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# american whitewater

September/October 1999

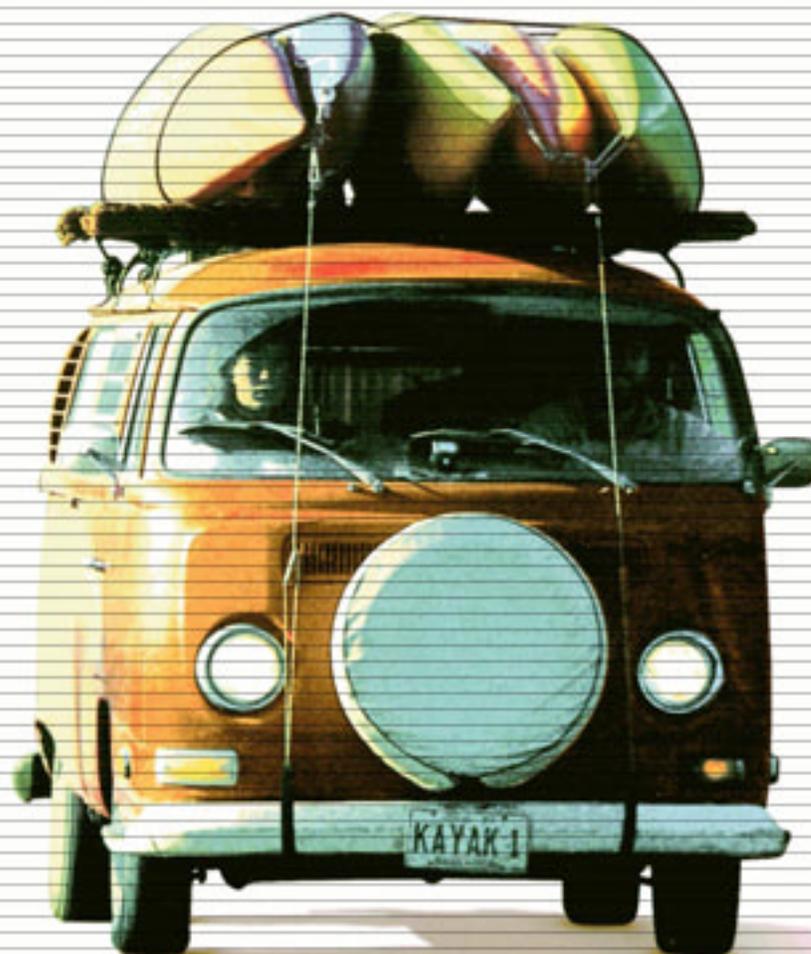
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## The Kids are All Right

One evening in June, I was camped beside Rapid Number 6 on Colorado's Arkansas River. At twilight a party of thirtysomethings pulled into the adjoining site. Before long we struck up a conversation. They had driven down from the suburbs of Denver to raft Brown's Canyon. Actually, they weren't just from "the suburbs" of Denver; they were from Littleton... Littleton of Columbine High School fame. I couldn't resist asking what they knew about the tragedy that occurred there, not really expecting more than morbid gossip. As it turned out, they knew a great deal.

They worked for the district attorney's office, manning a juvenile offenders' program. They were, in fact, the very officers of the court who had dealt with Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold after they were arrested for breaking into a car, a year before the massacre at Columbine. After a six month probationary program, which the boys completed successfully, they were released from supervision. The agents who handled their cases, my new acquaintances, had written in a final report that they anticipated no further trouble from the two.

Needless to say, since then those youth workers have agonized over that report and the way they handled the case. They have asked, "How could we have seen the calamity coming?" and "What could we have done differently?" For them, there will be no easy answers. They cope with a daunting caseload of middle and upper class kids who get into minor skirmishes with the law. Most of those kids Straighten out; no doubt they become timber or coal barons, riverside real estate developers or lobbyists for "wise use" organizations. Only a few go on to commit murder. It would be easy to blame the legal system for what happened at Columbine, but that wouldn't really be very fair.

Who then should be blamed? The jocks at the school who tormented the Trench Coat Mafia? The teachers and school administrators who failed to intercede? The creeps that fed them poison via the Internet? The jerks that sold them guns? The kids' parents? Or the kids themselves? Maybe Harris and Klebold were just born bad.

No doubt there is plenty of blame to go around. But pointing fingers doesn't accomplish much. Who really knows why some kids turn out good, while others turn out bad?

I don't profess to be an expert on raising children. But my campfire discussion that evening got me to thinking about the hundreds of youngsters that I have met during



my twenty-year kayaking career. Many of them are adults now; a few even have kids of their own. And I can't think of a single one of them who has become a menace to society, much less a mass murderer. Most of them turned out fine.

I'm not naïve enough to suggest that when it comes to raising children whitewater is a panacea. But I do think that there are plenty of reasons why whitewater recreation can be good for kids. Not the least of these is that whitewater can foster a healthy relationship between parents and their offspring.

That's why I think that parents who curtail their boating so that they can "spend time with their kids" are really missing the boat. Especially if "spending time with their kids" means hauling the little munchkins from one structured activity to another. Surely being a good parent requires more than being a reliable chauffeur to ballet lessons... little league... midget football... cheerleading... soccer... or, God forbid, little miss beauty pageants! Especially if the parents just sit on the sidelines or wait in the parking lots after they get there. I sometimes wonder if these people really want to be with their kids at all!

My parents never hauled me to such things. Even though, when I was six, I threw a ninety-mile-an-hour fastball and could kick a field goal nine out of ten times. Instead, we went swimming, water skiing, hunting, horseback riding, and camping. My mom and dad involved me in the things they liked to do. We did them together and everyone was happy. No one had to "give up" anything. We had something in common. Something we could talk about, something we could share. My parents were good at the things they liked to do, and when I got good at them, they let me know that they were proud.

And when I did things with my parents, I did them with their friends, too. Of course, some of their friends had kids, so I was around a few others my own age. They were my buddies. And because kids are competitive, we encouraged one another to improve. But being exposed to adults in a non structured setting was good for us, too. Those adults taught us a lot by example, not the least of which was how to function in a group and how to be considerate of others. If we acted like brats, they let us know. If we wanted the adults to include us in their activities, we had to behave. A child who spends time in such an environment soon learns that he is not the center of the universe.

I think that most American kids are drowning in an ocean of their peers. Modern educators insist on packing thousands of hormonally crazed adolescents into impersonal mega-schools like Columbine, then complain because some of the kids get lost in the shuffle and it is next to impossible to maintain order. Duh!!! Any promoter of a Spice Girls Concert could have predicted that! Then there are the so called experts who maintain that kids need to spend most of their time with others the same age so that they can learn how to act. Is it any wonder that some children never learn to function as adults?

Unfortunately, most Americans can't do much about the schools their children attend. But they can influence how and with whom their kids spend their leisure time. So, I say, take them to the river!

Folks weren't doing much whitewater boating when I was a kid, but I think my parents would have liked it. I know I would have. The kids and their parents that I see on the rivers seem to be having fun. They seem to respect one another. The adults teach the

youngsters the basics... how to ferry, catch eddies, and surf holes. Before you know it, the kids are trying to teach mom and dad to cartwheel. That's always good for a laugh.

Most of these kids get good fast. And when kids get good at something, it makes them feel good about themselves. I knew a kid who tried hard but never made the honor roll or an all-star team. But, she turned into a really hot boater. Whitewater worked miracles for her confidence and self-esteem.

Quite often by the time whitewater kids are 15 or 16 they are better than their parents are. This doesn't seem to bother most parents; their pride in their children dwarfs their own egos. Of course, the kids love to see mom and dad take an occasional aquatic trashing. What kid wouldn't? But when the parents accept these whitewater misadventures good-naturedly, their kids learn a lot about vulnerability and good sportsmanship.

For better or worse, some parents are determined to turn their kids into world class athletes. I have reservations about that. I don't think a parent should project his or her own unrealized fantasies on a child, unless, by some happy coincidence, that child truly shares the dream. That having been said, the odds that a kid will rise to the top in competitive whitewater, be it in racing, hair boating or rodeo, are surely a lot better than for other more traditional sports, such as track, basketball, or football. There are fifty million parents out there who pray that their sons will step into Bret Favre's shoes. There just aren't that many dreaming that their daughters will inherit Cathy Hearn's booties! A committed kid who works hard is far more likely to make it to a world championship in a kayak than on ice skates or snow skis.

For one thing, kids don't have to be big to excel in whitewater. That certainly isn't true for many sports. Whitewater is about ability, not size. Another plus to whitewater is that boating kids rarely sustain serious spinal injuries... the kinds that cripple hundreds of high school athletes every year. Although many people perceive whitewater recreation to be dangerous, there have been very few fatalities involving minors. Ask Charlie Walbridge if you don't believe me. And kids who develop an interest in whitewater can realistically hope to continue to pursue it throughout their adult lives. How many fifty-year-olds do you know who still do gymnastics, twirl batons, or play football? But I'll bet you know plenty of fifty-year-old boaters. Lots of them are damned good! Some of them are teaching their grandchildren to boat.

Whitewater boating teaches kids a lot about responsibility. Whitewater kids quickly learn that shuttles must be set, boats must be loaded, and that you have to look out for other people on the river. They learn what it is like to be, to some degree, responsible for the safety of others. I know several 16 and 17 year olds that cruise into Friendsville alone

on hot summer days, looking for companions to paddle the Upper Yough. The regulars know who they are and they are always welcome because they are fun to be around, are self-reliant, and they know how to act. During the drive to the put-in they listen to our Bob Dylan tapes. Later, while running shuttle, we listen to their Wallflowers CDs. I'm sure this happens on rivers all over the country.

When kids paddle whitewater they learn to stay cool when things get tense and they learn how to get themselves out of trouble. They learn that sometimes it is appropriate to challenge their fears and that sometimes it is better to walk away. They learn to make their own decisions and to set limits for themselves. And they learn not to whine when they are cold, wet, and hungry.

Involvement in whitewater can also teach kids the value of money. Whitewater gear is moderately priced. Really. Not so expensive as to be out of reach, but expensive enough to encourage kids to take care of their gear, especially if they have to help buy it. I know several teens that desperately wanted a new rodeo or creek boat. They were the children of teachers, doctors, and lawyers. Sure, their parents could have bought those boats, but, wisely, they didn't. They let the kids work for them. Hey, you are bound to appreciate that

Mr. Clean more if you had to flip a few hundred thousand burgers to get it!

All things considered, there are lots of good reasons why we at American Whitewater think whitewater and kids go together. That is why we have been publishing more and more stories by and about young boaters, including our Kidzcorner section. We want to do everything we can to attract youngsters to the sport. After all, paddling with kids can be a lot of fun. They keep the sport fresh. More importantly, when we encourage youngsters to appreciate the magic and beauty of whitewater, we are helping to create the river stewards of tomorrow.

Bob Gedekoh

## Correction!

The Most Beautiful Angel in July/August American Whitewater was written by Chuck McHenry. His name was mistakenly left off the credits. We are sorry for any inconvenience or embarrassment this may have caused.

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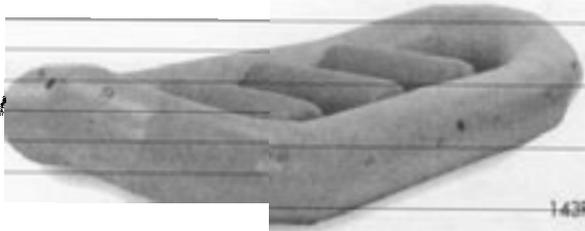


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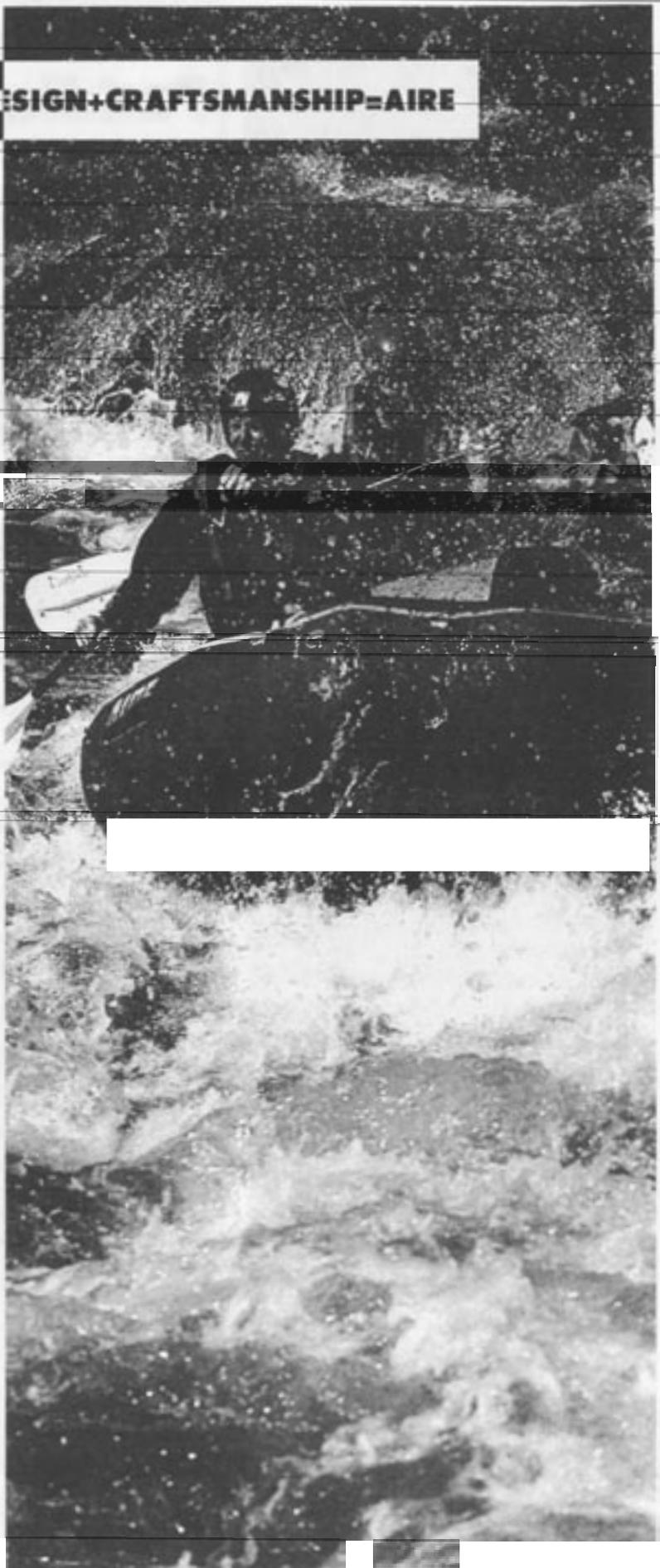
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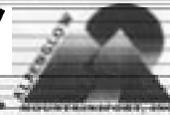
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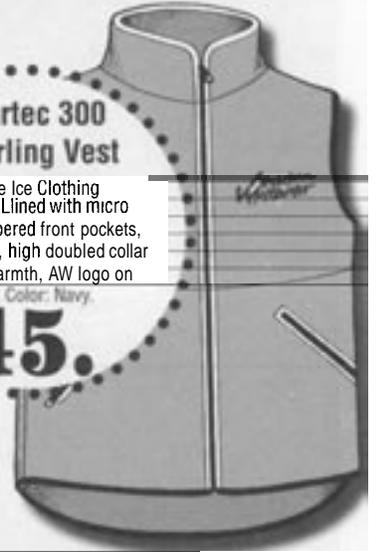


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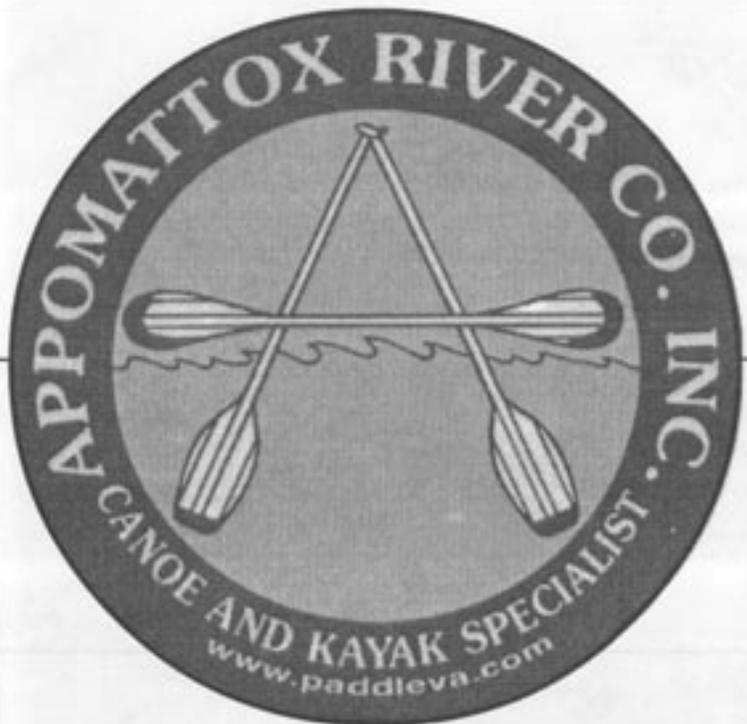
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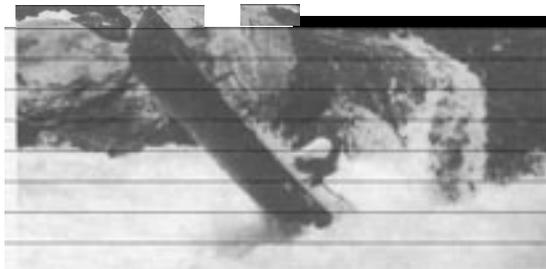
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Please read this carefully before sending us your articles and photos! This is a volunteer publication, please cooperate and help us out. *Do not send us your material without a release - signed by all authors and photographers (attached)!!!*

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

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

If possible, articles should be submitted on a 3-inch computer cassette. (*Word Perfect* preferred - 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. 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. Because we publish in black and white, photos with a lot of contrast work best.

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

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

If you are writing about a commonly paddled river, your story should be told from a unique perspective. Articles about difficult, infrequently paddled, or exotic rivers are given special consideration. But we are also interested in well written, unusual articles pertaining to Class III and IV rivers as well. Feature stories do not have to be about a specific river. Articles about paddling techniques, the river environment and river personali-

ties are also accepted. Pieces that incorporate humor are especially welcome. Open boating and rafting stories are welcome.

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

Profanity should be used only when it is absolutely necessary to effectively tell a story; it is not our intent to intentionally 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.

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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 bi-monthly magazine, and by other means, American Whitewater, (AW) provides information and education about whitewater rivers, boating safety, technique and equipment.

**SAFETY:** AW promotes paddling safely, publishes reports on whitewater accidents, maintains

a uniform national ranking system for whitewater rivers (the International Scale of Whitewater Difficulty) and publishes and disseminates the internationally recognized AW Whitewater Safety Code.

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

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

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

# Blackwater Canyon

## Paradise Lost?



By: Mac Thornton, AW Regional Coordinator

If you looked through the October 1998 issue of *Outside* magazine or any of the other publications where the State of West Virginia advertises itself, you would see a picture of a gorgeous mountain canyon stretching out before a spectacular rock outcropping. The vista pictured is Lindy Point, near the head of Blackwater Canyon. Only one little problem — *as of the fall of 1997, Lindy Point and all of Blackwater Canyon is posted NO TRESPASSING and is under 24-hour guard!* If you walk out on Lindy Point, the good sheriff of Tucker County will be glad to show you the inside of his pokey.

Even worse, 169 housing plots have been surveyed along the wild canyon rim near Lindy Point. Down in the Canyon, the whitewater roar of the Blackwater River has often been drowned out by the growls of bulldozers caving crude logging roads on the steep canyon sides and the high-pitched whines of chain saws cutting down the choice 80-year-old hardwoods. Recently, a lawsuit seeking to challenge the timber company's ownership failed in the West Virginia Supreme Court, and a land swap for about a quarter of the Canyon has also fallen apart. On the plus side, an interim agreement regarding endangered species, spearheaded by the Sierra Club, has stopped most chainsaw work, at least temporarily. Also, American Whitewater has obtained access to the river itself for paddlers, anglers, and other river users. But many environmentalists are starting a push for the ultimate brass ring: a new national park!

The Blackwater River gathers its waters as it meanders lazily across the flat floor of a valley set high on a plateau, Canaan Valley. As it passes the old lumbering boom town of Davis, the river reaches the edge of the plateau, leaps off the 50 foot Blackwater Falls, and tumbles pell mell towards the Dry Fork Cheat River, eight miles away and 1000 feet below. The rampage forms the longest continuous, Class III-V rapids in the Mid Atlantic states, and has carved a narrow, 1500–2000 foot deep defile, Blackwater Canyon.





**Unprotected, Blackwater Canyon's fate has again taken a sharp turn for the worse.**

Left: Bernd Kirstein, from the Alpiner Kanu Club, Germany, early run on the Upper Blackwater. Wick Walker Photo. Previously published in *River Runner*, 6/86.

Back: Bob Gedekoh, early run on the Upper Blackwater. Wick Walker Photo. Previously published in *River Runner*, 6/86.

Above: Andy Bridge, early run on the Upper Blackwater. Wick Walker Photo. Previously published in *River Runner*, 6/86.

Before the 1850s Blackwater Canyon was untouched due to its rugged landscape and dense primeval forest of gigantic hemlocks, oaks, and other hardwoods. In this era, legendary author and illustrator Richard Hunter Strother (pen name "Porte Crayon" meaning "Carry Pencil") caught 350 trout in a day in the river and wrote about his experiences for *Harper's Monthly*, making Blackwater Canyon famous across the nation.

However, in the late 1880s, a railroad line was cut up the river right side of the Canyon, the steepest rail grade east of the Rockies, to facilitate logging. Pairs of lumberjacks with long saws went to work and by about 1910, the huge virgin forests of Blackwater Canyon and Canaan Valley had been clear-cut. Then the slash piles and light organic soils dried out and were burned away in massive fires, leaving a moonscape.

The denuded Canyon was acquired in about 1918 by the forerunner of Allegheny Power Company to develop hydropower. Thankfully, the dams for the power were never economically feasible, and for the next 80 years a second growth forest had a chance to grow tall and mature. The Canyon became recognized as the home of the endangered Virginia northern flying squirrel and the threatened Cheat Mountain salamander. The endangered Indiana bat and Virginia bigeared bat are believed to depend on the Canyon for their ever dwindling habitat.

Meanwhile, outdoor enthusiasts discovered and had free access to Blackwater Canyon to enjoy its fabulous whitewater (first run in 1970), scenic vistas, and its trails for hunting, hiking, mountain biking, cross country skiing, and bird watching. From a whitewater perspective, the Canyon is divided into three runs, the premier run being the Class V+ "Upper Blackwater" from Blackwater Falls down about a mile and a half to the confluence with the North Fork Blackwater, a Class V+ premier run in its own right. At the confluence, deep in the Canyon, the "Lower Blackwater" run starts, featuring about seven miles of mostly Class IV action with a gradient of over 100 feet per mile.

On a bright, chilly day in December 1982, I first ventured into Blackwater Canyon, lugging an open canoe for a mile down the railroad grade, and then letting the boat lead down the steep slope for a Lower Blackwater run. Alarming, once on the torrent, I could only see the next 40 yards or so before the river would disappear over a horizon line, in the words of *Wild Water West Virginia*, "a continuous blind bend — downwards." The river flowed directly towards the afternoon sun, and the sunlight dazzled off the white foam piles as I tried to pick my route. On either side, the banks rose in steep green slopes to the Canyon's ramparts high overhead. I swam three times that day, swallowing some water and coming home with giardia. But it only took one trip to fall under the spell of Blackwater Canyon and I have been back for several rematches in canoe and kayak. The vision of condos lining the rims, logging roads carved into the slopes, with a thinned forest and piles of slash, is sickening.

Conservation efforts got underway in 1934 with the establishment of Blackwater Falls State Park, which eventually would receive 900 acres donated by the power company. In 1989, the spectacular old railroad grade was acquired by Monongahela National Forest for a rails-to-trails project. That same year, American Whitewater and other environmentalists joined forces to form the West Virginia Rivers Coalition, whose first order of business was to call for permanent protection of Blackwater Canyon — under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The river was officially found eligible for designation under that Act, but the concept stalled under pressure from property rights extremists, and a newly Republican Congress.

Unprotected, Blackwater Canyon's fate has again taken a sharp turn for the worse. In the mid-1990s, Allegheny Power began to accept bids for the 3000 acres comprising most of the main Canyon and the canyon of the North Fork Blackwater. The Conservation Fund of Arlington, Va. offered \$3.5 million for the 3000 acres of Canyon, but other buyers offered more. In February, 1997, Allegheny Power sold the Canyon for \$4.85 million to a local land developer, who turned around and sold it the same day to Allegheny Wood Products of Petersburg, WV for \$5 million. [Note that a mere \$1.35 million at this critical juncture, added to the Conservation Fund bid, could have saved the Canyon forever.] Soon the bulldozers and chain saws started, shocking environmentalists and recreational users. John Crites, the owner of Allegheny Wood Products, claimed to have received anonymous threats that trees would be spiked, and so he posted the Canyon and put it under 24-hour guard.

Despite public statements that he had, "no immediate plans" to develop Blackwater Canyon. Crites then filed applications with the state to dump 300,000 gallons of wastewater per day into the river to allow construction on 280 homesites and a large recreation center. Lindy Point would become a private area for homeowners, forever off-limits to the public.

Outraged environmentalists and recreationalists have pulled out all the legal and political stops to save Blackwater Canyon, but with limited success so far. The highlights:

**Court challenge to the sale.** The WV Highlands Conservancy, WV Wildlife Federation, the Sierra Club, and two WV Rivers Coalition members stepped forward and challenged the sale in court. Under West Virginia law, a public utility like Allegheny Power must obtain state approval to sell its assets in the state to ensure the public interest is sewed. However, Allegheny Power had previously put ownership of the Canyon in a corporate subsidiary which existed only on paper, with no separate employees and no separate location. It contended that its paper subsidiary was not subject to the approval requirement, and the case ended up in the West Virginia Supreme Court.

In December, 1998, the Court handed down its decision stating that, "If the natural integrity of the Blackwater River Canyon is destroyed, it will be a tragedy for the people of West Virginia. . . the sale of the Blackwater River Canyon may have significant environmental implications for West Virginia." But the majority of the Justices upheld Allegheny Power's position that its paper subsidiary did not need state approval to sell the Canyon. This is the sort of legal hocus-pocus that has left Appalachia as poorly off as it still is today.

