat to rock precariously. I scream to Megi, "Did you see that alligator?!" Megi shouts back, "Whatever you do, don't tip the kayak!"

Not long after that we saw a water snake that looked like a cobra swimming along in the river. I decided that I'd rather be in the frigid Lake Michigan than the critter-infested waters of Florida.

Megi is also the person who coaxed me to canoe down the Flambeau River in northern Wisconsin when I should've got out before the rapids. My rotator cuff still gives me trouble after 3 years. But that's another story.



Joannie Williams on the Gila River
photo by Megi Williams

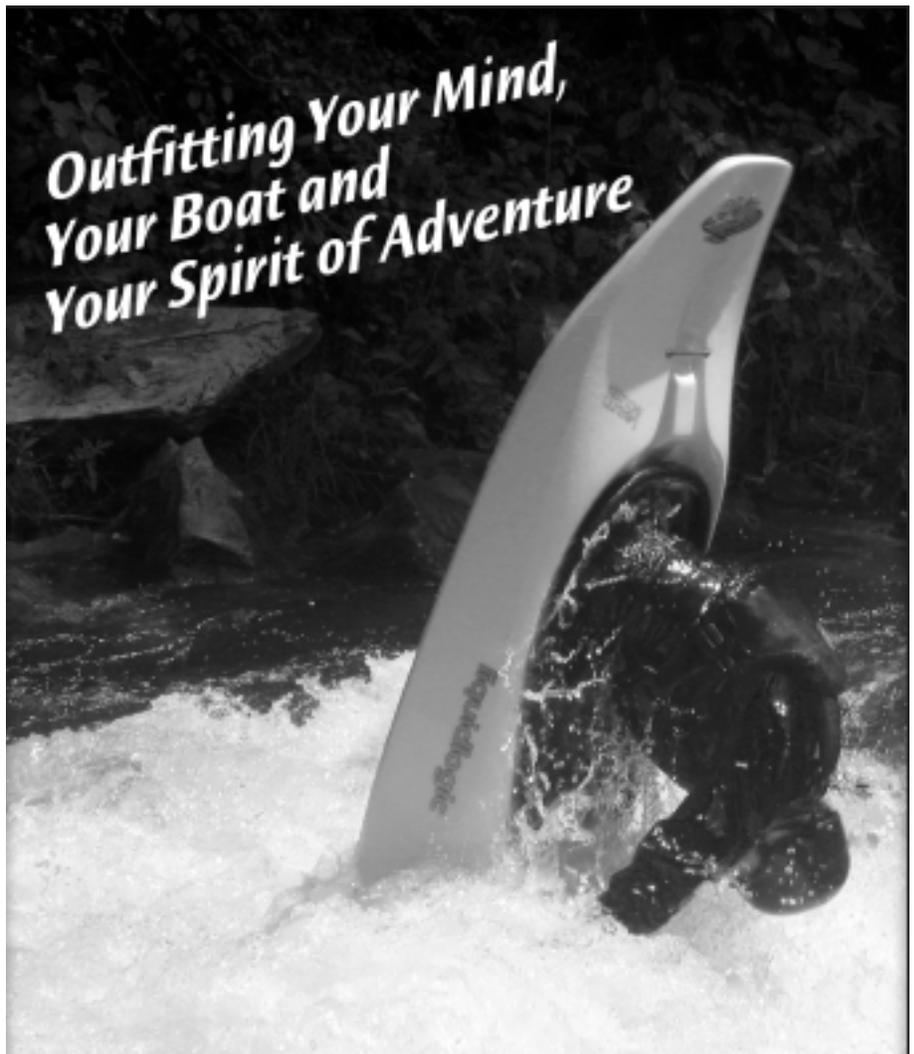
Okay. So now the stage is set for the Gila extravaganza on March 16th. Chronically sleep deprived Megi rises up in the morning almost manic. I mean, she is positively giddy with delight that she is going kayaking. I can hardly believe it. This is the child who used to sleep until noon or 1 or 2pm. While I'm stumbling around the house getting my poor tired body ready, Megi is cajoling Hut and me to get a move on it. Talk about role reversal!

We get into the Toyota and take off to meet up with the other kayakers at the designated meeting place. Our caravan takes off for the Gila River and by 10:30am, we are in the water. Tommy brought me an inflatable kayak called a ducky. Because of my inexperience, I am using a boat that is more stable in the water, i.e. less likely to tip.

I'm in my rubber ducky. Megi is in her play boat. The other paddlers are all experienced and it became evident that I am there purely for comic relief as my boat carried me wherever it pleased. Twirling around in the currents, I crashed into some overhanging branches on the right bank, forcing John into the water. I was supposed to follow Tommy who, appropriately, had a rubber ducky on his helmet. But as I was not in control of anything, my boat occasionally overtook the others and I found myself heading toward the sound of whitewater with everyone behind me. "Now what am I supposed to do?" I'd shout.

This went on for 5 hours as we traveled 7 miles down the river. When we finally reached our take out, my arms were sore and I had blisters on both hands. I felt very, very tired and not a little proud that I had made it to the end. I was asked by the club members when I might be coming back this way and if I'd like to join them again. Hmmm. Should I come to Arizona to kayak, or should I stick to projects around Megi's house?

Now whenever I look at my 2 year old grandson's rubber ducky, I can't help but think about the Gila River. Next time I'm in Arizona, I think I'll sort through Megi's sock drawer or something. 



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Velvet Falls Middle Fork of the Salmon

by David Stoesz

photography by Matt Leidecker

CRESTING the ridge,
a valley slowly opens as

the trees part. Absent the shade from the firs, the sky brightens, the sun flashing off the mares' tails high above. In an expansive meadow to the left, the cobalt and purple of lupine and shooting star pulsate against the new green grass. The meadow waves as the wind ruffles the blue waters of myriad streamlets. Filtering through the brush and grasses surrounding the flowers below, the valley is awash in rivulets, the remnants of alpine snowfields. The meadows' waters converge on one another, and not far away a thin line of navy can be seen. These form the headwaters of Boundary Creek; its upper reaches now engorged, rushing, careening, until finally cascading over Dagger Falls into the Middle Fork of the Salmon River far below.

The anticipation of their portent casts a shadow over the shimmering waters lingering in the meadow – a stomach-churning, but momentary distraction. Below Dagger Falls, an 80-foot ramp will guide boats, supplies, and people down to 100 miles of undammed whitewater through the biggest roadless area in the contiguous United States. The anxiety is acute, born of having been trashed more than once by the Middle Fork and expecting it again soon. The cataracts of icy, spring run-off colliding with boating skills rusty from disuse, too often leaving equipment and boaters strewn along the river.

This ominous prospect is flushed, as it always is, by the peaks breaking into view on the right. Erupting out of the dark green forest, as counterpoint to the meadow, the rock soars vertically. Only grudgingly do the shafts of stone ease up enough to shoulder a precarious snowfield. Implausibly, the jagged spires repeat themselves, marching down the valley in upright chaos.

The geologic anarchy on the right competes with the shimmering palette on the left. Soon the eye is swinging back and forth--blue and purple to gray and white; then up and down--brilliant blue sky to crystalline teal streams--and varying in tempo as the dark green of the firs open and close again with distance. The passing miles of the valley are the rhythm of Vivaldi's La Primavera; Spring comes to the Sawtooths.

As expected, Fred has arrived, having nuzzled his bleached Chevy van up to the hitching post of the General Merchandise in Stanley.





With a population of 70 in the off-season, Stanley begins to hum in April, in preparation for the affluent hoard that will descend the various waters that have carved out central Idaho. Given life in the remote Rockies, Stanley is home to the largest concentration of on-call public safety volunteers in America. Between the fire department and squads of emergency medical technicians, about one-fifth of Stanley's population volunteers to save the tourists from their unexpected acquaintance with the caprices of the aptly-named "River of No Return Wilderness." Among them is Jan, a sawed-off version of the guys who dominate backcountry rescue. Jan had refined her relations with the macho gender during years as a mine safety inspector. At 5' and 115 pounds, Jan is equivalent to her weight in plastic explosive.

A GM-UAW-lifer, Fred is the most unlikely of whitewater honchos. With a physique resembling Buddha, he refrains from alcohol and swearing, his only addictions being cigarettes and orange pop. In his twenties, Fred got a quick out from the Navy, and, having some time on his hands, indulged in a commercial river trip through the Grand Canyon.

He was hooked. Twenty years later, Fred Robinson was still scheming, conniving, and cajoling three months of leave each year from GM through holes, gaps, even the punctuation in UAW-GM contracts, enough cumulative time to account for much of the balance of trade deficit between the U.S. and Japan. In the process, he learned by trial and terror the nuances of America's premier whitewater. Arguably, Fred Robinson had become the most skilled white-water rafter in America.

In front of the General Merchandise, Fred scans the Sawtooths with his camcorder dubbing the tape with commentary about as stale as the potato chips he is munching. After lighting a cigarette, he recites the by-now-repetitive logistics of the coming trip. As the permit holder for a private group, Fred is responsible for the entire 8 days: squaring the number of boats with members of the party, providing the necessary hygiene and safety equipment, assigning meals to accommodate the vegetarians as well as the carnivores, minding particularly the psychic idiosyncrasies and vendettas that have surfaced in previous outings in order to minimize any possibility of mutiny. For the inconvenience this entails, he enjoys the privilege of choreographing the entire week. The cost will be

Focus: Western Rivers and Inflatables

Velvet Falls continued

divided among those who accompany him as permit-holder; for his guests it will cost a fraction of a commercial trip. Having won the permit by lottery, Fred is the patron without whose good fortune none of this would be possible, so Fred rides free.

Most of the troupe is familiar. J.P., an accountant from Baltimore, dreams of replicating in finance the amount of vacation time that Fred has finagled from

Editor's Note:

Photos contributed by Matt Leidecker from his new book, *Impassable Canyon: Journey Down the Middle Fork of the Salmon*. *Impassable Canyon* reveals the thrill of running the Middle Fork of the Salmon-Idaho's magnificent river which cuts its way through the largest wilderness area in the lower forty-eight. Photographer and river runner Matt Leidecker shares his intimate knowledge of this awe-inspiring place in stunning photographs that illuminate the river in its many moods, offering a glimpse of how it feels to float through one of the West's last wild places.

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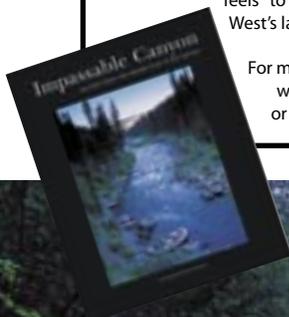
Detroit. Lynne is an EMT-fire-fighter working in eastern Washington. Susan, a U. of Idaho student health service doc, and her husband, Christian, a hydrology student there, are a welcome addition. Jan joins us. I have become a regular on Fred's list by virtue of having prostituted myself to his culinary preferences – "Robinson Stew" is now de rigueur on all Fred's trips. The unfamiliar additions include Mike and Dave, partners in a computer business in Moscow, and Taki, a Japanese kid that Jan has rescued from an ill-planned May bicycle trip across the Sierras.

We indulge in our last foray of shopping and agree to meet at the Boundary Creek put-in for dinner after which we'll begin to assemble the gear for the trip. The 30-mile route to the put-in is a gravel road already wash-boarded by early season traffic. Residual snow banks intrude onto the road near the meadows, but these are ignored in favor of the small herds of elk and flocks of sandhill cranes that populate the open spaces. Winding down the road from the high meadow to the put-in, a black bear abruptly appears but pivots and vanishes amid the columns of tree trunks blackened from an earlier forest fire.

By evening, the group has gathered around a campfire and introductions are made; a mist begins to fall. After dinner and a few drinks, the group becomes a little giddy, the nascent tension broken by the retelling of now-familiar stories and lies. Exhausted by the long drive, the gang disbands early.

We awake to three inches of snow, not unusual for the Middle Fork, but not welcome for rigging the boats either. The veterans maneuver early for the most desirable task for the day, an early shuttling of vehicles to Cache Bar, the take-out just downriver from the confluence with the Main Salmon. Fred, religiously meticulous in outfitting his rafts, stays to supervise. His permit instructs us to begin the trip that day, so we expect to have the rafts pumped hard, frames lashed tight, coolers packed and secured, oars in their clips, and each boat slid down to the eddy immediately below the ramp by the time the shuttle drivers return.

The excitement of rigging the boats quickly fades as a light sleet begins to coat the gear. Numb hands strain at buckles and slip; skinned knuckles and palms leave streaks



of blood. A cold lunch does nothing to elevate spirits. Taking a break, Fred lights a cigarette, casts a skeptical look upward, and mutters what could be a four-letter word, but this is unlikely. An indefatigable optimist, Fred assumes that the weather will clear, the first day will be short, and everyone will be sprawled in a hot spring before dinner. If the cold continues, Fred will simply crawl into heavy-duty polypropylene and a dry-suit.

Fred has had his share of confrontations with Mother Nature at her worst: flood, lightning, forest fires. A quick learner, he is the first to resort to whatever is necessary to assure survival. His companions have learned that serious water is ahead when Fred puts on his helmet and second life-jacket. A veritable Captain Bligh, he strolls amid the coils of rope, the clusters of bailing buckets, the heaped waterproof gear bags, swigging an orange soda with a cigarette in his lips.

By mid-afternoon, the shuttle drivers have returned. The sleet is unabated and puts us behind schedule, but adrenaline speeds the loaded rafts down the ramp. After a quick review of safety and hygiene procedures by a petite National Forest Ranger, we sign off as members of Fred's crew. Quickly, we don everything we have to stay warm in what will be a very wet and very cold afternoon, and march down to the boats. Fred will lead rowing a 16-foot Avon "Pro"

loaded with a much of the gear. Christian, Susan, and Lynne will follow with a raft as large, but with passengers substituting for equipment. The next raft belongs to Dave and Mike—what seems, for lack of any identification, a military surplus raft, a yellow rubber blob that is already losing air. I elect to ride with Jan and Taki in Fred's smallest raft, a 12-footer that Fred has named after her. Gathering the bowline for Jan, who will row the first section, I make two observations as I coil the rope and scamper into the boat, the sleet has turned to snow; and Dave, who will row the leaky, yellow raft, is taking a long pull from a bottle of Jack Daniels.

The easy part of the Middle Fork is the first fifty yards. Thereafter, the river turns abruptly right and accelerates through a narrow canyon, every turn punctuated by whitewater. The first few miles are constant class II and III water, not ordinarily troublesome for inflatables. But the confines of the canyon walls make the 8- to 10-foot oars unpredictable in the fast-moving water and the obstructions of trees that may have been swept downstream by Spring flooding present possibly lethal obstructions. The major rapid for the afternoon is Velvet, a class IV that seems to suddenly emerge from nowhere. There, the constant noise and activity from negotiating the first five miles of the Middle Fork leads precipitously to a lateral hole along the right side of the river, the implications

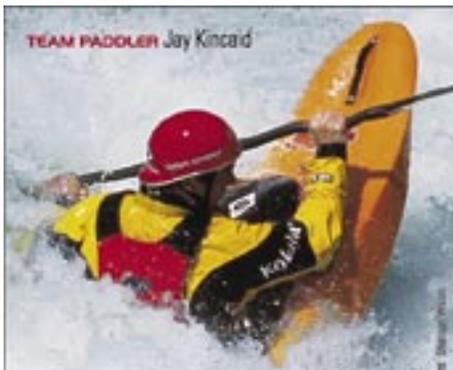
of being sucked into which are literally unfathomable. A half-hour out from the Boundary Creek put-in, the prudent rower tries to anticipate Velvet, craning a look over a shoulder, when possible turning the raft around for a clearer view of the river, searching for the rock-slide on the left and the creek joining the river on the right, then the immediate, reflexive strokes that will deliver boat and passengers downstream to a round of self-congratulations during cocktail hour before dinner.

Within the first mile, everyone is soaked. Worse, the snow thickens. Only an hour on the river and approaching Sulphur Slide, a delightful class III on a sunny day, visibility becomes negligible. Reluctantly, but with little choice, we pull the rafts ashore and tie them up. In a blizzard even Sulphur Slide becomes iffy, so we will wait out the weather, hoping the snow abates to a flurry while huddling on the rocks and trying to make out the phantom whitewater that fades and then comes into focus again between the snow squalls. The Japanese kid fumbles with his dictionary, but his hands are too cold to turn the pages so he drops it back into the ammo box that Jan has loaned him. I can't imagine what he is thinking.

The snow lessens and we free the rafts. Knowing that exercise is the fastest way to warm-up, I ask Jan if I can row. She relents, but there is concern in her eyes. Taki, on the



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Focus: Western Rivers and Inflatables Velvet Falls continued

other hand, is perfectly composed; sitting on the bow of the raft, he realizes that the view is exquisite. Snow lacing the pines, ice glazing the rocks, the water modulating varying shades of dark blue-green as it wends away; a classic Japanese print.

Working the oars is welcome even if the raft feels like a bus compared to the kayak that I was just learning to paddle back home. After several exaggerated strokes, I recover sensation in my feet and hands. True to its name, Sulphur Slide is a straight shot of wild water that slaps over the front tube drenching Taki. Jan is happy to bail, another chance to warm-up. According to the map, I have two miles before Velvet. The intervening rapids are uneventful, and I practice ferrying the raft to the left behind a boulder, then into the current and across the river to another eddy on the right. With each down-stream ferry I feel warmer. The wet-suit I had brought is much too thin for these conditions; even with a heavy sweater and a nylon pull-over, the chill penetrates every time I'm dowsed by an errant wave.

At least the boats are well grouped in the event of mishap. Before us, Dave is rowing a mass of softening rubber, the integrity of which is evident by how far Mike has sunk by sitting on the front tube. Dave tilts the bottle and hands it to his partner. Off to the side, Christian and Susan are chatting away with Lynne, insulated from the cold by their dry-suits. Then, beyond Dave and Mike, I notice Fred standing on the rowing platform. Taking a long, last drag on a cigarette, Fred dumps the butt in a soda can, sits down, rummages around in his

dry box until he comes up with a life jacket and a helmet. Feathering the oars beneath his knees, Fred loosens the straps on the life-jacket, and turns to yell instructions. It is inaudible, but unnecessary. By clipping on his helmet and the second life-jacket, Fred has signaled that Velvet is just ahead.

"Far left," Jan coaches. "Up next to the rock on the left, you'll skirt the hole," she says. "If you're too far right, you'll get sucked in." She pauses in reflection. "Now, you might want to do that in July, but this isn't July, so I'd advise you hug that rock on the left." Sounds simple, I think, hang left. She shouts at the Japanese kid and with clowning gestures shows him how to wedge his foot between the floor of the raft and the side tube then hold onto the gear straps for security. Taki tightens his grip, oblivious of what lies ahead, a pilgrim if ever there was one.

The rock slide passes on the left, and I begin to pivot the raft so that my back is toward that bank in the event I need a power stroke in that direction. The stream to the right comes into focus. I look downstream. Fred is almost standing in the foot braces, pulling hard, straining to keep the Avon to the left. Suddenly, he disappears—either in the hole or beyond it. Next, Dave who has been nudging the left bank all along, swirls around the rock and disappears also. Christian follows. Casually, he stands on the rowing seat, sizing up the approach. From right center, he drifts, feathering his oars. Then, at what seems the last possible moment, he leans forward deeply, and in

Continued on page 44





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Velvet Falls continued Continued from page 38

three powerful strokes pulls the raft across the river, and inserts it neatly behind the rock--an eddy turn with a 16-foot raft in a class IV rapid. Closing on Velvet, I can make out the boats down-river; everyone has made it.

Minding Jan's instructions, I stay center steadily pulling to the left. The water is faster than I expect, and I stand in the foot braces to move the raft toward the rock on the left. In less than ten seconds, I figure we'll be skating the edge of the hole, when Jan suddenly yells: "You're not far enough left! PULL, UP TO THE ROCK!"

But it seems I'd have to ship an oar if I got that close.