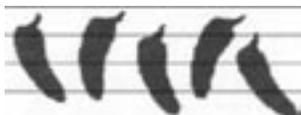
**The land swap falls apart** In late 1997, American Whitewater's John Gangemi, Jason Robertson, and others persuaded Senator Jay Rockefeller to broker a land exchange deal which promised to save 750 acres, about one quarter of the lands acquired by Allegheny Wood

Products. These lands were perhaps the steepest in the Canyon, the most difficult to log and therefore the least commercially valuable. Most of these acres were on the steep river right bank of the main river, as well as the short canyon section of the North Fork. Putting these lands into public ownership would ensure future paddler access to the river. The deal was to exchange lands of equal value elsewhere in Monongahela National Forest for these 750 acres. However, as of the beginning of 1999, Allegheny Wood Products has pulled out of the deal because they dispute the value put on the 750 acres by the government appraiser. That appraiser stated the 750 steep acres were worth only \$150/acre or so, but Allegheny Wood wants "millions" of dollars more and refuses to agree to a neutral appraiser. [Recall the entire canyon cost them \$5 million.]

**Endangered species settlement.** In late 1998, Highlands Conservancy and the Sierra Club filed formal notice of an intent to sue the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Allegheny Wood Products and enjoin further logging pending compliance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA) regarding the species of squirrel, salamander, and bats noted above. In February, the Sierra Club entered into a settlement with Allegheny Wood which put a stop to timbering in the Canyon, for the time being, pending negotiations with the government on means reasonably necessary to study and to protect the endangered species. The company needs to obtain an "Incidental Take Permit," from the Fish and Wildlife Service, which would allow some adverse effects on the target species. The settlement will not affect the condo development on the rim, nor is it clear how much of the logging will be affected in the long run. While laudable, the settlement is in no way a complete solution. In the meantime, the Highlands Conservancy has filed formal suit challenging Allegheny Wood Products with violating the ESA.

**Paddler access agreement.** After public access to the Canyon was shut off in late 1997, Gangemi and Robertson went to work to

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enable paddlers and others to put-in on the Lower Blackwater, which as described in the author's 1982 trip, necessitates traversing Allegheny Wood land. In April 1998, Crites agreed to allow paddlers to walk down the old railroad bed, as well as a 20-foot easement on both banks, providing a take-out for the Upper Blackwater and North Fork runs, and a put-in for the Lower Blackwater. While this agreement was only good for one year up to April 1999, AW is negotiating with Crites to obtain a formal extension. Paddler access is not a problem in the meantime.

**Call for National Park status.** While the West Virginia Supreme Court has publicly stated that losing the Canyon would be a tragedy, while at the same time refusing to help protect it, an alliance of environmental and labor groups led by the Highlands Conservancy have called for the formation of the Blackwater Canyon National Park and an associated Blackwater Ecotourism Enterprise Training Center. The Center would provide for instruction in outdoor recreation and ecotourism entrepreneurship, using public lands in the West Virginia Highlands as the principal training and demonstration area.

So far, 100 volunteers have collected over 18,000 signatures on "Save the Blackwater Canyon" petitions. West Virginia has long been dependent on extractive boom-and-bust industries like timber and coal. As observed in the Washington Post, "...many people around here have begun to realize that industries that extract and export raw natural materials are also industries that pollute and create very few local jobs. By contrast, a local economy based on preservation and tourism is sustainable and will capitalize on the area's inherent strengths." Already, tourism brings an incredible 2.1 million visitors a year to Tucker County.

Crites himself has found himself at the very center of the controversy, and a key issue in the debate is whether he can be persuaded to sell the Canyon voluntarily. He has cloaked himself as a protector of property rights, but has been roundly criticized for

making misleading statements about his plans to log and commercially develop the Canyon.

The political climate in West Virginia makes condemnation of the Canyon from Crites a difficult proposition. The property rights extremists and most politicians in West Virginia look the other way when land is condemned and purchased (at market value) for purposes like Hughes River Dam or the Corridor H superhighway. But many of them bristle at the notion of public acquisition of land for conservation purposes. American Whitewater's position simply is that Blackwater Canyon should be permanently protected in some form of public ownership — National Park status or otherwise — and that no alternatives for protecting this very special place should be foreclosed.

As this paper heads to press, Crites' has promised to sell the five acres of Lindy Point to the state (for a tidy profit), and donate another 50 acres, apparently in hopes of defusing public pressure. However, while obtaining protection for the entire Canyon will not be easy, environmentalists and recreationalists are not likely to be slowed down much by protecting a mere 55 of 3000 acres.

**How to Help Blackwater Canyon**

Supporters of Blackwater Canyon are urged to write Representative Mollohan and Senators Byrd and Rockefeller asking them to support permanent protection of Blackwater Canyon, such as by establishing the Blackwater Canyon National Park and the Ecotourism Enterprise Training Center. Write: The Honorable Alan B. Mollohan, 2346 Rayburn HOB, Washington, DC 20515-4801, and The Honorable Robert Byrd and Jay Rockefeller, United States Senate, Washington, DC. *If you are from out-of-state, point out that you wish to visit Blackwater Canyon and spend your vacation dollars in West Virginia.* For more information, call WVRC at (304) 637-7201, or visit [www.wvhighlands.org](http://www.wvhighlands.org). Send contributions to WVRC, 801 Randolph, Elkins, WV 26241 and mark the check for "Blackwater Canyon."

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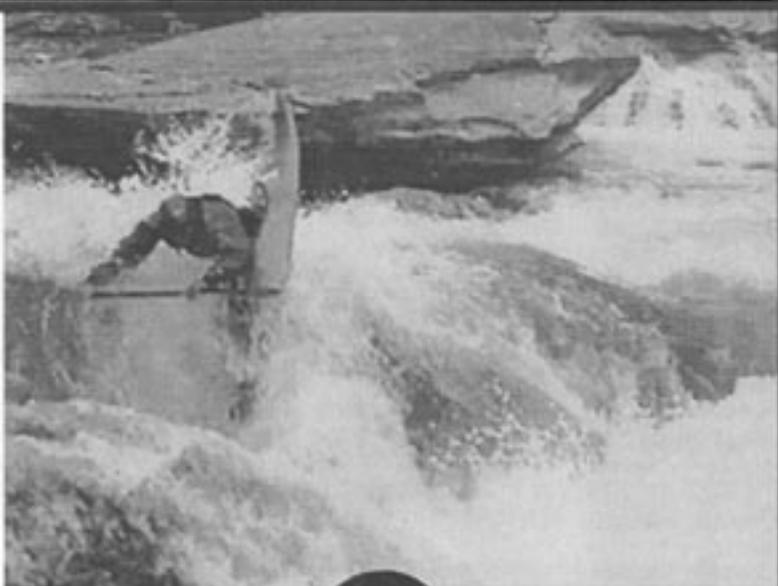


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# Director's Cut

By Rich Bowers

In the spring, American Whitewater sent a survey out to a good many of our members. So far, we have received nearly 600 responses and I wanted to thank each of you who took the time to complete this survey and send it back. Thanks for letting us know what you think of our efforts on your behalf. We are still sorting and cataloging all of the replies, and expect to have a final report completed before the Gauley Festival.

There is a lot of good information in the surveys, but one reply seemed to pop up time after time. When questioned why members support American Whitewater, or why members think we are effective, or what makes us different from other groups - the consistent reply was "Boaters working for boaters." While this answer came in several formats: "most in touch with the boating community," "...boaters banding together to protect rivers and access," and "the national organization for paddlers," the message was clear.

For the staff and directors of American Whitewater, this is a great verification of both our work and our advocacy. More, it is high praise since we, like you, spend a good deal of time on whitewater. I don't think it would be an exaggeration to say whitewater is an overriding life-style here at American Whitewater.

But this organization is much more than staff and directors, and an incredible number of our members are directly involved with us on river projects. Paddlers are truly part and parcel of each



**John Gangemi leads Whitewater Study**

Photos by Rich Bowers

of our efforts. This is the real reason that American Whitewater is, I believe, so effective. One excellent example is the magazine you're reading, a publication that just couldn't happen without the continuous volunteer input and submittals from paddlers.

American Whitewater prides itself on being an organization of boaters and supported by our members, but recent examples of boater dedication and assistance have been tremendous. In June, we logged over 1000 volunteer hours in setting up and running the Ocoee Rodeo in Tennessee. Volunteers came from as far away as Michigan and

were just paddlers interested in getting involved. A week later, volunteers racked up another 800+ hours pulling off the Potomac Whitewater Festival outside Washington, DC. Thanks to Chris Wood, Pope Barrow, and all the Potomac paddlers for pulling this off with style. Both Jayne Abbot and I want to thank everyone for helping make these events such a success, and so much fun!

While the Potomac Festival was running, I had the chance to join American Whitewater's Conservation Director John Gangemi and nearly 40 volunteers at a boat-

Colorado to help out. Some were directors, some were regional coordinators, but most

**Regional Coordinator Norwood Scott, NF Feather Study**





**Ocoee Whitewater Rodeo**

ingstudy on California's North Fork Feather River. For this study, members of American Whitewater, Friends of the River, and local paddling clubs donated more than 1200 hours of time and effort. Some of this was spent running whitewater, but more was spent loading boats, filling out forms, and cramming in multiple runs per day. Special thanks to Regional Coordinator Dave Steindorf, who helped John (with Directors Kevin Lewis and Richard Penny) plan, set up, and run the study. If this wasn't enough effort, Dave shanghaied his mom, dad, wife, and daughter for test weekend, and they happily volunteered to run shuttle all over the valley.

These are outstanding examples of "boaters helping boaters helping rivers!" If you need more examples, look at the stairs and trail at the take-out for North Carolina's Watauga, the hours spent on Virginia's John's Creek, registration at Tallulah Gorge in Georgia, or the parking, ticket taking, and clean-up crews that help each year with the Gauley River Festival in West Virginia.

One final example of boaters helping rivers are the interns working at our office this summer (see Risa's write-

up elsewhere in this edition). Never has the whitewater lifestyle been more evident here at American Whitewater than it has over the last three months. Boats stacked in each room, every parking space filled with cars, trucks, and roof racks, and more energy and new ideas than often seems safe in one office. Steve, Maureen, Adam, and Bryant - each intern working to make rivers more accessible and American Whitewater more effective for you.

Thanks to each member for helping us achieve our mission, and equally important, keeping us focused on whom we serve and what we are.

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1999

# Top 40 Whitewater Issues

**A**merican Whitewater's Nationwide Whitewater Inventory, a Geographic Information System for Whitewater Rivers in the United States, identifies less than 1% of this nation's rivers as containing Class III, IV and V rapids. This percentage includes whitewater rivers below dams and those that are boatable only for several days or weeks per year.

Our annual "Top 40" issue, now in its ninth year, is a collection of the most pressing problems, questions, decisions, and opportunities affecting whitewater rivers as well as the people who enjoy them. Whitewater rivers represent this country's most beautiful, exciting, and ecologically important resources. In addition, whitewater rivers provide valuable recreation opportunities for an estimated 24 million kayakers, canoeists, and rafters each year [1995 National Survey on Recreation and the Environment, USDA Forest Service and the University of Georgia, Athens].

The "Top 40" issue presents an updated narrative on all of the recent organization, club, and volunteer efforts to improve and restore rivers. It demonstrates the willingness and dedication that whitewater boaters, and others, show for the rivers they use and enjoy. Chances are-if you fish, boat, or live along whitewater rivers, this report will include those that mean the most to you.

For American Whitewater staff and members, the "Top 40" issue provides focus for our conservation and access program efforts over the next twelve months. It likewise provides an opportunity to celebrate victories, monitor ongoing issues, and recognize trends that affect rivers and the growing sport of whitewater paddling. Here is a quick review of just a few of the success stories completed by whitewater paddlers and partners in the last year:

- \*First whitewater release on Washington State's Nisqually River
- High water closures successfully overturned on New York's Cattaraugus Creek
- \*Eight miles of permanently protected land along Montana's Alberton Gorge
- Two whitewater trespass cases dropped on Colorado's South Platte River
- \*River access land purchased on Virginia's John's Creek
- \*Proposal submitted to open select rivers in Yellowstone National Park
- \*Flow study completed on California's North Fork Feather River
- \*Demolition of Edward's Dam on Maine's Kennebec River
- Improved river access and safety relations on Maryland's Potomac River
- \*Recreational use defined as a traditional test of Navigability on New York's Moose
- California approves 39 miles of the South Yuba River for state Wild and Scenic status
- \*Major changes in Grand Canyon fees for river runners, and
- \*Potential wilderness designation set in motion for the Grand Canyon

By American Whitewater staff  
(with help from friends,  
volunteers, and members)



View from canyon rim of Chelan Gorge. Photo by John Gangemi

Unfortunately, there are plenty of issues and problems still to be addressed, and even more over the next horizon line ready to replace those gone from last year's list. Below are the most important issues to be tackled in 1999. If you need additional information on any of these issues, just call those listed under contacts, or call American Whitewater at the following numbers:

Jason Robertson, River Access Director  
Phone (301) 589-9453 e-mail [Access@amwhitewater.org](mailto:Access@amwhitewater.org)  
John Gangemi, River Conservation Director  
Phone (406) 837-3155 e-mail [jgangemi@digisys.net](mailto:jgangemi@digisys.net)

## 1. Fee Demo & Funding Public Lands

Issue: Access & Conservation

For the second year in a row, American Whitewater has identified the Congressional Fee Demo Program and funding for our public lands as the number one issue affecting boaters' abilities to enjoy America's rivers.

American Whitewater was one of many national recreation organizations that initially supported Fee Demo and even testified on its behalf before Congress. Our support was based on the civic ideal that, as recreationists, we would like to help with the improvement and maintenance of the environment and visitor experience on our public lands.

However, we have withdrawn our support for Fee Demo based on the uncorrected deficiencies of this project and the fact that the widespread collection of fees has substantially detracted from our member's enjoyment of visiting America's public lands. In our experience, the implementation has frequently been unfair, arbitrary, unpopular, and inconsistently applied across resource areas.

Termination of Fee Demo is consistent with Congress' intentions and implementation of this project. A review of the Congressional Record clearly indicates that Fee Demo was never intended as a permanent revenue source for our public lands or for it to affect regular Federal appropriations for the public land management agencies. However, there are ongoing discussions within Congress and the agencies for a unilateral extension of Fee Demo.

Our position on Fee Demo comes from our members. According to dozens of letters, our members oppose the extension of Fee Demo and would rather see their tax dollars pay directly for the maintenance of America's public lands. As Congress begins a debate about

the further extension of this program, we strongly encourage our elected representatives to solicit public comment on all aspects of the Fee Demo program. Congress should carefully scrutinize and evaluate the successes and failures of the law's implementation on our public lands; address our concerns about fairness, waste, and abuse within the system; and provide adequate funding for our national parks and forests.

We cannot support making Fee Demonstration a permanent program at this time, or extending the program (for a 3<sup>rd</sup> time) beyond its original expiration date, currently set for 2001. The Fee Demonstration Program, along with many other funding programs now being targeted towards outdoor recreationists, substantially affects the visitor experience of those who use our public lands. Developing a program that is fair and effective is critical for both outdoor users and for continued resource protection and maintenance. Fee Demo is neither fair nor effective.

Contact Jason Robertson, Access Director.

## 2. Colorado River, AZ

Wilderness in the Grand Canyon

Rafting the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon is one of America's greatest wilderness adventures. As of now, this is an experience almost unattainable by individual paddlers, as the private waiting list currently has a minimum 23-year wait. Additionally, the giant motorized rigs that carry customers through the canyon occasionally shatter the wilderness of the experience. Less obtrusive oar-rigs allow Americans the opportunity to access the wilderness of the canyon with minimal environmental impact, while continuing to provide adequate access, jobs, and profits for commercial river outfitters.



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The issue of Wilderness management in the Grand Canyon is rapidly becoming one of the most publicized environmental issues in the United States. Politics have long played a key role in the management of the Grand Canyon, but the American public is now demanding a voice in the planning process. Public interest groups like American Whitewater, Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association (GCPBA), and the Wilderness Society are taking active roles in ensuring that the American public is able to enjoy the wilderness of Grand Canyon. Last year we convinced the Park Service that it could not separate management of the river from management of the wilderness. Therefore, the Colorado River Management Plan will also include the Draft Wilderness Management Plan.

Drafting these plans will not be easy, nor is the process likely to be pleasant; however, it provides a critical opportunity for Americans to preserve the wilderness in Grand Canyon. The main participants in the DWMP revision process are embarking on a potentially historic journey. Like the first Canyon explorer Major John Wesley Powell, participants must commit to their course of action. Powell's first journal entry reminds us of the simple beauty that is found in wilderness, and the importance of finding inner strength in facing one's fears:

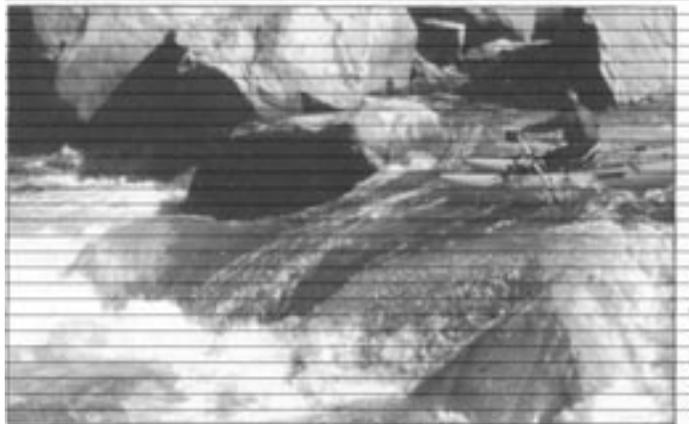
"We are now ready to start on our way down the Great Unknown. Our boats, tied to a common stake, chafe each other as they are tossed by the fretful river... We have an unknown distance yet to run, an unknown river to explore. What falls there are, we know not; what rocks beset the channel, we know not; what walls rise over the river, we know not."

Like Powell, we must embrace the unknown and accept our responsibilities for the future. Americans need the wilderness of the Grand Canyon as badly as the Canyon needs to be saved from future degradation. In a world of increasing mechanization and development, the solitude and natural beauty of the Grand Canyon cannot be surrendered. A fair planning process is necessary, but not sufficient,

to ensure the future of the Grand Canyon—only through full federal wilderness designation can we ensure that future generations will feel the tonic of wildness that is the Colorado River through Grand Canyon National Park.

We encourage you to support our efforts and consider joining GCPBA.

Contact Tom Martin at [tomhazel@grand-canyon.az.us](mailto:tomhazel@grand-canyon.az.us).



Photos by Rich Boaters

### 3. California Hydropower Relicensing

Issue: Hydropower Relicensing

In California over the next 15 years, 50 hydropower projects encompassing 167 dams are due for relicensing under the Federal Power Act (FPA). All private hydropower dams are licensed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for periods of 30 to



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50 years. Licensees must reapply to FERC for a new license at the time of expiration, a process referred to as relicensing. FERC decides, via input from state and federal agencies and the public, the terms and conditions for a new license. The current relicensing cycle presents a singular opportunity to enhance and restore many of California's rivers because most of these projects presently under review were granted licenses 30 to 50 years ago prior to passage of many existing state and federal environmental protection laws.

Precedent: California is renowned the world over for its classic whitewater. Many more miles of Class III, IV and V whitewater can be added to the California inventory through the relicensing process.

Contact John Gangemi, Conservation Director.

## 4. Dam Removal

Issue: Environmental restoration

In July of this year on the Kennebec River in Maine, water spilled through a gap cut in the 162 year old Edwards Dam. Removal of Edwards Dam was accomplished after a prolonged campaign by a coalition of conservation groups including American Whitewater. Removal of the dam came about only after careful study of the Kennebec River watershed, natural resource needs and hydropower project economics. Studying the feasibility of dam removal and accompanying river restoration is a rather recent phenomena. American Whitewater is involved in the dam removal studies numerous states including Arizona, California, Idaho, Oregon, Vermont and Washington. The American Whitewater journal (July/August 1999) recently featured stories on efforts to study the feasibility of removing Glen Canyon Dam on the Colorado River and the four federal dams on the lower Snake River.

American Whitewater supports the study of dam removal and

advocates it on a case by case basis only after thorough scientific and public policy analysis. Studies must consider the factors included in both the dam decommissioning and the restoration of the landscape, including economic and political issues in order to exercise the wisdom of knowing which course of action should preside.

Precedent: There are over 75,000 dams in the U.S. Many of these dams severely degrade river ecosystems. Some of these dams have outlived their usefulness. Dam removal provides an opportunity to restore ecosystem health and simultaneously raises our consciousness regarding the longevity of seemingly permanent public works, river integrity and the steps necessary for ecosystem restoration.

Contact John Gangemi, Conservation Director.

## 5. River Safety

Issue: Safety, Education, and Impact on Resources

The issue of whitewater safety has dropped from it's No. 2 position last year, not because it is less important, but thankfully because early indications for 1999 are that fatal accidents are slightly lower than in the previous two years. Any decline in this statistic is great news. Our numbers are preliminary at this point, but just about everyone could use a break from the 1997-1998 list of incidents involving skilled boaters.

Recently compiled statistics by state health officials in Colorado found that fewer fatalities occurred among the 700,000 people who canoed, rafted, and kayaked in the state than did fatalities reported for climbing, bicycling, or skiing in the same area. Statistics like this are very useful to remind us that there are sports other than boating, but it loses this usefulness when one of our friends winds up in the data column. Bottom line— safety remains an individual rather than public responsibility, and all of us need to paddle with this in mind.

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In last year's Top 40, we mentioned that any death creates political problems for those who enjoy and use rivers. This issue has become even more noticeable in the first half of this year. The increased attention involving whitewater safety has heightened the interest in paddling liability, especially among power companies who control flow to many of our most highly used whitewater rivers. Much of this may stem more from an economic rather than safety concern, but every incident makes the liability issue that much harder to answer.

Likewise, river accidents involving non-boaters are impacting the sport. In our current list of 1999 river fatalities, two involve hikers. On section IV of the Chattooga, attempts to recover one hiker's body has resulted in impacts to this Wild and Scenic River. More importantly, this could introduce legislation aimed at reducing recreational use of this river, and certainly opens the question of "fixing" rivers to avoid future accidents.

American Whitewater is always looking for ways to promote safety in the whitewater community, and hope that paddlers will use the Journal to share their ideas. Safety issue written by Rich Bowers.

Contact Lee Belknap (804) 266-9060 or Charlie Walbridge (304) 379-9002.

## 6. Yellowstone, WY

Issue: River Closure & Conservation of Wilderness

Aldo Leopold, architect of the modern wilderness ethic, writes in the *Sand County Almanac* that, canoeing is "as American as a hickory tree," and that "Wilderness areas are first of all a series of sanctuaries for the primitive arts of wilderness travel, especially canoeing." Unfortunately, the free-flowing waters in the Yellowstone wilderness were closed to boating in 1950 in an attempt to control fishing.

American Whitewater recently asked Yellowstone National Park to consider lifting the ban and allowing boating on a small handful of rivers. We suggest a process under which the Park could permit boating while protecting Yellowstone's unique cultural and environmental resources.

We recommend reopening 5% of Yellowstone's free-flowing waters. We have voluntarily asked for strong seasonal restrictions to protect wildlife during reproductive seasons, and only recommend opening portions of the Black Canyon, Gardner, Lamar, and Lewis rivers. This will provide a variety of experiences for visitors with a diversity of skills and interests, and the Park will not need to construct any new trails or facilities.

Our proposal raises the bar for managing visitor use and impacts on America's public lands. Every human activity has impacts. However, kayaking and canoeing have minimal transitory effects with inconsequential impacts to the landscape and river environment. The real question for Yellowstone is one of overall visitation. How much use is appropriate? What uses are appropriate? And how do we limit overall impacts?

Our proposal specifically addresses these questions and takes "responsibility" for recreational use to a new standard. It suggests that recreational use restrictions must be based on scientific studies that objectively address resource degradation. We also ask the Park Service to evaluate all recreational use on the governing standard that there be no degradation to Yellowstone's natural resources as a result of that use. American Whitewater believes that gauging actual effects on wildlife and sensitive areas improves upon the practice of regulating use through obsolete traditional definitions or political clout. This paradigm shift requires the Park to manage for wildlife and resource protection first and the activity's contribution to the visitor experience second. If the Park accepts our proposal, it sets a strong precedent for managing use by all visitors.

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Kayaking and canoeing are allowed in all of America's other National Parks with whitewater rivers, and these activities contribute to visitor enjoyment. A review of recreational use management plans at National Parks and Forests across the country demonstrates that whitewater paddlers adhere to stringent "leave no trace" ethics on public lands. The ban on canoeing in Yellowstone is inconsistent with the management policies of our National Parks and the historic intent of wilderness management. Furthermore, the ban does not address the real issue of visitation, and does not contribute meaningfully to the Park's management goals.

Our members have a legitimate interest in Yellowstone. We share a reverence and appreciation for America's wilderness areas with other conservation-minded recreationists. We respect Yellowstone for its unparalleled scenery and wildlife, and believe that it can teach us about our American identity and ourselves. We encourage you to read our proposal firsthand and judge it for yourself. We welcome comments and ideas for improving our model for recreational use management. The proposal is available on our web site at [www.awa.org](http://www.awa.org).

Contact Jason Robertson, Access Director.

## 7. Blackwater, WV

Issue: Logging, water quality, aesthetic impacts, and access

Last year we reported that a logging company, Allegheny Wood Products (AWP), purchased a 3,000 acre private inholding of the Monongahela National Forest. American Whitewater brokered a temporary deal with the Forest Service and AWP that allowed river access for one year; this deal expired in March. As we head to press we are negotiating for longer term access to this dramatic Canyon.

During the past year, environmental groups protested the pur-



Blackwater Valley, WV. Photo by Rich Bowers

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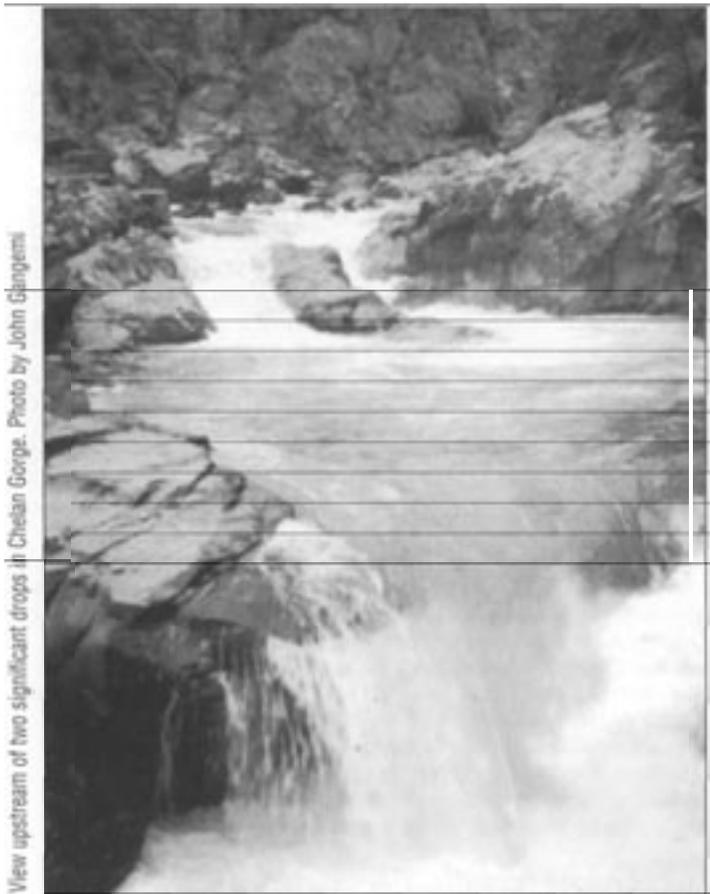
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chase of the property, challenged logging operations under the Endangered Species Act, and began seeking National Park status for the entire Canyon. American Whitewater is committed to working on a solution that protects the entire canyon. We are following the National Park movement with great interest and caution. Look for Mac Thornton's article for one member's perspective on this issue.

Contact Jason Robertson, Access Director.

## 8. Chelan River, Washington

Issue: Relicensing Lake Chelan hydropower project



View upstream of two significant drops in Chelan Gorge. Photo by John Gangemi

Chelan Public Utility District is currently relicensing the Chelan Lake Hydropower Project. The current license expires in 2004. American Whitewater is advocating an annual schedule of whitewater flows in the river below the dam. Studies of the whitewater resource have been postponed indefinitely due to liability issues. American Whitewater is working cooperatively with Chelan PUD to find a mutually agreeable solution to the liability issue.

The Chelan River drops 400 feet between Chelan Lake and the Columbia River four miles downstream. The bulk of this gradient occurs in the 1.5 mile Chelan Gorge. A 40 foot high dam constructed at the end of Chelan Lake diverts lake outflows into a 2.2 mile penstock around the Chelan Gorge to the powerhouse. Initial reconnaissance of the 500 foot deep gorge revealed five Class V rapids, one Class VI and an abundance of Class IV. The Chelan Gorge is truly a whitewater cathedral.

Precedent: Whitewater boating is no more dangerous than other recreational activities such as motor boating typically provided at hydropower reservoirs. Liability issues must not preclude whitewater releases. Hydropower operators are required by law to guarantee public access to the river channel as well as mitigate impacts. An annual schedule of whitewater releases is necessary to mitigate for

lost paddling opportunities caused by water diversions from the river.

Contact John Gangemi, Conservation Director, at [Sangemi@digisvs.net](mailto:Sangemi@digisvs.net) for further information.

## 9. North Fork Feather River, California

Issue: Hydropower Relicensing

In early June, 1999, American Whitewater conducted a controlled flow study to determine optimum whitewater flows for two sections on the North Fork Feather River as part of an ongoing hydropower relicense process. These river sections, a nine mile Class IV-V run and a five mile Class IV reach, are de-watered by the Rock Creek-Cresta hydropower project operated by PG&E.

Altogether, the North Fork Feather River offers six separate Class III, IV and V whitewater runs encompassing 50 river miles, surely a paddling mecca worth placing on any destination paddling vacation (See March/April 1997 issue). American Whitewater is actively working to restore the North Fork Feather so that this river evolves into a paddling destination. Under the present hydropower operating conditions whitewater paddling is severely precluded. Years ago, Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) engineered a series of reservoirs, pipes, and powerhouses diverting water from virtually every mile of this 50 mile long river canyon. Flows sufficient for whitewater are only available during extremely wet storms, typically the winter



Photo by Rich Bowers



Norwood Scott, American Whitewater Regional Coordinator, boating County Line Hole on the Cresta section during the controlled flow study in June on the North Fork Feather River. Photo by John Gangemi

months when run-off exceeds the capacity of PG&E's 12 foot diameter pipes and reservoir storage. As one infamous California boater stated in reference to the North Fork Feather, "PG&E giveth and PG&E taketh away."

PG&E operates three FEKC licensed hydropower projects in the mainstem of the North Fork Feather River totaling six dams and seven powerhouses. Two of those projects, Poe and Upper North Fork Feather recently started the relicensing process. These two projects contain four reservoirs, four dewatered river channels, and four powerhouses collectively. The license for the third project, Rock Creek-Cresta, expired in 1979 but has dragged out the typical five year relicense process for 19 years.

Precedent: Restoring summer whitewater flows to the six dewatered reaches of the North Fork Feather will elevate this reach of the Feather to one of California's premier paddling destinations. Check American Whitewater's Website [www.awa.org](http://www.awa.org) for updates and opportunities to submit comments

Contact John Gangemi, Conservation Director

## 10. Chattooga River, GA

Issue: Protecting the River's Wild and Scenic River Status

The Chattooga River is a federally designated Wild and Scenic River. As such, it is afforded some protection from development and damming. Recently, the Chattooga watershed's wild and scenic status has been jeopardized by a number of people with both good and bad intentions. Our members have seen threats from development, raised concerns about logging, questioned new parking fees, worried about the safety of proposed commercial inflatable trips on Section IV, and most recently protested the temporary damming of the river to recover the body of a drowned hiker. American Whitewater has tracked all of these issues, and we are very concerned that they threaten the river's wild and scenic status.

American Whitewater and several outfitters on the Chattooga, including the Nantahala Outdoor Center (NOC), have joined a suit with the Forest Service to prevent development and support our right of navigation on the West Fork of the Chattooga. When it became clear that the USFS was going to impose fees on the Chattooga under Fee Demo we provided advice on the structure of the fee system; these proposals were implemented and created one of the fairest systems in the country.

Unfortunately, the drowning of a hiker above Raven Chute has posed yet another threat to the Chattooga. Though the body was quickly discovered with the aid of a dive team and camera crew, it could not be easily recovered. The USFS agreed to let a team build a temporary dam on the river diverting water around the drowning site. In the process of building the dam, the rescuers exposed themselves to great risk and also drilled several holes in the bedrock to seat the dam in place. Ultimately, the dam failed before the body could be recovered. The parents of the drowned girl did not believe that every step had been taken to recover her body and brought strong political pressure to bear on the rescuers by Senator Strom Thurmond (SC). Ultimately the USFS agreed to let the rescue team build a second temporary dam, and, after two months, the remains of the victim were discovered in an eddy below Raven Chute.

American Whitewater is opening a dialogue with all agencies and other interested parties to establish a policy explaining what will and won't be done on Wild and Scenic Rivers to avoid similar confrontations in the future. We are concerned about future recoveries, as well as river construction designed to improve safety for others (i.e. the Left Crack and Sock-em-dog issues of the last few years). To do this, the issue needs to be removed from the recent tragedy or else emotion will overrule good decision-making. We are working on this now, and with the recovery of the body, our chances of avoiding similar controversies on the Chattooga, or any other Wild and Scenic River, are much better.

Contact Jason Robertson, Access Director.

## 11. Electric Utility Deregulation and Hydropower Reform Legislation

Issue: River restoration and mitigation funds

In 1992, Congress passed the Energy Policy Act which permitted restructuring of the electric utility industry. Up until passage of the act, electric utilities had a regulated monopoly on a designated territory of electric consumers. Public utility commissions within individual states set electric rates for these monopolies to protect consumers and provide a guaranteed rate of return for the utility. Passage of the act allowed each state to individually restructure utility regulation in a competitive marketplace. In April of 1998 California was the first state to offer a deregulated market to retail customers. The electric utility industry's public relations campaign claims deregulation will lower consumer electric rates. In reality, future electric rates are uncertain in this new market place.

Electricity costs aside, deregulation marks an uncertain future for America's rivers and consequently whitewater boating opportunities. Because utilities are no longer guaranteed a rate of return, the profit generated from a 30 year of hydropower license is uncertain. As a result, hydro operators are reluctant to commit funds to mitigate project impacts on the river resource. This attitude ultimately manifests itself in decreased flows for river restoration and whitewater.

The electric utility industry has developed a legislative agenda designed to "reform" the licensing process for hydropower projects. In reality this is a streamlined licensing process, allowing the utilities to bypass the environmental restrictions and review procedures. The utility industry claims the reforms are necessary to reduce costs associated with licensing projects and to eliminate duplicate and conflicting requirements. In contrast, the Hydropower Reform Coalition of which American Whitewater is a founding member, sees agency and public involvement as a critical component of the environmental review process. The costs associated with relicensing are minor relative to the profits from hydro generation on the public's rivers. American Whitewater is working to maintain public and agency input on the utility relicensing process.

Precedent: The hydropower industry has been spearheading electric restructuring. This new market place must not change the industry's obligation to mitigate impacts caused by project operations. Legislative changes to the licensing process are not necessary. Increased funding for regulatory agencies and enhanced communication will do far more to expedite the relicensing process.

Contact John Gangemi, Conservation Director.

## 12. Upper Yough, PA

Issue: Sale of power plant limits recreational flows; DNR imposes fees.

Sithe Energy consortium purchased the power plant that provides water for the Upper Yough. The prior owner reduced cooperation with paddlers to the bare minimum while the sale was negotiated in order to increase the apparent value of the facility. American Whitewater has succeeded in getting the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to review the sale. We are urging the Maryland DNR to require the power company to address the issues of supplemental releases, encourage cooperation with private boaters and rafting companies by announcing releases, and also opening channels of communication with the paddling community.

As representatives of the paddling community in the original agreement, American Whitewater earned the support of boaters to follow through with this negotiation.

American Whitewater has also been working with the Maryland DNR regarding the new fees at the Upper Yough put-in, and the possible development of an alternative take-out.

Contact: Steve Taylor [[taylor@hoss.stx.com](mailto:taylor@hoss.stx.com)] or Mac Thornton [[potomacgorge@compuserve.com](mailto:potomacgorge@compuserve.com)].

### 13. New River Drys, WV

Issue: Access & obtaining recreational releases

Wouldn't it be great if the consummate play run in the state of West Virginia, the "Drys" section of the New River, would run in the summer? Well guess what? It just might, thanks to a grass roots effort, American Whitewater, and the help of the American Heritage Rivers Initiative (AHRI).

The "Drys" section of the New River is located below the Hawk's Nest Dam in Ansted and ends in the town of Gauley Bridge. Dave Garcia said, "There's not a play run in WV that beats it, and the shuttle is no hassle." It extends for six miles of Class III-IV water that can take as little as 45 minutes or as long as four hours to paddle, depending on how hard you play. It's also a splendidly scenic section of river that boasts 50-foot cascading waterfalls, a 100-foot high canyon, a natural arch, and a diversity of fish and wildlife.

Project: Water for the New River Drys is spearheading the campaign for releases. The group is lead by Tim Daly and Patrick Myers, two local boaters that asked, "Wouldn't it be cool if we could have water on the Drys in the summer." Instead of blowing the dam, they took some vital steps to get the whole process going. First, they got a gauge placed on the river and increased awareness among boaters and local townspeople. Then, President Clinton designated the New River as one of ten American Heritage Rivers in the country: this designation opened up all kinds of doors. The AHRI was formed to preserve historical and cultural aspects of a river system, maintain protection of a vital natural resource, and spur economic growth, as well as education and training. As a facilitator for the AHRI said, "This is exactly the type of project that this program was designed for."

Project: Water for the Drys is also currently working on creek cleanups in the region. Mill Creek and Laurel Creek (featured in

Falling Down) are both in desperate need of attention. The cleanups will consist of getting all fallen wood and trash out of the creeks as well as making a trail system for boaters, hikers, and fishermen. If these guys continue being successful, we may actually be looking forward to a "Drys" season next summer.

If you have any questions or comments on the efforts of Project: Water for the New River Drys or if you just want to get involved in the cause, you can contact Tim Daly at (304) 757-8571.

### 14. South Fork of the South Platte, CO

Issue: Access & landowner conflicts

Landowners have erected barriers along the South Fork of the South Platte River, thereby forcing boaters to get out and portage, and opening boaters up to criminal trespass charges. The local District Attorney's regularly throw out these cases, but the landowner's behavior has chilled river use substantially. This river was cited more in River Access reports mailed to Ken Ransford than any other river in the United States. American Whitewater's Jay Kenney has represented two groups of arrested boaters, getting the charges dropped in each case.

Contact Jay Kenney at [jaypkk@aol.com](mailto:jaypkk@aol.com)

### 15. Stony Creek, PA

Issue: Water releases from Quemahoning Dam

The Stonycreek river canyon is a Class III run with over 100 hydraulics and surfing waves in a wide range of sizes and configurations. Over the past ten years, even without a reliable flow release schedule, it has become a regular destination for western and central Pennsylvania kayakers and canoeists. With reliable water, the

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Lee Burdige running Sheppard's Falls, West River, WA. Dave Skoner photo.



Stonycreek will draw a large population of playboaters with a diversity of skill levels without becoming overcrowded, a problem common to rivers with only a few play spots.

Efforts to obtain recreational releases from Manufactures Water Co., the owner of Quemahoning Dam, have been underway for more than a decade. This year the dam will be sold to a public authority formed by Cambria and Somerset counties with the stated purpose of enhancing recreation and tourism.

American Whitewater has been assisting local efforts since the sale of the dam first became a possibility. We actively campaigned for the counties to become the new owner. With the change in control of the Quemahoning Dam, American Whitewater and the Benscreek Canoe Club (BCC) are seizing this opportunity to establish scheduled whitewater releases on this unique resource.

Currently, American Whitewater is proposing feasibility and controlled flow studies of releases from the Quemahoning reservoir. The purpose of these releases is to determine the optimum flow, the capacity and frequency of releases, and the resulting economic and environmental benefits. In addition to whitewater recreation opportunities, reliable recreational releases from the Quemahoning Dam will also provide economical opportunities to the local non-paddling community and compliment efforts to restore water quality and a fishery on the Stonycreek River.

If you are interested in helping with this project, or would like more information, please contact Scott Cuppett, Regional Coordinator, 134 Pine Dr. Johnstown, PA 15905, 814-288-2608, 814-269-2998 (fax) e-mail: [Cumett@JST.ctc.com](mailto:Cumett@JST.ctc.com)

## 16. Housatonic River, Connecticut

Issue: Hydropower Relicensing

Connecticut Light and Power are in the process of relicensing

two hydropower projects on the Housatonic River, Falls Village and Bulls Bridge and must submit their license application to FERC in Fall 1999. Flows from both projects effect whitewater boating opportunities in downstream reaches.

The Housatonic was historically a warmwater fishery. The state fisheries agency along with local fishing groups has artificially propagated a coldwater fishery incapable of tolerating historic water temperatures in the Housatonic. The coldwater fishery functions primarily as a put and take fishery for anglers. The state fishery agency claims summer whitewater releases raise water temperatures above a critical 75 degree threshold for trout. To date, no adequate studies linking fish mortality to recreational flows have been conducted. Nonetheless, releases from Fall's Village power plant are now dictated by a combined river and reservoir temperature model greatly limiting whitewater flows in the summer. The state fishery agency advocates use of the temperature model in the new 30 year license. Due to fishery budgets that are funded primarily through the sale of fishing licenses and equipment, the state fishery agency clearly has a conflict of interest with this 30 year prescription. Meanwhile, there is no equivalent state agency advocating conditions for the whitewater community. American Whitewater, along with local paddling clubs and conservation organizations, will strive for equitable use of the river resource.

Precedent: Relicensing must be used as an opportunity to balance resource uses equitably. Maintenance of non-native fish is unfairly dominating the relicensing process on the Housatonic. Unfortunately in the case of the Housatonic, the whitewater community lacks representation by a state or federal agency with regulatory authority in the process. Recognition of whitewater recreation as a beneficial use in state water quality plans will grant regulatory representation through 401 water quality certifications.

Contact John Gangemi, Conservation Director.

## "FEEL THE THUNDER!"

Rick Gusic's latest film, "Silent Thunder: The Legend of Team C" is rolling across the country, and the accolades are pouring in:

- Winner of three awards at the National Paddling Film Festival, including Best of Show
- Winner of the "Humor" category at the Canadian Water Walker Film Festival

### The Legend of Team C:

From the director of Spreading the Disease comes a new whitewater paddling video that provides an in-depth look at a team of paddlers that most of the paddling world wouldn't touch in a million years. A team of kayakers that checked their ego at the door long, long ago. The result? A few laughs, a couple of interviews, and footage of an elite group of skilled to moderately skilled boaters taking their shot at fame by throwing themselves up against some of the best whitewater in the country and getting brutalized.

### The Rivers

North Fork of the Blackwater, WVA, Green Narrows, NC, The Big South, CO, The Gauley, WVA, The Russel Fork, KY, Oh Be Joyful Creek, CO, Homestake Creek, CO, Spencer Heights of the Cache, CO, The Narrows of the Cache, CO, Tallulah Gorge, GA, The Rouge, Canada, Clear Creek, CO, Gore Canyon, CO, The Bottom Moose, NY, The East River, CO, The North Fork of the South Platte, CO, Tunnel Creek, CO, The Casselman (high water), PA

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Hey Kids! Brian Joly Says,  
"Watch me get brutalized!"

## 17. River Modifications

Issue: Altering river channels for fishery enhancement

Channel alteration continues to threaten river integrity at a myriad of sites across the country. These treatments are for the most part benefiting those advocating the alteration, and are the source of many of the anthropocentric symptoms plaguing our nation's rivers; e.g.; flooding, bank erosion, and aquatic habitat loss. Furthermore, the treatments prescribed generally focus on the symptom rather than curing the disease leading to the impact. In addition, the sum of the treatments often results in significant cumulative impacts to the river.

This approach is particularly evident on the Yellowstone River in Montana. Following the floods of 1997, residents along the Yellowstone continue to armor banks, re-route the river channel, and construct dikes to avoid future flooding. Individually, these treatments have minute impacts on a river ecosystem the size of the Yellowstone. Collectively, these alterations have a devastating impact on river habitat and ultimately exacerbate flooding.

State and federal agencies are increasingly using artificial large woody debris (LWD) structures to improve fishery habitat degraded by poor land use practices and, ironically, past fish management practices. The large logs placed in the channel pose serious safety hazards for whitewater recreationists. In other cases, agency personnel are advocating channel modifications for fish passage at naturally impassable barriers.

Precedent: River modifications disrupt riverine ecological processes. Artificial placement of LWD structures rarely results in habitat improvement for salmonids. The current scientific literature does not support use of artificial structures. The whitewater boating community advocates salmon restoration using methods incorporating a watershed approach and supported by the peer reviewed scientific literature. The few remaining salmon will not support trial and error techniques. Furthermore, artificial structures create severe safety hazards for boaters.

Contact John Gangemi, Conservation Director.

## 18. Kern River, California

Issue: Hydropower licensing and Access Fees

The Kern River has repeatedly been at the forefront of American Whitewater's annual Top 40 river issues. The Kern is an outstanding whitewater resource but the agency responsible for its oversight continues to mismanage the resource and offend whitewater user groups. For example, the Sequoia National Forest (SNF) failed to require adequate whitewater flows in the relicensing of the Kern River No. 3 hydropower project. American Whitewater and other conservation and local civic groups successfully appealed for the second time the SNF flow schedule.

The Kern River offers 85 miles of Class II-V whitewater in the southern Sierra. In total, there are five FERC licensed hydropower projects plus an additional multipurpose reservoir regulating flows in the Kern watershed. To date, two hydropower projects have received licenses on the Kern River; Kern River No. 1 on the lower river and Kern River No. 3 on the upper river. American Whitewater advocated for better flows and access in both relicensings. The relicensing process for two other FERC hydro projects begins in late 1999.

On the 18 mile Class V wilderness run known as the Forks of the Kern, the SNF instituted a permit system limiting private use to 15 boaters daily. Based on a study conducted in 1982, the permit system was put in place to minimize camping impacts to the river corridor associated with multi-day trips. At that time, many boaters took more than one day to run the 26 miles. The majority of private users in the 1990s view the Forks as a day run. Day use of the river has minimal impacts, if any, on the river corridor. The permit system on the Forks needs revision to reflect current use patterns.

On a positive note for the Kern, American Whitewater, along with grassroots assistance from local volunteers and other groups, has convinced the SNF that implementation of a fee system targeting boaters is unfair. The SNF has instituted a citizens advisory board that will work with the SNF on river related issues. It is hoped this board can develop solutions to the Forks permit system, access on the lower river, and implementation of a volunteer river ranger program that will target safety education for the non-boating public.

Precedent: The future management picture is improving on the Kern due largely to the persistence of local American Whitewater members directing SNF staff toward a positive model for river management. The SNF recently dropped a river user fee plan, increased access points on the lower Kern and implemented a citizen river advisory board. We hope this new river management outlook will carry over into the SNF's third attempt to write a flow schedule for the Kern River No. 3 hydropower license. The flow schedule must support present whitewater use and be adaptable to future growth in river sports over the next 30 years.

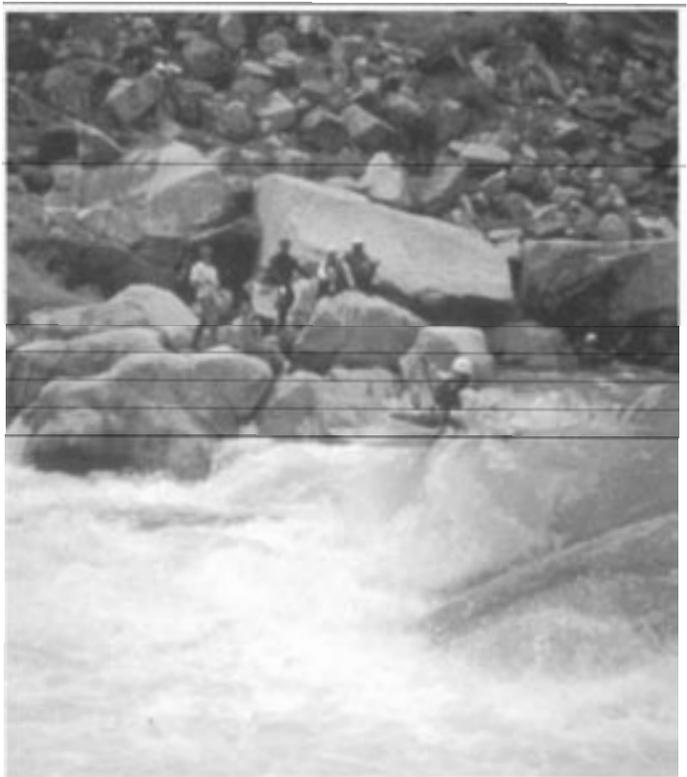
Contact John Gangemi, Conservation Director.

## 19. Boundary Creek, Idaho

Issue: New hydropower project

Continental Lands Inc. filed a preliminary permit to construct a hydropower generating facility on Boundary Creek. The preliminary permit is the first step toward getting a license to construct the project. The Boundary Creek hydro project would require diverting water from a significant length of a premier kayak run. The loss of water would also greatly impact bull trout, west slope cutthroat trout and harlequin ducks. Project construction and operation would disturb caribou, grizzly bears and wolves. The kayak season would be shortened significantly if not completely eliminated. American Whitewater submitted comments protesting the preliminary permit.

Boundary Creek is situated, as the name implies, on the border between Idaho and Canada. This is the quintessential creek run: A ten-mile paddle with gradients fluctuating between 250 to 375 feet



Dave Friedman exploring the gradient on boundary Creek. Photo by John Gangemi

per mile. It's described as a single rapid ten miles in length.

Precedent: Based on the natural resources at risk the FERC must not grant a preliminary permit to Continental Lands. Boundary Creek hydro is unwarranted because there is currently a surplus of electricity in the Pacific Northwest. Boundary Creek with its associated species and recreational opportunities are an irreplaceable resource. American Whitewater will keep members informed on the status of Boundary Creek via the Journal and web site.

Contact John Gangemi, Conservation Director.

## 20. Bear River, Southeast Idaho

### Issue: Hydropower Relicensing

The license applications for three hydropower projects encompassing four dams are due in October 1999. The public has been granted 60 days to file comments on the operating conditions described in the applications. This is a singular opportunity to restore flows to the Bear River including two whitewater runs with regional significance.

The three projects include the Soda project, Grace/Cove project, and Oneida project. Both the Grace and Oneida hydropower projects effect flows on downstream whitewater runs. The Grace project diverts up to 900 cfs of water from the 6.2 mile Black Canyon section. This Class IV (V) run is only 2 hours from Salt Lake City. In most years, little or no water flows in the natural river channel. In May of 1997 American Whitewater conducted a controlled flow study to determine the optimum flows for whitewater (see July/August 1997 issue). American Whitewater is fighting hard to get these optimum flows regularly scheduled on an annual basis.



Bear River, UT. Photo by Rich Bowers

The Oneida project is a peaking hydropower facility. Flows below Oneida Dam can fluctuate between 250 cfs to 3000 cfs several times in a single day. The Oneida reach is an important Class H training ground a short drive from Logan, Utah. The Utah State University (USU) canoe club uses the reach regularly. American Whitewater, Idaho Rivers United and the USU canoe club have requested a schedule of stable weekend flows of specific magnitude and duration.

Precedent: These relicensings offer a tremendous opportunity to add significant whitewater stretches in an arid area of the country. The final license applications for all three projects are due in the Fall of 1999. Paddlers are encouraged to write comment letters. American Whitewater will post the address and instructions for comments on the web site in October. Visit [www.awa.org](http://www.awa.org).

Contact John Gangemi, Conservation Director.

## 21. Chattooga, Access to Section 0, 00, & 1

### Issue: Access

The Sumter Land Management Plan will be completed in October 1999. Upon completion of the plan, we will ask the USFS to draft a River Management Plan addressing boater access to sections 0.00, & 1 of the Chattooga River. At present, these sections are limited to fishing access only. Optimistically, we're looking at seeing a complete river plan in 2003.

In the meantime, American Whitewater will propose that the USFS allow river access between the normal high water period between December 1<sup>st</sup> and April 15<sup>th</sup>. We hope to get limited access for these dates without a complete NEPA EIS review. The major concerns that we need to address are: 1) regulating unskilled boaters and inner tubers, 2) restricting camping, 3) registering river users, and 4) avoiding conflicts with fishermen. All of these are manageable concerns. Furthermore, limiting access to winter months will go a long way to reducing the potential for conflicts with fishermen and use of the river by unskilled visitors.

Volunteers should send an e-mail to [Jason@amwhitewater.org](mailto:Jason@amwhitewater.org).

## 22. Increased Motorized Use of Rivers

### Issues: Jet Skis, Jet Boats, Safety, Environmental Concerns

Personal Water Craft (PWC) use is growing on lakes and rivers. Manufacturers are building bigger machines capable of navigating whitewater rivers. PWC use on whitewater rivers will impact river safety, crowding, environmental health, and wilderness ethics.

PWC use on waterways is facing increased opposition from a number of diverse sources. The National Park Service recently outlawed PWC use in park units unless it is considered fitting for a specific area based on enabling legislation, resource protection, other visitor uses, and broad management objectives. Flaming Gorge eliminated jet skis declaring that they are not appropriate with the wilderness designation of the area. Contact: John Gangemi or Dave Jenkins, American Canoe Association at (703)451-0141, ext. 20.

## 23. Mokelumne River, California

### Issue: Hydropower Relicensing and Access

The license for the Mokelumne hydropower project expired in 1975. PG&E has been operating this multi-dam project on annual licenses since that time. Annual licenses grant the licensee a one year license with the same conditions in the previous 30 to 50 year license. In many cases these license conditions completely disregard river resource needs. The license delays on the Mokelumne are largely the result of PG&E's own unwillingness to bring their project operations into compliance with contemporary environmental protection regulations.