"NEXT TO THE ROCK!" she screams. "PULL!" I stretch forward, gripping the oars, bowing them with the stroke. With the first stroke, the raft is moving away from river center. After the second, the boat is closing on the rock. Only one more, I think, as I throw myself forward for the last, essential stroke.

But, it is too late.

I look over my shoulder toward the rock, but it isn't where it should be--the direction is suddenly downward. I can see that only three feet to the left is a small channel that glides easily by the rock. It is so close, I could reach out and grab it. The boat, however, is not going that way. Seductively, it slips away, then tilts dizzily as it spirals into the hole, the oars akimbo, the gear straining at the straps. Taki pops up in the air and disappears. Jan

screams something, but the sound is lost in the roar of Velvet. Not that I pay attention; I'm airborne.

The water is beyond cold; it is like liquid nitrogen. The first sensation is breathtaking, not from being submerged, but from the stabbing cold. Because of the life-jacket, I surface instantly, but I can feel the chill sapping what warmth is left in my body. Miraculously, the raft is upright and only five feet away, drifting crewless in the eddy behind Velvet. In three strokes, I'm able to throw an arm over a tube and grab the running line around the raft. But after three tries, it is apparent that I haven't the strength to pull myself into the raft. With each try, my arms lose strength. The cold is relentless, seeping into the core of my body. Out of the water! I think, GET OUT OF THE WATER! As quickly as I am able, I follow the side of the boat around to the bank of the river. I am aware that each time I reach for the rope to pull myself forward, my grasp weakens. My hands are ceasing to function, with each grasp I have to concentrate, instructing the fingers to close, then open. Finally, I pull myself up and around to the side of the river.

I am looking at a sheer rock face.

An expletive flutters through my mind, but I have no choice other than figure it out. I reach up and grab an outcropping. My fingers are so cold they feel like they will break-off. With this hold, I am able to pull my chest out of the icy water. It is not enough, but I have a better look at the rock wall. It looks like a 5.2 move, I think, oddly amused that my mind considers the difficulty of a rock-climbing move. My right hand finds an edge, but it will do for no more than a few seconds given my condition. Before putting force on it, I search for a foothold in the water. My legs lost any feeling minutes ago; all I sense is a foot bumping along the rock. But when I force down it stops. A nubbin? If this is solid and the right hand works, I can pull myself out of the water. It must work. I can't do this again. In surreal motion, the pull from the hand coupled with foot pressure eases me slowly, even gracefully, out of the water. A spark ignites. The left hand grabs a hunk of rock; another foothold is as big as a shelf. I can see that in a short distance the bank begins to slope and I can stop to rest. Gathering my wits, I look around. The raft bobs in the eddy--no sign of Jan or Taki. No other boats. . . must be downriver. . . got to find Jan and the kid.

I scramble left, working uphill, figuring elevation will improve the line of sight. The snow retards progress, I slip often--three feet up, followed by two feet of muddy

smear as I slide down, backward toward the water. Further left, a rock outcropping looks firmer, so I move laterally. From there, the climbing is easier. For all the effort of the past....how many minutes, I am only ten feet above the river. I move upward, my hands have become claws on the rock, my feet are clubs jammed into the mud. Suddenly, I stop--not six inches from my nose are a pair of boots. I look up. The boots, the pants, and the life-jacket are attached to Dave, and his face is streaming with blood.

Standing next to Dave is Mike, the shaking of his shoulders synchronized with the chattering of his teeth.

"What happened?" I ask.

Mike looks at Dave who stares vacantly across the river, the blood dripping off his chin. "A r-r-rock," Mike offers.

I work my way around to the other side of Dave. He sports a three-inch gash to the bone above his right eye and the countenance of a cigar-store Indian. I pull his watch cap down over the wound to slow the bleeding.

"W-w-w-we saw you g-g-go over," Mike starts again, "and p-p-pulled over there." He gestures to the flaccid yellow boat slumped in a nearby eddy. "Dave slipped on a r-r-rock."

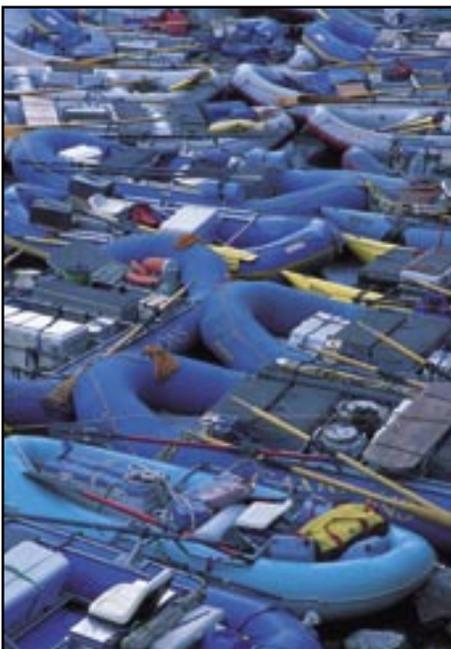
I grumble under my breath as I lead Dave and Mike down to their deflating craft. I quickly scan the area for Jan and Taki--no sign. Stepping into the yellow raft, I lurch for a tie-line to keep my balance. The boat is so soft, my foot presses twelve inches into the floor.

Mike unties the bow-line and I pull the mushy tub across the eddy-line, over the current and toward the 12-foot boat that I had been rowing what seems like hours ago.

"J-J-J-Jesus, Dave!" Mike blurts as the boat turns with the current, "You said this was exciting, you didn't say it was D-D-D-D-DANGEROUS!" In reply, Dave stares blankly ahead.

My passengers are found not far downstream--Jan giving Taki a full-body massage to warm him up. The hot spring where we camp soon revives us, including Dave whose appearance is lopsided from the bulky bandage that Lynne has slapped on his forehead.

The next morning the sun shines through the hemlocks, melting what remains of



the snow. After breakfast, Lynne locates a suitable chair for the patient. As she gently removes the bandage, Susan offers Dave his choice of anesthetic: novocain or Jack Daniels. To no one's surprise, Dave chooses the latter and Susan plants a row of 14 stitches in his forehead, neatly covering it with a bandage. Semi-soused for another day of class IV rapids, Dave toasts the surgical team. Unamused with this ceremony, the raft-patching crew redouble our efforts to assure that the yellow boat continues for the next week.

The following days are lyrical, the boats bounding through splashing rapids, the evenings finding the crew basking in hot springs. A few days later Dave's bandage falls off, revealing Susan's artistry. To the surprise of everyone, the yellow boat holds up through Pistol Creek, Tappan Falls, and the relentless rapids below the Flying "B" Ranch. Despite at least one class IV rapid each day, the raft refuses to sink.

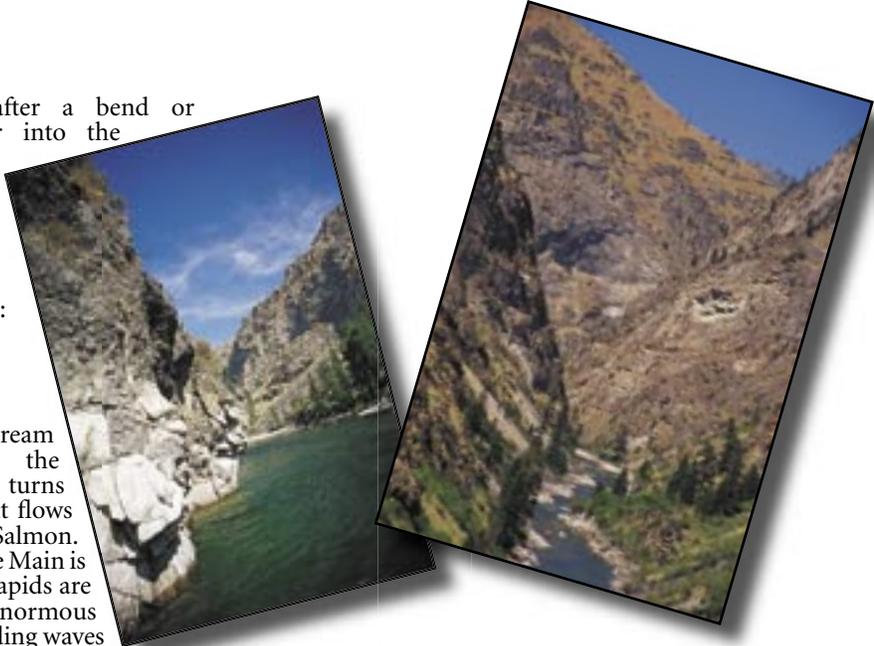
I give Jan back the oars to her boat. Taki grows more indifferent to the water, except for the more difficult rapids we scout. After Redside and Rubber, he gives Jan a high-five. He spends less time thumbing through his dictionary, and seems absorbed by the scenery as it sweeps past--steep slopes of tall, tan grass broken by rock outcroppings and islands of brush. Hidden rock faces on which undecipherable petraglyphs are chiseled. Side canyons carved by gushing

creeks that, after a bend or two, disappear into the distance. His English improves; we learn some Japanese.

A Haiku verse:
Old pond,
young frog.
Splash!

Not far downstream from Rubber, the Middle Fork turns sharply left as it flows into the Main Salmon. The water of the Main is bigger, but its rapids are no more than enormous haystacks, standing waves that we try to surf to break the monotony of the by- now routine water.

An hour downstream and Cache Bar comes into focus--a scene of pandemonium. One group has already repacked gear and is kicking up dust en route back to Challis. A commercial group is hoisting still-inflated rafts on top of one another, in order to return them to the put-in for the next mob of tourists. Just before us a private group has secured rafts. As oars and frames are unstrapped, raft tubes flattened, dry boxes



The water is beyond cold; it is like liquid nitrogen.

Continued on page 51

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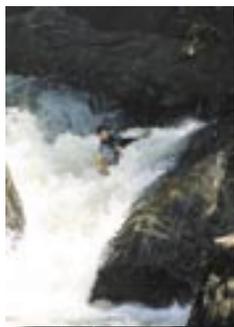
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Charlie Beavers
photo by Dixie Marree Prickett

Author's Note:

This past October the paddling community sadly lost Charlie Beavers. Charlie was one of the sport's absolute best, a true Jedi Master of kayaking. During the last six months of his life he paddled the Royal Gorge of the North Fork American River, Fantasy Falls of the North Fork Mokelumne River, West Cherry Creek, Upper Cherry Creek, Middle Fork of the Kings River, Homathko, and the first full descent of the Toxaway. This impressive list of rivers has taken some of the sport's best paddlers years to complete. It is a true testament to his love and commitment to the sport of whitewater kayaking. This is a story of the last adventure that Ryan Casey and I were fortunate enough to share with him. He is a person I always looked forward to paddling and sharing time with and I will miss him.



Charlie Beavers
photo by Leland Davis



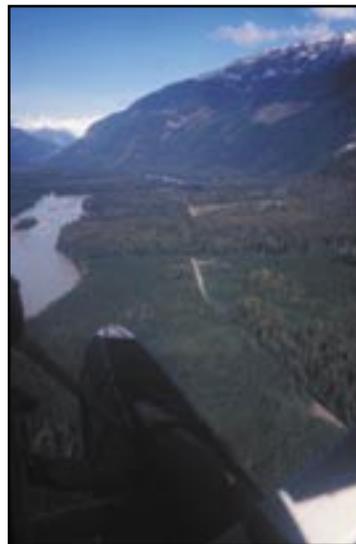
British Columbia's Homathko River

Article and photographs Fred Coriell

The Homathko River is located in western British Columbia. It carves a treacherous 65-mile course, starting at 2800 ft elevation from its outflow in Tatlayoko Lake, plummeting through the Coast Mountain Range flowing beneath Mount Waddington, the largest peak in British Columbia, and then subsiding at sea level into Bute Inlet and the Pacific Ocean. During the 1860's Alfred Waddington chose the river for a wagon road to connect the coast with the interior of the province. His grand vision was to use Bute Inlet as a primary shipping port to bring booty from the Canadian gold rush out of the BC interior via this route. Railway surveyors also examined the river as a possible terminus to the Canadian Pacific Railway. Fortunately, none of these schemes came to fruition. Bloody skirmishes with local tribes and the sheer ruggedness of the terrain ultimately sealed the fate of the river to sustain its sublime disposition and immense wilderness.

The whitewater allure of the Homathko is equally as exciting as its historical past. There are stretches where the gradient drops more than 80-feet per mile with over 6,000 cubic feet per second of water, creating some of British Columbia's most challenging rapids. Surrounded by the rugged Coast Mountain Range the river makes it a total commitment to reach the bottom. Hiking out would be nearly impossible. It was not until the fall of 2001 that the entire whitewater puzzle was finally navigated in a single trip. That group consisted of some of the world's best expedition boaters, two of whom were training for the historic Tsang Po Gorge expedition. Even the river's name, Homathko, utters a deep, resonating tone echoed by the desolate and craggy mountains upholding its passage.

It is no wonder that Ryan Casey, Charlie Beavers, and I were so hesitantly excited when we checked the internet on Thursday morning. Waning temperatures during the past week had brought the Homathko River down from 18,000 to 9,000 cubic feet per second on the gauge. We had been in Canada for the past two weeks kayaking the plethora of whitewater in southwestern British Columbia, but also waiting anxiously for the opportunity to arise when we could head northward in an instant. That time was today and our decision was hinged on an unfriendly weather pattern due to hit the Homathko Sunday night.



Water levels, which were in our favor, make sense, but weather is a whole different ball game. There are too many variables. Especially for a river which flows within such an unpredictable mountain range. It is anyone's guess as to how a weather system carrying lots of moisture is going to react with coastal mountains. A warm night or rain can unleash the fury of melting glaciers. Then it would only be

a matter of hours before icy glacial milk charged the river with relentless power. Early that afternoon we chose to go, relying on gut feelings and the calculated assumption that things would not be out of control until at least Sunday evening. We drove most of the night stopping only for gas, Subway (the last good meal for a week), and a phone call to Gideon Shutze, the backcountry pilot who was going to fly us out of Bute Inlet, confirming the pick-up time and location.

Somewhere around 3 am it started raining. Charlie resisted Ryan's and my hesitations reminding us of the decision we had already made. We pulled over to catch a few hours of sleep.

Friday morning came too soon, but the rain had stopped. The drive around Tatlayoko Lake was quiet. Our anticipation of the next three days was at its peak. We could barely see the back end of the lake from the road. There the Homathko resumed its form as a river flowing at a mere 200 cubic feet per second. It would grow to 50 times this size before reaching the ocean 65 miles downstream. In the distance, the huge peaks of the Coast Range were hidden by low cloud cover. They appeared a giant wall of rock through grey mist where the Homathko had carved its channel for tens of thousands of years. It was desolation out there. Three kayakers were preparing to make a journey into the heart of the British Columbia wilderness. As we packed the kayaks and ate the first of many oatmeal breakfasts, a light tailwind was blowing across the lake. It seemed a good omen for the beginning of our journey.

Alpine meadows drifted by and passing mountains grew larger as we paddled downstream. Every corner seemed to uncover another side drainage adding slowly, but steadily to flow. The river never showed more than a class II riffle this day. And large piles of dead trees were strewn about the gravel bars; reminders of the raging torrent that normally flows down the river.

Hitting the right water level for the Homathko is a mixture of vigilance and luck. For most of the year the river is swollen to well over 15,000 cubic feet per second. It usually peaks during the month of June when the strong rays of the summer sun meet last winter's snow pack. This year the river exploded to more than 350,000 cubic feet per second on June 28. By the end of the summer the snow pack is gone and the melting glaciers of the surrounding mountains control the water level. During the cooler fall months the coastal climate carries heavy amounts of moisture to the region. This raises water levels back up again until December when it is far too cold for kayaking. The opportunity to paddle the Homathko lies within the small gap between the end of the summer run-off and the fall rains. This year the gap was three days. Some years there is none.

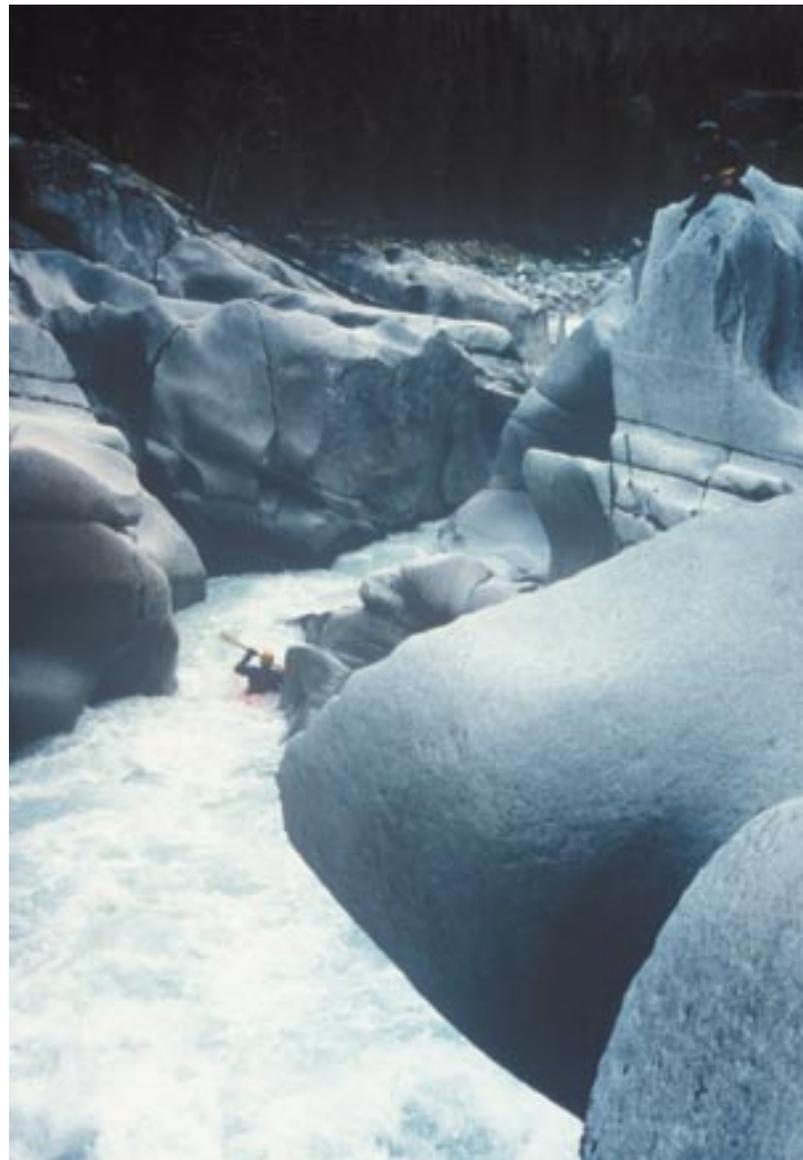
We camped the first night beneath Homathko peak. The afternoon had burned off some of the cloud cover giving us glimpses of the surrounding mountains. All around us was vast wilderness. Charlie sat prodding fresh bear tracks in the sand. Between a raging river and hungry wildlife we were at the mercy of Mother Nature.

That night the campfire conversation turned towards our expedition mentality. The next two days would be full of intense whitewater. Our team of only three was a concern because of the Homathko's whitewater characteristics. Three gigantic boxed-out granite canyons and two more accessible canyons lie within the river's path. Ideally the team would consist of at least four paddlers, with two groups being established. One doing safety and support on the river bank while the other negotiated a rapid. Our approach was going to have to be blue-angel style. The three of us would be committed to ourselves, each other, and the whitewater in the big canyons. Any problems would be dealt with on the water. It was not an ideal situation, but an exciting one. We were looking forward to the trial.

Saturday morning had clouded over again, but rain did not seem imminent. We let the sun warm the air before starting downstream. Mountain walls were inching closer to the river

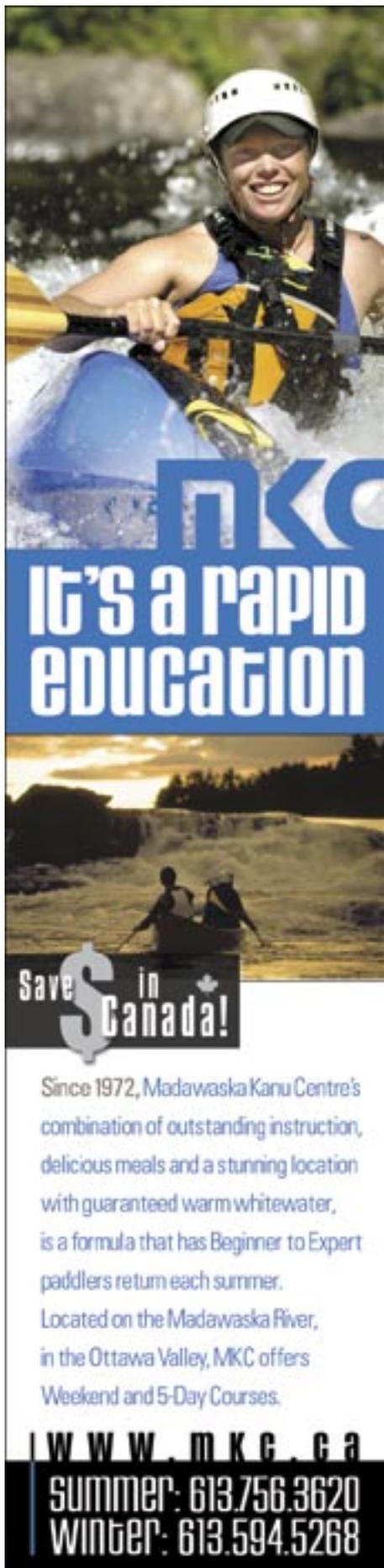


Alpine meadows
drifted by and passing
mountains grew
larger as we paddled
downstream.



Focus: Western Rivers and Inflatables

British Columbia's Homathko River continued



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bank and the gradient was picking up. The river was beginning its plummet towards the Pacific Ocean. Towering sentinels standing tall for millions of years had been breached by the course of the Homathko River. Yet, they would not give passage easily. For the next 30 miles the river is forced into turmoil, eroding its way through metamorphic rock and massive granite intrusions; the recipe for this particular mountain range.

We entered Good Morning gorge, the first hard whitewater of the Homathko. The canyon is wide forcing the flow into a channel against the river-left wall. Enormous truck-sized boulders line the river-right bank. Debris scattered high upon these rocks hinted at the wall to wall chaos thundering through the canyon at peak flows. The rapids began with two Class V drops. Scouting and safety could be done easily from the river bank. It was a relief to be navigating whitewater. There is a certain calm that comes from settling into a rhythm of moving downstream, working out problems as they arise.

High quality Class IV-V boulder gardens filled the ensuing miles of kayaking before reaching Birthday Gorge. This gorge is a miniature version of the canyons downstream. There are places in it only six feet wide, squeezing the water through narrow notches, creating swirling eddies and boils. The granite bedrock had been carved into smooth bowls illustrating the prowess of nature's paintbrush. This was also the last set of rapids we could run separately with safety on shore. We ate lunch lying comfortably in the smooth half-formed potholes.

Doran Creek dumps in a considerable amount of water at the entrance of Tragedy Canyon Act One. Here the Homathko cuts into the first of three box canyons. Granite walls tower 60-80 feet straight out of the whitewater below in an impressive display. We made a long scout high on river-right. The thick cover of manzanita and blueberry bushes made the task difficult. To save time and effort we decided not to inspect the entire canyon, but instead pick our way down by scouting until we could see a place to take-out and scout again. The three of us climbed and crawled back

to our kayaks and paddled through the first rapids of the canyon.

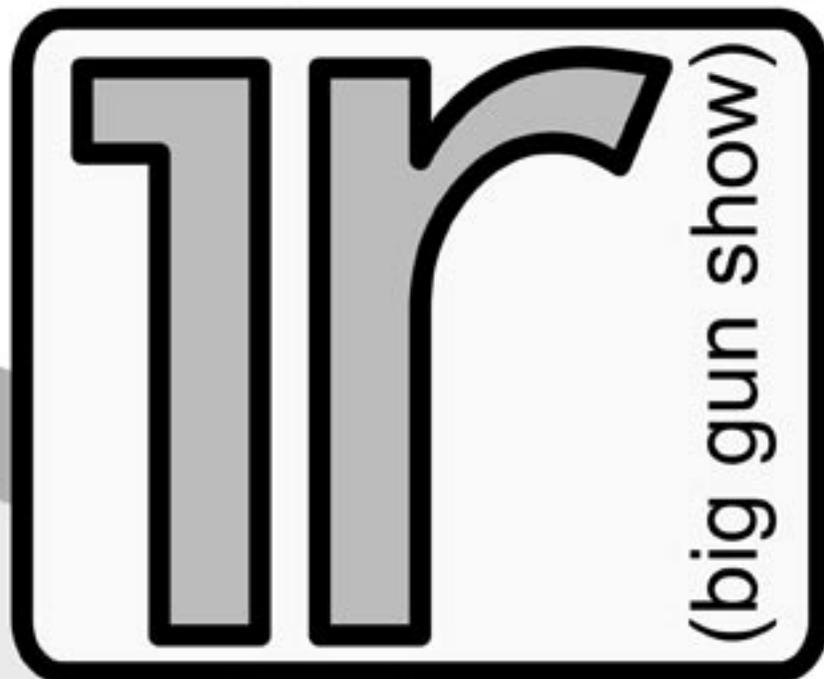
It was possible to boat scout the whitewater downstream. We paddled a few more rapids in this manner but then the river played a bad trick, or perhaps it was our fault for forgetting we were confined in a sheer walled canyon. One blind corner too many and an eddy and small gravel bar were the only things between us and a kayaker's worst nightmare: the unscoutable, unportageable, and unrunnable. Ahead the canyon constricted to ten feet wide forming a hideous looking rapid. Beyond that was a horizon line with no visible mist behind it. I could see a glimpse of calm water far downstream and greatly wished that was where we were.

After a failed attempt to scout the drop at river level our only option was to devise a way to climb out of the canyon. Charlie immediately went for the most obvious, but perilous looking gully. With a rope anchored at the top it would have been an easy ascent. Wet, slimy rocks and loose moss prevailed when Charlie was about half way up the fifty foot climb. Ryan and I were poised below knowing that if he slipped there was little we could do to catch him. We watched Charlie's focused steps as he down-climbed the difficult route.

Still searching for an exit Ryan waded upstream along the cliff wall. He was able to climb out of the river and onto a ledge where there appeared to be more options to make the top of the canyon. Charlie and I gained the platform with Ryan and surveyed the options. There were several, but none without difficult and dangerous moves. Falling meant bouncing a few times before splashing in the river. Our choice between a rock and a hard place was obvious. Indeed the rock climb was risky, but the unknown fate of the river downstream was certain peril. Again, Charlie attempted another route. At the crux, Ryan's 6'7" frame assisted Charlie through a dangerous but mandatory move. We watched him continue up the rock, grabbing hold of tree roots and blueberry bushes, until he disappeared over the rim.

Continued on page 50

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Focus: Western Rivers and Inflatables

British Columbia's Homathko River continued

Ryan and I went back to our boats and waited. We both knew our error. The mental lapse had inflected us with expedition tunnel vision. Total awareness of the surroundings, a vital component to the success of any backcountry journey, cannot be compromised. In a very short amount of distance and time we had disconnected ourselves from the foreboding canyon paddling like we would on a more familiar river.

Charlie finally appeared with a two thumbs down for the rapid. He dropped his rope and we began the slow task of hauling the heavy boats and ourselves up the cliff. The reality of our blunder set in as I surveyed the rapid for myself. It was horrendous. 4,000 cubic feet per second was shot through a ten foot wide slot and then over a 30-foot waterfall backed up by an enormous undercut boulder; a reality I am thankful we did not have to experience. This was a harsh, but fortunate lesson. From now on we would scout entire canyons and not lose sense of the wild place we were kayaking within. The site of Mosley Creek was a well needed reward after the long portage. That night we huddled around the fire watching the sky as dark clouds rolled overhead.

It started raining early in the morning. The pounding staccato on the tent kept me awake. I was thinking about the 35 miles of river we had until the logging camp. Charlie rolled over a few times, grumbling, aware of the weather, but not wanting to think about it quite yet. His style in situations like this is to stay comfortable until the last possible second, then in a flash get ready and go. I wished I had that presence of mind. We ate a wet breakfast and started paddling. Not only was it cold and raining harder by the minute, but the most difficult miles of whitewater were downstream.

Mosely Creek doubles the flow of the Homathko. We were now riding on close to 8,000 cubic feet per second. The water from Mosely Creek had turned the light-blue colored water of the Homathko to a grayish glacial glop. Everything about our surroundings was beginning to look and feel hostile.

We portaged "The Bet" the first big rapid of the day. It was the most technical rapid

thus far. The move required punching two huge frothing piles then making a hard left to right move to avoid a definite swim at the bottom.

Rain was coming down in sheets when we eddied out to scout Tragedy Canyon Act Two. We picked river left to inspect the canyon, which proved to be the wrong choice. The other side looked much easier to maneuver around. There was no stopping halfway through this canyon to get out and scout again. It was complete commitment to three big rapids. We huddled on top of the cliff staring 80 feet down at the hardest move, thinking about how much bigger it was going to feel on the water. Ryan's knack for pointing out lines had convinced Charlie and me of the route through this rapid. The driving rain was now becoming much more than an inconvenience. Thoughts of a rising river were dancing in my mind.

In the calm pool below the canyon the three of us gathered ourselves. The last few minutes of kayaking had felt like a nightmarish water park ride. Water between each rapid was moving swiftly within the sheer-walled confines. There was barely enough time to confirm our line choices with each other between the rapids. And it was big. We were all hurled upside down out of control through the crux rapid. There was little to do except line up for the move and try to carry good speed through a large hole. Our high vantage point had certainly dwarfed the size and power of the churning chaos below. We continued downstream, still the most difficult canyon remained.

The Homathko saves its most impressive whitewater for last. Tragedy Canyon Act three is long, entrenched within daunting granite walls. It is a magnificent spectacle. The powerful hydraulic forces dancing below us created an eerie grumbling din. A story written by Steve Whitall about the expedition last year mentioned, in the words of Charlie Beavers, "some loose talk about a death hole." We did not reach the same conclusion concerning the final rapid of the canyon, but there was little doubt that we would all be stroking very hard to move far left at the bottom.

The echoing roar downstream combined with the sound of pelting rain in the lush pine forest created a surreal setting. Nature's symphony was at a climax in its ancient song. We were quiet and intensely focused sitting in our kayaks above the entrance rapid, about to cast ourselves into the awesome forces of the river. Shoving off the rocks into the water three small figures disappeared between foreboding granite walls.

Cold waves pounded my chest and face. It was difficult to see the landmarks we had chosen through the watery mayhem. I mistimed a critical boof, slid too far left, and slammed a rock in the landing. Stalled for a moment, the water pressurized against my back rocketing me into the main flow. I looked behind long enough to see Ryan and Charlie experience similar episodes then turned to set up for the next move. Charlie took the lead in the last rapid. The water seemed to carry him as he effortlessly stroked through the final move, missing the "death hole."

The roar subsided and canyon walls gave way to a rocky shore once again. We had completed the "Tragedies" and now turned to paddle the remaining 30 miles before dark. It was cold and the rain showed no signs of receding. Hope of warmth and shelter at a logging camp in Bute Inlet fueled our weary bodies.

It was almost dark when a log boom appeared in the distance. We pulled our boats ashore and walked into the gathering of trailers and garages. Here we met "Skookum" Chuck and his wife Sharon, the caretakers of Homathko Camp. For three days, while we waited for the weather to clear enough to be flown out of Bute Inlet, they shared kindness and selfless hospitality. Chuck welcomed us back anytime and asked that we pass the word that any travelers in the area were always welcome at his camp. As the Beaver flew eastward towards Tatlayoko Lake, I stared at the muddy Homathko thinking about Chuck's stories of the fascinating history captured within the canyons, relieved we had finished the run before the rains once again unleashed the true power of the river. 

Velvet Falls continued

Continued from page 45

and coolers re-stowed for another trip, their crews make final toasts with beer cans battered beyond recognition from a week in a drag bag.

Ever the opportunist, Fred suggests spending a final night at the hot spring at Panther Creek.

The hot spring is some miles from Panther Creek, high up on a hillock. The road diverges from the creek and begins a steep ascent. Without a guardrail, the dirt road switches back and forth on a single-track, occasionally widening to a reassuring width for passing vehicles. The slope away from the road is as precipitous as the view is breathtaking. If you had to roll off a mountain, surely this is the place to do it. Up canyon, the Middle Fork winds in and out of view, the afternoon sun obscured by an occasional cloud. To the left, the Panther Creek watershed seems to go on and on, an endless repetition of massive, broad-shouldered mounds covered in tawny grass, broken by periodic stands of trees.

The hot spring is nestled in a basin at the top of this 1,500 foot elevation. Scattering our gear widely enough to reserve tent space from late-comers, we unpack towels for a quick dip. We follow Christian and Susan down a narrow path, brushing the close trees and enjoying the Columbine and Wild Iris. Gradually, the odor of sulphur permeates the air, obliterating the fragrance of the flowers. Not far ahead, we hear a brief crashing in the nearby cattails and slow our pace. Perfectly motionless, a white-tail doe comes into view. The deer is skittish about our presence initially, but assumes we are the harmless variety of humans and resumes browsing. Sloping gently away from an opening in the path, the hot spring emerges. Several small, steaming rivulets lead to a large pool, the temperature being regulated by the placement of stones in different feeder streams. Up the hill a bit on the right is a miniature stone sauna. We disrobe walking toward the water, the varying shades and shapes of anatomy having long lost their intrigue. The sun falls behind the ridge as the deer browses nearby, our conversation muted and punctuated by long silences as we soak it up--ALL of it! The idea of dinner gets misplaced in the sunset.

The morning finds us wandering down to the hot spring again for a final reflection on the trip. The frigid days of only a week ago are an ice-age away. No one has driven up the road since our arrival, so we have the hot spring to ourselves. The deer has found better company, but the hot spring is thick

with migrating Western Tanagers. Their yellow bodies, red heads, and black wings fill the air like confetti. We slump into the warm water, marveling at the birds, soaking-up the comradery. Sometime much later in the day, we will have to be elsewhere, but that is of no concern for the moment. Luxuriating in the hot spring, the future is far away and distant in time.

The murmur of voice and water is suddenly broken by a cough. A silence... then, another cough. We glance around. Everyone is here, and we should have heard a truck coming up the road, so who is coughing? Collectively, we turn and see a small group clustered where the path opens to the hot spring. A gaunt man in a fedora, white shirt, and misshapen slacks glances awkwardly away from us. He seems to be wearing a smock or cloak, though it is hard to tell from the rising mist. Behind him, a number of people are gathered, most of them in white dresses. They are engaged in muted, but intent conversation.

A discomfort settles over the hot spring. First Fred, then Christian, and I prudently slip into towels and walk up the path. By the time I arrive, I suspect a ceremony.

The man in the fedora is a preacher, surprisingly young, perhaps in his late-30s. By the conversation, I understand that today is Sunday, a fact that had escaped me entirely.

"...well, by coming up early, we sort of expected to have the place to ourselves," the man says, almost apologetically. "We wouldn't want to inconvenience you folks, but . . . well, it'll just take a few minutes."

"No problem," Fred interrupts. "We'll get our people out of your way and you'll have the place to yourselves." Fred marches resolutely back to inform his troops of our retreat. "Won't take long," he explains. "Just a church thing."

Suspecting what is in store, I approach the preacher as I return with my clothes. "Mind if we watch?" I inquire.

Sizing me up, he replies righteously, "No, not at all." By the tone in his voice, I suspect that he not only expects to induct his flock into the ways of Christ at the same time he purifies these waters of the naked heathens.

From the shelter of the trees edging the hot spring, we crouch like a clutch of savages, to observe a group of five women and one man gather before the preacher. The

preacher places his fedora carefully on the moss, but keeps on his shoes as he wades into the hot spring. He turns to the flock, now assembled in a semi-circle on the shore before him. Elevating his Bible, he selects his passage, reads a chapter. Heads bow in prayer. He walks backward until he is waist-deep and beckons the woman on the left to join him. Unquestioningly, she walks into the warm waters up to the preacher. He asks her a question that is lost in the dampening water and mist, then turns her to face the remaining congregants. He places one hand behind her lower back, the other over her nose and sweeps her backward under the water. . ."In the name of the father, and the son, and the holy ghost. . ." wafts back to us.

The woman surfaces with a glorious smile as she rises from the water. The preacher signals with a hand, and the man is next. He turns, the invocation intones, the immersion, another beaming face. We are transfixed. The cycle repeats. The next woman is older, but the smile no less jubilant. Taki seems disconcerted and mumbles a question to Jan. The next two women appear to be sisters; they could be twins.

Taki pulls out his dictionary. He thumbs one way, then the other. Soon he looks up, baffled. "Bap. . ." he stutters, "bap . . ." Another puzzled expression. "What is . . . what is this...baptism?"

photo by Kevin Colburn



Girls Gone WILD!

Women's 2002 National Rafting Championship



Team California

by Nicole Nasser

If I had a penny for every time I told myself, “This is unreal,” I might not be a millionaire, but I’d have at least twenty dollars. From the time Kelly approached me in May to ask if I’d be interested in joining a women’s whitewater rafting team, to bringing it together in August, to actually sitting in the airport en route to this year’s National competition, I’ve been repeating this phrase in my mind.

Kelly looks at me in the Sac airport, while next to us a beautifully dressed fourteen month-old screams at the top of her lungs. “That one’s on our flight, you know,” she grumbles. Security takes me aside because my underwire bra has set off the metal detector. Ten minutes after thoroughly searching me and discovering that the only “weapon” I am carrying is an over-the-shoulder-boulder-holder, they release us. We head toward the gate where our favorite child sits with her four year-old brother and exhausted parents.

At least we’ve been checked all the way through to West Virginia. I am stoked to be flying with Kelly. She is an amazing woman whose stories are a tangle of good fortune and determination. She’s been everywhere on river adventures—Africa, Chile, Alaska, Costa Rica. Kelly has also played the Pink Power Ranger, and she was Meryl Streep’s stunt double and trainer for the movie *The River Wild*. Petite and muscular, Kelly is always a surprise. We take our seats together, near the back of the plane.

Our favorite child has stopped screaming, but will be sitting directly behind us for the next four hours. In front of us is another lap-child. Across from us is a wide-eyed four year-old girl. I am dreading take-off, now, for more reasons than my own fear. Kelly hands me a stick of gum, and says, “Should we get a cup of coffee or a beer?” My sentiments exactly. When breakfast arrives, Kelly goes for the movie and I dive into my book. I finally put on my earphones as a high-pitched chorus of children’s shrieks reaches a postmodern staccato. A strange phenomenon: when one child screams, all of the children join in.

We land, smoothly, partially deaf, and motion sick, but happy to have the longest leg of our journey over with. After grabbing

coffee we board a flight to DC. This one goes much better; our row-mate is a perfect gentleman from Georgia, the seats are bigger, and we endure no screaming. In DC we connect to Charleston, West Virginia on a teeny motorcycle of a propeller plane. The dark gray pool in the sky makes me wonder if we’re going to make it. Our landing sucks. Really sucks. I think everyone on the plane was surprised that we didn’t fishtail off the runway. Descending the small stairway from the prop plane, I feel as though I have stepped into the shower. The fog hangs like party streamers; it’s Hawaii without a beach. Time to collect baggage and to see who’s arrived.

Rebecca is sitting on a bench, legs crossed, flipping through a magazine. Her short, brown, wavy hair runs amok. Rebecca is a world-class adventure racer, although she is very humble about it. Later in the week when I tell her that she’s in *Sports Illustrated* for Women, she says, “Oh, yeah, I heard about that. I should make a copy of that page and send it to my mom or something.” Rebecca has competed in seven eco-challenges and two Raids Gauloises, among a smattering of other races. She has just returned from a race in the Yukon, and after our rafting competition she’ll head to Fiji for another. It’s Rebecca who helped us get a deal with NRS for matching neoprene racing gear, and she also got us good whitewater shoes. Rebecca fine tunes us, and makes us look like a team, both in style practice.