American Whitewater has been advocating for an annual schedule of releases on the four whitewater reaches impacted by this project.

T o p 4 0 I s s u e s

Until recently, PG&E has declined our requests. The FERC recently voiced their disapproval of this overdue license. In the subsequent meeting, American Whitewater urged PG&E to participate in a one year collaborative process designed to develop new operating conditions for the project. An annual schedule of whitewater releases is on the issue list in this collaborative.

The popular Electra run on the Mokelumne is foreshortened from a six mile to a three mile novice run due to an unnecessary access restriction imposed by East Bay Municipality District (EBMUD) at their downstream reservoir. The multi-purpose reservoir stores water for hydropower generation as well as municipal water supply. EBMUD does not permit human contact with the water yet encourages motor boat use of the reservoir and leases grazing allotments on adjacent lands. The Electra run is probably the most heavily used novice run in California.

Precedent: Annual licenses are a disincentive for utilities to commit to the relicensing process. Furthermore, annual licenses allow utilities to continue maximizing profit from a public resource with little if any mitigation. Annual licenses must include interim operating conditions imposed by the regulatory agencies and stakeholder groups. Hydro operators must be required to provide free public access to project lands and waters.

Contact John Gangemi, Conservation Director.

## 24. Canoe and Kayak Tax

Issue: State Legislation on Fees or Permits

During the past couple of years American Whitewater has observed a trend in the eastern part of the country in efforts to tax boat owners. With the help of an alert boating community, our members, and other organizations such as the American Canoe Association and Carolina Canoe Club we have successfully countered several proposed taxes. However, we are spending more and more of our time fighting boat tax issues. If this trend continues we will need more of your help in the future.

In 1999, we successfully defeated proposed taxes in North Carolina, Vermont, Virginia, and Maine. We were also successful in having a boat tax repealed in Arizona! However, we are concerned that we may see more efforts to tax kayak and canoe owners in the coming year.

Update on two bills in North Carolina: SB 499 passed during the Summer session. As passed, this bill taxes motorboat owners. We were successful in having provisions dropped that would have taxed canoe and kayak owners. This was a major victory for everyone involved.

Though the boating community initially supported a second bill, SB 368, we withdrew our support at the last minute because several amendments were added in the closing hours of the session. One of these amendments included a license fee for paddlers who used Wildlife access areas. Because it was late in the legislative session, we were not able to evaluate the changes. The Carolina Canoe Club asked the bill's sponsor to either stop action on the bill or to kill the measure. Originally, SB 368 would have given the state Department of Transportation (DOT) the ability to designate DOT owned property near a road as a public access to a river.

Senator Wib Gulley chose to halt action on SB 368 and to arrange meetings over the next year for interested parties including the Carolina Canoe Club, DOT, and Wildlife to discuss the issues raised in the bill.

Thanks to all of you who wrote letters, sent e-mail, or made phone calls on these two pieces of legislation. And a VERY SPECIAL THANKS to Carolina Canoe Club member and American Whitewater Regional Coordinator Cleo Smith for his work on these two bills. We could not have made it through this year without his diligence and hard work!

Contact Cleo Smith, 919-755-1290 [[clesmith@hotmail.com](mailto:clesmith@hotmail.com)] or Bob Brueckner [[rjbrueckner@mindspring.com](mailto:rjbrueckner@mindspring.com)] for more information.

## 25. Navigability

Issue: State Legislation Modifying Navigability Laws

American Whitewater has been at the forefront in protecting navigability rights in America for the past several years. In 1998 alone, we successfully opposed reductions in your navigability rights in Arkansas, Oregon and Montana with the help of our regional coordinators and affiliates. Our activities have also paved the way for a productive year in 1999 in which existing rights developing from case law should be clarified in legislation to the benefit of boaters, swimmers, fishermen, ranchers, and commercial outfitters.

Update on Oregon's navigability activities: In an event that received much fanfare, Shannon Carroll kayaked off the 76-foot Sahalie waterfall in Oregon on July 31<sup>st</sup> 1998, setting the world free-fall kayaking record. Shannon's feat dramatically demonstrated the extreme edge of actual navigability.

Three months later, in October 1998, a fisherman was arrested in Oregon for trespassing as he walked along the banks of the John Day River. The case was dismissed. However, the judge has been asked by the Northwest Steelheaders Association to issue a determination of navigability on this river.

The first case demonstrates the strength of Oregon's navigability law, and the second demonstrates its weaknesses. Currently, only ten rivers are navigable under Oregon law. The State owns the beds of these rivers and the public has a right to float, wade, fish, and recreate within the normal high water mark.

The remainder of Oregon's non-navigable rivers and streams are subject to a floatage easement. This easement is based on the argument that moving surface waters are held in common under the Public Trust and are not subject to private ownership. Boaters are clearly allowed to float down non-navigable rivers. Though the right to portage, wade, fish, or make incidental contact with the beds or banks is unclear.

Private threats to public recreation rights come largely from two areas: land rights activists who fear prescriptive easements, and landowners that fear liability. Both fears are unfounded. Oregon's recreational use statute absolves landowners from liability for all but the most extreme hazards. Additionally, the permissive recreational use of land does not create an easement, and public rights of ownership are protected.

During the 1999 legislative session, Oregon's senate reviewed the Oregon River Access Bill (SB 832) that clarifies public recreation rights on the state's waters. Jason Robertson helped draft much of the language in this bill and made sure that it formalizes boaters' rights to 1) float down any tributary capable of supporting a boat and 2) allows recreational uses incident to boating (i.e., swimming, wading, picnicking, fishing).

If passed, this bill will have several major impacts on navigability and recreational use in America. First, it will allow boaters to float, scout, and portage any river. Second, it will bolster the region's existing laws that are under siege from internal threats by the livestock and agriculture industry. Third, it will create a new benchmark for recreational use statutes throughout the country. And fourth, it will support a movement to define navigability based on a river's capacity for recreational use.

American Whitewater is one of more than 18 organizations that have joined to form the River Recreation Rights (RRR) coalition in Oregon in support of this bill. This coalition is unique in that fishermen, boaters, conservationists, and hunters are working together to supply everyone with the opportunity to use Oregon's waters for recreation. In a somewhat unusual move, we have even hired a lobbyist, Phil Donovan, to increase the odds that this or another bill supporting the public right of navigation will be passed in the next legislative session.

For more information contact: Jody White [[jwhite@peak.org](mailto:jwhite@peak.org)], Willamette Kayak & Canoe Club Conservation Chair; or Keith R. Jensen [[jacks@teleport.com](mailto:jacks@teleport.com)], American Whitewater Regional Coordinator

## 26. Cheoah River, North Carolina

Issue: Hydropower Relicensing

Current Issue: Tapoco, Inc., a subsidiary of Reynolds Aluminum, is currently relicensing a series of hydropower projects on the Little Tennessee River and Cheoah River. Santeetlah Reservoir stores water originally destined for the Cheoah River, an 8.5 mile Class IV (V) run. This section has rarely been paddled.

Two political obstacles stand in the way of establishing an annual schedule of whitewater releases in the Cheoah; lakefront homeowners and misapplication of the Endangered Species Act. Homeowners fear whitewater releases will lower pool levels in Santeetlah Reservoir. The whitewater community does not advocate an annual release schedule that impacts flatwater recreation on the reservoir. Releases can be designed to meet desired pool elevation targets.

The junaluska salamander, an endangered species, has been recorded on one occasion in the river channel below Santeetlah reservoir. Tapoco claims their project operations (dewatering the channel to five cfs) have enhanced the habitat for the junaluska salamander. According to Tapoco, whitewater releases or any change in the present five cfs flow regime will degrade junaluska habitat. However, Tapoco has conveniently overlooked the fact that construction of Santeetlah reservoir eliminated significant junaluska habitat. Furthermore, current project operations significantly impact fish and other aquatic species in the 8.5 mile de-watered reach. Maintaining degraded conditions for a single species at the expense of an array of other species is counterproductive to the Endangered Species Act.

Precedent: This relicensing is the first in a series of relicensings in the southeast. Familiarizing ourselves with the relicensing process, identifying the key agency personnel and advocating river restoration will greatly enhance outcomes on the Cheoah River and other rivers due for hydropower relicensing.

Contact John Gangemi, Conservation Director, or Rod Baird at RodBaird@compuserve.com

## 27. New Dam Construction

Issue: Hydropower, Flood Control, and Pork

While many proclaim the era of big dams to be over, and progressives look to remove uneconomical and unwanted dams across the country, a few rivers continue to be threatened by proposed new dams.

It seems ironic that while many are looking to rip dams out, some legislators and developers (often the same people) still see new dams as a good way to make their fortune. And unfortunately for those living in California, many of these dam supporters seem to have migrated to that part of the country. The June 1999 Calfed environmental report calls for construction of twelve new dams. Calfed is a multi-year effort by 16 state and federal agencies to address restoration of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay Delta. On a parallel course with Calfed, the California Water Plan seeks to forecast the state's future water needs. The draft document for this plan proposes building or enlarging 57 dams. River conservation groups are currently in negotiations over the final plan.

Precedent: The Calfed process was initiated to restore river reaches impacted by dams and water withdrawals. Mitigation plans for dam impacts must never include new dam construction as a solution. The California Water Plan overestimates the future demand for water and power as well as overlooking the significance of water and power conservation.

Contact John Gangemi, Conservation Director, or Friends of the River at (916) 442-3155.

## 28. John's Creek, VA

Issue: Trespassing & Access

Whitewater boaters have been paddling John's Creek for 20 years and the local lore is full of stories about conflicts with landowners. Whether fact or fiction, the stories became reality when a landowner recently charged a boater with trespassing for floating on the river.

The landowner later told the judge that when the boater came through the falls he looked over at him and smiled. The landowner told him to stop but the boater headed on down the river. An officer was called to the American Whitewater parking lot just downstream and also told the boater to stop, but the boater paddled around the bend. Later the boater turned himself in. Three months later he was tried in criminal court, found guilty, given a suspended sentence, and fined \$50.

The kayaker's trespass was partially precipitated by American Whitewater's purchase of a take-out on this popular run. We had purchased the land when the traditional access site was sold to a plant nursery. We were able to purchase the property with the generous help and support of Lynn Aycock, Liz Garland, the Coastal Canoeists, Float Fishermen, and other members who wanted to ensure that fishermen and boaters could access the river safely and legally.

During the boater's trial, the landowner claimed to own the riverbed and have a Kings Grant giving him title to the water. A Kings Grant is land that was given to a colonist prior to the Revolutionary War. These grants often included broad language deeding ownership of everything from the birds in the sky, to the fish in the river. Under one interpretation, a Kings Grant could prevent the public from touching the streambed, the rocks, or even the water.

However, American Whitewater has recently completed our research on this issue and discovered that the landowner's deed in this case only extends to the water's edge and that no trespass occurred. American Whitewater working closely with river users, neighboring landowners, and law enforcement officials to address concerns about courtesy, trespassing, and public rights of navigation in order to prevent future conflicts over the public's right to float this fantastic river. While we respect the landowner's right to limit scouting and portaging on their property, we will be working to correct an inaccurate interpretation of the restrictions imposed by this grant. Please refrain from running John's Creek while this issue is being resolved in the courts.

Contact Jason Robertson, Access Director.



Merced River. CA. Photo by Rich Bowers

## 29. Merced River, CA

### Issue: Access & Conservation on a Wild & Scenic River

Yosemite National Park is drafting the Wild and Scenic River Management Plan (RMP) for the Merced. The RMP provides an invaluable opportunity for us to protect this beautiful river while also ensuring that the public will be allowed to enjoy its rivers.

You can help by writing to Superintendent Albright, Yosemite National Park, PO Box 577, Yosemite, CA 95389. Explain that you are a member of American Whitewater, and ask to have your name added to the mailing list.

The primary management goal under the Wild & Scenic RMP should be limiting impacts to the environment while simultaneously managing the river to protect opportunities for river recreation. The conservation goals are well represented and will guide the management process; therefore most of our comments are addressed specifically towards the secondary issue of river access for non-commercial whitewater boaters. The full text of our comments is available on our Website at [www.awa.org/mercedcomments](http://www.awa.org/mercedcomments).

Our comments specifically address the issue of navigability, safety, appreciation for wilderness, development of skills, and the growth of the sport. We recommend managing the following river segments for boating-oriented recreation opportunities:

On Jason Robertson's last visit to the Park, in May 1999, a Park Ranger explained that the river was "not navigable" and therefore illegal to run. Our research indicates that this statement was at the very least misleading, if not entirely inaccurate. Several of our members have reported similar contacts with Park personnel and have asked American Whitewater to address this issue.

Under California's Constitution, all rivers and waterways in the state, including those in Yosemite, are in fact navigable. The courts have ruled that non-commercial access for small craft such as canoes or kayaks may not generally be limited even for purposes of river "safety" such as high water closures.

However, the Park is permitted certain management responsibilities that supersede the state's rights under the Property Clause of the United States Constitution. The Property Clause allows the Park Service to regulate conduct on non-federal land when reasonably necessary to protect adjacent federal property or navigable waters.

The Park does not have a clear right to ban canoeing or kayaking outright on any segment of a Wild and Scenic River unless these activities will "substantially interfere" with other users or the unique attributes that led to the segment's inclusion under the Act. While it may be appropriate to limit overall access, limitations should be based on clearly defined and documented impacts, as well as resource protection goals. If the Park determines that whitewater use will substantially interfere with the management of the resource for its wild, scenic, or recreational attributes, then we would support moderate limits on access to protect the resource.

When you write to the park, ask for the river managers to clarify their position on the issue of navigability and the extent of limitations on use in the Merced Wild & Scenic RMP. Also ask about the extent of current limits on non-commercial canoeing and kayaking on the Merced and for a map of the river corridor in the RMP showing existing trails, parking areas, viewing platforms, and other areas of human usage related to the river.

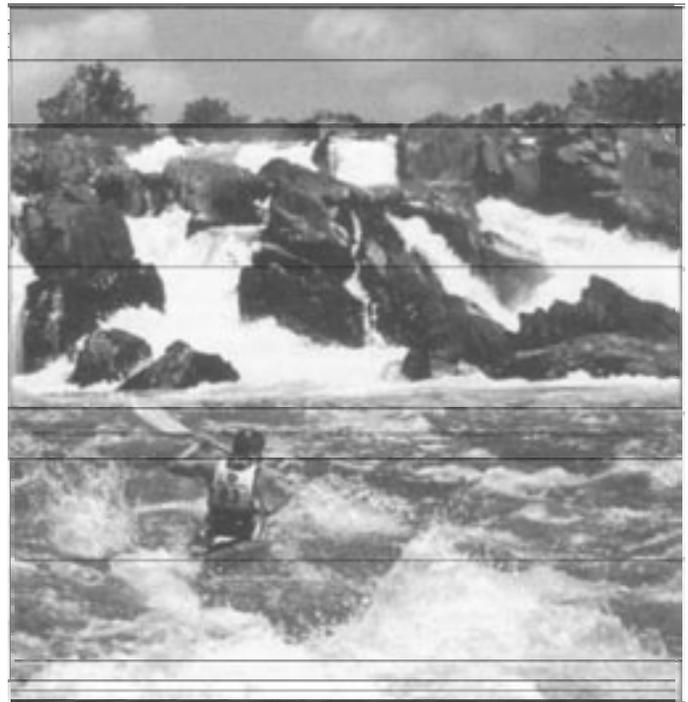
Contact Jason Robertson, Access Director

## 30. Potomac River, MD/VA

### Issue: Access & Conservation

Local kayakers have been meeting regularly with park authorities and fire and rescue personnel for the last year in the Potomac Gorge Safety and Protection Group (PGSPG). These groups are cooperating on river safety, education, volunteer clean ups, trail work, and related issues.

The informal meetings have been hosted by the Park Service as a



Potomac River, MA. Photo by Rich Bowers

means of improving communication and examining ways in which the boating community can police themselves in this popular park. During the course of our meetings we have been able to address the common prejudices that boaters and law enforcement officials have regarding safety and the use of motorized rescue boats on the river. This has provided an invaluable opportunity to educate each other about etiquette and expectations, while developing collegial friendships between these previously adversarial relationships.

Though this is a win-win situation we have included it in our Top 40 river issues because it highlights the steps that might be taken on other publicly managed rivers with conflicts between law enforcement agencies and the boating community such as the Kern River in California.

Contact Jason Robertson, Access Director.

## 31. Hydro Liability

### Issue: Liability & obtaining recreational flows from hydropower projects

In just one more example of how the hydropower industry appears to be avoiding their responsibilities to rewater America's rivers, the Chelan County Public Utility District (PUD) in Washington state, wrote a letter in May to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) requesting a directive regarding a feasibility study for releasing recreational flows on a dewatered river section. Their concerns include the public's ability to navigate difficult whitewater and the company's liability if an injury were to occur. Citing *Ravenscroft v. Washington Water Power*, 969 P.2d 75 (Wash. 1998), the utility claims that re-watering a four mile bypass channel constitutes an artificial condition for which their company bears liability.

However, the Ravenscroft decision should not be interpreted in this way. The case cites four elements from the recreational use statute necessary to exempt the land or water owner from the statute: [1] knowledge of a [2] dangerous [3] artificial [4] latent condition for which warning signs have not been conspicuously posted... The issue Chelan County PUD is concerned with is whether the water they release would be considered artificial, eliminating the immunity from liability the statute provides. Thus, the utility is reluctant to release water flows for the purpose of recreation.

American Whitewater and other national organizations such as the Mountaineers and Friends of the River do not support this interpretation of the law. As a result, American Whitewater's staff and board of directors have volunteered to serve as expert witnesses defending the power companies against liability claims based on releasing water for purposes of conservation or recreation. We believe that the element of "latency" can easily be made patent through reasonable steps and thereby enable a power company to retain the protections of a recreational use statute while allowing recreational flows.

Though the initial concerns regarding liability were raised in by Chelan County PUD, several other companies, including Pacific Gas & Electric in California, have suggested that this issue needs to be resolved before they allow any further releases.

Please contact Jason Robertson at [Access@amwhitewater.org](mailto:Access@amwhitewater.org) if you can volunteer to provide legal assistance on this subject.

## 32. Middle Fork & Main Salmon River Management Plan

Issue: Access & Wilderness Management

Last year we wrote that the Forest Service had prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness. This wilderness includes the Middle Fork and Main Salmon Rivers in Idaho. The preferred alternative cut river access significantly. The boating community spoke out loudly against the preferred alternatives in the DEIS and encouraged the USFS to release a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS). As the Top 40 list is going to press, we have learned that the SEIS is also going to the printers. The USFS has prepared five new alternatives, including one that was drawn directly from American Whitewater's comments. It is important that you comment on the new SEIS, since the Forest Supervisors will examine your letters to select the best elements for the final management decision. The deadline for comments has been tentatively set for Dec 1<sup>st</sup>.

Senator Frank Church, the namesake for this wilderness area, observed that "It was not the intent of Congress that wilderness be administered in so stringent a manner as to needlessly restrict their customary public use and enjoyment. Quite the contrary. Congress fully intended that wilderness should be managed to allow its use by a wide spectrum of Americans." American Whitewater believes that the Frank Church Wilderness should be managed for wilderness with reasonable opportunities for solitude as well as opportunities to visit the Middle Fork and Main Salmon.

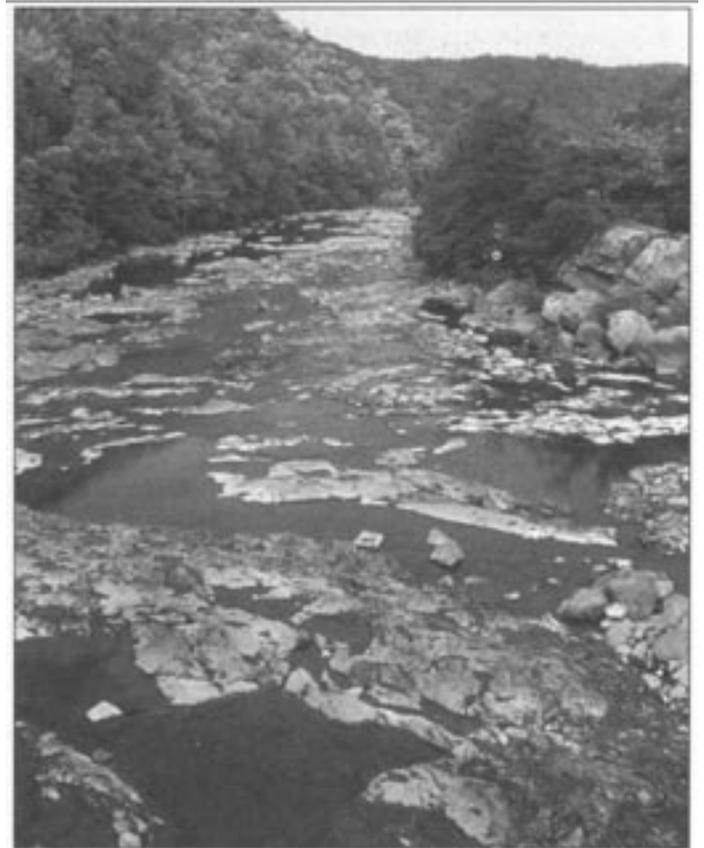
Call 208-756-5100 and ask the Salmon - Challis National Forest for a copy of the SEIS and the opportunity to comment on this document.

Contact Paul Delaney, Northwest Whitewater Association, at [pwd@thefuture.net](mailto:pwd@thefuture.net).

threatened to tow cars, and dug a ditch through State Lands to prevent parking. American Whitewater has been working closely with the owners and North Carolina's Fish and Wildlife Agency in an attempt to reopen this area.

At present, the owners allow boaters to park on their property for \$5/day or \$3/morning. There is also free parking along Big Hungry road, and there are still 3-4 spaces at the end of Gallimore. American Whitewater and our regional coordinators continue working with the landowners to address their concerns and ensure an easing of tensions in this area. Please respect the local community when you visit the Green River.

Contact Chris Bell at [bell@unca.edu](mailto:bell@unca.edu)



Upper Ocoee. TN. Photo by Rich Bowers

## 34. Upper Ocoee

Issue: River Flow, Economics & Future Improvements

Tennessee's Upper Ocoee, the site of the 1996 Olympic Slalom event, has been on American Whitewater's Top 40 list for several years. Last year was the first year of scheduled whitewater releases on this section of the river. It was anticipated that these releases would translate into more paddling days, less crowding for the downstream middle Ocoee and a better venue for the annual Ocoee Whitewater Festival and Rodeo. Water is released due to commercial outfitters paying for it. Thank them the next time you paddle this section.

While it may have been over zealous to expect all of this to happen in the first year, the new run (for recreational boaters) came very close to expectations. What was demonstrated, inarguably, is the exceptional value of the Upper Ocoee for whitewater and local economics. According to the US Forest Service, nearly 2,500 people participated or viewed the Ocoee Rodeo this summer, the largest attendance by far since the Olympic slalom and downriver events.

In the coming months, American Whitewater will be working

## 33. Green River, NC

Issue: Landowner conflicts and Access

In 1998 landowners notified American Whitewater of their intention to close access to the Green River along Big Hungry Creek at Gallimore Road. They posted "No trespassing" and "No Parking" signs along their property,



Green River, NC. Photo by Rich Bowers

with agencies, outfitters, private boaters and the Tennessee Valley Authority (the agency that controls flow to this river segment) to leverage additional whitewater releases from these statistics, and increase boating days on this outstanding whitewater resource.

Contact Jayne Abbot 828-645-5299.

## 35. Swan River, Montana

Issue: Loss of river access due to sale of hydropower lands

Access to the site of the annual Bigfork Whitewater Festival on the Swan River's Wild Mile is threatened by the sale of the local hydropower project. Hydro developers, attracted to the gradient in the same mile long section of the Swan for different reasons, constructed a flume and powerhouse at the turn of the century. The current license for the historic project expires in October, 2002. PacifiCorp, the project owner, is attempting to liquidate this hydropower facility. Thus far, no other hydropower operators have indicated any interest in owning this project due to the low power output coupled with annual maintenance costs and long term repairs necessary. PacifiCorp also owns an additional 400 acres surrounding the reservoir and river corridor. PacifiCorp intends to sell these lands at highest market value — developable waterfront lots. Development of these lands will dramatically alter the wild character now present along the Swan River and impede access to the river.

Precedent: Utility owned lands adjacent to the reservoir and impacted river corridor must be included in the hydropower project boundary as mitigation. These lands must not be eligible for sale or development outside that prescribed in the FERC license. The public must be allowed free access to project lands.

Contact John Gangemi, Conservation Director.

## 36. Perceptions of Private & Commercial Conflicts

American Whitewater generally represents private river runners, rather than commercial outfitters, on river management issues. However, the management decisions on a handful of rivers, most notably on the Colorado through the Grand Canyon, have created a widespread perception of conflict between private and commercial river interests. The reality is that both groups have much more in common than we differ on, and we share an interest in protecting America's rivers and the opportunity to enjoy them safely.

David Brown, Executive Director of America Outdoors, the trade association for professional outfitters and guides, emphasized that private boaters and outfitters have a long history of cooperative relationships in the conservation of river resources. Brown clarified that, "many users may not realize that private use is actually unrestricted on most rivers, where outfitted use is regulated and limited. Outfitters are subject to limits and some form of regulation on more than 300 rivers running through state and federal lands. Whereas private use is regulated on approximately 17 rivers and, in all but one case, private allocations are effectively equal to or greater than the allocation to the outfitted public."

We at American Whitewater believe that the perception of conflict is an important issue, which warrants our attention in the coming year. Many of our successes on rivers such as the Chattooga, Kern, and South Fork American have come as a direct result of cooperating with the outfitters to protect the rivers. We look forward to continued successes on rivers such as the Cheoah and Deerfield.

Contact Jason Robertson, Access Director.

## 37. Southeast forest protection

Issue: Water quality, land stewardship and recreation impacts

In the past decade, over 100 high capacity chip mills came into the Southeastern United States, each one consuming on average 10,000 acres annually. Over one million acres were logged last year

to supply the chip mills, causing adverse impacts to water quality, habitat, numerous plant and animal species and recreational opportunities. In addition, much of the acreage logged for chip mills is converted to monoculture pine plantations which detract from forest or water related recreational opportunities. An interagency federal study was undertaken in August, 1999 to study the regional impacts of high capacity chip mills and accompanying industrial forestry.

Precedent: The forests of the Southeastern United States provide exceptional recreational opportunities. The proliferation of chip mills in the Southeastern United States may adversely impact recreational benefits provided by a healthy forest ecosystem. Prior to further expansion of high capacity chip mills in the Southeast a regional study of the environmental, economic and recreational impacts must be undertaken from which a unified federal policy is developed based on clear scientific evidence.

Contact John Gangemi, Conservation Director, or Trevor Fitzgibbon of Southeast Forest Protection at [sefn@hotmail.com](mailto:sefn@hotmail.com) for further information.