Nothing prepares us for Shelly.

Shelly is a cross between Robin, the Boy Wonder, and a low-key Wonder Woman. She’s got Pippi Longstocking blonde braids, huge blue eyes and a natural caffeine reserve. She guided the Gauley years ago, so her knowledge of the river is an asset. Shelly has earlier in the day driven from Durango to Albuquerque, flown to Charleston, secured our rental car, driven to our cabin an hour and a half away, checked in, bought food, and returned to pick us up. I immediately love this woman. She offers to drive us back to the cabin, too, which is great because I feel like I’m about to fall over. The fifth member of our team, Rhonda, won’t be in until 9:30 the next morning.



Since Shelly and I have volunteered to drive back to the airport to pick up Rhonda, we drag ourselves out of bed early. “Holy smokes!” Shelly exclaims when we get to the airport. Rhonda’s flight is now delayed until 11:30 am. I think of the women back at the cabin, lacing up the floor of the boat and pumping it up. I hope we’ll make it out on the river today.

We have all come in a week before the National Whitewater Competition to practice—enough at least to see the lines for the downriver race. The problem is that we only have Gauley releases Friday through Monday, and today is Monday. Our sprint and slalom events are this Friday. The downriver race is the following Monday. If we don’t get on today, we’re not going to be able to see any rapids until Saturday.

Poor Rhonda has been on two cancelled flights. She is our outrigger canoeist. She’s incredibly strong, incredibly fit, and the mother of a 9 year old. She’s got a dry sense of humor that comes from living with her Australian husband, and a big heart. Tall, lean and determined, Rhonda is going to be sitting across from me in the middle of the boat, for which I’m thankful. We’re the power seats. Kelly and Rebecca are the front paddlers. Shelly and Sue, the sixth team member, are guiding.

Sue is lead guide for the first time this year, having been co-guide with Beth Rypins and Julie Munger in many races. She was a kayaking champion in the ‘80s, and her skill is apparent in how she handles the boat. Naturally subdued, she’s lends an interesting balance to our team, able to focus our strong personalities. No small task.

After collecting Rhonda’s luggage, the three of us stop by Rivermen rafting company. We learn that the dam stopped releasing at noon, which means there is no way we will get to go down the Gauley until Friday or Saturday. Regrouping at the cabin, we decide to practice slalom on the first rapid below the dam. It’s hot—75 degrees with at least 70% humidity. We put on our neoprene anyway, hop in our blue fourteen foot Sotar, and begin to work out the bugs.

Paddling competitive whitewater is nothing like commercial guiding. For

one, everybody paddles. That in itself is a wondrous accomplishment, but the fact that everyone is fit and paddles together is even more amazing. We use outrigger canoe strokes, turning our bodies and pulling the boat, working our obliques, lats, and completely compressing and killing our hip flexors. It’s very uncomfortable, but really fun and rewarding when you get the raft going.

Depending on where a team member sits on the raft, she has different responsibilities. The two front paddlers steer as well as paddle, and make minute adjustments during downriver racing. They are extremely on top of raft positioning during the slalom. It’s their technique and strength that can make or break the event. The middle paddlers are the “guns.” Unless it’s an emergency, we never stop paddling forward, regardless of turns. It’s our job to keep forward momentum in rapids, sprint and slalom. We never take a backstroke (except in rare slalom cases), so the lines we take in rapids are a little different than what commercial rafts take. The women in the back are guide and co-guide. They paddle to help with forward momentum, and tell us where to go. They also rudder. The front paddlers are crucial to executing good turns for this reason. We do NOT want to slow down. We need to make it through rapids as fast as possible, sometimes completing a ten mile run in an hour or slightly more. It’s amazing to see what a raft and good paddlers are capable of.

After ferrying and eddy turn practice, I feel for the first time like the team is coming together. Sue and Shelly work out their idiosyncrasies, and their personalities mix well. Rebecca and Kelly fine tune their draw strokes. Rhonda and I learn the difference between eddy paddling and downriver paddling. We practice for two

hours. Tired, arms wobbly, we hoist the raft to shoulder height and hike up an insanely steep hill. We tie down the raft, head for the grocery store, and end the first night on the couch with chicken salads, watching footage of the 2001 World Rafting Championships at the Gauley.

The next day, we head back to Rivermen. One of the coolest “rivermen,” Amanda, warns us about severe undercuts on the New River, where we decide to practice. A very kind guide named Ed agrees to shuttle us. After a life-threatening van ride down to put-in, we are finally on a river that has water. Now we’re ready to practice technique and racing strokes as a team

Low water racing is nothing short of grueling, and paddling across pools is hell. Pure hell. Frustration prevails; some of us are learning entirely new skills and muscle memory hasn’t kicked in. Kelly looks back and wonders how hard we’re all paddling. Rebecca is silent, and I know our fitness level discourages her. Shelly is trying to learn how to co-guide with Sue, while thinking about driving the raft forward. Rhonda is paddling well. I am attempting to add an extra stomach pull to my stroke while keeping up with Rebecca and Kelly. Sue tells me to paddle harder. I resist the urge to strangle her and dig my paddle in deeper. We try a slower pace; we try a faster pace; a rapid gives us a break. We back paddle off one of the gnarlier undercuts I’ve seen, and I shudder.

We scout the next rapid after arguing about the best lookout, and I laugh quietly. Our arguments are not malicious, they are simply a product of everyone having her own idea about how to do something well. This day, I think, is about learning how to do things together.

Ed picks us up, nearly missing us at our take out. He drives us back to Rivermen home base, telling flood stories all the way. After leaving Rivermen, we head toward Fayetteville in search of much-needed beer. After two pitchers of Newcastle and some nachos, we head back to our cabin to watch Rebecca’s racing video footage. I love her perspective. She points at an awesome jungle panorama and says, “See that? That cave is full of bat poop. It looks gorgeous but it’s really gross.” Some of us retire to the hot tub, and some to bed. I

Focus: Western Rivers and Inflatables

Girls Gone Wild continued

hit up my computer and begin writing everything down.

It is Wednesday already, and sure enough we picked the one day that the garbage truck comes by to sleep in. Today we are taking a rest, as yesterday we might have worked too hard. A low-key run and a scout of Pillow Rock begins the morning, followed by breakfast, a deluge of cell phone conversations, and the discovery of internet access at the local library. We pound a cup of coffee each.

At 3 p.m. we have to get on the water for slalom practice. As we arrive, we notice two things: the slalom gates are up, and the Colorado women's team is here. Both are a pleasant surprise, and the dialogue between their team captain, Buggy, and members of our team is friendly. The usual sizing-up dance happens, of course, and we all hop into our respective boats and play on the slalom course. The general sense I get from all of the women's teams is that of intense, good-natured competition. Even though everyone wants to win, it seems as though the women's teams are happy to have any competition; raft racing, like many other sports, is male-dominated, and it's inspirational to see so many women willing to come out here and compete.

Slaloming is fun. I mean really fun. It requires knowledge of whitewater motion, sheer power, and speed. The mental game that comes with understanding how to get through each gate is an awesome challenge. The courses always consist of at least six and no more than twelve gates, some upstream (in red), but most downstream (in green). If a team member, the boat, or a paddle touches any part of the gate, the team is charged a five second penalty. If any member of the team does not get her head through the gate, it's considered a missed gate, which means a 50 second penalty. If, for instance, you were to run Gate Eight before passing through Gate Seven, then Gate Seven is considered a "dead gate" and you'd receive a 50 second penalty. Last year's World Champions won by intentionally missing a gate that many teams had lost time trying to make. On the Gauley, we have six total gates. The first is downstream, the second upstream, right on an eddy line which tends to push us into the left pole. The third is downstream, and

requires us to catch a pillow and slide right into the perfect spot. Gate Four is upstream in a tough eddy, and this one will cost teams the most time. Gate Five is downstream over a drop. Six is also downstream, but in an eddy, so our strategy is to run it as a "reverse gate," which means we enter the eddy at the top and back paddle through it, careful not to touch the striped green poles.

In our first run, we make it through Gate One perfectly, but we bump Gate Two. Gate Three is no problem. Gate Four, however, presents a challenge, and we practice it about five times before moving on to Gate Five and discussing Gate Six. Finished, we hoist our boat up to the van, drive back to the put in, and run the course again. This time we make Gates One and Two, and hit Gate Three. Gate Four goes well, as does Gate Five. We figure out our reverse move in Six. We do it again. This process goes on a few more times until it's dark. The inside of the van is filled with excited chatter, as we realize that "hey, we're not doing that bad...in fact, we're doing really well."

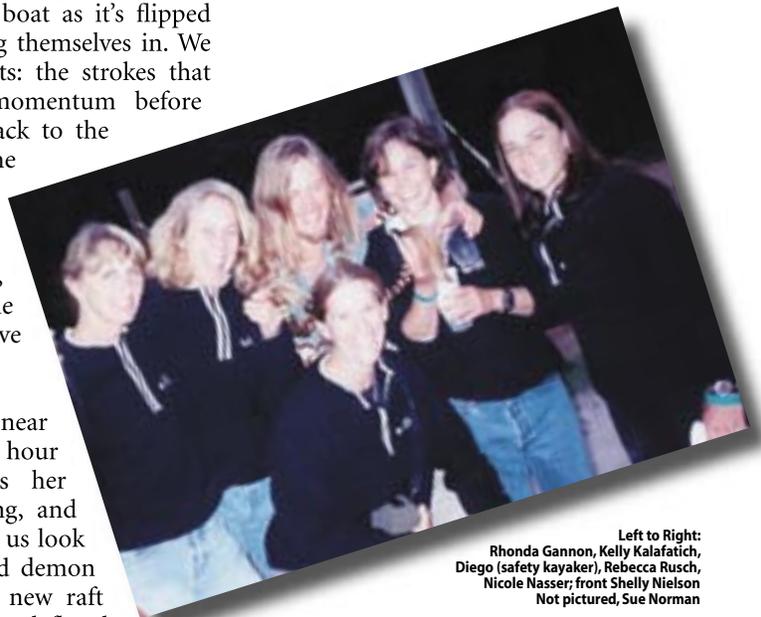
We begin the next morning with the dreaded flip practice. Flipping in the downriver race does not disqualify a team; it just costs time. There are ways to shave time off righting a flipped raft, which generally involve two people on top of the boat, and the other four grabbing lines in the middle of the boat as it's flipped back over, thus pulling themselves in. We also practice our starts: the strokes that will give our raft momentum before the sprint. Zipping back to the put-in, we meet the Clear Creek men's team, who lend us a better racing raft with a welded floor, which reduces drag. The problem is that we have to find it.

It's reportedly back near Rivermen, half an hour away. Shelly acquires her new gift in van racing, and while the other five of us look out for cops, we speed demon it over to where our new raft might be hiding. It's deflated,

rolled and behind a fierce looking German Shepherd. Good thing we have bribe cookies to distract it. While Rebecca, Kelly, Shelly and I secure the raft, Rhonda and Sue register us for the race. It turns out that Rivermen will have a women's team competing in nationals as well. We use the air-compressor at the gas station to inflate our new boat. In a flash we're done, back on our way to the Summersville dam put-in, and ready to practice.

The new boat is a blue blur. It's like someone took twenty pounds off of us, and we run the slalom course four times this afternoon. We learn the secret of Gate Three, we think. Shelly holds our angle perfectly in Gate Five. Kelly pulls us swiftly into Gate Six. We hit an average of one gate per run, and dial our Gate Six move. A realization comes over us in the van on the way home: we're getting better. Cautious optimism follows us through dinner and into bed early Thursday night. The next day could make or break our chance to be the national team.

It's Friday, the day of the sprint competition. Coffee is poured, passed around. It's early for us, and we take a quick hike down to Pillow Rock. The rest of the morning is spent finishing registration and mentally readying ourselves for the sprint. There are six women's teams now: ours, Colorado's, the local group, two from the Czech



Left to Right:
Rhonda Gannon, Kelly Kalafatch,
Diego (safety kayaker), Rebecca Rusch,
Nicole Nasser; front Shelly Nielson
Not pictured, Sue Norman

Republic and one from Canada. Making up the initial phase of the sprint are solo time trials that determine who will compete head-to-head in the final heats and where our pole positions will be. Our team goes first.

We turn downriver and go. For the first time I hear a “dammit!” from the back after a drop, and I hope we haven’t been blown into an eddy. We just keep paddling. The sprint ends in flat water, which is great because it can really influence the outcome. We paddle to the left side of the river between the orange buoys, where we’re told to go to the team captain’s meeting. We finish with the meeting in time to see Team Colorado come through the wrong finish line. I know that this mistake has given us a huge advantage, especially since their team and ours are obviously the fastest.

Surprisingly, Canada has placed first and will be racing the West Virginians, who finished in third. Since we came in second, we’ll race the fourth place Czech team. Instead of being disqualified, Colorado has been given sixth place and will race the other Czech team, who are in fifth. My adrenaline kicks in as I listen to Rebecca’s advice. “If we come out of the eddies together, you cannot hit the other boat or a person in that boat. It’s cool if you’re reaching for water but if they think you’re being malicious we’ll get penalized. Just take your stroke. And if you’re on the opposite side of the collision, hammer away because you might be the only ones grabbing water.” We take the left side of the river. “One minute,” Mark’s voice comes through the bullhorn. “Thirty seconds,” we joke with the guy who’s holding our boat at the proper angle. He’ll release us after the countdown. “Ten.” “Five, four, three, two, one, GO!” and our paddles are in the water. We paddle hard, as hard as we possibly can, take the drop and pick it up in the flat water. I’m not aware of anything but an animal yell that comes through my throat as we pull, pull, pull to the finish line. We win the heat, even with the other team on our tail the entire time. We find out we’re racing the Canadians in the final round. We have placed higher than the other US teams. I’m ready to take first.

We’re positioned at the eddies for the last time after the men have cycled through their semifinals. Unfortunately, we have the less desirable position since the Canadians had the fastest time in the trials. We take river right. When the announcer says, “Go,” we hit the water fast, and we are way ahead of the Canadians in the drop and through the finish. First place is ours. We high-five.

The scoring system is working in our favor right now; each event is worth a certain amount of points. Sprint gets 300, slalom 300 and the downriver race 400. When a team places below first, they get a certain percentage of those points. We’re in the lead with 300. The next team, the Rivermen women, have 128. Colorado is in fifth. We’re leading by a large margin, but we still have two events to get through. The slalom race will be next.

A two-hour interval of heat and humidity gives us time to snack and socialize until its slalom time. This part of the championships will be difficult, especially now that the wind is picking up and blowing the gates around. The men go first, and we watch their strategies through Gates Three and Six, the problem gates. We’re the first women’s team to run the course, and the run is awesome. My arms are weak from the sprint, but we still manage to hammer. Gate Three earns us a five second penalty, but we go through Gate Four smoothly. On this first run we also hit Gate Five, which is in a drop, and we do our reverse move in Six. From the take-out, we watch the other women run the course. I thought that two touches was a lot, but many teams miss Gate Six entirely, almost everyone has touched Three, Four and Five, and a bunch of the teams perch on the rock above Six. It’s a mess, but only a team’s best run of two counts. We head out to run it again. We’re faster, although more tired, and we still hit gate three. We think we avoid five, but the judges decide we’ve touched it. Now it’s time to wait for the final times to be compiled.

After the Canadian men kidnap all six of us for a beer, I wander back to the race tent. The Rivermen women’s team has done a phenomenal job, which seems even more amazing when I discover they have paddled together for the first time today. The results of our slalom race reiterate their success; they place third in an event that is completely new to all six of them. Colorado has taken second place and our team has again won first, which is incredible.

Rebecca’s mom has shown up, and she’s figured out that out of six teams, we must only come in fifth in the downriver race to win overall. It’s exciting to say the least, and the weekend will consist of scouting the Gauley and running the rapids.

It’s Saturday during Gauley Fest and there are at least a hundred cars parked next to the dam. Maybe two hundred. I see the other women on the team. There is a

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Girls Gone Wild continued

light mist this morning, and the weather is trying to decide whether or not to be cold. We motivate to get out on the water. If we're fast enough we'll get two trips in today.

Frankly, everyone is tired. Dog tired, bone-tired. Amanda, our friend at Rivermen, has told me, "Watch out for BFR. That's Big Fuckin' Rock. It's really undercut, so don't swim there." BFR is also known as Shipwreck. That's all I've heard of the Gauley—it has fun rapids that are not technically difficult, but have deadly consequences. My plan is to stay in the boat. I should know better than to make a plan without first discussing it with the river.

Though brutal, Saturday's practice is genuinely fun. "Is this Insignificant? Is this the Class V rapid?" We chatter a bit in the boat, trying to figure out where exactly we are. Sue tells everyone it doesn't matter. "Let's just read and run the rapids with the fastest lines we can." She's right, although I'm nervous about the dangers at each turn.

Insignificant is anything but. It's a huge wave train with two holes, one of which I think is going to flip us when we accidentally run it sideways. There is a large slab on the lower right section of the rapid, off of which large haystacks propel us into the proper line. What I don't know is that there's a deadly sieve on the upper right that a ranger will pull four people out of that weekend (alive, thankfully), and that the slab rock is extremely undercut. Insignificant becomes a point of contention for the team. Everyone has a different idea of where to be and how to get there. "I said left turn, dammit!" When Sue starts yelling, we know she's serious.

The battle of Insignificant over, we head through a variety of Class III rapids, and it becomes obvious to us that our race will be won or lost in these. Lines are analyzed, discussed, tried. We're trying to take it easy, but the intensity of our personalities doesn't allow much room for easy on our boat. I focus on practicing my technique, hoping not to disappoint anyone in the race.

The most difficult part of both Saturday and Sunday is vying for space among all of

the kayaks and other rafts at the entrance of each rapid. Pillow Rock, a bit of a scary rapid with flip potential, goes well. "Woo-hoo!" Shelly and Sue high-five, Kelly and Rebecca smile at each other. Adrenaline propels us through the next rapids and the Meadows." We slog through long stretches of flat water before reaching the next Class V rapid, Lost Paddle.

Our cheat sheet tells us there are "lots of spooky undercuts" in Lost Paddle and warns us to "stay in the fucking boat." I decide I'm not going to tell my mom about this rapid. In the first section, we take a small drop and then catch an eddy. Yep, I'm staring right at some water traveling under a rock on river right. Like, the entire shore. I shudder to myself. As much fun as this is, I am a chicken. I do not want to swim.

The next section is Zoom Flume. If you've ever ridden a roller coaster or taken the drop at Splash Mountain, you know what it's like to paddle this section. In the final part of Zoom Flume, we have some trouble finding the best route through, and it consists of the most undercuts. A two-foot sieve at the bottom makes up the Mail Slot. Maneuvering gets us through well enough, and this is only the first run.

On our way to the fourth Class V rapid, we pass by BFR. It's huge. A friend of a friend leads us through some fast lines. We thank him and arrive at Iron Ring.

Iron Ring is big, juicy and steep. It looks easy to run generally, but since we're trying to get through this rapid quickly, it's a different story. We take the usual line, and have no problem. Enter on the left, avoid the strong eddy line on the right, watch out for the pour-over hole on the left and then run the river-wide hole/wave/huge hydraulic at the bottom. I think this one will be our easy, slide-through rapid.

Today, it is. But hubris does not go unchecked by the river gods.

As we enter the rapid on Sunday, we end up too far right, on a strong eddy line that gives us a tube stand. The familiar slow motion fall, prefaced by the split second knowledge that I'm about to swim in a rapid with underwater caves flashes, and I force panic back into its little box.

When I surface, there is an obvious look of relief on Kelly's face, and she pulls me in. "You were down long enough for me to start counting, Nicole. Are you okay?" I nod, feeling sheepish that I'm a guide and someone else has just helped me into the boat. Four of us swam, including Sue, who is famous for hanging on to the boat. As we're paddling away from Iron Ring, I am silently hoping that we were just served our big piece of humble pie, and that we don't have to eat another slice on race day.