## 38. Lake Fork Gunnison, CO

Issue: Access & landowner conflicts

Private landowners are placing obstacles in the river designed to prevent commercial rafting outings. The Colorado River Outfitters Association (CROA) has hired an attorney well versed in environmental matters to represent the commercial rafters. Ironically, CROA now laments that it fought the Colorado Stream Safety Act in 1996, a bill that would have guaranteed river access and the right to portage. American Whitewater supported that bill, and plans to aid CROA in their current battles. Though small and rarely paddled, the river has exposed Colorado's access problems.

Contact Jay Kenney at [jaypk@aol.com](mailto:jaypk@aol.com).

## 39. Caney Fork, TN

Issue: Conservation and Access

The eight miles of Class IV-V whitewater in the upper Caney Fork River is located in one of the most remote river gorges in Tennessee. The river flows on the Cumberland Plateau near Crossville, Tennessee. The hardwood forest, challenging rapids, scenic bluffs, side stream waterfalls, and caves in the gorge have captured the attention of conservationists.

Bridgestone-Firestone Company, the primary landowner, has recently donated 4,000 acres to the State of Tennessee as a conservation area. The donation includes the first four miles of whitewater in the upper river. Bridgestone-Firestone owns an additional 11,000 acres containing the lower part of the whitewater section and the Scott's Gulf Road, an extremely rough take-out road for the whitewater section. While the gift was very generous, the Scott's Gulf Road has been closed by Bridgestone-Firestone due to liability concerns.

The road closure requires paddling an additional nine miles of relatively flat water to the next access at Dodson Bridge. There is an additional safety concern since the lower river is choked in places with saplings that have grown up during dry summer months. The road closure also impacts the seven-mile Class IV-V Bee Creek run which ends at the confluence with the Caney Fork River at the Scott's Gulf Road access.

Over the next year and a half, Bridgestone-Firestone will decide how to provide for the long-term preservation of the remaining property, which could include addition to the state conservation area. We are discussing options for boating access with the company. In the meantime, we ask that boater's honor Bridgestone-Firestone's "No Trespassing" signs for their property. At least one boating party has been escorted off the property and the company states that they will fine trespassers. The goodwill of all recreational users including boaters will be very helpful in negotiations with the company.

Contact Chuck Estes ([estesoak@att.net](mailto:estesoak@att.net)).

## 40. Ohiopyle Falls on the Lower Youghiogeny, PA

Issue: Gaining access to Ohiopyle Falls

Access to Ohiopyle Falls has been restricted since the formation of Ohiopyle State Park. The present park manager has raised the restriction to a criminal offense. Recent feedback from Park management indicates that restrictions may be lifted if liability concerns can be addressed.

American Whitewater is drafting a proposal to test the suitability of the falls for whitewater enthusiasts. This is the first step to demonstrating that the Falls can be run safely with minimal management or liability by the State of Maryland.

Contact Barry Tuscano at 724-676-4713, email: [TMRI@KISKI.NET](mailto:TMRI@KISKI.NET)

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# Public Access Coalition Formed

## Only You Can Fight Forest Fees!

Public Access Coalition: A Coalition of the Outdoor Industry, Conservationists, and Recreationists Dedicated to Preserving Free Public Access

*On August 14, a group of businessmen, environmentalists, recreationists, and even a congressman gathered together on the steps of the Outdoor Retailer convention in Salt Lake to protest access fees on America's public lands. They were there to protest Congressional Fee Demonstration authority (a.k.a. Fee Demo) and announce the foundation of the Public Access Coalition.*

Jason Robertson, American Whitewater's Access Director and one of PAC's original founders observed, "I've been writing letters and talking to the agencies and our Congressmen for over a year. Our concerns about paying to use public lands were not being addressed by the agencies at the park or forest level." Virtually every outdoor interest group that I spoke to was experiencing similar problems and receiving outraged calls from their members. Doug Hoschek, Armando Menocal, and I started talking that it didn't make sense for all of us to keep reinventing the wheel and wasting our energy working on the same problems with implementation over and over again. And I came to this same realization at the same time and sat down and laid out our goals for a national organization to address our common concerns and free America's public lands."

The objective of the Public Access Coalition (PAC) is to preserve the principle of free access to federal recreation lands and to support adequate public funding for land, waterways, and habitat protection. Alternate funding sources may include tax revenues, special funds such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund, or reasonable, non-discriminatory, non-exclusionary fees. Congress will soon decide whether the fee demo program, currently limited to a few hundred projects, becomes a permanent financing mechanism and expands to reach all potential fee opportunities. The coalition does not advocate for the complete elimination of all fees on public lands, but seeks to prevent fees-for-service or pay-to-play from becoming mechanisms for funding the needs of our forests and parks.

At a recent meeting with Jim Lyons the head of the Forest Service, Doug Hoschek, the man who invented the name Polar Fleece™, explained the problem with Fee Demo. He suggested comparing the original intent of Fee Demo to making an offering at church, "When we, the public, were originally asked to support these fees, we did so because we knew that our temples, our forest and parks, needed our help. Congress kept cutting funding; and the Forest and Park Services didn't have enough money to maintain the facilities. So they asked for our help and we helped out. Congress originally told us that this was a 3-year project and wouldn't replace federal funding; but the truth is that Congress keeps extending Fee Demo and is replacing

federal funds with gate fees. Everyone knows that when you make an offering at church, this is voluntary, and often for a specific project. But Congress is saying you must pay without sharing any real information on the cost of the project or an honest answer about when this test will be ended. This is wrong."

Contrary to some beliefs, Fee Demo cannot be used for acquiring more public lands and is not a method for expanding our National Parks or preventing our forests from being logged. Instead, these fees are being used for maintenance, law enforcement, and the collection of additional fees.

Robertson characterized the fees as a tax, "According to Congress' own records, virtually everyone, more than 80% of the population, visit our public lands every year. We already pay for the privilege of visiting our parks and forests through our income taxes, and we shouldn't be taxed a second time because Congress won't do the right thing and fund them directly." Robertson added, "It's even worse when forest managers actually set discriminatory fees or believe fees are a justifiable way of keeping some people from being able to afford visiting local parks, hunting and fishing, or canoeing and kayaking on the streams."

At press time, our steering committee has already grown to include Patagonia, American Whitewater, the Access Fund, the Utah Environmental Congress, Neptune Mountaineering, Kelty, and many more.

Armando Menocal, founder of the Access Fund for climbers, noted that the following congressional representatives from both parties support ending Fee Demo: Peter A DeFazio (D-OR), Mary Bono (R-CA), Wally Herger (R-CA), and Lois Capps (D-CA). Menocal encourages everyone to help PAC by calling to express your support for ending this project, and by calling your own representatives and urging them to fully fund our agencies and support the Land & Water Conservation Fund.

You can find out more by visiting the PAC Website at [www.awa.org/PAC](http://www.awa.org/PAC). You, your club, or your business can sign on at the Website or by calling 301-589-9453.

# Gauley River Panther Mountain Shuttle

**Every Saturday and Sunday of Gauley Season!**  
**Schedule: Saturday, 3 to 6 pm, Sunday, 1 to 4 pm., Shuttle runs every 20 minutes.**

**Take out at Mason Branch 112 mile below Sweet's Falls to WVRC/American Whitewater paddler parking lot on Panther Mountain Road.**

**Suggested Donation: \$5 per boat (all proceeds support the W.VA. Rivers Coalition)**

**Boat Shuttle Courtesy of:**

- \*Class IV River Runners
- \*USA Raft
- \*West Virginia Rivers Coalition
- \*American Whitewater

**Shuttle for boats only — boaters must still hike the trail. No rafts (Sorry!)**

## Trouble on the Waters

If you had trouble getting to the river, let us know. Use this form to report access problems so that AW can convince legislators and government authorities where and when river access is a problem. If you have met an irate landowner, noticed signs forbidding access, or were stopped by a landowner, barbed wire fence or a locked gate, tell us about it on this form. If several boaters are arrested or involved, only one form should be filled out per incident naming a boater available for future contact.

River \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Date of incident \_\_\_\_\_

**Access code categories:** List below or circle the categories, multiple categories are OK.

**Brief description of incident:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Boater contact** \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City etc. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Landowner/Agency/Sheriff contact (if known)**  
 Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City etc. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**1. Trespass. Ticket, warning or arrest for:**

- 1.01 Trespass on private property
- 1.02 Trespass on public property
- 1.03 Criminal trespass
- 1.04 Civil trespass

**2. Public Access Closure**

- 2.01 Denied by federal law
- 2.01.01 Denied by BLM
- 2.01.02 Denied by Forest Service
- 2.01.03 Denied by Nat'l Park Service
- 2.02 Denied by state
- 2.03 Denied by local authority
- 2.04 Denied by administrative edict

**3. Injury from man-made obstacles**

- 3.01 Barbed wire or fence
- 3.02 Low head dam

**4. Obstacles running river, scouting or portaging**

- 4.01 Fence or chain on land blocking access
- 4.02 Fence, wire, or tree on river blocking access
- 4.03 Posted no trespassing sign
- 4.04 Vehicle towed, ticketed, or vandalized
- 4.05 Threats or acts of violence

**5. Closures: Rivers closed that were once open**

- 5.01 Closed by private landowner
- 5.02 Closed by government agency
- 5.02.01 Federal
- 5.02.02 State
- 5.02.03 Local
- 5.03 High water closure

**New access fees**

- 6.01 Charged by private landowner
- 6.02 Charged by government agency
- 6.02.01 Federal
- 6.02.02 State
- 6.02.03 Local

**Dam controlled rivers**

- 7.01 Water turned off
- 7.02 Inconsistent flow: too much or too little
- 7.03 No notice of releases

Send to Ken Ransford, 475 Sierra Vista, Carbondale, CO 81623, 970-963-6800, FAX 970-963-6700, ransford@csn.net

**Access is a constant struggle. The AW Access Committee needs your help.**

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## The Ocoee Rodeo An insiders view...

By Jayne H. Abbot

### October 1998

Talk about not getting to rest on your laurels—the 1998 Ocoee Rodeo had just wrapped up successfully, and already it was time to begin planning 1999. Here's a look behind the scenes—in real time...

Now this is exciting: Competitors and sponsors want to run the event at the Olympic course. We can have vendors, food, lots of parking. It'll be awesome! To fit with the national schedule of rodeos, we change the date from October to May. I contact the Forest Service, Park Service, Whitewater Center: They are all ecstatic. No problems with permits. I can't say enough good things about the officials in this area of the country. Water is secured from TVA who controls this dam-fed river. They waver on providing a practice day, and in late February, the Slalom Team Trials are moved to the Ocoee eliminating any chances of an extra day. It'll be an interesting competition—everyone will be on equal ground.

As soon as a date is nailed down, the search begins for a headquarters/party site. The event has many needs: electricity, space for camping, registration, food, silent auction, raffle, band, vendors, beer, and our host for the past two years can't accommodate us any longer. The Whitewater Center seems the obvious choice but no alcohol is allowed. I get a nibble from a couple of sites and go visit. Hiwassee Outfitters becomes the place. They offer everything we need and more and are psyched to host the party.

### Three Months Prior

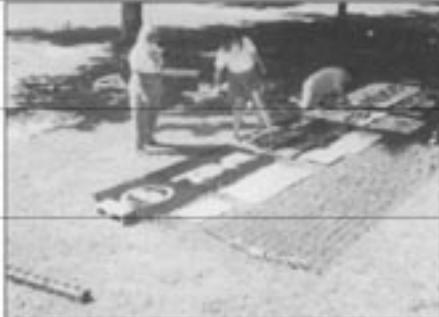
Our sponsors respond enthusiastically to the new event venue. Work begins on the program. T-shirt design is finalized. A hot band is secured. Volunteer sign-ups come in. Barry Grimes designs our new web site. Registration materials are mailed. There are these two incredible volunteers, Elizabeth Boyd and Don McNealy, who run a copy company in Charlotte. They copy and mail all the registration materials; copy the programs; design and print the poster; make signs, passes, and anything else that is needed. They are wonderful.

### One month prior

Hannah, my "helper," is hard at work calling sponsors to finalize details on their participation, creating lists and checking them off, and cataloging the incoming product. The UPS man jokes about the event being his



The crowds. All photos Heidi Domeison.



Banner management, getting ready for hanging at the site.



Busy judges stand



Platform building



Jayne Abbot, the organizer, keeping the officials liappy



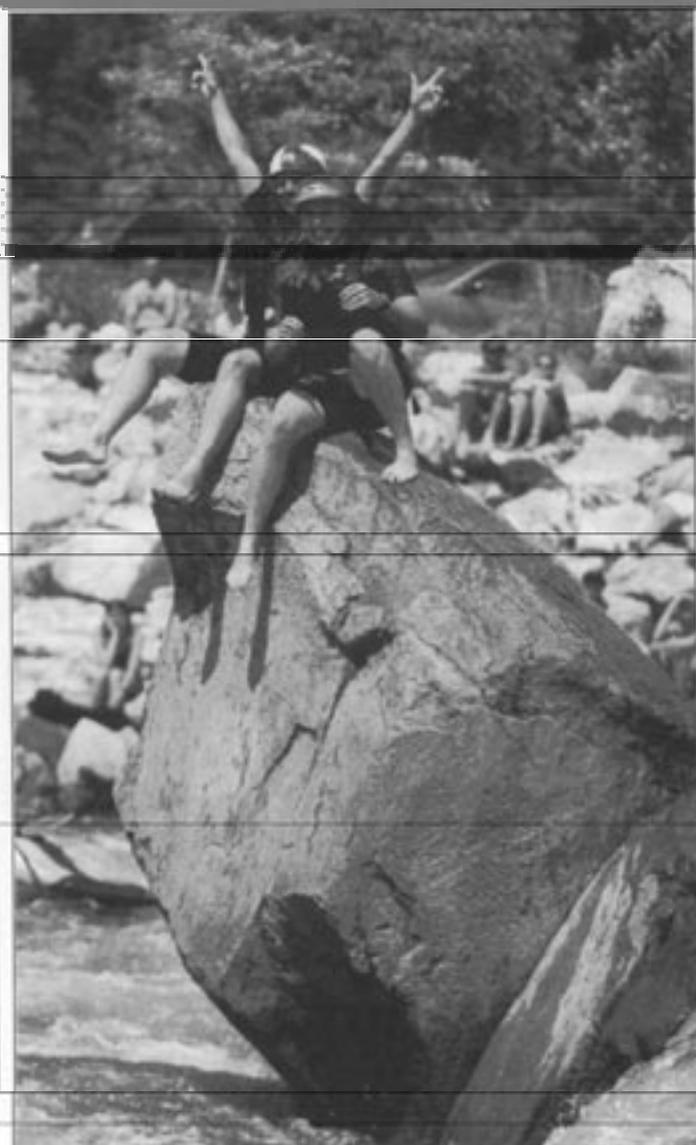
One of many tents to set up on Thursday.



Aletta Miller, 4th Place Women's Pro.



Susan Wilson entering Smiley hole. Photo by Heidi Domeison



Aleta Miller and Kelly Murphy take o' in the views. Photo by Heidi Domeison



The ladies encouraging each other. Erica Mitchell, Jamie Simon, Deb Ruehle (lft to Rt). Photo by Heidi Domeison

job security. We work among the growing piles of boxes. I rent a van. There isn't room in my car to transport all the supplies and "stuff" to the site.

### Two weeks prior

I wake up at 2 am in panic mode. I've been dreaming about the event and the party/registration site at Hiwassee Outfitters when the train tracks forming a bridge at the entrance come into view. I picture boats and racks being ripped off as busses and RVs enter the site. I phone Hiwassee's owner, Mike, in the morning, "Can RVs fit under that bridge at your entrance?" "Sure, no problem," says Mike. I continue, "even with boats stacked on them?" "Yep." Whew...

Hannah and I break open the many boxes and it's like Christmas. "Look at all this way cool stuff!" We spend the day separating sponsors' products into piles for the silent auction, raffle, and volunteer raffle; determining starting bid prices; and labeling all the raffle products. It's a fun day.

### One week prior

The PA man informs me that I must have an electrician to tie his system into the generator. Ahhh, where do I find someone to do this? I flub it. "Oh yes, we'll be sure to have someone there." Last-minute phone calls are made to make sure everyone is going to show — band, beer, sponsors, volunteers. I pick up the van Monday morning and begin loading supplies. I convince the firemen next door that their civic duty is to help carry boxes down the stairs. I head out Tuesday reaching Hiwassee Outfitters in the early evening to unload and begin set up.

Wednesday begins with a meeting of the Forest and Park Service, TVA, and Whitewater Center staff. I find an electrician who agrees to tie in the PA system Friday morning. The first of many volunteers, Adam Mayo, a newly plucked college intern who will work with American Whitewater in Washington DC after I "break him in" at the Rodeo, arrives. We meet up with another volunteer, Heidi Domeison, who is responsible for keeping the PA man happy, acting as official photographer, and keeping me fed and sane.

She takes her job seriously and keeps us laughing throughout the weekend with her antics.

We spend the afternoon at Hiwassee organizing banners, stuffing competitor goody bags, getting the registration/silent auction building ready, and organizing signs. A few more key volunteers roll in: Kate Gribskov from American Whitewater's DC office, Jay Kenney from Denver, CO, and Susan Wilson, the past rodeo organizer. I'm so grateful to have these wonderful people around. While our hands are busy, we chatter and laugh as the new bonds of friendship are formed.

Thursday morning I meet our bleary-eyed head safety person, Doug Gay, who has driven all night from Alabama with his family and friends. We head to the site to put up tents, build a judges platform, and hang signs. Fresh volunteers arrive. They are put to work. There doesn't seem to be enough time. I rush back to Hiwassee to meet Kathy Evans who will run the registration. Longtime rodeo volunteer Oren Kennedy arrives from Michigan with a friend in tow. John Payne, our

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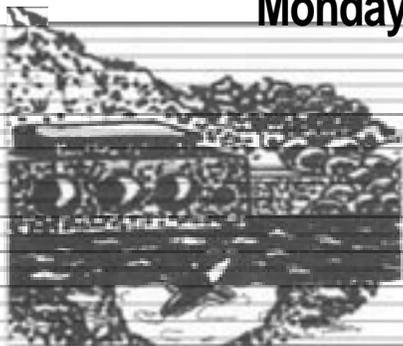


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party organizer, arrives and lends a hand. Registration begins. They arrive in dribbles, then we're flooded. Kathy and I stay up late sorting through the registrations. I'm up early for last-minute packing, then head to the river where we set up the central information booth, then drive around dropping off water, food, and various information at important areas.

Competitors and vendors begin arriving early. A competitors' meeting is held at 9 am. Some show, many don't. Close to my ear I wear not one, but two radios attached to my Camelback. I feel like a dork but they become my lifeline to others around the site. It seems the only way to locate anyone is to call them on the radio. The site is so large I'm glad I stuffed my bike in the van. I imagine myself looking like some crazed lunatic racing around on my bike with a radio stuck to my mouth.

After the competition on Friday, it's back for another registration for Saturday's events. More volunteers arrive, including Cindy Little, a long-time volunteer who wears whatever hat I put on her: judge, scribe, runner, scorer, and shoulder to lean on. We flop into bed at 2:30 and awaken at 5:00. Saturday is busy. Four competitions to run: Hole Riding, Free Riding, Downriver, and Squirt. The Squirt



Allen Braswell, Photo by Heidi Domeison



Deb Ruehl, winner Women's K-1 Pro  
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Photo: NPPF1999 Best Paddling Image Winner by Julia Keller



We're having a party!  
Volunteers Jay Kenny and Prince Vintow  
Photo by Heidi Domeison

shuttle van took a mountain tumble and efforts to find a new vehicle never panned out. Risa Callaway runs an awesome Free Riding event while Caroline Porter gets the Downriver race started off on a good foot. Competitors and spectators find their way to the Squirt site just fine. A highlight of the day is the first-ever Junior Women's class. Three local girls compete with supporting cheers from the spectators. It's a great day of competition.

I head back to Hiwassee to see how preparations for the party are going. The entrance looks awesome. John Payne and Eddie Adkins have organized the silent auction beautifully. The beer is being poured. Dagger has set up this wild-looking Cartwheel Machine. Immersion Research is dying hair "waffle house blonde." Perception's crew is prepared to help "Clean It Up," as their tour motto says. Food is ready for the hungry. I'm delighted. The band plays on the front porch. We rock to the tunes as we work preparing for the next day. The skies open up. The crowd revels in the rain. With preparations for the next day finished, we head out to join the party.

Sunday begins anew. We're all moving a bit slower after the late night. The end comes quickly. We run out of water for the Men's K-1 finals and are hit with a strong, quick storm. Everyone scatters. The event is suddenly over. Take-down begins. The awards ceremony and volunteer raffle are held. The site begins to clear out. A few volunteers are staying one more night and I take them out for a thank-you dinner. Monday comes and we exchange addresses, talk about when we'll see each other again. The van is a wreck. We empty it and repack for the drive home. Hugs abound as we all say good-bye and the rodeo begins to drift into memory.

Kate joins me at my house on her way back to DC. She's indispensable. She writes down thoughts for improvements for next year, helps sort through the banners and bibs for the Potomac event in two weeks. We say our good-byes. I indulge in a massage.

I'm elated and exhausted. The event was a success! An estimated 3,000 people attended. More than 130 volunteers pitched in with great energy and enthusiasm. One-hundred ninety-three competitors took their rides. Fifty-five sponsors provided unprecedented support. Money was raised for river conservation. And, the most important thing of all, everyone had fun!

Thank you to all the numerous volunteers who made this event run so smoothly and our sponsors for their incredible support. The event couldn't happen without you. Now it's time to start working on 2000. See y'all next year!

# NOWR Event Results

## Coosa River Festival / May 14-16

This year's Coosa Festival went very smoothly, with great weather and a good turnout of boaters and spectators. Fun was had by all who participated in the events and attended the festivities afterwards.

- Pro/Elite K-1 Men
1. Eric Southwick
  2. Javid Grubbs
  3. Billy Craig

- Pro/Elite K-1 Women
1. Deb Ruehle
  2. Erica Mitchell
  3. Harriet Taylor

- Pro/Elite K-1 Junior
1. Andre Dominic
  2. James Sloan
  3. Matthew Thornton

- Pro/Elite C-1
1. Chris Manderson
  2. Luke Hopkins
  3. Brian Miller

- Pro/Elite OC-1
1. Mike Costas
  2. Larry Mauzey
  3. David Kahn

## Bigfork Whitewater Festival / May 15-16

Great weather set the tone for this year's Bigfork Festival. The silent auction was able to raise \$3000 dollars for the preservation of the Swan River. Tough competition made the disco inferno party on Sunday night that much more entertaining and enjoyable.

- Pro/Elite K-1 Men
1. Steve Fisher
  2. Charlie Bowers
  3. Dan Gavere

- Pro/Elite K-1 Women- Upper Course
1. Gaby Campbell
  2. Nadine Kerin
  3. T.J. Peterson

- Pro/Elite K-1 Juniors- Upper Course
1. Steve Byrd
  2. James Byrd
  3. Eadie Hake

## JacksonHole Rodeo / May 29-30

Despite generally miserable and rainy weather, the event was a huge success with great participant and spectator turnout. High water levels moved the free-style event to the Hoback River, and the downriver race on the Greys River proved to be fun for both racers and spectators alike.

- Pro/Elite K-1 Men
1. Taylor Robertson
  1. Ben Selznick
  2. Steve Fisher

- Pro/Elite K-1 Women
1. Gabby Lloyd-Campbell
  2. Merrit Stinson
  3. Noel Whitney

- Pro/Elite K-1 Junior Men
1. Pep Fujas
  2. Tyler Maxwell
  3. Brady Johnston

## Potomac Whitewater Festival / June 5-6

Despite low water and hot weather, this year's festival proved to be successful with some awesome competition. The Great Falls race was truly exciting for all those involved. And who was that in the bunny suit...?

- Pro/Elite K-1 Men
1. Jimmy Blakeney
  2. Luke Hopkins
  3. Eric Jackson

- Pro/Elite K-1 Women
1. Erica Mitchell
  2. Deb Ruehle
  3. Brook Winger

- Pro/Elite C-1
1. Allen Braswell
  2. Luke Hopkins
  3. Eric Jackson

## Clear Creek Festival / June 5-6

- Pro/Elite K-1 Men
1. Andrew Waters
  2. Shawn Hartie
  3. Brock Aitken

Pro/Elite K-1 Women

- 1. Harriet Taylor
- 2. Gabriella Campbell-Lloyd
- 3. Jamie Simon

Pro/Elite K-1 Junior

- 1. Dustin Handley
- 2. Chris Johnson
- 3. Dan Roller

**FiBark / June 17-20**

Pro/Elite K-1 Men

- 1. Rusty Sage
- 2. Macy Burnham
- 3. Dustin Knapp

Pro/Elite K-1 Women

- 1. Brooke Winger
- 2. Deb Penniger
- 3. Erica Mitchell

Pro/Elite K-1 Junior

- 1. Kyle Scarborough
- 2. Chris Johnson
- 3. Jon Clark

ProElite C-1

- 1. Chris Manderson
- 2. Allen Braswell
- 3. Barry Kennon

ProElite OC-1

- 1. Eli Helbert
- 2. Frankie Hubbard
- 3. Richard Oldenquist

**Animas River Days / June 25-27**

Pro/Elite K-1 Men

- 1. Kale Rieze
- 2. Jimmy Blakeney
- 3. Rusty Sage

Pro/Elite K-1 Women

- 1. Deborah Pinniger
- 2. Aleta Miller
- 3. Brooke Winger

Pro/Elite K-1 Junior

- 1. Max Mancini
- 2. Andre Spino-Smith
- 3. Brad Bullock

ProElite C-1

- 1. Luke Hopkins
- 2. Alan Braswell
- 3. Brian Miller

**Skyfest / June 26-27**

Pro/Elite K-1 Men

- 1. Tao Berman
- 2. Kelly Gillespie
- 3. Paul Hodge

**Boulder Whitewater Festival / June 12-13**

Pro/Elite K-1 Men

- 1. Jimmy Blakeney
- 2. Charlie Beavers
- 3. Jason Arnold

ProElite K-1 Women

- 1. Deb Pinniger
- 2. Brook Winger
- 3. Jamie Simon

Pro/Elite K-1 Juniors

- 1. Zach Currier
- 2. Matt Farrar
- 3. Kyle McCuthen/Andy Reger (tie)



Photos by Tim Pease

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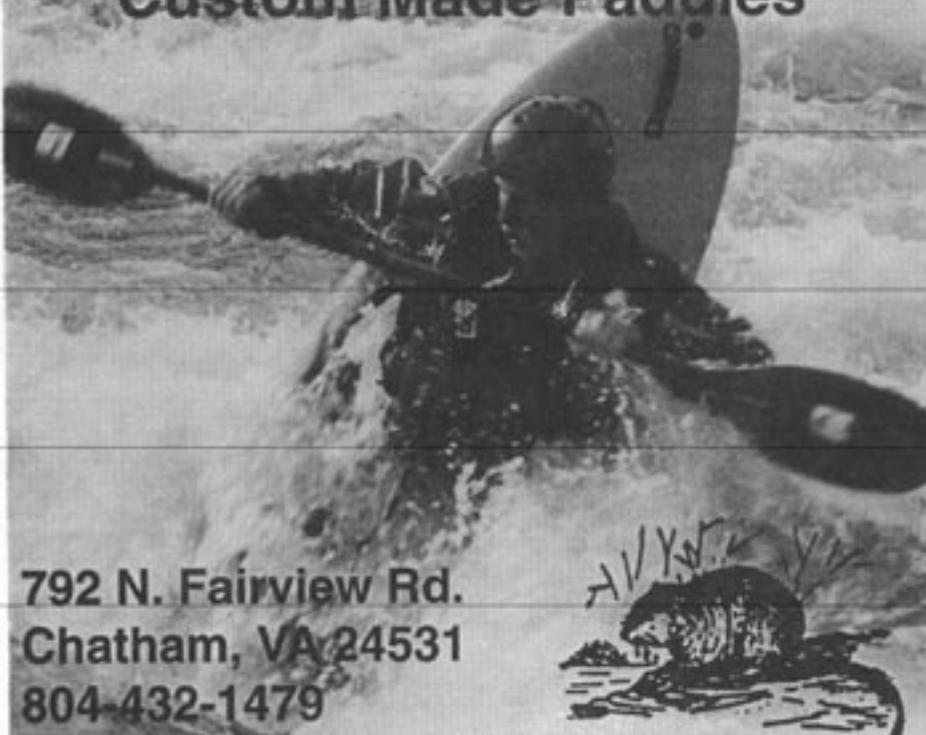
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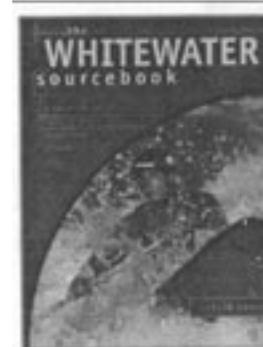
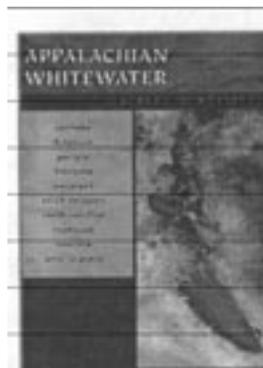
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## A Historical Perspective

In 1938, the Flood Control Act changed the futures of thousands of unborn whitewater enthusiasts. That otherwise un-memorable piece of legislation led, although indirectly, to the phenomenon known in boating circles today as “Gauley season.” Although those who worked from 1960 to 1966 to complete the Summersville Dam never expected it, their efforts made possible the tradition of the Gauley Festival—

the largest whitewater gathering in the world. Today boaters from around the country and all over the globe come to central West Virginia for six weekends each fall to experience one of America's greatest whitewater rivers.