Our run finishes at Sweet's Falls, a fourteen foot drop where we all must be in the boat at the finish line. We line up with a sweet spot and avoid Dildo Rock at the bottom. If you've never been through Sweet's Falls, I highly recommend it. I also highly recommend the "Get Down" command for heading through it. What a rush! I understand that after racing for an hour, this rapid could make or break us, as tired paddlers could easily make a 50 second mistake.

We've finished.

I'm pooped. The weekend has been productive for our team. From paddling, to hanging out at Gauley Fest, to sharing silly stories, we have learned how negotiate each other's energies. I am awed at the strength that I feel in myself when I am around these five women.

Race Day is tense, but informal. We race in heats; our team starts with Canada and a Colorado, while Rivermen races both Czech teams. I am nervous. My mind is here, focused, and all of my fears smack me in the face. We will be paddling at a fast pace for an hour, and I hope that I will not disappoint anyone. I tell myself that I can go that long. I am determined, but I wonder if determination is enough.

Our team chooses its pole position, and Colorado takes off ahead of us immediately. I am conscious of my paddling, and my breathing, and I am trying not to think about Canada behind us. The air is hazy, almost dreamlike. Kayakers move out of our way, and soft calls of "you can do it" resonate as we pass.

We are following Colorado's wake. Insignificant. We almost blow it. I don't

know what happens, but we're not on our line, and I feel a hole stop us with an almost painful tug. We keep on. Canada is behind us by about a rapid's length. Our lines in the Class III rapids are fast, and we are able to stay right on Colorado's tail. For some reason, though, we can't pass them. Rhonda cheers at me, "C'mon, you can do it," and I try to stay focused.

Pillow Rock approaches. Colorado takes the "hero's line" on the left, a dodgy yet fast trail through the rapid that just kisses Pillow Rock. We choose a right line, charging to the left of a hole and absolutely nailing a perfect run. I am floating on a resurgence of adrenaline, aware of the lift in the boat. I am conscious of Kelly and Rebecca calling, "Three, two, one, switch!" Rhonda and I follow suit. Flat water lasts too long, and I feel my stroke fading. Rebecca urges me on.

I dig my paddle in deeper, and soon we are at Lost Paddle. We are still behind Colorado, but our strategy has been to take the bigger rapids more slowly and carefully, searching for the best line of current without being reckless. Coming out of Lost Paddle and into Shipwreck, I am amazed that we have made it this far, but I still feel as though I am in a transcendent state of consciousness. Our line is fast, and we are tailing Colorado marginally. Paddle, paddle, paddle, breathe, breathe, breathe. Our pace has been relatively constant. I can feel that I'm tired, as I'm sure everyone else is—other teams included. When paddlers get tired, mistakes happen. Iron Ring was the site of our swim, where the river gave us a spanking and taught us a lesson in pride. I offer up a silent prayer to the river that I won't be sacrificed again today.

Thankfully, our team does not get handed another serving of humility.

As we enter Iron Ring, I am on edge, watching where we're going, hoping that we get nowhere near that nasty eddy line, or any wave that will suck me out.

My jaw drops.

I see six helmets bobbing and the underside of a boat. "Flip!" shoots out of my mouth.

"Nicole! Keep paddling." I am paddling, although Sue chastises me, reminding me to focus.

"Are you alright?" Rebecca and Kelly ask as we cruise by their carnage. Empathy travels fast, and the excitement of taking the lead is offset by the reality of how tenuous that lead could be. Sweets Falls is in sight, and yet one misstep could spell the same fate for us.

I am amazed that we have the possibility of winning, and the sight of the finish line elates me. As I take a stroke, I smile at Rhonda, who winks at me. My ass is staying in the boat at the finish line. Rebecca reminds us "C'mon ladies. We're almost there. Keep your heads together and don't lose your focus. Stay in the boat." That's my idea.

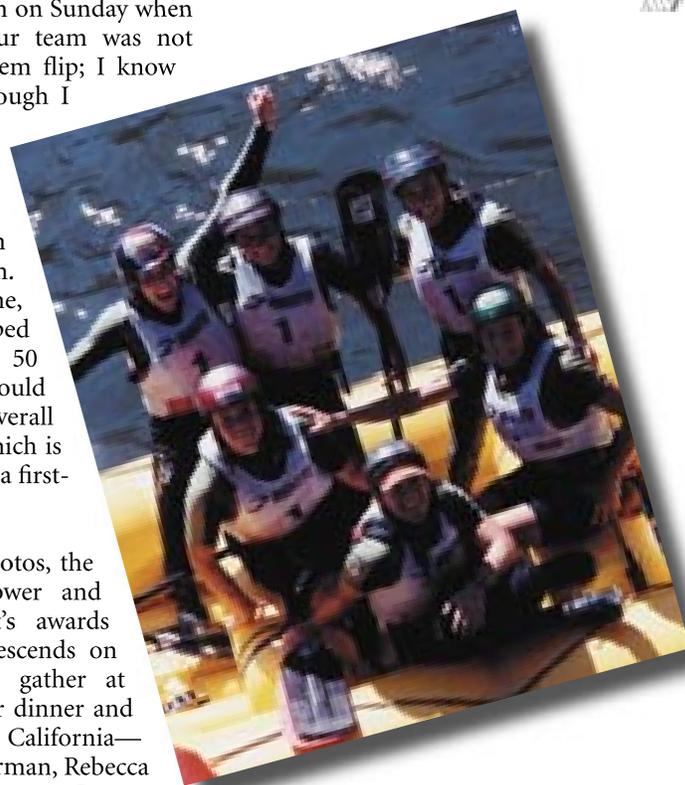
The drop offers a long-needed relief, and the cheers of the crowd nearly drown out the ache in my arms and stomach. We pull over, first in our heat, and wait to see the times of the other boats.

Canada finishes next, and we are already up on shore drinking beer when Colorado drops over the Falls. I think the Colorado women are a great team, but they were tired, just as we had been on Sunday when we were practicing. Our team was not happy when we saw them flip; I know my heart sank even though I was trying to focus on what our team was doing. We brought over some beer and hugs, and watched the Rivermen women's team finish. Their time was awesome, even though they flipped in the Falls, earning a 50 second penalty. They would have finished second overall had they not flipped, which is absolutely incredible for a first-time raft racing team.

After more beer and photos, the teams disperse to shower and prepare for the night's awards ceremonies. As dusk descends on West Virginia, athletes gather at Rivermen base camp for dinner and announcements. Team California—Kelly Kalafatic, Sue Norman, Rebecca Rusch, Shelly Nielson, Rhonda Gannon and me—are announced the winners of the downriver race, and the US Women's

National Whitewater Rafting Team. We now have the opportunity to head to the Czech Republic for the World Championships in August 2003. I don't think I've grinned so hard before. It's our night to celebrate and take a break from thinking about the future, and we do just that.

As Kelly and I take our seats on the way home, I think about what this competition means. Of the twenty or so teams present, only six were made up of women. I wonder if that is a reflection of the demographics of boaters, although I doubt it. Women need to be more present in this sport, as well as others. The river is not about gender; it beckons us at a spiritual level, it feeds our souls and tests our bodies. The men in the competition were respectful and encouraging, and they are supportive of having more women's teams enter the race (more beer to share!). Rafting competitions are about finesse, smarts and endurance, which many female raft guides will tell you are crucial skills to navigating the river. One thing is for certain. I felt part of a group of strong, capable athletes, and I am motivated to keep training. Hello, Czech Republic...



Triumphant at Takeout!
Clockwise from top left:
Kelly Kalafatic, Rebecca Rusch,
Rhonda Gannon, Sue Norman,
Shelly Nielson, Nicole Nasser

National Paddling Film Festival Summary

Big Names and Bigger Theater

by David Margavage, NPPF Director



The Kentucky Theatre
photo by Don Spangler

The worst ice storm in its history hit Lexington, KY on Sunday night, only days before the 20th National Paddling Film Festival was to occur. It looked like a bomb had hit the city. One hundred year-old trees were reduced to huge piles of broken limbs and snapped electrical lines were blocking roads all over the city. Seventy five thousand people were reported to be without power. It was one of the worst natural disasters Lexington had ever witnessed. The local newspaper, the Lexington Herald Leader, who had been planning to run a full page story on the film festival the day before the big event, called and wanted to know if the show was still on. Should they postpone the article? NO WAY! The community could use a good diversion and a little bad weather wasn't going to stop a bunch of paddlers – who tend to thrive when Mother Nature throws a fit anyway. Besides, people were flying and driving in from as far as Taos, New Mexico, Seattle, Washington,

and even Frankfort, Ky. Our special guest host, Emmy Award winning filmmaker and Tsangpo expedition leader, Scott Lindgren, was committed and coming in from California. The magnificent Kentucky Theater still had its power and was ready to roll. The volunteers of the Bluegrass Wildwater Association had built it and the people were coming. The 20th NPPF would have to happen!

The ice storm may have put a slight dent in attendance, but not in the spirit of the volunteers or those who made it to the festival in spite of their flooded basements and darkened homes. The 20th NPPF still had a packed house for its awesome show of paddlesport images and videos. The move from the University of Kentucky campus to the Kentucky Theater could not have worked better. Our AV guru, Barry Grimes, was sweating bullets about moving to a new theater, especially one without the

comforting, state-of-the-art infrastructure of the University of Kentucky, but his worries evaporated as the show proceeded without incident, and, incredibly, ran on schedule for the first time in many years. The new location also gave the several sponsors and the beneficiaries (American Whitewater, American Canoe Association and West Virginia Rivers Coalition) a place to display their programs and to sign up new members. In front of the theater were NPPF sponsor's cars and trucks loaded down with canoes and kayaks, lining the city sidewalks and proclaiming that this was simply not your normal film festival.

The pace was typical non-stop NPPF style with 25 back to back video entries, submitted by talented filmmakers from across the USA and Europe appearing together with the 6 finalist (out of the 50 contributed) still images competing in the Best Paddling Image Competition. Add in a personal presentation by Scott Lindgren of his epic expedition documentary, "Into the Tsangpo" and it was an outstanding 8 hours of incredible visual action that paused only once for the special heartfelt and emotional presentation of the William Nealy Award to PerformanceVideo's John C. Davis for his exceptional contributions to the state of paddlesport arts and imagery and for his outstanding service and contributions to the National Paddling Film Festival.

It is the filmmakers who actually make the NPPF possible by contributing their work to be shown at the NPPF so let's hear what some of them thought about the experience...

Here's what film maker Tom O'Keefe, winner of the 2003 NPPF Best Amateur/General Boating award for "Washington Whitewater: A little Backyard FUN", had to say: "So my wife keeps asking me if I won anything other than the admiration of my peers. Here's my "speech". I'm headed off to China for a paddling adventure at the end of the week. I am thrilled to have my film chosen as a winning entry in the NPPF. I've been shooting film since the days of 8-mm but the technology available for digital editing has finally allowed me to produce the films I have always wanted to make. Over the past two years, I have spent many weekends filming the whitewater runs in Washington State. As a dedicated American Whitewater volunteer, I have been working

to document whitewater resources in our state as part of the Stream Keeper project - particularly those runs that are threatened by access and conservation issues. It was my goal to present the wonderful whitewater resources of our state in an entertaining way. I achieve a great deal of satisfaction from being able to entertain the paddling community. Most of all, I am proud to make a contribution to the conservation efforts supported by such great events as the NPF.

From Scott Doherty and Lane Jacobs we have "True Gravy." Made for a fine arts class, it was Lane's first film. Through they did not win, they stated, "Thanks for the consolation - although winning was the last thing on either my mind or Gravy's; that's for sure. I'm just psyched it got selected. The show sounded fun. Thanks for putting it on. I'll keep my eye out for the tour."

We asked Dr. Marinakis, producer of the new squirt boat film "Metal Flakes", who was his biggest influence and he replied with, "Jim Snyder and Eric Zitzow." No surprise there! What's next for Harry? "A trip to California for the National Speleological Society Convention." Underwater or underground, spoken like a true squirt boater! Is there a pattern here?

"What a way to promote the sport of surf kayaking and paddlesurfing...entering a production to be seen by many people, not only in the kayaking industry and sport, but others that may not be involved with paddlesurfing at all! Without the great athletes that come with me, paying their own way traveling just to have a good time surfing and promoting the sport they love, I would not be able to even put together a production like "The Search 2: More Paddlesurf Chronicles." I would like to thank the people at the NPF...I guess someone over there likes what I do! Can't wait until next year..." Vince Shay, winner of Best Accomplished/Documentary.

Brent Laubaugh of Philadelphia, D - Team producer on why he entered; "I made D - Team for my friends as a video scrapbook of the 2002 season. I never intended it to be shown to the general public. I was encouraged by several people who attended the NPF in years past, to enter the film. During the editing process, I tried to capture some of the free-spirited moments both on and off the river that makes paddling with friends special. Hopefully, that's something that came through in the final version of the film."

Made primarily for the viewing pleasure of Portland area boaters, Chuck Taylor's entry PDXkayaker '02 was his "Video Yearbook". It documents the paddlers, rivers, waterfalls, and play spots of the

Pacific Northwest in 2002. The unique choreography makes it exciting and "artsy."

We were entertained by "Best of the New River Gorge," an entry by Chis McLoughlin and featuring the Georgia Canoeing Association's annual July 4 New River Paddlefest. Chris's entry was an amateur film that gets people involved and adds a personal touch to the NPF. It is interesting to see how a camera affects people.

The winner for Best Professional/General Boating category was Olaf Obsommer of Germany. When asked to give us a few words, Olaf gave us this, "I will try, but my English sucks... The idea of Painkillers is from Jens Klatt. He did almost all filming. Jeni gave me the footage and I did the editing. We feel great. It's a good feeling to win and it makes us happy to win at the biggest festival in the USA. A lot of big names there... After you told me that Painkillers won, I was sure I am on the right way and even more to have Jeni as a friend. He is 13 years younger than I. Young people have the best ideas... It is also great to make a movie where everybody is laughing. That was the idea of painkillers; not another hero story. That is what makes us happy - that the people see this with the same eyes."

Olaf's friend, Wermer Moaser, also of Germany, provided us with a 2-minute animation entitled, "Clayman." It seems like both these guys are out there just having fun and it shows in their work.

Yellowbird Samora of Taos, NM and producer of Borderline Drought, "Well, I just wanted to thank you and your volunteers and sponsors for a wonderful experience. I'm spreading the word and already brainstorming on some new ideas for next year. I

Scott Lindgren on location - Tenaya Creek, Sierra Mountains California
photo by Jennings Steger



Dad: "Timmy, there comes a time in every boy's life when he-"

Timmy: "Dad, is this about the birds and the bees?"

Dad: "No son, this is about you getting your own \$%#*%\$# subscription to LVM."

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Events

National Paddling Film Festival continued

can't thank you enough for your efforts to bring all types of paddling footage to the big screen. I also wanted to thank you for the great hospitality and lodging at Boone Creek Lodge. It really made the weekend. The band at the Awards Party was awesome - just what the doctor ordered."

From the United Kingdom, "Destination Nowhere" producer Simon Westgarth, "After years of being a global kayaking adventurer, I just thought it was time to show a little of what it takes; such as the lifestyle, people, places, great days, and of course, the screw-ups that seem to make it all just perfect."

"Breath" producer Isaac Priestly gave us the best-untapped waters the Northwest and British Columbia have to offer. Featuring multiple first descents including a 101-ft. world record attempt. "I've climbed El Capitan by four different routes but still never paddled in the Sierra Mountains." Sounds like Isaac is giving us a hint for a future film, "Water and Stone?"

"The Fast Track to Kayaking - For Beginners," by Portland, OR pro Sam Drevo won the Professional/Instructional category with his comprehensive beginner progression that starts with outfitting and moves through the roll with all the fundamental strokes in between. A "must-see" for beginner paddlers.

We asked producer Carey Robson what makes "The White Experience" so unique? "Just the passion of open canoe paddling for 29 years is probably totally weird in most people's minds. Paddling in December, January and February puts us into the lunatic fringe - even in Canada. My wife did most of the camera work. The mosquitoes at the take-out are voracious. It was a perfect trip."

There were two equally exciting documentaries aimed at our rivers and conservation. The "Raquette River Releases" by two-time "Best of show" winner Rick Gusic and Eric Martin's "North Fork of the Feather - brought to you by American Whitewater." One was filmed on the West Coast and the other the East Coast. Both entries provide the viewer with spectacular footage of these recent success stories by American Whitewater.

Nate Nash's "Royal Flush," was of the highest quality and was a film documenting the adventures of some of the world's best paddlers traveling to remote locations throughout the planet. Nate shot lots of 16-mm film and traveled through Laos, Costa Rica, US and NW Territories. Nate says, "I'm just trying to keep up with the rest of the boys out there..." Nate's next adventure is Ethiopia?

The presentation of LVM (Lunch Video Magazine), a quarterly-released video magazine by Penstock Productions, was an intensely interesting way of keeping up with what is new and happening in the world of whitewater kayaking. Their film contained the best segments of LVM issues. These guys go far and long to gather material for the publication - from events to people; they cover it all.

Two of the NOC's best instructors, Joe Holt and Brad Burden, teamed up to produce "Nitty Gritty" - a step-by-step playboating film produced in their backyard on the Natahala, Nolichucky, Ocoee and Tuckasegee rivers. These guys love anything to do with water and their enthusiasm shows it. With 4 kids, you know Joe has the patience to teach. As for the future, their next film will be a long-awaited video on "water-reading."

Why did "Jehovah's Wetness" producer and former European Free Style Champ Alex Nicks enter? "The phenomenal prize money ;-)" Alex took us for a first decent of the 4000 islands section of the Mekong in Laos. The film rocks. Alex's biggest influence? "The friends I have met travelling the 6 continents over the past 15 years and Kid Rock."

The NPFf even had a "R+" rated film by Boil Line Production's, "Freakz by Nature." The film starred no one, just the local paddlers of Corma, CA. Hold on to your seat and wear your helmet. It has hot spots both on and off the water from around the world! No telling where these guys will take you?

The 3-minute entry by Epicosity Project, Andrew Oberhardt and Ned Trice, entitled "Bryan Kirk Promo" the Super Ninja of

paddling! Though it was short, it rocked, had excellent photography and was well edited. Quality, not time, made this film.

"Y.S.P.," produced by Evan Ross, takes he and his friends from their hometown of Jackson Hole, WY, east and then to the Equator. They paddle everything in-between and concludes with the first decent of the Bull Lake Creek in the Wind River mountain range. The film has the big drops and crazy moves.

Young Gun Productions, Marlow Long with his film "The Next Generation," was all new school with the best free-style footage from Chile, Canada, Austria and the USA. When Marlow says "New School" he means it; all of the athletes are under the age of 19. The "Next Generation" came at you hard and never let up.

From the producer of "Paddle Snake Hunters", Accomplished/General Boating winner, Best of Show and Paddlers Choice, Milt Aitken, "I thought it would be fun to hear comments from paddle porn junkies. Long ago, Wayne Gentry's tapes were the only paddling video I had seen. I still like watching his tapes. He was running stuff in the early 90's that the new generation thinks they discovered." When asked if he was a boater? And how long?... "About 14'... assuming you're not getting too personal." What are your plans for the future? "... clear, blue water, plenty of stylish boaters and serious carnage! Perhaps I'll do a video on the virtues of open boating." If you saw "Paddle Snake Hunters," you wouldn't expect anything less.

It is the people that keep the NPFf rolling and, like our new friend Olaf says, "We hope the people see this with the same eyes."

The NPFf was a BIG SUCCESS. Thanks to the Bluegrass Wildwater Association, the dozens of volunteers who have given their time and energy, and the sponsors for their backing and expertise. We want to give a special thanks to some of the key people who helped make it all happen: Chris Hellmann, Don Spangler, Burgess Carey, Jim Dinger, Lynn & Rich Lewis, Barry Sipple, Tyler Cundiff, Philip Sisk, and Dave Thomas for their time, effort and patience.