However, the very thing that makes Gauley season possible is an Army Corps of Engineers dam. The irony of the situation—that boaters profit from something that they traditionally oppose—seems to matter little to the 3000-plus who attend Gauleyfest each year. They, as well as boaters who are able to take advantage of releases on rivers like the Upper Yough and Green, happily accept the situation without comment. And so every year, thousands of kayak-clad vehicles cross the 400 foot high rock-fill dam on their way to five-star whitewater at its base.

In the past, nearly every dam built by the Corps of Engineers was named after the nearest settlement. In this case, the town was called Gad and it sat near the present-day site of Summersville Lake Marina. After careful consideration it was judged too difficult for

men and women in US Army uniforms to discuss the “Gad Dam” without rolling on the floor in laughter—an action strictly forbidden in the military.

The dam was eventually named after nearby Summersville, West Virginia. In the years since the dam's completion, Summersville has grown substantially. A key ingredient to this growth has been the steady flow of powerboats that can be seen lumbering up Route 19 behind trucks and sport utility vehicles all summer long. It is the recreation of these “flatwater enthusiasts” that makes our beloved Gauley season possible. Because power-boaters have tremendous political pull, the Corps of Engineers keeps the lake at a high summer level into the month of September. Then, in early September, after the sailors have all had their final water ski around the lake, the Corps is faced with a summer pool level. In order to create space for next spring's floods, they must lower it 75 feet in a short period of time. What better way to accomplish the task than

with weekend releases of 2800 cfs.? And so, each September the whitewater world zeros in on Summersville, West Virginia for a rare treat—guaranteed flows in a world-class river.

Long before the construction of the Summersville Dam, and over 100 years before anyone ever conceived of navigating the Gauley in whitewater craft, the river became the focal point of a minor incident that led indirectly to West Virginia's independent statehood. The incident is named for a place on the Gauley known by boaters today as “that long pool above Lost Paddle where the Meadow comes in.” In the 1860s, however, it was simply called Carnifax Ferry and was important because it was one of the few places the Gauley could be crossed.

In 1861 this took on heightened significance as the Civil War raged through the wilderness known at that time as western Virginia. While the region was officially a part of Virginia, ideologically it had little in common with areas further east. The Confederates hoped to maintain a presence in

western Virginia to prevent pro-Union sentiments from leading to anything as treacherous as secession.

The Confederate and Union armies clashed in and around what we know today as boating paradise. Western Virginia's mountains and rivers provided many a rugged battlefield, perhaps none so severe as the terrain surrounding Carnifex Ferry (as it is spelled today). The mayhem that took place at Carnifex Ferry in September of 1861 shows a fascinating resemblance to modern whitewater tales—many of which occurred at the very same location over a century later. It includes rivalry and jealousy among leaders, overconfidence, lack of confidence, ill-advised valor leading to senseless injury, and, of course, death and destruction.

This tale begins with the two Confederate commanders in charge of the region around the Gauley. Although General Floyd and General Wise were quite familiar with each other, it was not the sort of familiarity that leads men to drink together. Instead, it was the sort that, in those days, drove men to duel. Floyd and Wise were both former governors of Virginia, political rivals who never saw eye to eye in politics and saw no reason to do so in war. Floyd was the commander of the Confederate forces at Carnifex Ferry and Wise, stationed nearby, was his subordinate. It was probably out of jealousy that Wise sent a constant stream of criticism concerning Floyd to General Lee throughout the war.

The outcome of their feud is easy to guess. Just think about the last time you went out with the paddling club and Bobby and Jeff got in a fight at the put-in about who was going to lead and who would sweep. Then they sulked and wouldn't talk for the rest of the trip. Remember the next time you saw a trip advertised in the club newsletter that was co-led and you elected to stay home and mow the lawn instead? Now you have an idea of the situation between the two Confederate generals.

In late August 1861, General Floyd made a stealthy crossing at Carnifex Ferry in flatboats. During that daring maneuver, one of the boats was swept downstream and four Confederate soldiers were killed. As far as I am aware, these casualties represent the first fatalities on the Gauley. In addition, the four deaths remain the most in a single whitewater related episode on the river. The incident served as a notice of the ferocity of the Gauley and of Lost Paddle in particular. It also suggested that a flat-bottomed boat was not the best design for running whitewater—a logic only now being disputed by the newest

playboats.

Five days after crossing the river with his men, General Floyd launched a surprise attack on Union troops stationed nearby. He drove them away and settled into an encampment on the north side of the river called Camp Gauley. For the rest of August and into September Floyd fortified his position at the top of the gorge. After erecting defensive entrenchments, Floyd wrote confidently that Camp Gauley could withstand any Union force.

Of course, his bluster would quickly disappear with the arrival of Union troops. If anyone needs help picturing a boater whose confidence level fluctuates so quickly in times of adversity, let me know—I think I can help you out.

On September 10, Floyd ordered General Wise to send reinforcements to help defend his camp against the coming Union forces. Wise decided to send only half the men requested by Floyd, so that when the Union troops moved into the area under the com-

**Gauley Festival...the event which, 138 years ago this September, may well have saved the Gauley from being made into one big irrigation ditch.**

mand of General Rosencrans, Floyd began to worry.

Late that evening, Union soldiers advanced on Camp Gauley in a maneuver to test the Confederate strength. They continued to fire on the defenses, making little headway as the night approached. Against the advice of his officers, Rosencrans ordered his forces to keep attacking. Finally, with darkness playing tricks on the soldiers, two Union regiments began firing on one another, resulting in 30 casualties. Rosencrans, finally convinced to halt the fighting for the night, was awakened before sunlight the next morning by the report that the Confederates had evacuated Camp Gauley.

Finally overcome by his fears (and a minor injury), Floyd had decided to abandon his "impregnable" position. In the wee hours of the morning of September 11, he and his men re-crossed the Gauley (safely this time) and fled south.

This maneuver deserves some notice because it is remarkably similar to a tactic that

I have used on the river before. This trick works best after a brutal swim that looks particularly nasty. All you have to do is induce bleeding (if you aren't already) and feign injury. When a friend paddles over and sees you lying on the shore like a drowned poodle, be sure that your blood is clearly showing. After your boating partner appreciates the injury, pretend that you plan to continue. When asked "Are you sure you can do it?" quickly capitulate. "No, you're right. I'd better get this to a doctor," is an excellent choice of words. Then collect your scattered gear and limp away pathetically. If you're lucky, everyone will feel so bad it won't be mentioned again.

In General Floyd's case, he probably never heard a peep about the fiasco. High military rank tends to deflect comments of ineptitude. On the other side of the battlefield, General Rosencrans actually received compliments for his handling of the incident despite suffering 158 casualties compared with only 20 on the Confederate side. This is the whitewater equivalent of running a rapid you shouldn't, making poor decisions while running it, getting your butt kicked, and then being showered with high fives at the bottom of the drop. Trouble picturing this one? Go buy a whitewater video.

In the larger context, the incident at Carnifex Ferry in September 1861 contributed greatly to driving the Confederates out of the Kanawha valley. With the region under Union control, wild, wonderful West Virginia won its independent statehood via referendum in 1863. This had an impact on the future of whitewater in the eastern US. It's hard to imagine what boating would be like today if the best whitewater on the East Coast were still in Virginia. I can only picture (shudder) an enormous aqueduct sending the waters of the Gauley eastward to irrigate endless miles of tobacco fields.

Next September, as you find yourself inching across Summersville dam, peering at the spouts of water rushing into the riverbed below, remember Generals Floyd, Wise, and Rosencrans and the four soldiers who lost their lives probing one of the Gauley's most infamous rapids. And later that night as you wander about the Gauley Festival, perhaps you will hoist a brew and celebrate the event which, 138 years ago this September, may well have saved the Gauley from being made into one big irrigation ditch.

While the Civil War and the erection of the Summersville dam are two of the most significant events that have shaped the history of the Gauley, the incident that whitewater enthu-

siasts are most concerned with is the first descent. But if you must ask the question, the answer is "no." No there isn't a clear cut, single person or group that can be given that distinction—as if it mattered. Probably the first hundred people to navigate the entire stretch of the gorge were doing virtual first descents, in that they didn't know anything about the river that wasn't shown on topographical maps.

In truth, there is no way to know who might have made the first descent of the Gauley. Was it a pioneer lumberjack surveying the gorge? Perhaps it was a colonial explorer. Maybe it wasn't even a person of European descent. Couldn't the Native Americans have navigated the Gauley hundreds of years before Christopher Columbus was born? In any case, it would probably crush the collective ego of the kayaking community to discover that with our state of the art boats, gear, and training, we're not doing anything that a lumberjack or an Indian in a dugout hasn't already accomplished.

The first descent of the Gauley in anything resembling whitewater craft was done by John Berry on Labor Day weekend 1957. Berry, a member of the Canoe Cruisers of Washington DC, and a friend were in the area paddling the New that Labor Day weekend. He recalls running the entire New River gorge from Thurmond to Fayette Station, then hopping on a passing freight train to run shuttle.

The following day, Berry and his boating partner elected to try the Gauley. What little John Berry knew about the Gauley came from the writings of early whitewater guidebook author, Walter Burmeister. The method that Burmeister used to gather information about particular rivers is unknown. Certainly he paddled many of them with Eric Seidel, a kayaker from Germany who won multiple slalom world championships. Yet, according to veteran boater John Sweet who first paddled the Gauley in 1968, Burmeister's description of the Gauley in *Appalachian Whitewater* was very general, probably based entirely on topographical features. It is reasonable to assume then that Burmeister had not run the Gauley before Berry's descent.

It took a long time for John Berry and his friend to find a put-in. Unlike the river we know today, the pre-dam Gauley was not easy to access. Berry recalls that the river was running low that day. Still, he and his friend, paddling an Old Town guide model and a 15 foot Grumman canoe respectively, managed to reach Gauley Bridge that same day. In retrospect, it seems unlikely that Berry and his partner ran any of what is today known as the Upper Gauley. Still, there can be no doubt that whatever portion of the river he traveled, John Berry did a virtual first descent of the Gauley.

The next known whitewater expedition undertaken on the Gauley was made by Sayre and Jean Rodman of the Pittsburgh Explorers Club. Though the year of their descent is unknown, it probably occurred in the late 50s. They tackled the river in inflatable rafts and it is possible that they did not run all of the rapids. John Sweet heard subsequent reports of their trip which conveyed the impression that future runs on the Gauley would be impractical.

On the Saturday of Labor Day weekend 1968, John Sweet along with Norm and Jimmy Holcolombe, Jack Wright, Miha Tomsic, and Jim Stuart were in the area paddling the New River Gorge. The following day they decided to make an attempt on the nearby Gauley. The Gauley was still a virtual unknown, although the recently completed Army Corps of Engineers dam provided an easy put-in. The group paddled a mixture of slalom fiberglass boats that were patterned after European designs. Most of the gear was homemade, though some wore field hockey helmets or batting helmets with the brims cut off.

1968 was the first year of the fall draw-down of Summersville Lake. Today this occurs in the form of convenient weekend releases in September. But in 1968 the Corps simply opened the gates around Labor Day and closed them whenever the lake was at winter pool. The river level on that Sunday was closer to 1200 cfs than the 2800 cfs achieved during releases today.

The group launched sometime around midmorning. With the luxury of a shuttle they felt they had plenty of time. They soon discovered that most of the drops could be boat scouted. Pillow, Lost Paddle, Iron Ring, and Sweet's Falls required shore scouting. John Sweet was the lone member of the group to attempt each of the rapids that day, running Iron Ring and Sweet's Falls by himself. Consequently Sweet's Falls bears his name, although Sweet says he never encouraged it.

After successfully navigating the first half of the river, the worst of the whitewater was behind the group. However, they had no way of knowing this. As it turned out, the lower half, though large and imposing, was not as steep and technical. It was not until the early evening that the group of exhausted boaters floated within view of Swiss, having paddled the nearly 25 miles of whitewater that makes up the entire Gauley gorge. Even today it is rare for a group to run the entire length of river in a single day. Those who have know how tiring it can be. We can only imagine what it might be like with no idea of what lurks around the next bend. Though we will probably never know for certain who first descended the entire gorge of the Gauley, it is very likely that John Sweet and his group

deserve the distinction of having first run all of the rapids in modern whitewater craft.

For years after John Sweet's 1968 run, Gauley season continued to be sparsely attended. Charlie Walbridge, describes the level of familiarity among Gauley pioneers in his 1993 *American Whitewater* article: "If we didn't know you, or if you weren't with someone we did, you probably didn't belong on the Gauley."

Commercial rafting had an early presence on the Gauley. Jon Dragan's Wildwater Unlimited, based on the New, began running trips of experienced customers down the Gauley in the very early 70s. Much like hardboating, however, commercial rafting grew slowly. It wasn't until the mid to late 70s that other companies began running the river. Often they used western-style oar-rigs, which were ill-suited to the technical rapids of the Gauley. Veterans of the river recall that early rafting met with much carnage. However, as the river became better known, rafters and hardboaters alike began to perfect lines through the most daunting rapids.

Access in the late 60s and early 70s (to say nothing of the 50s) was not as simple as it is today. Rout 19 was certainly not the super-highway that it has become. Boaters had to consult topo maps, drive miles of rural dirt roads, and hike even further to find serviceable access points. As much as everyone complains about the trials of hiking out Panther Hollow today, access was much more difficult in the not-so-distant past. Back then many groups elected to run the Upper Gauley, hide their boats in the bushes and hike out through the long, grimy railroad tunnel to Peter's Creek. They camped there, walked back in the next morning, retrieved their boats and finished the river.

Though much has changed since the early whitewater boating on the Gauley, the spirit of running the river hasn't diminished. Paddling the Gauley remains a milestone for most boaters, and it's still a hell of a lot of fun. Consider the phenomenal turnout for both Gauley season and Gauleyfest. Last year more than 3,500 boaters attended the festival alone. Surely this represents a sizeable proportion of all American boaters capable of running the Gauley. There is little doubt that for whitewater enthusiasts, come September, the Gauley is the place to be.

Hopefully, future generations of boaters will come to acknowledge and celebrate the rich history that flows between the Gauley's banks. And though the world may someday come to acknowledge the first boater to navigate this wild river, may the Gauley remain forever free of a last descent.

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# CHILLIN' on the Gauley

By Paul Lang

## A Low Water November Run

It is a question of need. I find my spirit severely saddle-sore. I think it's from riding a mutant tyrannical monster—a beast that has been carrying me along on a surging wave of lost humanity, widely known as the rat race. I need to find a better, wetter ride. I need to chill. In short, it has been too long since I paddled some good whitewater...

The promise of perfect late November weather combined with adequate flow from the Summersville Dam is all the incentive I need to e-mail trip leader, John Kobak. John's initial response is something to the effect that unless his head cold clears up the only paddling he'll be experiencing is at the Kobak Homestead. Later e-mails confirm that John is still remarkable in his ability to bounce back from adversity—he is good to go. But the Corps has cut the release back to 800 cfs—he now does not know what he wants to do. But John is persistent, and much to my

delight his persistence pays off. His Friday afternoon call to the Corps reveals a Saturday release of 1200 cfs.

The trip is on! John is driving down accompanied by my new friend Stu Koster, a bakery operator from Michigan. We may meet up with other tag-alongs on Saturday. Even better, my wife JoAnn, the Sweetest Shuttle Bunny I know, has agreed to come along.

Saturday morning dawns clear and crisp. John and Stu arrived late Friday night. Just like old times for John and me, except that in the old days our ever-gallant companion had always been the redoubtable and resplendent Day Glow David Boyd, a.k.a. Cat-in-the-Hat. All we need for a truly realistic reenactment of the old days is for Stu to don a bit more colorful kayaking garb and to... to.... Ah well, a Stu-da-Baker or a Cat-in-the-Hat; a third is a third, I'll leave it at that.

As we are getting ready to shuttle,

another of my new friends and soon-to-be hero, Josh Kaufman shows up. Josh has brought his video camera with him, and that makes him everybody's hero.

By the time shuttle is set, the day has progressed from frost all over to warm as toast. A number of other boaters are ready to put-on, including a group from the DC area and a couple of Pyranha paddling locals. On the first surfing wave, I comment to Stu and Josh that even though I am wearing little more than I would during Gauley Season, I feel overdressed. Josh responds that we should always have such Thanksgiving-weekend problems.

Stu is paddling a new boat, a Wave Sport Godzilla. I ask him how he likes it.

**With a purposeful grimace  
And a terrible sound  
He pulls the spitting  
High tension wires down...**

Stu says he likes his new boat fine. Me, I cannot get that darned Blue Oyster Cult song out of my head.

We play our way down to Initiation. A less experienced boater from Indiana, also named John, is unsure of what to expect from the river at this level. He also seems to be a bit unsure of the order of the rapids, so we informally shepherd him and his friend down.

The first of the big rapids is Insignificant. I feel confident I can do the boof near the bottom on river left. So does one of the locals. We both are a little less than aggressive in our efforts in making the move to get left. Our reward for our lack of effort is the same. We both piton on the rock we are trying to boof, and we both flip. Those who choose the more traditional line are rewarded with drier sinuses.

In the first rapid below Insignificant,



Paul Lung *nails* an ender in a hole just above Sweets Falls.

Photo by JoAnn

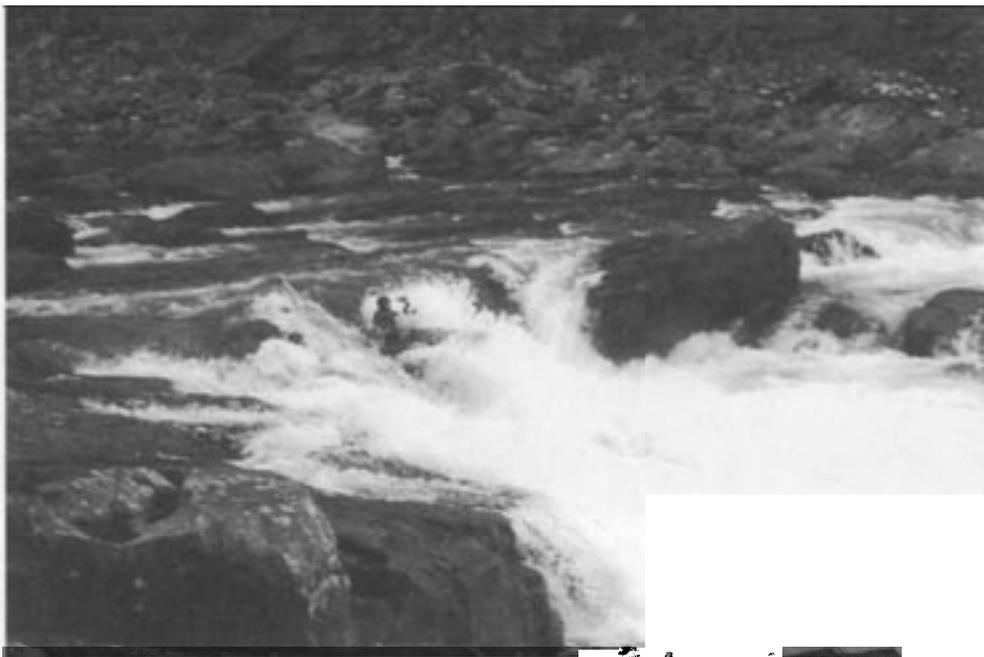
the undercut rock on far river left that caused a bit of mayhem back on Gauleyfest Weekend is quite apparent. And it's quite apparent that this is a good place to avoid at any level.

Indiana John is demonstrating his lack of Gauley knowledge when he asks if we are at Pillow yet. That's OK. I like people who aren't afraid to ask. No, we are now at Iron Curtain, a big wave train. John Kobak later attests that this is the only rapid he has a problem with all day. I'm right behind him and get to see all of it—it being the bottom of the Kobak Pirouette.

The next rapid of consequence is Pillow Rock. Pillow, ah Pillow, how you've been degraded. Once considered a Class V+, *American Whitewater* now considers Pillow a mere Class IV. But Pillow Rock still has one salient feature to confound the unwary: The Room of Doom.

Back on a beautiful Memorial Day weekend at similar flows (850–1200 cfs), I watched my buddy Rob Hammond attain the Room and make it seem effortless. So I attempted to attain the Room. One small problem with my attempt: I flipped on the pillow. Not wanting to swim and unable to paddle roll on my onside due to being right up against Pillow Rock, I let go of my paddle and hand rolled. This is great! Well, it seemed great until I watched my paddle get sucked way deep into the crack in The Room. Unwilling to risk life and limb for a mere piece of fiberglass, I abandoned my paddle and continued downstream with a friend's breakdown. (I did eventually get that paddle back, but that's another story).

This time I run Pillow while my buddies scout. On my first run I attempt the splat and get what I always get for this sort of effort—trashed. I spend the next 10 minutes or so attempting enders at Volkswagen Rock while watching others run. In the meantime Josh has made his run and, with video camera in hand, is set up on Pillow Rock. After waiting and waiting with John and Stu yet to run even once, I figure what the heck, I'll carry up and run again. This second run is good fun. My attitude is decidedly casual. I get stern squirted in the middle and for once actually manage something resembling a splat on Pillow—all on video!



Paul Lang attacks Sweets Falls at 1000 cfs.

Photo by JoAnn Lung

**...Oh no! They say he's got To go. Go, go Godzilla!**

John and Stu have completed their video-recorded rides and have gotten out on river right to eat lunch. Lunch really isn't part of my itinerary, I don't feel like carrying up to run again, and doing enders at Volkswagen Rock has proven mostly fruitless. So, what to do? If idle hands are the devil's workshop, then bored paddlers are the paddlesnake's workshop. This bored paddler decides that attaining the Room is kind of looking like fun, especially since there's gonna be time o-plenty...

**Oh, no! There goes Tokyo Go, Go Godzilla!**

Some people just never learn. I have little trouble paddling up and onto the Pillow. I am leaning aggressively onto the Pillow. I find that the *proper* technique is to aggressively lift the upstream thigh. Unfortunately I find this bit of enlightenment only after flipping. Deja Vu all over again. Out of breath after a couple of unsuccessful roll attempts methinks, "Well I'm not losing my paddle to that infernal crack again." So I pull the rip cord.

**...History shows Again and again How Nature points up The folly of men.**

Now for the Chillin.' 'Twas a good thing that the local Pyranha boys are doin'

some herbal chillin' up on Pillow Rock. Cause yours truly is doin' some bodacious chillin' in the Room. 'Tis an even better thing that our video boater has put his camera away. But the best thing is that our video boater has the only throw rope on that side of the river. My dear friends eating lunch on river right are of the attitude that if you can't help, 'tis a grand thing to sit back and enjoy the show.

And a show it is. Swimming in the Room of Doom with a boat and paddle to play tag with is easy. At least it's easy compared with trying to swim *out*. After a few round trips of futility, someone has the good sense to yell for a rope. Yes, I could have been respectful to life as I know it and gotten the hell outta there first, but that would have left some poor slob of a kayaker (namely me) without any paddling gear. So I tied my paddle to the rope. Eureka! My paddle is saved from that accursed crack.

I try to swim out again with my boat. My boat has other ideas. Next step, tie boat onto rope. By stern. By stern 'cause that's the only way I can be sure it won't come loose. Of course this leaves a ton of water in the bow. I hope those gents up there got some stout arms if they think they're gonna pull this thing straight up Pillow Rock. Pulling straight up doesn't work, but pulling upstream does.

My boat and I are good friends. My boat and I part company. I sadly miss my boat. Perhaps the separation anxiety would be lessened if someone could have produced another throw rope the instant my boat was taken away. Because at the

*Continues on page 67*



moment the only thing I am missing more than my boat is my ability to consistently keep my head above water. I yell for a rope. "Sorry dude, the only one we got is tied to your boat." They say patience is a virtue. At the moment virtue takes a back seat to sundry other concerns.

A rope, a rope! My kingdom for a rope! I have no kingdom. Can I please have a rope? At last my hero, the video king Josh, throws his rope to me. I can see it's not easy for him to pull my lard butt around that big rock, so I'm patient until I see the rope clear the top of the rock. When I get around the rock myself, I see Josh is fairly spent with reeling me in and is having all he can do to keep pulling. My answer is to pull hand-over-hand. The water is not terribly unpleasant, but I just hate to keep hogging it all to myself. I stumble ashore, glad to be a land animal once again, look across the river, and give the thumbs up to John and Stu.