National Paddling Film Festival 2003 WINNERS

AMATEUR/General Boating
WA Whitewater: Backyard Fun, Thomas O'Keefe, Seattle, WA

ACCOMPLISHED/General Boating
Paddlesnake Hunters, Milton Aitken, Marietta, GA

ACCOMPLISHED/Documentary
Search 2: More Paddlesurf Chronicles, Vince Shay, Shell Beach, CA

PROFESSIONAL/General Boating
Painkillers 2, Olaf Obsommer, Nussdorf am Inn, Germany

PROFESSIONAL/Instructional
Fast Track to Kayaking for Beginners, Sam Drevo, Portland, OR

PADDLER'S CHOICE AWARD
Paddlesnake Hunters, Milton Aitken, Marietta, GA

BEST OF SHOW
Paddlesnake Hunters, Milton Aitken, Marietta, GA

BEST PADDLING IMAGE
Josh Edgar Launches off Small Falls, ME, by Karyn Roy, Fairfield, ME

Please go to our website and find out more about the NPPF, including the descriptions of these and all the entries from the 2003 NPPF www.surfbwa.org/npff. You can also find out how to host your own Road Show, and see these films for yourself.

Please...Remember the generous support of
Our Sponsors for this Film Festival

Ace Adventure Center	American Whitewater
Applebee's	Boone Creek Anglers Club
Billy's Hickory Pit Bar-B-Q	Boof Gear
Barney Miller's	C.C. Howard Gray
Canoe & Kayak Magazine	The Underwear Guys
Chaco	J & H Outdoors
Crazy Creek	Kentucky Ale
Kentucky Eagle Distributors	Kokotat
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Leatherman	Mountain Surf
Lynn Images	Nantahala Outdoor Center
Menasha Ridge Press	Ohiopyle Prints
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Nature Outfitters	Pyranha
Paddler Magazine	Snapdragon
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Cooper Steel Fabricators, Nashville, TN
South States Contractors, Bowling Green, KY
Kentucky-American Water Co.



John Davis receiving William Nealy Award from Don Spangler, former NPPF Coordinator

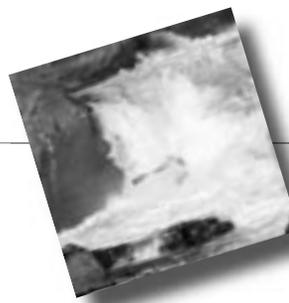
Yes, I'm in like, issue 3. I'm the guy with the yellow helmet running that nasty @#%

...this punk @## couldn't even make it into "you gonno eat that"

Liar

Liar

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Great Falls
photos by Neil Hermansdorfer

BigFork Whitewater Festival

For the 28th year, the Bigfork Whitewater Festival will be held on the Wild Mile stretch of the Swan river in Bigfork, Montana. The event is slated for May 30th - June 1st, 2003. Attendants have the opportunity to participate in a beginner or expert slalom race, downriver race, triathlon, and rodeo as well as a host of off water festivities including a live bands, an award dinner, and disco party.

As best as anyone can remember the Bigfork Fest started when a local bar owner offered free beer to whoever could paddle the Wild Mile fastest. In 1975 there was only a hand full of competitors and even fewer spectators. Today hundreds come to compete and watch the weekend's events.

As years of camaraderie and competition have gone by, the Bigfork Fest naturally became a steward for the area surrounding Swan River known as the Wild Mile Corridor. Funds raised from the festival help to support trail and park maintenance within the corridor as well as American Whitewater. Through local efforts and the work of AW, an agreement has recently been reached with dam and property owners to preserve the Wild Mile Corridor and enhance recreational activities. The agreement includes river access improvements through the removal of restrictive chain link fencing, building pedestrian walkways across the existing canal, easements for public access, and Wednesday evening whitewater releases July 1 through August 31. The agreement also provides significant access improvements over existing conditions and simultaneously protects wildlife habitat close to the Bigfork downtown area

The Big Fork Fest is a shining example of how AW hopes to encourage the use of responsible event planning to publicize successful conservation and access efforts. Events create a fun and interactive atmosphere that are perfect for letting both the boating public and the greater community know about the fantastic work being accomplished by AW and dedicated local volunteers. In 2003, the Big Fork Fest plans to continue its support of AW through a financial contribution after the event. AW hopes that whitewater enthusiasts will support this fantastic event, patronize the Big Fork community, and enjoy the beautiful Swan River.

Event Schedule

Friday: Registration at Garden bar 7:00-9:00 pm
Saturday: Registration at Garden Bar 7:00-9:00 am
 Community gear sale 9:30 -1:00 pm
 Beginner slalom 10-12 am
 Silent Auction 5:00- 9:00 pm
 Safety meeting 1:00 pm
 Expert slalom 2:00-6:00 pm
Sunday: Triathlon registration at Bigfork Athletic Club 7:30 am
 Registration at Garden Bar 7:00-9:00 am
 Down river race 10:00-12:00 am
 Competitors meeting 1:00 pm
 Rodeo starts 2:00 pm

**Awards ceremony and dinner at Garden Bar following rodeo.
 Disco party at Village Well.**

For triathlon info contact: Montana Athletic Club
 P.O. Box 337, Bigfork, MT 59911 • Tel 406-837-2582
 All other inquires contact: Mike Dezzani
 PO Box 2136, Columbia Falls, MT 59912
 Tel 406-388-9065 (before May 7) • Tel 406-892-2256 (after May 7)
 Email paddle2004@msn.com

Great Falls Race 2002

The Original Great Falls Race, organized in the 80's by Andy Bridge and Tom McEwan, was always held on the Virginia Spout each fall. This year was different and it wasn't completely because of water levels. It seemed that Tom was going through a phase to find new lines down the falls. For example, he has been pushing the local crowd to follow him down the river right side of the Spout. A place that had been considered off limits was now pock-marked with plastic scrapings from a red Prijon Fly.

So, a few weeks prior to the Oct. 27th date, amidst rumors the Great Falls Race may be on a non-traditional line, Tom was worried there might not be enough water to run ANY line. But Tom's worries washed away as race day approached and the rain continued to fall. The Potomac was fluctuating slightly, but remained well over 3 feet.

There are four standard lines to Great Falls, the Virginia side (and traditional race line), the Middle line, the Maryland side and Fish Ladder; each has a different ideal level. The day before the race the Potomac was just below 3.2 feet. This is a very tricky level as it is high for the Maryland and Virginia sides, but low for the Middle line and Fish Ladder. Holding true to the very distinctive Tom McEwan style – he chose one of the most difficult (and different) race lines that included a combination of the Middle and Maryland lines.

Competitors started out on the river right bank above Leonard's Leap on the Virginia side but instead of going downstream, racers ferried over to the top of Grace under Pressure. Grace is a short 3-foot slide/pour over onto a small platform, which then cascades down over a 15' waterfall. The majority of the water falls off to the left where it meets another channel coming in to form a big hydraulic. Racers needed to have a strong boof to clean the drop, with the fastest lines just right of center. After that, the competitors had to make a hard cut to river left through some boogie water to continue down the Maryland side. This is where things started to get interesting.

The next two drops looked huge, even from more than 200 yards away. A fairy above Charlie's Hole¹ was necessary to set up for the next rapid, Z turn. Z turn is very big at this level, and racers had to navigate their way on top of a series of pillows, from right to left, to avoid spending time in the numerous large holes. A bad line here could result in serious consequences because not far below was the next rapid, Horseshoe. Horseshoe is a huge pour over with a particularly bad reputation for its retentiveness. At this level, there is not a lot of time, and very few eddies between Z turn and Horseshoe. At normal flows, Horseshoe is predominately run on river right. At this level, the line is on the usually rock-covered river left side over 'the point'. Racers boofed over 'the point', cleared a few more holes, and were at the finish line.

Everyone had strong lines, with junior slalom competitor Eric Ameson finishing first in his C-1 with an impressive time of 1:22: 99. Eric Brooks came in second with 1:35:92 and Tom McEwan rounded out the top three with his time of 1:41:80. Everyone seemed pleased with the results, including the large crowd of spectators that had practically filled the observation decks. A racers brunch was held at the Old Brogue where prizes were handed out (thanks to Ursy Potter) and bets were placed on next year's results. Will Tom be able to gain momentum on his ever-progressing pack of young protégés? Only time will tell.

¹ Charlie's Hole is a very deep, sticky hole with several undercut shelves downstream. It claimed the life of one kayaker in 1998.

Calendar of Events 2003

Dates	Type	Events	Location	Website/E-mail	Phone
May 2-3	AW Presence	Cheat River Festival	Albright, WV	http://www.cheat.org	304-329-3621
May 3	AW Presence	Obed River Festival	Wartburg, TN	dscruggs@utk.edu	
May 9-10	AW Champion Event	French Broad River Festival	Asheville, NC	http://www.frenchbroadriverfest.com	828-253-1240
May 17-18	AW Champion Event	Coosa Whitewater Festival	Wetumpka, AL	lonniegc@bellsouth.net	334-272-0952
May 17-18	AW Presence	Clackamas Whitewater Festival	Milwaukie, OR		503-788-3077
May 30-June 1	AW Champion Event	Bigfork River Festival	Bigfork, MT	paddle2004@msn.com	406-892-2256
May 30-June 1	AW Champion Event	Potomac Whitewater Festival	Great Falls, VA	http://www.potomacfest.com	301-770-7453
June 12-15		Fibark Festival	Salida, CO	http://www.vtinet.com/fibark/	877-772-5432
August 2-3	AW RiverFest	Deerfield RiverFest	Charlemont, MA	http://www.americanwhitewater.org/events	828-252-0728
September 19-21	AW RiverFest	Gauley RiverFest	Summersville, WV	http://www.americanwhitewater.org/events	828-252-0728
September 27-28	AW Champion Event	Ohiopyle Falls Race	Ohiopyle, PA	legacy@allterrainprojects.com	412-362-1916
October 4-5	AW Champion Event	Russell Fork Rendezvous	Elkhorn City, KY	http://surfbwa.org/russellfork/	859-296-4967
October 18-19	AW Presence	Moose River Festival	Old Forge, NY	ckoll1234@aol.com	315-652-8397
October 31 - Nov 2	AW Presence	NOC Guest Appreciation Festival	Bryson City, NC	programs@noc.com	800-232-7238 ext. 600

AW Event Types

AW Champion Events are independent events that have made a financial pledge to AW, in support of its conservation and access work, and in return are encouraged to use AW's Journal, website, electronic newsletter, and experience hosting events to help promote their own event.

AW Presence Events are independent events that have at their core the mission of protecting and restoring whitewater rivers. AW supports these local events by working with AW's dedicated local volunteers to set up information booths and educate the attending public about its conservation and access work at the local, regional, and national levels.

AW RiverFests are the flagship events of American Whitewater's events program. The 2003 series includes three events geographically distributed across the country. Each location was selected for its proximity to a wide range of outdoor recreation activities, each river is the home of a nationally significant and successful river conservation/access project, and each venue was selected for its proximity to whitewater enthusiasts.

AW Member Appreciation Sites were the idea of AW board member Sutton Bacon. Sutton's idea was to have small local AW sponsored events that thanked paddlers for being AW members and encouraged new enthusiasts to join the AW ranks. Last year's Tallulah event was wildly successful. Watch for new sites across the country.

Attack them my pet!
Make them stop taunting me!

LVM Brotha!

Yea, LVM you dummy!

Curtis

Andy

LVM

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2003
**Potomac
Whitewater
Festival**

Great Falls National Park, VA

Friday, May 30 -
Sunday, June 1

Proceeds to benefit:



Register on-line at:
Active.com

Event Details Available



Potomacfest.com

Conservation

Settlement Agreement Finalized for the Bigfork Hydropower Project, Swan River, Montana

American Whitewater recently signed a Recreation Settlement Agreement with PacifiCorp for the hydropower project located on the Swan River, Montana. The Agreement includes river access improvements through the removal of restrictive chain link fencing and building pedestrian walkways across the existing canal, easements for public access for the 30 year life of the new license on non-project lands and Wednesday evening whitewater releases July 1 through August 31 annually. PacifiCorp filed the Recreation Settlement Agreement for the Bigfork Hydropower Project to the FERC on November 8, 2002.

This Recreation Settlement Agreement solidifies continued public access to the Swan River previously threatened by sale of PacifiCorp's 500 acres of non-project lands adjacent to the Swan River and reservoir. The Agreement also provides significant access improvements over existing conditions and simultaneously protects wildlife habitat close to the Bigfork downtown area. Once the PacifiCorp staff recognized our collective interests in the Swan River corridor they focused on developing a Recreation Settlement Agreement to meet the needs of the local community. The final outcome is an agreement PacifiCorp and the local parties support.

We anticipate the FERC to issue a new license for the Bigfork Project in early 2003.

Whitewater Flow Studies on Klamath River, Oregon

September 13th through 17th, 2002 American Whitewater conducted Whitewater Controlled Flow Studies on two reaches of the Klamath River in Oregon: the sixteen-mile Class IV Hell's Corner Reach and the five-mile Class IV reach between the Dam and powerhouse known as the JC Boyle bypass. The studies are part of the relicensing process for PacifiCorp's Klamath River Hydropower

Project, FERC No. 2082. The license for the Klamath project expires in 2006.

The Hells Corner reach is routinely used by commercial outfitters located in northern California and southern Oregon. This section of the Klamath has historically provided dependable summer whitewater flows due to the presence of the hydropower project just upstream. More recently, fluctuations in power markets associated with de-regulation have disrupted the daily schedule of releases making this reach less dependable. Flows of 1 and 2 turbines are clearly preferred by outfitters and private boaters alike under present hydropower operating conditions. There is no telling what restrictions will be placed on the new license. For that reason, American Whitewater along with the commercial outfitters operating on the Klamath felt a Whitewater Controlled Flow Study was necessary to clearly delineate the flow thresholds at which whitewater recreation became undesirable and even unsafe. The flow study examined flows of 700, 1000, 1300 and 1700 cfs on the Hells Corner reach. Flows less than 1000 cfs were considered undesirable.

PacifiCorp's project operations dewater the five mile JC Boyle stretch of the Klamath River below a flow suitable for whitewater recreation. This stretch between JC Boyle dam and powerhouse contains nine distinct Class IV rapids some of which are as much as a half mile in length. At the higher flows of 1300 and 1600 cfs there are numerous play features to catch on the fly as well as several play spots with eddy service. The long rapids with steep horizon lines are plenty for entertaining river runners. Overall, this reach has a creek-like appearance in a basalt canyon with ponderosa pines. The flow study examined flows of 700, 1000, 1300 and 1600 cfs on the JC Boyle reach. Flows less than 1000 cfs were considered undesirable.

American Whitewater will work with commercial outfitters, PacifiCorp and other stakeholders in the relicensing proceeding developing alternative hydrographs for the new license that provide opportunities for whitewater recreation in the respective reaches. For more information or if you would like to participate in this relicensing proceeding contact John Gangemi jgangemi@digisys.net.

Settlement Agreement Reached for the Kern River No. 3 Hydropower Project, California

In December, 2002, American Whitewater, Friends of the River, and Southern California Edison (SCE) signed a Settlement Agreement for whitewater releases from Fairview Dam on the upper Kern River above the community of Kernville, California. Whitewater releases for the Kern River No. 3 (KR3) Hydropower project, licensed by the FERC in 1997, have been locked up in a five-year legal battle. The signing theoretically brings to an end this legal challenge with the potential for implementation of a new whitewater release schedule in April 2003. The Agreement increases the number of days for whitewater releases to 39 days annually as well as matches release volumes to kayak and rafting preferences.

The KR3 hydropower project will provide the following schedule of whitewater releases below Fairview Dam beginning no later than 10 a.m. and ending no earlier than 5 p.m.:

1. April 1st to the weekend before Memorial Day weekend SCE will provide Friday, Saturday and Sunday releases:
 - a. If between 1,000 cfs and 1,300 cfs is in the Kern River at Fairview Dam, SCE will release 700 cfs below Fairview Dam
 - b. If 1,700 cfs or greater is in the Kern River at Fairview Dam, SCE will release 1,400 cfs below Fairview Dam.
2. Daily between the weekend before the Memorial Day weekend and July 4th:
 - a. If between 1,000 cfs and 1,300 cfs is in the Kern River at Fairview Dam, SCE will release 700 cfs below Fairview Dam.
 - b. If 1,700 cfs or greater is in the Kern River at Fairview Dam, SCE will release 1,400 cfs below Fairview Dam.
3. Weekends after July 4th and up to July 31st:
 - a. If between 1,000 cfs and 1,300 cfs is in the Kern River at Fairview Dam, SCE will release 700 cfs below Fairview Dam.
 - b. If 1,700 cfs or greater is in the Kern River at Fairview Dam, SCE will release 1,400 cfs below Fairview Dam.

Brief History of Kern River lawsuit

American Whitewater and Friends of the River filed two successful lawsuits challenging the U.S. Forest Service's recommendations for whitewater releases from Fairview Dam in the new hydropower operating license. American Whitewater and Friends of the River discovered that the Forest Service's recommendations did not comply with the local Forest Plan and failed to satisfactorily mitigate the impacts to whitewater resources resulting from hydropower project construction and operation. Because of the successful lawsuit the FERC issued a new license to SCE for the KR3 hydropower project in 1997 without a whitewater release schedule. The whitewater release schedule was to be included in the license once the lawsuit was resolved. SCE, American Whitewater and Friends of the River elected to enter into settlement negotiations

to craft a mutually agreeable whitewater flow schedule rather than let the court prescribe one.

Resources impacted by the KR3 Hydropower Project

The KR3 hydropower project diverts 600 cfs in a canal around seventeen-miles of the Kern River. Flows in excess of 600 cfs typically occur during the spring and early summer coinciding with Sierra snowmelt. When inflows to Fairview Dam exceed 600 cfs the dam spills water into this seventeen-mile reach. The hydropower project has no water storage capacity. Whitewater opportunities in this seventeen-mile reach range from Class II to V depending on where you launch and take-out.

Next Steps

The Settlement Agreement was submitted to the U.S. Forest Service and Ninth Circuit Court in January. As of this writing it is uncertain if the U.S. Forest Service plans to release the proposed schedule in an environmental assessment format for public review. Once approved by the U.S. Forest Service, SCE will adopt the whitewater schedule in the Settlement Agreement. American Whitewater encourages boaters to file comments in support of the Settlement Agreement.



The logo for LVM (Lunch Video Magazine) features a large, stylized, black-outlined letter 'D' that forms a frame. Inside the frame, the letters 'LVM' are written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Below 'LVM', the words 'LUNCH VIDEO MAGAZINE' are written in a smaller, black, sans-serif font.

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Whitewater Schedule Included in New Hydropower License for the Carpenter-Rommel Project on the Ouachita River, Arkansas

In December 2002, the FERC issued a new license for the Carpenter-Rommel Hydropower project on the Ouachita River in Arkansas. The new license calls for three-hour releases of 3600 cfs every Saturday and Sunday from Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day and include Memorial and Labor Day. Releases are scheduled to occur between 12 noon and 5 PM. In addition, the Licensee will provide up to four special whitewater releases during the course of the year that will consist of 3600 cfs releases for up to six hours to support swift-water rescue training and other educational and organizational type events.

The Ouachita River below Rommel Dam is often the only summer Class II high quality whitewater in the South Central U.S. This popular 5-mile Class I river contains two class II ledges (known as Rockport) near the end at the Interstate 30 bridge near Malvern, Arkansas. The main significance of the river is that the ledges offer excellent whitewater play and training (paddling and rescue) opportunities during times of full generation from Rommel Dam. The new license guarantees the Ouachita will continue to be a summer paddling destination for South Central boaters for the next 50 years.

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Conservation Shorts

By Kevin Colburn

Paddlers Celebrate Several Huge Successes on the Upper Ocoee!

On February 24th the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) announced several significant changes in their policy on recreational releases on the Upper Ocoee (TN). Prior to that release the river was scheduled to be completely dewatered in 2003 and beyond. Now however there will likely be 20 days of recreational releases in 2003 and as many as 74 annual releases in the years to follow.

The sudden change occurred after the TVA moved the Ocoee River issue from their power generation program to their economic development program. This critical TVA decision was the result of constant pressure from American Whitewater and the Ocoee Outfitters Association, public outcry that resulted from our outreach work at the Teva Whitewater National Championships last October, strong support from other state and federal agencies, and a strong leadership role played by Congressman Zach Wamp. This change was a critical step in achieving fair releases on the Upper Ocoee, and we commend the TVA for this socially responsible decision.

With the change in the departments of TVA that are in charge of the Ocoee issue came several significant results. The first is an offer to the outfitters that would allow them to purchase 20 releases in 2003 for commercial and non-commercial use. This unexpected offer not only erased previous years' shortfalls but also offered the releases at a significantly lower cost than in previous years. The price that the outfitters must pay TVA for releases is \$4.00 per customer, assuming that 1400 customers will be taken down the river each day. This works out to a daily fee of \$5600 for a recreational release. While the TVA is still demanding full cost recovery, that cost has fallen sharply, and is now in the cost range we have long considered realistic and the outfitters consider reasonable. American Whitewater views this offer by TVA as a responsible short-term solution to the Ocoee issue.

The second and even more exciting change that TVA's programmatic shift has brought about is the creation of the "Kitchen Cabinet." This cabinet will be made up of TVA, and various regional stakeholders and will seek to enhance the economic viability of the Ocoee Region through various ways, including enhancing recreation flows in the Upper Ocoee. The goal of the group is to design a long-term strategy in 2003 that will remain in effect until 2019. American Whitewater will be attending meetings of the Water Resources subcommittee of the Kitchen Cabinet at least every two weeks for the next few months to lend our expertise to the group. The group's goal is to fully implement the preferred alternative from a 1997 Environmental Impact Statement that recommended 54 days of releases annually in the Upper Ocoee for commercial and non-commercial use and up to 20 additional days of releases for water based events.

If the goals of the Kitchen Cabinet sound familiar it is because they are very similar to the goals American Whitewater has been pursuing for the last 7 years. We consider this a major success and will now continue to work hard to bring those goals to fruition. If there is one issue that will remain contentious it is almost certainly fees. There are Polk County interests that want to charge private paddlers an amusement tax, TVA is still at this time demanding full cost recovery, and the Outfitters still have limits on the customers they are able to attract and the fees they are able to afford. This being said, we are confident that a solution exists and we are excited to work with the Kitchen Cabinet to develop a working long-term solution to the problem of recreational releases on the Upper Ocoee.

The current administration has attempted yet again to weaken a critical piece of environmental and public health legislation; The Clean Water Act. This attempt came in

Clean Water Act Threatened

the form of an "Advanced Notice for Public Rule Making on the Clean Water Act" that addressed the "Regulatory Definition of Waters of the United States." The intention of the Rule Making is to clarify which water bodies are eligible to receive protection under the Clean Water Act. The action was clearly in response to pressure to remove "isolated, intrastate, non-navigable waters" from protection. Many of the rivers that we regularly paddle could be affected directly or indirectly by such a change, and our health and rivers could be at risk. Most at risk are small headwater streams and wetlands, which of course flow directly into larger streams and so on. The Environmental Protection Agency received so many comments that they have extended the public comment period until mid-April. Please check the American Whitewater web site for information on how to file comments to the EPA, and take part in this very important public process.

Access Shorts

By Kevin Colburn

Chattooga Boating Study Out and Ready for Comment (NC/SC/GA)

The Environmental Impact Statement that addresses opening the Headwaters of the Chattooga River (NC/SC/GA) to paddling should be out and available for comment at this time. Please check the American Whitewater website to review out comments and send your own. This is a critical issue for all paddlers who recreate on rivers flowing through Forest Service lands to participate in.

Buckle Up!

By Joey Hitchens

In the past five years, technical innovations have literally brought the sport of freestyle kayaking to a new dimension, "THE AIREAL DIMENSION". While some super-cool developments have made kayaking much more comfortable, others have made the sport much more dynamic such as, shorter boat length, harder rails, more rocker and the list goes on. We're not fooling ourselves here, just like anything else people have taken the sport of freestyle kayaking to new bigger, higher and dynamic playing fields. One of the relatively new additions to the sport of freestyle kayaking has been the introduction of the seatbelt.

A fellow kayaker came up with the idea of moving the safety convention of a car seatbelt into the kayak. To be honest, when I first saw this three years ago, I thought it was a crazy idea. But the seatbelt is now becoming the "norm" with professional boaters. Last fall I decided to incorporate the seatbelt into my Flip Stick and, well, it has made a world of difference.

One of the most important aspects of freestyle kayaking is OUTFITTING! What you put in your kayak will have a big impact on how the kayak performs in the water. The kayak should move when you want it to, and the less delay the better.

The seatbelt offers a new level of precision, a level of precision the sport has needed for some time.

Now I'm not saying that everybody who owns a kayak should go out and put in a seatbelt. A seatbelt suits the people who are well above the intermediate level of freestyle kayaking. You should have a super solid roll, be confident in class 4+ whitewater and most importantly use the seatbelt with respect. The seatbelt that is intended to take you higher in the air, can just as quickly become the last string between you staying underwater for the rest of the day or getting back to the surface for another breath.

The seatbelt is not meant for use while CREEKING or River Running. Let me say that again. The seatbelt is not meant for use while CREEKING or River Running.

Like most things in life, there is a time and a place for everything. The place for this seatbelt is primarily while your "park & playing" and boogie boating on a river that you are extremely familiar with.

The thing we all must consider is, can we get out if we need to. I am a professional kayaker and the thought of swimming doesn't enter my mind that often. That is until last spring when my brother Chad had his kayak literally ripped off his body after a five-foot aerial blunt at the BUSEATER play spot on the Ottawa River. He wasn't wearing a seatbelt, but would it have helped him anyway? It might have kept his boat on, but

would his skirt have stayed on? Then would the seatbelt have become a burdensome hassle to undo? Chad swam about one kilometer in water that was about 4 degrees Celsius. For those of you who don't know, this situation could have easily been turned to a case of hypothermia. To say the least, this incident was a wake-up call for all of us on the river that day. And Chad was happy he had decided not to strap in that time!

I have debated the seatbelt issue with many people in recent months. Some are open to the idea, and interested. Others are disgusted at the risk and danger they feel comes with putting a seatbelt in a boat. Some don't care much at all and are just happy to be in a boat with or without a seatbelt.

The advantages of strapping yourself into a kayak are that the boat really becomes a part of your body. When you move one inch, your kayak moves that inch with you. Without a seatbelt, most kayaks are outfitted with hip pads made out of mini-cell foam that compresses and holds its compressed form as long as there is pressure on it, but springs back to its original shape when the pressure is removed. However, over time with multiple compressions, the hip pad foam will slowly lose its original shape. I have found with the seatbelt that there is no need for hip pads.

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The American Whitewater Amazing River Rescue Writing Contest

River rescues are not always pretty. They can be cold, wet, and frightening. But now and then you hear some remarkable accounts of paddlers who showed unusual skill, innovation, courage, and tenacity while making a difficult rescue. Aside from being exciting and uplifting, these stories illustrate how other paddlers were able to master a dangerous situation. The lessons they learned and the examples they set might help others who encounter similar problems.

We'd like to highlight the best stories of successful river rescues with the first American Whitewater Amazing River Rescue Writing Contest.

To enter, write about a rescue that you were involved in during the last five years. Whether you were the rescuer, a member of the rescue party, or the person assisted by a particularly notable rescue, tell us what happened. Feel free to include any graphics or images that will help tell the story. And yes, we are interested in stories of intense self-rescues, too!

Deadline for submission: July 31, 2003.

Email your submission to Charlie Walbridge at safety@amwhitewater.org

The American Whitewater Safety Committee will assemble a panel of experts to review all submissions. The primary criteria for the judges include 1) the seriousness of the situation, 2) the innovation and leadership shown during the rescue 3) the courage, and tenacity of the people involved, and 4) the writing skills of the author. We will award a Spectra throwbag by Lotus Designs to the winning author(s) and announce the winner(s) and publish the winning stories in the November/December issue of American Whitewater.

But when you buckle up, you have to remember that you have not just the one task of pulling off your skirt, but the second task of releasing the seatbelt. And you might be thinking, "Just how hard is it to pull off a seat belt?" Well, my friend, most of the seatbelt conventions today are straps taken from other rigging systems like the ratchet back band straps from other kayaks. These straps were not designed to be used as seatbelts and therefore don't have an easily accessible quick release.

Most of us who use these seatbelt systems are comfortable and well aware of the risks involved. Like most professionals we take calculated risks, not crazy risks! These are some of the things one must think about and be comfortable with before installing a seatbelt.

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Paddling: Is it Worth the Risk?

by Gary Edgeworth

This past June I had to do a lot of soul searching when my hero and friend died in upper South Boulder Creek. It was a bad day in a place I have had other bad days in; I almost died there the year before in an underwater wedge pin.

My wife, family, and non-paddling friends ask me why I do this sport. They think I'm just an adrenaline junkie and I answer, "If you don't do it you won't understand." I feel the need to explain it to them as much for my benefit as for theirs.

This sport is not about who's the best or how big you go. It's about friends, unreal places, personal limits, and mental strength. This sport brings all walks of life together in search of the same goal: to live life to the fullest.

I have a group of eight or so paddling friends that I have spent the last 5 years with, paddling all over the country. These friends

are some of the most important people in my life - on and off the water. Most people will never be called to put their lives at risk for a friend, yet, in kayaking, it happens everyday somewhere in the world. Water enthusiasts are special people with special values that create an untouchable bond between paddling partners. Friends and living life are the reason we are out there.

The places that I have been kayaking and what I've witnessed from my boat are simply beyond words. I've seen bear, moose, bobcat, and mountain lions. I've seen bald eagles hit the water and come out with a fish in their talons, towering walls hundreds of feet above me, and trees so thick they create a roof over the river. From the aqua blue waters in Washington, to the crystal clear rivers in California and the Rocky Mountain watershed, whitewater gives us a purpose and motivation to get out and see the world as it was meant to be discovered.

You don't have to be an "adrenaline junkie" to set and achieve your personal goals in whitewater. Everyone has his or her comfort zone; some like it right there and others push themselves beyond it. Either way, you're out there getting it done.

Running whitewater gives us a chance to face our fears and improve our mental toughness. Paddlers make life-threatening decisions on the fly and then follow those decisions through. Whitewater is no joke; it's relentless, unstoppable, and lethal for egos and for those who show a lack of respect. Whether it be Class III or Class V, when I am out with my buddy's, I make my own decision to run or walk, to go left or right. This is an important process that takes place a hundred times in a run. Daring someone to run something is usually not tolerated - it's an individual sport and you live and die by your decisions.

My favorite thing about kayaking is searching for that perfect moment we've all had while paddling. I like the focus and the feeling I get above a big, scary drop (it's like tunnel vision). I like seeing some of my closest friends smiling and sharing what we have or are doing; looking up into the chaos after a run and knowing for this day the river made you special. The beauty of the unseen places that only a small watercraft can get to. The serenity and peacefulness, the campfires and the quality of people you spend these moments in life with. The bottom line is that whitewater is about the people next to you, so yes, it's worth the risk to me. 



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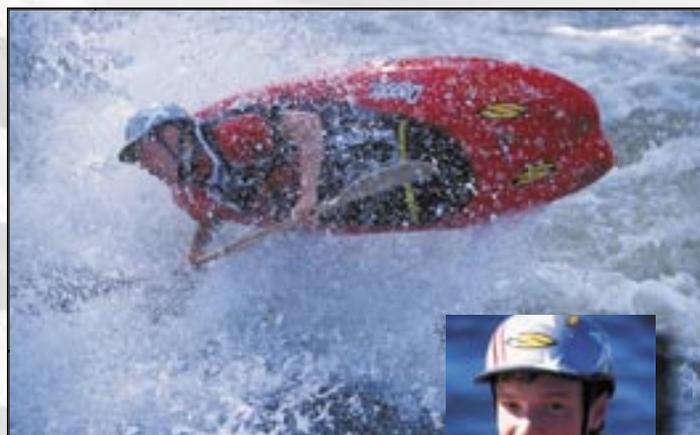
Athletes Chosen at Trials in Ottawa

by Phil Urban

The Worlds! Just those two words can quicken the pulse of any freestyle competitor. Every two years the best of the world's freestyle whitewater athletes gather for a competition and Olympic style celebration of our sport, our community, and the host community. This year the competition will be held in Graz, Austria on the Mur River in the beautiful city's center. Over 400 athletes from more than 40 countries and 6 continents will gather at the end of May for the week long biennial spectacle. A medal at the Worlds is the highest prize in freestyle, but every athlete there already has the honor of representing their country. Every one of these paddlers is an inspiration and the pride of some local community, and every one is already a winner. Most dream of a medal, and some have a realistic chance, but all are very happy just to be there. There is competitive tension throughout the week, but there is also a wonderful camaraderie and all who have experienced it want to return. As at the last Worlds in Sort, Spain, the awards ceremonies will be held in an old town square under the spires of an ancient church.

To compete at Worlds, an athlete must paddle for their national team. Making the US Freestyle Team is a major achievement in itself. For a variety of reasons, the US has the deepest and most talented team in the world; it could be argued that the field for the US Team Trials is deeper the field at Worlds. Most of this year's team was chosen last fall on the Ottawa, concurrent with the Canadian Team Trials, and hosted by the Liquid Skills Showdown. There were two events where most classes were chosen. Both events counted equally with points awarded for placement in each event and then tallied for an overall score and a place on the team for the deserving few.

The first event, the Horseshoe Huckfest, was three days long and held at McCoy's Chute. Most of the rides were in the left side of the beefy Horseshoe Hole. There were plenty of hucks, but advancing through the rounds required good variety scores as well. Some dreams were drowned here, but even a mid-field finish left open the possibility of a good placing at the next event and a spot on the team. There were familiar names in the men's semis like Eric Jackson, Clay Wright, and Dan Gavere. Some of the more recently established guys like Jay Kincaid, Bryan Kirk, Andrew Holcombe, Jimmy Blakeney, Andre Spino-Smith, Macy Burnham, and Javid Grubs also made semis. And there were a couple of the recently graduated hot juniors like Sean Brabant and Dustin Urban who made the cut, with Marlow Long in 16th, just missing it. In the finals, Jay continued his season of dominance with a victory. Dustin, 18, came in second in his first men's competition and Andre, Clay, and Andrew rounded out the top five.



Dustin Urban, reigning Worlds Junior Silver medallist, busted a couple of Helices and made the Men's K-1 team to go along with his squirt slot and his third US team. Photos by Jock Bradley / Rippin' Productions

The women were rockin' too. Harriet Taylor, Tanya Shuman, Shannon Carroll, and Eleanor Perry joined the winner, Brooke Winger, in the finals. There were some other established names in the semis like Whitney Lonsdale, Amy Jimmerson, and recently graduated junior Becky Anderson. As in the men's competition there were familiar faces mixed with new ones making their first move on the national scene. Devon Barker, Darren Eddy, Tracey Sage, Courtney Lynch, Jessie Stone, Kristin Podolak, and Stacey Johnson filled out the semis.

The juniors continued to show that youth is no hindrance in this sport, with Pat Keller throwing down rides that would have placed well in the men's competition. Tristan McClaren, Michael Quinif, Max Bechdel, and Chris Stafford joined Pat in the finals, and the semis were filled out by the future of the sport with paddlers Rush Sturges, Mia Shields, Jon Meyers, Ian Mickle, Daniel Simenc, Jonathan Sanders, Michael Edminston, Matt Stiefel, Chris Schell, and Tyler Bradt.

In C-1, Bill McKnight went big and stayed consistent to win followed by Dan Burke, old friend to many Shane Benedict, Brooks Baldwin, Bradley Pitts, Seth Chapelle, and Joe Stumpf. It was a small field and everyone remained in contention headed for the Garb a couple days later.



it, some did not, but either way catching the wave was not a given. Paddlers had to become much more conservative just to stay on the wave. It was still very exciting, but all agreed it was a disappointment that the final day of Team Trials came down to staying on the wave as much as going big. There was plenty of drama though, since so much was at stake.

In Men's, "Young Gun" Marlow Long went big consistently and just edged Jay Kincaid for the win to secure sixth boat on his fourth US team. He was the only athlete in Men's to make the team who did not make semis in both events. He needed to go big at the end and he did! With a first and a second, Jay closed out his season of excellence and earned first boat honors. Andrew Holcombe, of "Johnny Utah" fame, paddled great, joining Jay as the only athlete to make finals in both events and earned second boat and a place on his third US team. EJ finished strong, as always, and made his tenth straight national team, though as reigning World champ he already had a bye.

New move master, Javid Grubs, will get a chance to break out some fresh moves in Graz after two high finishes. Dustin Urban,

At 16, Pat Keller is a veteran of years of comps and one of the best hair boaters in the world of any age. He won both events at the trials.

Photos by Jock Bradley / Rippin' Productions

In the afternoon of day three, following the Men's Huckfest finals, the Squirt Team Trials were held at the feature called Pushbutton. This spot offered a wavehole and an interesting seam that was really three currents converging with the "squeeze point" a somewhat hard to predict spot. Good controlled mysteries were possible here with the occasional ride punctuated by a return to the surface for a breath of air and then a return to the deep. The competition was the first to use a new set of rules that did an excellent job of measuring the quality of a routine while staying true to the roots of the beautiful flowing dance that squirt can be. Moves were assigned a weighted value, but only scored once, and style and downtime were factored in.

This competition saw the introduction of some new moves and the further emergence of Dustin Urban and Deb O'Keefe as groundbreaking paddlers. Clay Wright squeezed back into his Drain to score well and join Eugene's Jacob Selendor on the US team. 2001 Worlds Bronze medallist Tom McKee will round out the US Squirt Team with a well-earned bye. Brooke Winger and Andy Bedingfield, both 2001 Worlds Squirt Gold Medallists, have retired from competitive squirting.

The second freestyle event was held on the world famous Garberator Wave. Expectations were high as paddlers were going huge in practice on this very fast and dynamic feature. Donkey Flips, the new Helix, Panams, and the like were being thrown. This had the look of a new and exciting chapter in freestyle competition. Big air was the norm and with a bonus in place for inverted aerial moves, it was a treat to watch. The prelims were quite exciting, though the water level had dropped to less than optimum. Unfortunately, the water dropped even further for the next day's finals. Just catching the wave proved difficult.

Dan Gavere and friends built a plywood launching deck on the ledge next to the diagonal feeding the wave. Some chose to use



photo by Juan Acosta

In Men's, "Young Gun" Marlow Long went big consistently.



River Voices

Team USA Psyched for Worlds continued



Tanya Shuman has continued to raise her level of paddling and aggressiveness and finished second to improve on her previous third and earn second boat.

Photos by Jock Bradley / Rippin' Productions

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reigning Worlds Junior Silver medallist, busted a couple of Helices and made the Men's K-1 team to go along with his squirt slot and his third US team. Jimmy Blakeney paddled with a severe rib injury forcing him to Blunt to one side only, but he showed courage and guile and placed high enough to make his third US team. Reigning Worlds Bronze medallist Bryan Kirk wowed the crowd with a Helix and other big airs and made his third US team. Sean Brabant made the semis in both events and his huge aerial Backstabs propelled him to his third US team. As the reigning Worlds Junior Gold medallist, Jesse Murphy, a.k.a. Weasel, received a bye onto the Men's team and Eric Southwick rode his Worlds Silver medal to the final slot on the team.

Two years ago the US Men's team was mostly made up of a bunch of venerable "geezer". This year's team still has the 39 year-old warrior and paddling icon, EJ, but the next generation has arrived. Dustin, Marlow, Sean, and Jesse are all 18 years old! They were all part of the junior team that swept the medals at the 2001 Worlds and caused a sensation in Sort. Now Jay, Andrew, Javid, Jimmy, Bryan, and Wick become the seasoned veterans with an average age of only 24. Every member of this team is pushing the boundaries of the sport. Any one of these athletes could be considered a favorite to medal.