After drying out a bit on the rock, I still have a boat to empty. I also have a rapid to run again. My third run is exceptionally clean. I just wish I had taken it before and instead of attempting attainments. But at this point the fact that I had actually been chillin' escapes me.

At the bottom, my friend Stu asks me if I am cold. Before I can answer, Stu interjected that I must be, 'cause I sure was chillin' in The Room. That Stu—what an imagination! Albert Einstein, another one of my heroes, was once quoted, "Imagination is more important than knowledge."

At the wave just downstream of Pillow I decide to do a little tandem surfing with my Kayaking Lord and Master, Mr. John Kobak. John's concern for me is quite touching. While side-by-side on the wave he asks me if I am cold. I answer that I am much warmer as I am now so close to my #1 Hero. With this show of affection I am once again treated to those tender mercies so unique to my Kayaking Lord and Master: A quick paddle blade to my chest and John is no longer troubled with having to share a surf with a serf like me.

The river below Pillow Rock is mostly Class II-III until it gets to Lost Paddle. Just above Lost Paddle the Meadow River adds its flow to the Gauley. I have never paddled any section of the Meadow, although I'd like to someday. In my head, thoughts of the Meadow and its uncertain fate due to a proposed power line crossing merge

with the song about The Original Wrathful Environmentalist.

**With a purposeful grimace  
And a terrible sound  
He pulls the spitting  
High tension wires down...**

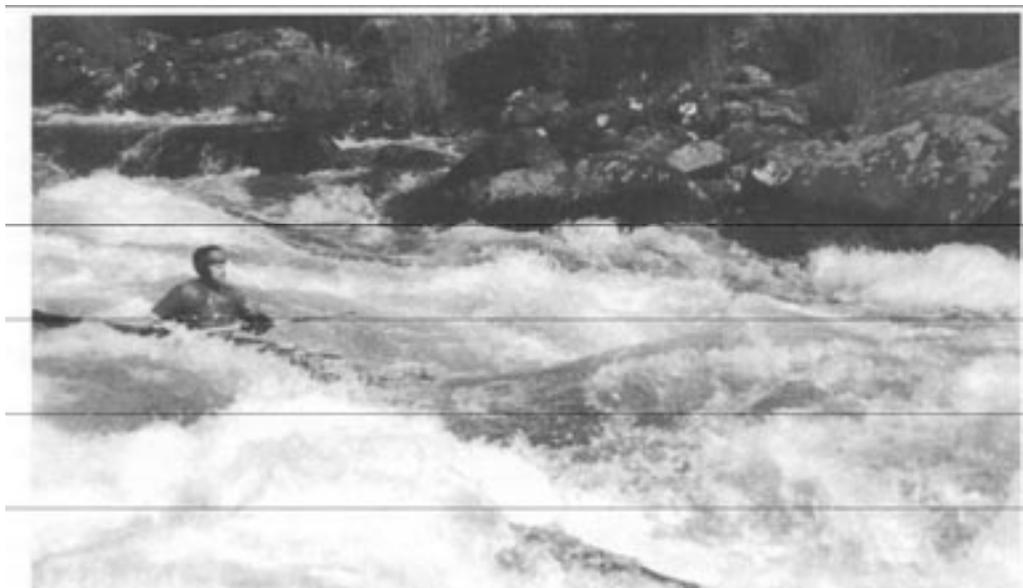
**Oh, no, there goes The Meadow  
Go, go, Godzilla...**

**History shows  
Again and again  
How Nature points up  
The folly of men.**

We arrive at Lost Paddle. I like Lost Paddle at this level. It's not as pushy as at

abrupt round of ego downsizing. Go left, through a half a boat length wide, horse-shoe-shaped defile created in the olden days by loggers blasting the riverbed and, ...well it ain't gonna be pretty.

Those of us who get out to scout find this sight inspiring. Those who don't—the locals—have found their inspiration elsewhere. The scouting crowd is impressed with their daring-do. They both attempt to boof the top hole, only to stall, fall in the hole, backender, and flip. At the time, methinks that only one thing kept them from being washed over to the nasty spot on the left—some providential water sprite intervening on their behalf for good deeds done at the Room of Doom. They later say that they had seen what they were attempting screwed up so many times with



Pillow Rock at Meadow River. Photo by John L. Ring

***...we run Insignificant cleanly; we head on  
down to Pillow. John asks, "Hey Paul, gonna try  
for the Room of Doom today?"***

full release, but it makes up for it by being a lot more technical. The DC paddlers, the locals, and the Keelhaulers all seem to run this long rapid at about the same time. And we all do fine. Same for Ship Rock, only by now the locals have gotten way ahead of us.

Iron Ring at this level is one mean-lookin' mutha. If you've never seen it at low water, I would highly encourage you to stop and scout. If you were so hapless as to be casual about your approach in the top of the rapids, where a nasty hole lurks, then heaven help your dermal layer in the left side of what's below. Because what's below is Woodstock Rock. Go right of the rock and the worst you can expect is an

nary a harmful result that the risks seemed minimal. As the lone swimmer, I am a sinner. I long for redemption. But that broken record of a song is still coursing through my synapses.

**...History shows  
Again and again  
How Nature points up  
The folly of men.**

I, along with all the spectators, elect to walk.

The rest of the day is largely uneventful Gauley fare. Because the late autumn sun has long since deserted the depths of the canyon that is the Upper Gauley, we spend

little time playing. Everybody runs Sweets Falls. Some are upright at the bottom and some are not. I don't keep score, but I think all the Keelhaulers remain upright.

At the take-out we bid farewell to my hero Josh. Seems he's got some kind of test to study for or whatnot, so he will not be paddling with us tomorrow. Josh has his priorities. I leave it to you, gentle reader, to judge their propriety—I am not one to malign my heroes.

Lest the reader get the impression that we Keelhaulers are of a sort that would chafe old Oliver Cromwell's backside, let me say this. While on the river before, during, and after my little escapade in the Room, I must admit that my attitude was decidedly, shall we say, Cavalier.

Later that evening, away from the fun and excitement of the moment, I had time to muse. My introspection led me to ponder my fate had no one been on Pillow Rock with a throw bag. A number of troubling questions flitted in and out of my mind. Mainly, could I have escaped the Room without assistance? The upshot is that I'm glad I never needed to find out. And yes, Josh, that does make you and the locals heroes.

Sunday dawns not dissimilar from Saturday: Mostly clear and a little frosty, but decidedly warmer. With our Keelhauler paddling group reduced to three, and with one of those three facing a long road trip back to Michigan, we opt for an early start. Hence John and JoAnn have long since been running shuttle before any other boaters even arrive at the put-in.

Stu and I talk of various things while waiting. Stu regales me with his newfound knowledge of volcanic vents in the deep ocean known as fumaroles and the weird life forms found nearby them. This discussion of strange aquatic creatures leads, in a free and easy progression, to a discussion of our paddling partner. No, we are not bashing My Lord of Kayaking. In fact our conversation held a touch of awe. I can see the old guy has slowed down a little bit in his playing in the last year or so. But still, Mr. Kobak is the only 62-year-old I know who is regularly out there paddling the likes of the Big Sandy, Upper Yough, and Upper Gauley.

As the other boaters begin to filter in our conversation is interrupted by one of the women from DC. "Hi, I'm T , " she says. I say, yes, I remember, we were introduced yesterday. "Well I don't remember your name and 'Room of Doom Guy' is probably not the only name you'll want to live with." I guess I'll be along time living that one down. "My name is Paul."

"OK, Paul, while you were in the Room, did you ever think about stemming the crack?" If the reader will pardon my ignorance of mountain climbing lingo, the reader can only imagine where my thoughts might be heading at the moment. Something like 'I know us male Keelhaulers are of a MANLY sort, but sheesh!' I respond that I do not understand. "You know, kind of like wedge yourself in the crack and climb up." Well no, that thought had not occurred to me. I hope I never find myself in a position again where I might test its efficacy.

Not long after this conversation, my Sweetest Shuttle Bunny arrives with her precious cargo. Another day of fun begins. We notice right away that the release has been cut back to 950 cfs. We play in a couple of spots above Insignificant, we run Insignificant cleanly; we head on down to Pillow.

John asks, "Hey Paul, gonna try for the Room of Doom today?"

Normally I am of a most delicate and retiring nature. Even the thought of using inappropriate language causes my timid heart to palpitate. But some occasions demand a more lusty thought process.

**"F\*% r!" is my reply.**

At this point in our paddling relationship, John and I rarely describe our lines to one another. Not that it would do much good, for unless there is a significant hazard to be pointed out, I doubt either one of us would listen. Still I have to wonder—did John really plan on catching that grabby eddy in the Room? I don't ask, I just whoop. John later admits that his line had been something of an improvisation. Like "I'm too far left and I've got two options—splat Pillow or eddy out in The Room." I can appreciate eddying out in The Room, but it's too bad we didn't get to see that splat! I can only hope John will indulge next time.

We go through Lost Paddle and point out a few landmarks to Stu. Like the hole at the bottom of Third Drop. Also the raft line at fourth drop—not so gnarly as we run it today, but gnarled with big holes at full release.

John says he wants to grab a bite at Iron Ring. This is cool with me—I again don't feel the need to eat, but scouting that bad boy sounds enlightening. Stu offers me an orange. I've got other things on my mind. Like redemption. As John and Stu are packing up and getting ready to walk one of them asks, "You running it, Paul?"

I respond that I might. I wait until at least one of my companions is in his boat at the bottom of the drop. Securing my spray skirt and locking my posture to the 'serious business attitude', I am off.

My plan is to run the center tongue from the top, boof the hole in the first part of the drop, then dodge the steep hole at the bottom. An alternative would have been to take a line more routinely run at full release — begin on the left tongue and work right. About midway into the approach, a hole that I hadn't thought much of while scouting has me wishing I had gone with the standard plan. It kicks me left. This tidbit of unexpected misfortune has me spouting more language I'd prefer not to repeat in this narrative. Only one thing to do now, lad; dig in and head right with all your might. I am relieved to clear the first hole with not so much as the merest lifting of my bow. The second hole awaits. On my only other attempt of Iron Ring at this low level, the second hole was the one that got me. This makes my redemption today all the sweeter. I am through clean, clean, clean.

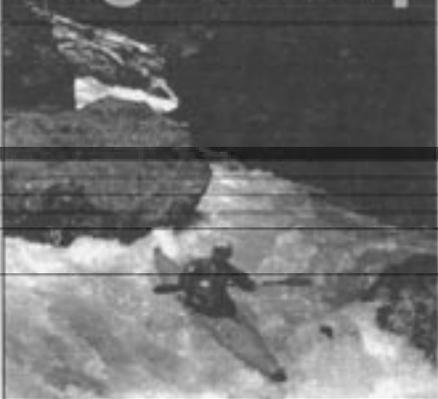
Redemption, I am told, can be a short-lived water sprite. In some no-name drop below Iron Ring I flip.

One highlight not to be missed at this level is the set of surf waves a few hundred yards above Sweet's Falls. At least it's not to be missed by me. John just paddles right on by them — and this is no surprise. But I told Stu about them. His feeble attempt at surfing disappoints me. I remember having to fight my fellow Keelhaulers for a place on those waves back on Memorial Day weekend. By the time I'm done playing John and Stu have already gone over Sweet's.

It is at this point that I choose to end my tale of Chillin' on The Gauley. Too soon I am back riding the same old monster in the same old rat race. But for one brief and glorious late November weekend another monster - the one in the song — reminds me of one of the finest rivers the East has to offer, of "thefolly d' men", and to chill.

Editor's note: Paul Lang is a distinguished member of Ohio's Keelhaulers Whitewater Club and a frequent contributor to American Whitewater.

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# The Sixth ANIMAL Upper Gauley Race called a "Howling" Success

By Donnie Hudspeth

**Monday, October 5th, 1999** — It is Gauley Season in West Virginia and the circus has come to town. This time of year is a favorite for whitewater paddlers everywhere, of course. It's a time to see old paddling buddies, to meet new paddling buddies, check out new boats, socialize a bit, and...do the Gauley Race! Last year's race was Fantastic — plenty of water, friendly competition and killer prizes, in fact over \$5,000 in cash and prizes! The fastest man, Andrew McEwan, and the fastest woman, Carolyn Porter, each received a Gold Watch and new kayaks, compliments of Stafford Jewelers, Perception, and Dagger. Raft Teams raced for cash, with the winner "Chicks with stix plus two tix" taking home \$600. "Team Wing" was less than a minute behind, and the "NARRly chicks" placed third. Whitewater Photography donated \$100 to *American Whitewater* for each and every raft team that competed. Thanks to all of you for supporting the race by volunteering as safety boaters, timers, racers, and sponsors.

This year's race is set for Monday October 4th, 1999. Come out and have a great FAST time with us and celebrate our sport!

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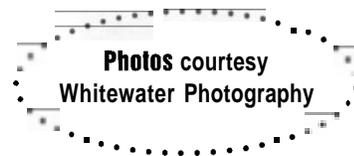
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Chris Hipgrave, 2nd overall, high speed in Pillow Rock.

## 1998 Upper Gauley Race Results

Racer	Class	Time	Overall	In Class
<b>Wildwater</b>				
Andrew McEwan .....	WW .....	47:03 .....	1 .....	1
Chris Hipgrave .....		48:45 .....	2 .....	2
Middy Tilghman .....		49:02 .....	3 .....	3
Dave Persolja .....		51:47 .....	4 .....	4
Mike Beck .....		55:17 .....	10 .....	5
<b>Wildwater C1</b>				
Andy Bridge .....	WWC1 .....	52:22 .....	6 .....	1
<b>Wavehopper — Men</b>				
Howard Tidwell.....	Whopper .....	51:50 .....	5 .....	1
Clem Newbold.....		52:45 .....	7 .....	2
Bobby Hartridge .....		53:05 .....	8 .....	3
Jonathon Gold .....		56:14 .....	16 .....	4
<b>Wavehopper — Women</b>				
Carolyn Porter .....	WhopperW .....	55:29 .....	11 .....	1
Shannon Carroll .....		55:54 .....	13 .....	2
Colleen Laffey .....		56:01 .....	14 .....	3
Deb Ruehle .....		56:46 .....	17 .....	4
Tracy Hines .....		1:02:26 .....	25 .....	5

Middy Tilghman on his way to 3rd overall.



Racer	Class	Time	Overall	In Class
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**Slalom—Men**

Eric Lindberg	Slalom	54:48	9	1
Philip Coleman		55:36	12	2
Jeff Nelson		56:13	15	3
Patrick Myers		56:57	18	4
Pete Persolja		57:19	19	5
Wally Hatfield		57:48	20	6
Andrew Waters		59:44	21	7
Jason Allen		1:01:05	23	8
David McFaden		1:01:50	24	9

**Playboat—Men**

Barney Bonito	Playboat	1:00:59	22	1
Wayne Amsbury		1:02:40	26	2
Dave Liebenberg		1:03:19	27	3
Ryan Gaujot		1:04:19	28	4
Ted Mason		1:06:05	30	5
Chad Foreman		1:06:12	31	6
T.K. Shields		1:06:49	33	7

The winning raft team at Sweet's!





Taking a well deserved break at the finish.

.....  
**Photos courtesy**  
**: Whitewater Photography :**  
 .....

Racer	Class	Time	Overall	In Class
<b>Playboat—Women</b>				
Sarah Gillfillan .....	Playboat .....	1:11:40 .....	36 .....	1
<b>OC1</b>				
Steve Fraiser .....	Open Canoe .....	1:05:22 .....	29 .....	1
Milt Aiken .....	.....	1:06:39 .....	32 .....	2
Tom Jackson .....	.....	1:19:11 .....	39 .....	3
<b>Shredder</b>				
Team Toby .....	Shredder .....	1:24:26 .....	41 .....	1
<b>Raft</b>				
Chicks w/Stix plus 2 tix .....	.....	1:08:31 .....	34 .....	1
Team Wing .....	.....	1:09:23 .....	35 .....	2
NARRly Chicks .....	.....	1:12:33 .....	37 .....	3
Beer is Love .....	.....	1:15:56 .....	38 .....	4
Screaming Beavers .....	.....	1:20:22 .....	40 .....	5

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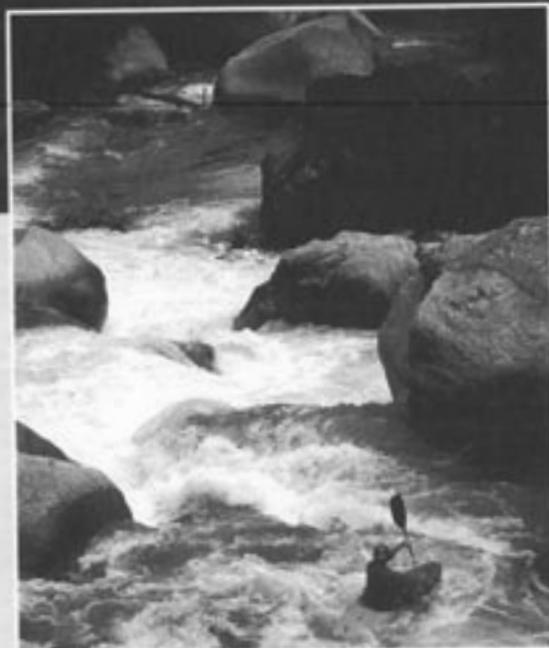
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**M**y final humiliation arrived toward the end of the second day.

After nine hours of paddling, the four of us had arrived at the confluence of the Clavey River with the Toulemme. An additional 12 miles of the Toulemme remained before our take-out at Wards Ferry.

Rok Sribar sneaks down a steep side chute on the lower Clavey. Photo by C. Koll



# Fear and Loathing in California

## California Screamin'

*By Chris Koll*

It was six in the evening in early May. The California sun that warmed us during the day had dipped behind the rim of steep hills rising from both sides of the river. We wearily paddled into the gathering dusk, choosing straightforward routes through rapids and laboring across swift-flowing pools.

I lagged behind my younger companions. Johnny Kern, noting my obvious fatigue, dropped back to join me.

"How are you doing, Chris?" John asked solicitously. "Would you like to take a break? Pull off for a little bit? *Maybe take a little nap?*"

"Hell, no!" I barked, embarrassed by his concern.

Of course, in truth, Johnny's concern was warranted. The dull ache in my left shoulder reminded me of the calcium deposit building in the joint. A throbbing pain in my damaged right knee forced me to slip my leg out of the thigh brace. The muscles in my lower back felt close to spasm and my oft-broken right foot threatened to cramp. I struggled through even the easy rapids.

Yes, I confess... I would have loved to eddy out and take a rest—if not a nap. But any delay would have raised the prospect of running the remainder of the river by the light of Johnny's headlamp.

That was an adventure I wasn't anxious to experience. Because along with my deteriorating muscles and joints—my night vision was starting to slip as well.

For years I had only vicariously experienced expedition boating. Oh, during the past two decades I managed to stumble down a number of challenging Eastern rivers through relatively remote terrain. But as I neared half a century in age, I found myself opting for whitewater adventures of limited duration.

In fact, I always tried to observe a few simple guidelines when selecting potential paddling destinations:

- Never boat a river where climbing gear is recommended as an aid in portaging.
- Never boat a river where portages are described as *mostly* at river level.
- Never boat a river where choosing an appropriate headnet is more critical than selecting color-coordinated paddling gear.
- Never boat a river where you need to pack toilet paper.
- Never boat a river where you need to carry more provisions than a quart of Diet Coke and a Snickers bar.
- And finally—never, never boat a river where you can't get off the water in time for Happy Hour.

Granted—these criteria have limited my explorations of wilderness whitewater to information gleaned from guidebooks or magazine articles during extended sessions relaxing on the toilet. And from the comfort of my bathroom—the various accounts sometimes seemed, well, compelling.

And to make matters worse, many of my paddling companions (having refused to recognize my sensible restrictions) often traipsed off on multi-day expeditions to obscure locations in Mexico, Asia, South America or northern Canada to return beaten and bug-bitten with tales of exhilarating

whitewater and stories of brutal hardships.

Listening to their epics, I'd find myself simultaneously fascinated and repelled. And gradually, my better sense began to erode. Surely—the prospect of exploring territory seldom traversed by other boaters must surely be worth the sacrifice of a few physical comforts...

Naahhhh... Even a weekend of difficult day trips reduced me to a whimpering ruin barely able to limp into my office chair for the beginning of the work week. Co-workers would simply shake their heads and exclaim: "Chris—what on earth ever happened to you?"

To their inquiries—I developed a standard rejoinder that might be adopted as the motto for all over-40 hardboaters:

"It only hurts on Mondays."

But the problem with a true wilderness trip is that Monday morning might still find me stranded on some desolate river without a hot whirlpool or a bottle of Ibuprofen in sight.

My attitude regarding expedition boating was reinforced after an ill-fated foray three years ago on the Tareau section of the Jacques Cartier just north of Quebec City.

Ostensibly—the Tareau can be paddled in a long day... which explains why it passed my rigid list of qualifications. But the section does stretch the definition of a day trip. The Tareau runs through 18 miles of totally inaccessible wilderness and its middle eight miles features some of the most challenging and continuous Class V rapids in eastern North America.

My one previous trip down the river required eight hours for our group of three to reach the take-out—but this time I was boating with a particularly strong party with considerable experience on the Tareau. I figured that despite the length of the run—

we'd be back in Quebec City in time for dinner and bottles of wine.

Of course, those plans went awry from the start after we arrived at the put-in to find the river virtually at flood—a full 18 inches over the gauge rock that typically indicates a medium/high water level.

After considerable hemming and hawing, the group dynamic (and the need to escape a cloud of black flies) overwhelmed common sense. We put on.

At high water, the Tareau is filled with long, steep rapids all requiring a series of complex moves to negotiate. I'd enter the top of a rapid more-or-less in the same place of the boater in front of me and then blindly fight my way down, around and through a maze of ledges, holes, and boulders.

I'd be winded by the time I reached the bottom eddy and needed to pause a moment to catch my breath before plunging back into the torrent. But with eight paddlers in our group, there never seemed time to pause before another

wild-eyed boater would careen into my sanctuary forcing me

back into the maelstrom.

It was not

a relaxing day on the river. Of course, we had a few unanticipated opportunities to compose ourselves while waiting for several members of the group to rebuild their psyches (and collect scattered equipment) after horrible swims. But even these respites were not appreciated as a swarm of blackflies followed us down the river—waiting to attack every time we approached the shore. And as I waited—swatting flies—for breakdown paddles to be assembled and boats to be drained, I felt an overwhelming sense of anxiety: more of the same water remained downstream and I worried that my turn to swim lay in the rapid around the bend.

And indeed it was. At the bottom of a particularly long and nasty Class V the Tareau dropped over a final five-foot ledge between partially exposed boulders. I threaded my line down the right between the jagged rocks and through the hydraulic at the base of the ledge. I blinked away the spray from my

**"How are you doing, Chris?" John asked solicitously. "Would you like to take a break? Pull off for a little bit? Maybe take a little nap?"**



*Clavey River campground*

eyes to discover three swimmers and a yardsale of equipment bobbing in the hole on the left.

I paddled over into a large, swirling eddy flanked by abrupt cliffs to help gather up the pieces. Suddenly, the tail of my Hurricane was sucked down into a whirlpool. For 30 seconds, my boat splatted the sheer wall in a perfect back-ender while I struggled to bring the nose down. Then, inexplicably, the tail of the boat dropped two feet deeper in the whirlpool leaving only the nose of the Hurricane and my head above water.



*Andy Opler ski jumps a hydraulic on the Clavey River. Photo by C. Koll*

I bailed—adding to the chaos of the moment.

Boats and paddlers were finally reunited—but any illusions I harbored about wilderness boating had been dashed. One of our party had suffered a slightly dislocated shoulder and a cracked rib and was barely able to continue. But the prospect of striking camp and calling in helicopter evacuation was almost unthinkable. We were unprepared to spend the night and the possibility of lingering for an additional 12 hours while under constant assault from the flies was horrifying. A rescue team would discover only our white, bloodless carcasses.

We all finally escaped the Tareau. But the sense of accomplishment I took from the experience failed to overcome the physical and emotional toll.

The following morning I was awakened by the screams of my buddy Ed Kiesa who was sleeping in the back of my truck:

"I can't see... I can't see... I'm blind," Kiesa screamed in a panic.

I opened the tailgate to discover Kiesa thrashing wildly in his sleeping bag, rubbing his eyes with his fists. Dozens of blackfly bites on his face had swollen his cheeks and eyelids shut. Finally, after a minute of massage, Kiesa could open his eyes to the width of a slit and vision was restored.

I was still laughing at Kiesa's predicament when I looked in the driver's mirror at my own face. It looked like I had

been on the losing end of a bar fight.

This time—it hurt on more than just Monday. And I resolved to never forget my paddling guidelines.

So...by now you might be curious—given my aversion to paddling under expeditionary conditions, how the hell did I ever find myself sniveling and whining down the Toulomme with day rapidly fading to night?

Simple. I was ambushed.

I first met my friend Rok Sribar eight years ago soon after he arrived from Slovenia to complete his PhD program at Cornell University in upstate New York. We initially hooked up on the Black River and soon I was showing Rok down some of my favorite eastern whitewater runs like the Bottom Moose, Upper Yough, and the Gauley.

Well, to be honest, all I really did was lead Rok to the put-ins. Because once on the water, Rok seldom required any assistance.

Unfortunately, Rok somehow felt a sense of obligation to return the favor by showing me down some of his favorite rivers. And because Rok was one of those paddlers who failed to recognize the wisdom of my guidelines, I always tried to avoid situations where he would set the boating itinerary. But after a while, it became more and more difficult finding excuses why I couldn't accompany him on his latest adventure down some gawd-awful run.

The problem was solved two years ago when Rok accepted a promotion and relocated to San Francisco thereby removing me from his sphere of influence.

Now, Rok would fly back to New York a couple times a year to visit, boat the Bottom Moose and preside over the preparation and consumption of pre-river dinners and wine-tasting marathons at my camp in Old Forge. And while twisting corks from bottles—Rok regaled us with tales of hideously difficult and remote California runs that made my exploits on the Tareau pale by comparison.

Lord knows I missed Rok. But sometimes I thanked God he was a continent away.

That said—I guess I only have myself to blame for telling Rok that my wife Caron and I were planning to visit California for the American Whitewater 1999 spring board meet-

***...although Andy's belly showed the effects of those boats full of beer, his legs were thick and knotted with muscle—testimony to long climbs up those interesting side canyons.***

ing. Rok immediately notified his employer that he would require a week of vacation in May and assured me that he would handle all the logistics of our trip.

"I have all the gear for camping and cooking," Rok said. "We won't be able to make specific plans until we see what the levels are while you're here."

"We're looking for a relaxing vacation—I don't know if we'll want to do a lot of cooking," I said. "Maybe paddle something a little challenging—hang out in shorts for a while—then hit a nice restaurant for dinner and drinks in the evening."