Some of the women were getting nice air in practice on the Garb, but the poor water levels brought them back to the surface in the competition. Brooke Winger followed up her Huckfest first with a third on the Garb to finish first boat and place her on her sixth consecutive US team. Tanya Shuman has continued to raise her level of paddling and aggressiveness and finished second to improve on her previous third and earn second boat. Devon Barker and Polly Green are both in their 30s and both made their first US team. Polly missed the semis at the Huckfest but, like Marlow in Men's, won the Garb event to pull out a place on the team. Both of these women have extensive global paddling experience outside the rodeo world. Steep creeking diva Shannon Carroll made her second US team with two solid finishes. Becky Anderson, 18, and Brenna Kelleher, 19, represent the next generation on the women's team. Becky scored the Bronze, and Brenna was the Junior Gold medallist at the Worlds in Spain. Reigning Worlds Gold medallist Erica Mitchell will, like Brooke, be on her sixth US team. Brooke, Tanya, Shannon, and Erica form a nucleus of familiar names that are always showing up on podiums. With two up and coming teens and two veteran women all making their first US Women's team, this is a very strong and nicely rounded group. With the help of boats that are finally being designed for women and a new sense of what's possible, all of these athletes are paddling at a level that would have won men's pro rodeos just a few years ago. Like the men, any one of these athletes could medal, and some almost certainly will.

The C-1 class is small in number but always hotly contested at the highest level. These guys use their leverage to clean and air on almost every ride. Bill McKnight built on his Pre-Worlds Gold by winning the trials. Brooks Baldwin, 19, joined Dan Burke, 21, as the new young blood on the team. DC area paddlers Joe Stumpf and Luke Hopkins made the team with Luke looking for his third C-1 medal at the Worlds level. Reigning Worlds Gold medallist Barry Kennon rounds out the team and brings his special enthusiasm and talent to another very strong US C-1 team.

Once again the US will send a very strong junior team composed of the latest phenoms. Pat Keller and Michael "Mike D" Quinif finished first and second. At 16, Pat is a veteran of years of comps and one of the best hair boaters in the world of any age. He won both events at the trials. Mike D throws airs with the best of the men and will be on his second US team after a finals appearance in both events. Rush Sturgis is another "Young Guns" video athlete and he'll be representing the US for the first time after knocking on the door for several years. Tristan McClaran and Max Bechdal, both 17, are first timers and classmates at McCall Donnelly High School in Idaho. Max is the son of Les Bechdal who paddled in his first Worlds in Austria as well, back in 1963. Les paddled slalom and wildwater C-2. The team is completed by 15 year-old Dan "Skippy" Simenc. The average age on this team is only 16, but they average 8 years of paddling experience! All will still be eligible as juniors next year. Some of these athletes have attended schools like Adventure Quest and World Class Kayak Academy while others are home schooled. Almost every junior athlete, male or female, has trained with David Hughes of Huge Experiences. This next generation brings the commitment and skills that have them paddling on a level that challenges the adults on the team.

The Junior women continue to grow as a class, both in size and skills. The Sort Worlds was the first time junior women competed on the international stage. This year's US team is made up of Brooke Bevan, 15, Hanna Farrar and Ali Wade, both 16, and Celeste Powers, 17. They provided a very entertaining competition

Liquid Skills is incredibly proud to announce that SIX of our instructors have qualified for the Canadian Freestyle Team and will be taking their shot at the world's title this May in Austria!

Their commitment towards the pursuit of excellence is something that we value dearly at Liquid Skills. We wish them the very best of luck in Austria, and want to take this opportunity to let them know how proud we are!

**Tyler Curtis
Brendan Mark
Ruth Gordon
Bruce Monkman
Cindy Jamieson
Anna Levesque**

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River Voices

Team USA Psyched for Worlds continued

and will be pushing the women in a few short years. Every one of them mentions a family member as a paddling mentor. How lucky they are to have the support and the skill to have earned the opportunity to expand the world of women's paddling and travel to Austria.

Open boat team trials were held on the Ocoee the weekend of the national championships. Seth Chapelle, 14, stunned the field with a first place finish. He will be joined by Andrew Bell and two time Worlds Gold Medallist Eli Helbert, who will compete with a bye. Seth is from the DC area and has a large following of people who recognize a talent and a special young guy. As with other athletes, some of his sponsors are members of his local paddling club. Eli is going for the first whitewater Worlds triple crown.

This year's national team is 43 members strong. It ranges in age from 14-year-

old OC1er Seth Chapelle to 39-year-old reigning World K-1 Champ Eric Jackson. There are athletes from 14 states and almost every regional boating community. Almost every athlete on the team speaks of starting his or her paddling with a parent. There are fresh new faces and old familiar ones, but everyone is now part of our team and will represent us all at the big event. Very few of our athletes earn money paddling and even fewer eke out a living at it. Ours is a sport pursued for the love of it, a love that all of us in the greater paddling community share.

In the past the US has dominated at the Worlds. At the 2001 event in Sort, Spain, Team US swept Gold and took 14 out of a possible 21 medals. That feat may never be duplicated as freestyle becomes more popular worldwide, but this may still be our strongest team ever. This team was chosen more than six months before Worlds. They've been focused on one event ever since. Win or lose, they already do us proud, good luck to the 2003 US Freestyle Team. 

Editor's Note:

Please see <http://USTeam.boatertalk.com> for a complete list of the athlete's bios.

Photo by Jock Bradley / Rippin Productions

EJ finished strong as always, and made his tenth straight national team, though as reigning World Champ he already had a bye.



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WKC Newsletter: Back to Basics

“Only those who have the patience to do simple things perfectly ever acquire the skill to do difficult things easily.”

- John C. Schiller

Most people, at some point in their life, witness an athletic performance that leaves them in awe. In those dark moments of human self-doubt and frustration we may even wonder, “What is it that separates us (everyday losers) from them (athletic superstars)”.

“Diary” is a program that runs on MTV. It is a day in the life of a modern day icon. Some episodes features pop trash while others are quite compelling. Last summer I was comatose in front of the TV, remote in hand, when I stumbled upon a day in the life of Serena Williams, the tennis star. Ms. Williams was going into an important match. Not being of the stick and ball game persuasion, I couldn't tell you what it was all about, but it was a pivotal game in her career.

Prior to each game, her father (who is also her coach) writes notes on a couple of three by five cards. He seals them in an envelope for Serena to keep with her. They are her secret weapon; to be opened only if the match is going poorly. And on this particular day it was going poorly. During a break she broke the envelope open and it contained two cards. One said, “Keep your eyes on the ball”. The other said, “Keep your knees bent”. Nothing could be more basic. Serena went on to slay her opponent.

While the Lances of the world clearly have a physiological advantage over the rest of us, many top athletes have gotten to the top by working harder than anyone else at mastering the basics. Watch a Dana Chladek, an EJ or a Tao on the river and their moves will be crisp, clean and with purpose. They have mastered the basics.

How important are the basics? They are your building blocks for everything else that you will do in your boating career. Your skills can be built on a foundation of stacked cards or on solid rock. Show me a person with poor flexibility and I will show you someone who cannot execute a proper sweep. Show me a person who cannot execute a proper sweep and I'll show you a person who cannot catch a wave or throw ends in a playhole.

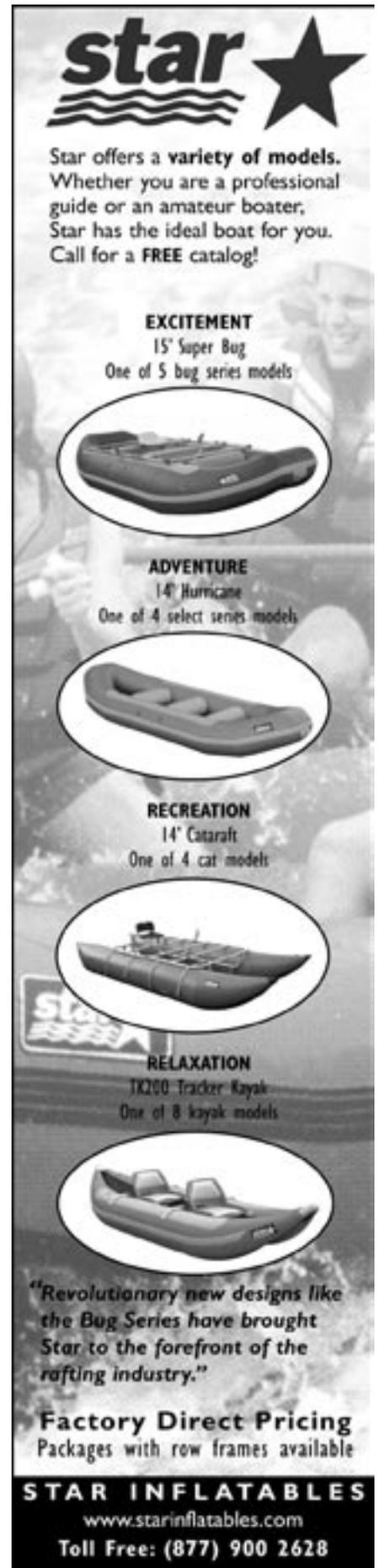
If basic moves are your foundation then the structural integrity of your body is what that foundation rests on. In observing boaters of all experience levels the limiting factor is, for the most part, flexibility. It is one of the reasons that most female boaters progress along the technique curve quicker than most men - women are inherently more flexible than men - especially in the hamstrings. Tight hamstrings result in poor posture. Poor posture limits rotation and power applied to the paddle. Poor posture is also a leading cause of shoulder dislocation.

Starting with the next issue of the WKC newsletter we will take you on a progression from building your strength and flexibility to honing simple moves that will take you to the next level as a boater. The catch is that they have to be done diligently. Most are drills that you can do in your living room or on the local lake. The goal is to ingrain proper behavior in benign conditions, so that when you are being hammered in eight foot seas or in a Class V rapid your body will know no way to execute a move but the most effective and safest way.

Boating is magic. When you are walking upright on both legs you are just a human. Once you slip into a boat and glide into water you become something entirely different - a creature with the mind, mentality, emotions and opposable thumbs of a human, but with the ability to move through water like an aquatic animal. You leave your human baggage on shore.

There are very few things that you have to do to move that boat through water. The better that you can execute those few things the better your boating will be. We want to take you there. 

Editor's Note: *Marty G. is an ACA Instructor Trainer in Whitewater Kayaking and an Instructor for Coastal Kayaking. Lynn Beck is a nationally certified personal trainer and kick boxing instructor. They recently moved from the Washington, DC area to Gig Harbor, WA with their dogs and a quiver of boats. Watch the future issues of AW journal for more instructional pieces by them.*



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New Club Incentive Program Just Announced!

Club Affiliates are extremely important to American Whitewater. As part of our effort to reach out to clubs, and their members, we've recently unveiled some exciting new programs. Take a look at the offers below and contact our office to find out how you can get involved.

Free DVD Player and LVM Subscription!

– American Whitewater club affiliates have between now until July 31st to get 50 of their club members to join American Whitewater. If your club meets this requirement, you will receive a FREE DVD player, one year DVD subscription to Lunch Video Magazine, AND a 'best of' LVM DVD! The program starts retroactively, from the first of January – so if you've already had 50 members of your club join AW, you can take advantage of this promotion. Please e-mail or call Jessie Rice for more details.

\$500 ClifBar Grant for Regional Club Projects! – Your club now has the opportunity to compete against other clubs in your area for a \$500 Clif Bar Grant. ClifBar has joined forces with American Whitewater to offer this unprecedented deal. Eligible clubs can submit proposals for river-related projects and winners will be announced at each of our three flagship events this summer. Please contact Jessie Rice or AJ McIntyre for more details.

Club Affiliates by State:

Alaska

Fairbanks Paddlers, Fairbanks, AK

Alabama

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

Arkansas

Arkansas Canoe Club, Little Rock, AR

Arizona

Grand Canyon Pvt. Boat Assn. Flagstaff, AZ

California

Sierra Club Loma Prieta Ch., San Jose, CA
Sierra Club Rts, Sacramento, CA
Sequoia Paddling Club, Windsor, CA
Shasta Paddlers, Redding, CA
Chico Paddle Heads, Chico, CA
Gold Country Paddlers, Lotus, CA

Colorado

Colorado Whitewater Assn, Englewood, CO
Pueblo Paddlers, Pueblo West, CO
Arkansas Headwaters Rec Area, Salida, CO

Connecticut

AMC Boston Chapter, Bloomfield, CT
AMC CT Chapter, Stafford Springs, CT

Georgia

Georgia Canoeing Assoc., Atlanta, GA
Atlanta Whitewater Club, Atlanta, GA
GeorgiaTech Outdoor Rec., Atlanta, GA

Illinois

Chicago Whitewater Assn., Cary, IL

Indiana

Hoosier Canoe Club, Indianapolis, IN

Kentucky

Bluegrass Wildwater Assoc, Lexington, KY

Maryland

Baltimore Canoe Club, Kingsville, MD
Monocacy Canoe Club, Frederick, MD
Mason Dixon Canoe Cruisers,
Boonsboron, MD
Garrett Comm. College, McHenry, MD

Maine

AMC/Maine Chapter, Hallowell, ME

Minnesota

Boat Busters Anonymous, Oakdale, MN

Missouri

Ozark Wilderness Waterways, Kansas City, MO
Missouri Whitewater Assoc., St. Louis, MO
Ozark Mountain Paddlers, Springfield, MO

North Carolina

Carolina Canoe Club, Raleigh, NC
Triad River Runners, Winston-Salem, NC
Camp Carolina, Brevard, NC
Western Carolina Paddlers, Asheville, NC
Nantahala Racing Club, Almond, NC

New Hampshire

Ledyard Canoe Club, Hanover, NH
Waterline, Manchester, NH
Mt. Washington Valley Paddlers, Franconia, NH

New Jersey

KCCNY, Teaneck, NJ
AMC NY-NJ Chapter, Rockaway, NJ
Garden State Canoe Club, Millington, NJ
The Paddling Bares, Milltown, NJ
Mohawk Canoe Club, Trenton, NJ
Hunterdon County Canoe Club,
Flemington, NJ

New Mexico

Adobe WW Club of NM, Albuquerque, NM

Nevada

Sierra Nevada WW Club, Reno, NV

New York

Housatonic Canoe & Kayak Sq., Ossining, NY
Clarkson Outing Club, Potsdam, NY
Zoar Valley Paddling Club, Dunkirk, NY
Adirondac Rafting Co., Lake Placid, NY

Ohio

Toledo River Gang, Waterville, OH
KSU Kayak Club, Kent, OH

Oregon

Willamette Kayak & Canoe Club,
Corvallis, OR
Outdoor Rec. Center, Corvallis, OR

Pennsylvania

Canoe Club of Gr. Harrisburg, Le Moyne, PA
Three Rivers Paddling Club, Pittsburgh, PA
Lehigh Valley Canoe Club, Lehigh Valley, PA
Philadelphia Canoe Club, Philadelphia, PA
Holtwood Hooligans, Lititz, PA
Benscreek Canoe Club, Johnson, PA
AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Sugarloaf, PA

South Carolina

Palmetto Paddlers, Columbia, SC

South Dakota

Whitewater! Discussion Board, Spearfish, SD

Tennessee

E. Tennessee Whitewater Club, Oak Ridge, TN

Chota Canoe Club, Knoxville, TN

Tennessee Valley Canoe Club, Chattanooga, TN

Eastman Hiking & Canoe Club, Kingsport, TN

Texas

Rockin 'R' River Rides, New Braunfels, TX

Bayou City Whitewater Club, Houston, TX

Utah

University Of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT

USU Kayak Club, Logan, UT

Utah Whitewater Club, Salt Lake City, UT

Virginia

Coastal Canoeists Inc, Richmond, VA

Canoe Cruisers Assn, Arlington, VA

Blue Ridge River Runners, Lynchburg, VA

Blue Ridge Voyageurs, Reston, VA

Float Fishermen of Virginia, Roanoke, VA

Richmond WW Club, Mechanicsville, VA

Vermont

Vermont Paddlers Club, Jericho, VT

Washington

Spokane Canoe & Kayak Club, Spokane, WA

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Kayak Pursuits, Redmond, WA

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Wisconsin

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For more information, contact Jessie Rice at jessie@amwhitewater.org, call our office at (866) 262-8429 or sign-up online at: www.americanwhitewater.org/membership.

Membership Notes

2003 has been and will continue to be a year of change at American Whitewater. One of our top goals is to take better care of our existing members, which means making it easier for you to renew, find out what projects we're working on, and better yet – get involved. As part of this effort, we'll be using the journal more often to communicate with you. Below is a list of frequently asked questions regarding membership. Please take a look at the list and if you have anything further, check out our website or e-mails us! Correct contact information can be found below.

Question: I am moving, how do I notify American Whitewater of my new address?

Answer: You can submit your address change three ways: 1) On our website (look under the 'membership' section), 2) By sending us an e-mail to jessie@amwhitewater.org with the words 'address change' in the subject field or by 3) calling our office and letting us know of the change.

Question: I did notify American Whitewater of my address change, but haven't received my journal, why?

Answer: Address changes must be made at least two weeks before the issue is delivered. For example, for the July/August journal, we need your address change by June 20th.

Question: I've noticed a code on the label of my journal that reads '20030105' next to my name – what does it mean?

Answer: That code is actually your expiration date. The '2003' is the year you expire. The following '05' is the journal issue you expire on and the final '01' is the year you first became a member. We run 6 issues every year, so the number 05 correlates with the Sept/Oct issue (06 would be Nov/Dec and so on).

Question: I renewed my membership, but received another renewal notice in the mail!

Answer: I think this is the most frequently asked question. The main reason is your renewal wasn't processed before the next round of renewals was sent. We go to great lengths to minimize this problem as much as possible, as it's a waste of paper time and money. Unfortunately, our printer needs time to prepare the renewal forms and we have to send him the names several weeks in advance. One way to solve this problem is to sign-up for e-renewals. Call or E-mail our office, or go to our website for more details on this program.

If you have a suggestion, comment or question not covered here, please send it to:

Jessie Rice
Membership Coordinator
American Whitewater
(301) 589-9453
jessie@amwhitewater.org

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 II, III & IV rivers as well. Feature stories do not have to be about a specific river. Articles about paddling techniques, the river environment and river personalities are also accepted. Pieces that incorporate humor are especially welcome. Open boating and rafting stories are welcome.

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

Please check all facts carefully, particularly those regarding individuals, government agencies,

and corporations involved in river access and environmental matters. You are legally responsible for the accuracy of such material. Make sure names are spelled correctly and river gradients and distances are correctly calculated.

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

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

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- I hereby release my work (literary, graphic or photographic) for publication in American Whitewater magazine.
- I understand that my work may be edited or cropped at the editors' discretion.
- I understand that I will not be paid for my work.
- I accept responsibility for the accuracy of the information included in my submission. I have not libeled or slandered any individual, corporation or agency in this work.
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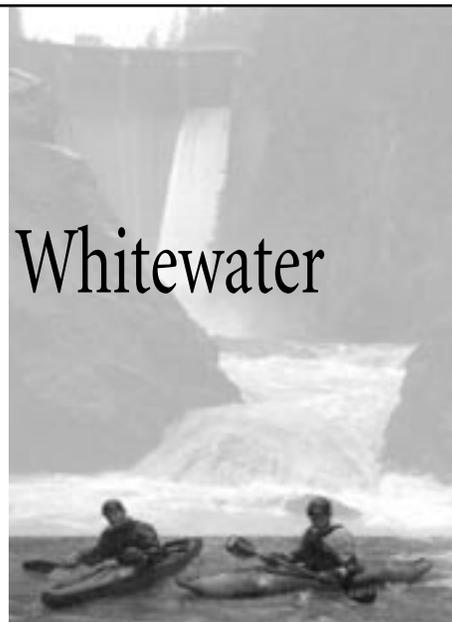
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Photo by Jed Selby, Paddler: Dre. Visit Dagger and Team D online at www.Dagger.com



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