"Sometimes you have to cook," Rok countered. "On the rivers we run in California—the shuttles are usually long and you have to camp back in the mountains near the put-in..."

Maybe I wasn't listening as closely as I should have. Maybe I should have been reading between the lines. Because at that point, I should have recognized that the rivers Rok was already considering were not going to fit my list of guidelines.

"We're going to camp out of our boats?" I asked incredulously.

Rok was on the phone. Our plans had changed. Rok would be unable to join us for two days—but he had set up an overnight on the Toulemme for Caron and me. His pal Andy Opler would guide us down the river.

"Of course," Rok said. "I'll meet you at the take-out Tuesday night so you won't have to drive a shuttle. Then we'll figure out what to paddle for the rest of the week."

"Welllll...OK."

The interminable conference in Kernville had finally concluded. Caron had spent two days boating the Limestone section of the Kern with Kitty Tuscano while I sat in the meetings. We spent a final day on the Kern boating the Forks section before heading north to meet Andy. But before driving out of town, we had a hasty stop at a local paddling store to buy nearly \$200 of dry bags.

Of course—we had come to California prepared to eat in restaurants and camp out of our rental car. And I wasn't sure if our bulky sleeping bags and heavy tent would fit into our newly purchased dry bags. Oh well—I figured—at least I'd have plenty of room for cigars.

Monday morning dawned cold and wet. Caron, Andy, and I stood on the porch of the Casa Loma, hands thrust deep into out pockets, watching water stream from the eaves.

Located at the top of the road that lead to the Toulemme put-in, the Casa Loma was a Californiaversion of an Eastern diner where paddlers traditionally meet to plan shuttles over breakfast. No biscuits and gravy, but the Casa Loma did offer cappuccino, an assortment of herbal teas, and a choice of seven-grain or sun-dried tomato bagels.

No wonder California boaters seemed so whippet slim.

But unlike Eastern greasy-spoons, one wall of the Casa

Loma was dedicated to shelves full of paddling gear and a television continuously playing whitewater videos hung in the corner. I ordered a bagel and a pair of booties.

But despite my new booties, I wasn't ecstatic about embarking on an overnight kayak trip on an uncharacteristically cold and wet California morning. But since Andy was our host, I tried to hide my lack of enthusiasm.

Because, I sensed that Andy would prefer spending a night outdoors alongside a river than in a suite at the Four Seasons. He had just returned to California after three weeks in the Grand Canyon and in June he had wrangled a two-week permit for the Middle Fork Salmon.

"I love spending time on the Toulemme," Andy said. "Sometimes I'll go in there by myself with just my fly rod, a



*Clavey River nose jobs. Photo by C. Koll*

little oil and lemon, and as much beer as I can load in my boat and spend three days in there. When the river is high—up over 6000 cfs—the surfing is tremendous and the fishing just gets better. I could stay in there for days just surfing, exploring neat side canyons, and reading."

And indeed—Andy looked like a prototypical river person. Although only in his mid-thirties, Andy appeared a little worn around the edges. His head was crowned with a frizzled tonsure of hair while his face sported a permanent two-day growth. And although Andy's belly showed the effects of those boats full of beer, his legs were thick and knotted with muscle—testimony to long climbs up those interesting side canyons.

Fortunately, Andy also proved remarkably perceptive. Standing on the porch of the Casa Loma, he must have sensed my hesitancy.

"Of course, we could do the Toulemme as a day trip," he said. "It's 18 miles and you can paddle it easy in an afternoon—you just don't have as much time to hike and hang out in the canyon."

"Hey...that's a great idea," I said—perhaps a little too quickly. "I mean, the weather is pretty lousy...we really

aren't equipped to camp...we haven't even bought food..”

The weather was finally starting to break as we turned off the Casa Loma Road, crossed a cattle guard onto a dirt lane, and started our descent into the Toulemme canyon toward the put-in. The road was caved into the side of the canyon wall and the left shoulder dropped steeply to the river a thousand feet below.

The lane lead upstream toward Yosemite and every turn revealed a new panorama of a blue ribbon of water punctuated by stretches of frothy white and framed by the distant snow-capped peaks of the high Sierras. I found myself starting to share Andy's enthusiasm for the river.

That feeling was heightened once on the water. The Toulemme was running at a medium flow—around 4,000 cfs—and we quickly bombed down the first six miles of continuous Class III and IV rapids maneuvering around ominous hydraulic and hooting and hollering down exhilarating wave trains. Within an hour, we arrived at the run's most prominent drop—Clavey Falls.

We spent half an hour on shore at Clavey Falls—not scouting the rapid—but rather poking around the river bank. Caron and Andy engaged in a lively discussion regarding the geology of some rock formations and then Andy pointed out the high-water mark of the flood several years



**Rok Sribar ski jumps a hydraulic on the Clavey. Photo by C. Koll**

**...he's been dragging me down these steep, technical creek runs that are really hard. I'm not that used to that kind of water and some of the trips have been real scary.**

past and then we hiked up to where the Clavey dumped into the river.

Finally, almost as an afterthought, we jumped back into our boats and blasted down the rapid from left to right.

And so the pace of the day was set. The river was a convenient highway that quickly transported us from attraction to attraction.

We raced down to the ruins of an old stone powerhouse that once generated electricity for gold camps located downstream. We pulled out again and scrambled over the stone walls, examining the remains of the massive turbines and other equipment and conjecturing how the materials were ever transported at the turn of the century to this remote location.

A few quick miles further down the river, we followed Andy into the entry of a large rapid, skirted a massive hole on the left, and then eddied next to a grove of willows.

"This is a prime spot for salvaging lost beer," Andy said. "During the summer, rafts get worked in that hole all the time—and all their gear and beer seem to end up in the willows, especially private rafts where they don't know how to rig their boat.

"I've found a firepan and kitchen box of gear and I've got it stashed way back up in where no one can find it. I could pull out here and camp indefinitely."

Back in the current, we finished the run-out of the rapid and paddled to our next stop—a perfect glassy wave flanked by a conveyoreddy on the right. Andy surfed for half an hour. Then, after a quick pause to drain his boat, he paddled furiously downstream to a small tributary creek that cascaded into the Toulemme from the left.

"This side canyon is really interesting," Andy explained as he pulled out.

We trailed behind Andy as he hopped from rock to rock up the stream bed, swam across a calm pool, scaled a sheer rock ledge, and disappeared upstream where the creek tumbled through a narrow defile over a series of falls. A few minutes later, he reappeared from his exploration.

"There are some even better falls further upstream—but the water is a little high to get to them," Andy said. "There's another neat canyon downstream where the South Branch Toulemme enters..."

Fortunately for me, dusk was starting to fall by the time we reached the South Branch and Andy figured he didn't have time for a proper hike. We proceeded downstream and soon reached the calm, dark waters of the San Pedro Reser-

voir. As we paddled the final mile to the bridge at Wards Ferry, Andy pointed out the dimples on the surface of the water where rainbow trout were rising to take the evening's catch of flies.

It was a rewarding, yet exhausting day. And it helped me develop one more guideline used in selecting appropriate rivers:

- Never boat a river with a paddler who has cached camping gear on shore.

Of course, I violated my new rule the very next day. But there were mitigating factors: Tuesday dawned crystal clear and the bright morning sun carried the promise of an afternoon so warm and beautiful that it had to be spent on the water.

Besides, Rok had promised to meet us at Ward's Ferry by 6 pm.

Paddling with Andy, we barely made it in time.

Stroking the final mile across the reservoir to Wards Ferry, Andy and I debated the probability of Rok arriving on schedule to pick us up.

If all had gone according to plan, Rok had flown back into San Francisco from Paris that afternoon around 1 pm. He would have immediately checked gauge readings on-line, packed his gear, loaded a number of boats, set the cruise control of his big Ford Expedition at 90 mph, and roared away toward the mountains.

Anyone else I'd expect to arrive hours late—citing legitimate excuses of delayed flights, jet lag, or California traffic. But not Rok.

"He'll take it as a personal challenge to be here on time," I said. "If he's at all late, he'll drive like a maniac taking what appears to any normal person as enormous risks to get here when he says he will.

I've driven with him and he's scared me to death—even though we always arrived safely.

"But that's just Rok."

Yes, indeed... that's just Rok. Whether on the highway or the river—a similarity Andy noted.

"I've always felt really comfortable on big water—like the Toulemme at 10,000," Andy said. "But since I've been boating with Rok, he's been dragging me down these steep, technical creek runs that are really hard. I'm not that used to that kind of water and some of the trips have been real scary. I'm always wondering why I let myself go along with Rok on these trips."

I knew exactly what he was talking about.

"But I get him back," Andy said. "About the only thing that really scares Rok is bears. When we're back on these rivers, he's always asking me, 'Andy, do you think there are bears around here?' Of course, we never see any, but I'm always telling him I'm seeing tracks."

Sure enough, Andy and I had barely slipped out of our spray skirts when Rok's green Expedition screeched around the final corner of the one-lane road winding down to Wards Ferry. Rok jumped from the car and greeted us with energetic hugs—showing no signs that he had traveled half way around the world to meet us at the Toulemme take-out.

Boats were quickly loaded and soon we were snaking our way back up the hill. Rok's wife Sara—cognizant of my weak stomach and Rok's penchant for high speed—sympathetically yielded the front passenger seat to me. I hung my head

out the window like a dog on a hot afternoon while Rok wrenched the big car around the endless series of hairpin curves.

Not surprisingly, Rok had already formulated a scenario for our next three days of paddling:

"We're going to meet Johnny Kern for dinner and then we can camp up the road from the Casa Loma," Rok explained. "Tomorrow we can head down to the Kings or the South Merced."

"Do you think Caron would like these runs?" I asked.

"Wellll...maybe. But Sara would really like to take her back to San Francisco and show her the town."

Oh, oh, I thought—Rok knew that my wife was a very competent Class V boater. He had paddled with her on the Moose, Gauley, and steep runs in Corsica. But he also knew that she didn't favor runs where the river gets, well, big and particularly hectic. I knew nothing about the runs Rok was

proposing, but I suspected he intended to introduce me to some of the best—or worst—water in California.

"Maybe Sara can take me to San Francisco and Caron can stay here to boat with you."

I had known the Kern brothers—Chuck, Willie and John—since they were enthusiastic but relatively inexperienced boaters living in Vermont. In fact, seven years ago, Caron and I were chauffeured back to our honeymoon suite at two in the morning from the last stop of our wedding reception in the back of Chuck's aging pickup bought used from some Vermont DPW and still painted in a hideous orange color.

Chuck and Willie joined our group of boaters the next day for a run down the Bottom Moose that was distinguished by



**John Kern backenders in top hole on Clavey River Rapid. Photo by C. Koll**

the number of paddlers with monumental hangovers and by Chuck's epic trashing in the hole at the bottom of Fowlersville Falls where somehow —after a minute of wild acrobatics— he somehow managed to work his way out on the right.

The Kern boys often joined our crew of local boaters over the next year but their meteoric learning curve was obvious. By the next fall Moose season, Chuck and Willie were pioneering new routes down the river that we old-timers had once thought impossible.

John was finishing college in Oregon while his brothers were building a reputation in the East, but upon returning home, he soon followed the family tradition.

The Kern boys left Vermont soon after in search of new whitewater worlds to conquer and, not surprisingly, ended up in California. Back in the East, we heard rumors of their first-descents down hideously difficult California runs and occasionally recognized their faces in steep-creek videos.

Ironically, one of those videos was playing on the television at the Casa Loma the next morning while we grabbed a quick breakfast and evaluated our options for the day. Watching the video of boaters hurtling themselves off precipitous drops, I immediately formulated another guideline:

- Never paddle a river with a boater who stars in whitewater videos.

Unfortunately, Caron and Sara had already motored away —driving my rental car. For better or worse, I was now a member of the party.

Rok and Johnny were eager to boat the South Merced and the Kings —but the passes over the mountains through Yosemite leading to their put-ins were closed by a mudslide. Like always —Rok had a fallback option: the Clavey.

"We can do it as a two-day," Rok explained. "There's an eight-mile top run and a nine-mile bottom section before the river empties into the Toulemme. The river was running around 800 cfs yesterday which is a good level. When Johnny and I ran it three years ago, we had around 700 cfs and we only carried two or three times."

Hey—that didn't sound too bad.

"Fine," I said. "Let's get going."

The faded letters stenciled on the parapet read—No

bungee-jumping from bridge. One hundred feet below, the water of the Clavey tumbled downstream toward a series of cascades. A more appropriate posting might have warned—No waterfall jumping on the river.

It was already noon and my three companions swiftly packed their Eskimo Diablos. I struggled to jam a pair of bulky dry bags into the back of my Prijon Boxer —skinning my knuckles in the process.

I had attempted to pack minimally —my bulky sleeping bag, a pile top and bottom for sleeping, a few cans of food to contribute to our communal supper, two quarts of Diet Coke, a package of Redman chaw, and my camera. But once on the water, my boat still seemed surprisingly heavy and slow to respond.

Just around the first bend of the river, perhaps 100 yards from the bridge, we encountered our first horizon line of the day. After a quick scout from shore, Rok and John ran the rapid effortlessly down the right maneuvering through a series of narrow slots.

"This looks easy enough," I thought to myself and followed their lead...but for some reason my boat seemed to have a mind of its own and refused to follow the obvious course set by the others. I bounced over a rocky shelf on the left and slid down a second drop backwards before sheepishly joining the others in the bottom eddy.

Somewhat chastened, I leaned further forward in my boat, and followed the others out of the eddy toward the next drop less than one hundred yards beyond.

And so we charged down the unrelenting Clavey. The drops were typically short—seldom more than 20 or 30

yards in length—but almost always steep as the river cascaded over sheer ledges or abrupt slides. John or Rok would be in the lead and drift up to the edge, peel down a tongue, find a seam in the hole and then move left or right through a technical run-out.

The river was not continuous. After every drop, the river stilled to pools of emerald green. But the respites were brief and the pools never stretched more than 50 yards before ending in another horizon line.

I kept waiting to find my rhythm, to start feeling comfort-



**Andy Opler surfs into correct line while entering Clavey Rapid. Photo by C. Koll**

able on the river. But even after the first 20 or so drops—I was still scrambling through the rapids. I'd run plenty of drops as steep back in the East—but few with as much water. And never so many lined up back to back to back.

"This is hard," I gasped to John as I managed to pull myself out of the grip of a hole and into an eddy.

"It's different than the East," John observed. "When I first came out to California, I got worked pretty bad a bunch of times. There were times I walked off runs."

I looked up at the canyon walls rising sharply from both sides of the river and immediately decided I would simply have to paddle better. Walking out of the Clavey was not an option.

Later in the afternoon, we clumped together in an eddy at the top of a blind eight-foot ledge. Our boats bumped together while we waited for one intrepid soul to probe the drop.

"The holes at the bottom of these drops were the scariest things for me when I came to California," John said to me as we craned our necks, trying to eyeball the hydraulic. "Chuck and Willy would go first and I'd still be waiting at the top looking down at them for some direction and they'd be just windmilling frantically. I just hated that..."

I laughed at the image—appreciating John's efforts to help me feel at ease—and peeled out of the eddy boofing the hole cleanly from left to right. Up above, I could see John still searching for the move. I caught his eye and windmilled my paddle frantically.

John was still smiling when he landed in the eddy beside me.

We seemed to be making good time, quickly working down the river. There were two portages—one where a tree blocked the obvious route—and most of the drops could be scouted from our boats. Still, it was early evening by the time we passed under the narrow bridge that marked the end of the top Clavey. Rok forged ahead, hoping to reduce our mileage for the next day. I followed behind, weary after only 8.5 miles of whitewater, and was happy when Rok announced that perhaps we should find a place to camp.

But locating a suitable spot proved difficult. We'd run a drop, then scan the shoreline hoping to find a bench or flat spot close to the water level. Soon, the gorge was cloaked in shadow and only the top of the canyon caught the last rays of the setting sun. My knee hurt, my shoulder ached, and I felt chilled as the day cooled.

Finally, what appeared to be a shelf appeared 100 feet above the river on the left. We pulled out on a massive boulder, dragging our boats well above the water, and scaled up the steep grassy bank to find...more steep grassy bank. Rok and I, sweating from the climb, lay back on the incline and allowed the youngster John to further explore for a flat spot.

He returned 10 minutes later with scratched and dusty legs.

"I didn't even come close to the top," John reported, "and

I didn't find anything close to level."

After sliding on our butts back down to the river, we evaluated our options: squeeze back into our boats and continue downstream in hope of the uncertain possibility of finding a more likely campsite before light failed completely—or try to locate a flat spot on a boulder large enough to stretch out a sleeping bag.

Neither prospect appeared particularly attractive. But in the end, I think our decision was based on being too tired to stretch our sprayskirts back over a cockpit rim.

The boulder was a house-sized chunk of granite jutting out into the river in a series of terrace-like ledges. I located a three-foot wide ledge that sloped gently back into the face

***I looked up at the canyon walls rising sharply from both sides of the river and immediately decided I would simply have to paddle better. Walking out of the Clavey was not an option.***

of the rock so I wouldn't roll off the boulder into the rushing water of the river. The others located similar-sized niches around the rock.

After changing into dry pile, Johnny busied himself pre-

paring dinner while Andy, Rok and I unsuccessfully tried to find a comfortable seat.

Winking at Andy, I asked him loudly—

"Hey, did you see that pile of bear scat?"

Rok's head immediately popped up.

"Sure," Andy said. "Over on the shore."

"Scat...what's this scat?" Rok asked.

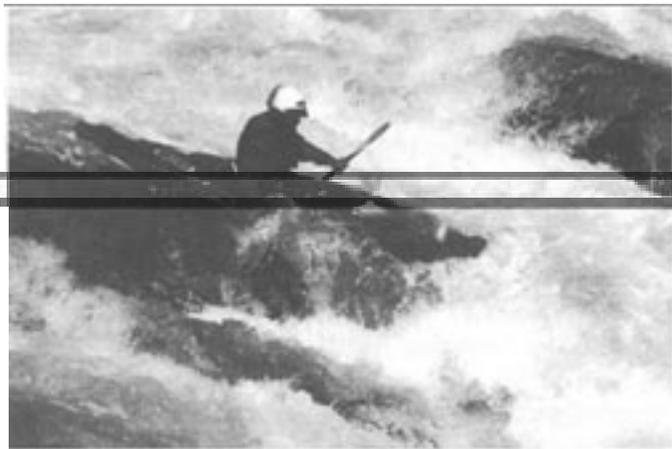
"You know...scat," I said. "Feces."

"No shit!" Rok said.

"Well, actually, yes shit. Bear scat."

Rok fell silent, but I could tell he was still pondering the prospect of encountering a rouge bear with nary a tree to climb within 50 yards. Finally, desperately trying to sound casual, Rok inquired:

"So...exactly where did you see this bear scat?"



***John Kern threads line between boulders in technical Clavey Rapid. Photo by C. Koll***

"Right over where we beached the boats."

"Yeh," Andy said. "It was a huge pile. And I saw little pieces of neoprene and a pair of noseplugs mixed into the shit."

Rok stared at us for a full 30 seconds, unable to release the image of the bear lurking out in the trees. Finally, disgusted at being had, he snapped:

"I think it is you who are shit!"

Here is the recipe for dinner on the Clavey: first dice a raw onion, cut a block of cheddar cheese into bite-sized chunks, open cans of refried beans and sliced black olives; then heap as much of the ingredients as you dare into the middle of a tortilla shell; roll and eat.

Bon appetit!

Of course, since I hadn't eaten since morning, I was ravenously hungry. And I'd like to report that the tortilla was the finest meal I ever tasted.

Nahhhh...

Even John, who I assume was accustomed to meager rations while exploring wilderness rivers, commented: "I guess it could use a little salsa."

And a little sour cream...some ground beef...lettuce...peppers, and hell, I really could use a few frozen Margerittas to wash it down. But instead—I settled for a desert of a few mangoes and a Snickers bar.

The moon was just starting to rise above the canyon rim when I awoke. The sky was so clear and deep that the bright stars seemed to lay upon it—like gems scattered on plush fabric.

I urgently needed to relieve myself but I was so stiff that unwrapping my body from my sleeping bag was a tortured effort. Once on my feet, I gingerly moved a half step at a time in the darkness until I reached the end of the ledge where I could urinate into the water. Swaying from stiffness and exhaustion, I feared I would misstep and tumble into the water.

My companions would find me the next day, floating facedown in some eddy...still holding my organ.

Fortunately, I was able to return to the warmth of my sleeping bag. But sleep would not come. I lay awake for a long hour staring at the brilliant sky.

Perhaps it was from exhaustion or the hard granite digging into my back or the refried beans—but it seemed



**Rok Sribar blasts out of a hole on the Clavey. Photo by C. Koll**

that I was hallucinating. The sky was filled with shooting stars raining down like spent fireworks. And then constellations—memorized as a youth—magically came to life as the stars that composed the mythic figures in the sky merged together to create glowing images that moved across the horizon.

I was simultaneously fascinated and a little afraid but I didn't want to go ~~back~~. And I realized that I was in a special place that I

would probably never visit again

I opened my eyes to see Rok standing on the ledge above me scrutinizing the rapid just downstream from our resting place.

"Look how much the river has come up," Rok said. "That rock is covered now. There must be 300 or 400 more cfs in the river."

"Great," I said. "Is that good news?"

We roused ourselves slowly, waiting for the sun to enter the canyon and dry our gear before dressing for the river. While we waited, John fixed breakfast—pouring cold water into foil packets of instant granola to create a hideous gruel that we squeezed directly from the package into our waiting mouths. It was delicious.

Nahhhh...

I settled for an apple, another candy bar, 800 milligrams of Ibuprofen and my last quart of Diet Coke.

It was difficult for me to believe, but below our campsite the drops were steeper and occurred at a greater frequency. At any given moment, I could look back upstream to see three cascades like a frothy staircase climbing up the canyon.

And with the added volume, the rapids featured more push and the holes appeared far more sticky than the previous day.

Fortunately, my boat felt significantly lighter with the absence of the last night's banquet.

At least that was my excuse for overpowering a boof move

over an eight-foot ledge. The nose of my boat rode up on the boulder guarding the right side of the drop allowing the tail to settle into U-shaped hydraulic at the base of the ledge.

Instantly, I was side-surfing—but not for long. First my boat front-ended. Then it back-ended. Finally, the nose caught a seam kicking me high enough on the foam pile to let me reach out for the green water. I pulled free to join an

**"Nice recovery," John offered and immediately peeled out leaving me to catch my breath. And I realized, getting worked in holes was not all that uncommon on California Class V runs.**

appreciative audience in the eddy below.

"Nice recovery," John offered and immediately peeled out leaving me to catch my breath. And, I realized, getting worked in holes was not all that uncommon on California Class V runs.

John's words were the last uttered for the next few hours.

The rush of the river was the only sound as our group moved downstream from eddy to eddy. John and Rok alternately assumed the lead—catching tiny eddies at the absolute lip of hideous precipices—then silently signaling back to the group without looking back or ceasing their study of the drop.

The lack of conversation was unnerving. Even on difficult Eastern rivers, I had never paddled with a group whose level of concentration on the river was so intense to make talk superfluous. But on the Clavey, I realized that idle chatter would only disrupt my companions' Zen-like focus on the river.

And at that moment, I experienced a sudden revelation: I was being granted a glimpse of what distinguished cutting-edge whitewater boating.

Of course, it wasn't too long before I was reminded when it comes to cutting-edge whitewater...I remained but a dull blade.

By mid afternoon we had completed six miles of the run, plunging over what seemed to be 30 or 40 challenging rapids, and I was already starting to tire—as much from the psychological overload as the physical exertion. John disappeared over a four-foot ledge, choosing the left of two narrow slots, and Rok followed by plunging through the right channel.

I vacillated before finally choosing Rok's line—but my hesitation prevented me from angling my boat back to the left to avoid a pinning rock in the middle of the slot. My nose pitched leaving me wedged in the slot with water pillowing over my back and head.

Fortunately, Rok and Andy were positioned just below and immediately jumped from their boats. Together they were able to hoist my nose free.

It was late afternoon and after eight hours on the river, I was exhausted. But it felt like we were near the end. The sheer walls of the canyon had opened up allowing the river to be bathed in sunlight. At every bend in the river, I looked downstream expectantly, hoping to catch sight of the junction with the Toulemme.

Instead, we encountered more of the fiercest rapids of the run. But after running dozens of Class IV and V drops, we felt

no obligation to further challenge ourselves and sniveled down sneak routes along the shore wherever possible and even portaged one long cascade that flushed inexorably into a series of brutal hydraulics. I shuddered to look at it.

It was our fourth carry of the day, Rok observed ruefully.

"When we ran this at lower water, I don't remember walking anything," Rok said. "The character of the entire river was different. We were able to pick our way down everything."

"I don't know about that," I said. "All I know is that this is hard...harder than anything I've ever seen in the East. The portaging is harder. The river is harder. And, hell, we aren't even done yet."

But then—we were. Just around the next bend was the Toulemme

"We'll paddle something easier tomorrow," Rok promised.

## Epilog

Considering the wonderful yet arduous two days spent on the Clavey, I felt relatively chipper the next morning. Oh sure, my shoulder still ached and my bum right knee caused me to limp like Grandpa McCoy—but all things considered, I felt pretty good for a 47 year old.

Still, I had learned my lesson: I needed to consult my orthopedic, schedule time at a health club, and visit the Fountain of Youth before tackling my next tough California river.

Rok was sympathetic and offered a solution.

"Cherry Creek is only seven miles long and I know it pretty well," Rok said. "It will be a lot easier than the Clavey. It's running at 2,500 cfs—which is a little high—but it should be OK."

Eight hours later, after I crawled the final yards of the portage around

Lumpson Falls, I was grateful to be off the river in one piece. The only way to describe Mushroom Rock and Lewis' Leap—the big hallmark rapids on Cherry Creek—is to take the upper Gauley's Iron Ring rapid, multiply it by four, and arrange it back to back to back to back with moves in between.

Andy was waiting for me at the bridge.

"How many times have you finished a run with Rok to hear him say, 'That was harder than I thought it was going to be.'" Andy asked.

I just shook my head and formulated one final guideline specifically designed to paddling in California:

- Never boat a river when I could be touring San Francisco with Rok's wife.



*None other than Chris Koll grimaces while driving through a series of drops in a Clavey River rapid. Photo by J. Kern*





Bryan running a drop on the Sessara River

The initial rendezvous was in Leuven (near Brussels). There I would meet my paddling buddies Filip, Ben, Koen, Bruno, and Monique. We set out in two VW vans for the Alps. I piled in with Filip and Ben. Filip had just bought his van the week before; a 1988. Unfortunately its top speed was 75, a snail's pace on the Autobahn. The other van left us in its dust. But who's in a hurry on vacation?

The boys cruised through Switzerland and finally made it into Italy about nine. We went over the Alpine Simplon Pass, which was beautiful beyond belief. There was still a meter of snow on the ground. The Alps had its heaviest snowfall in 50 years, which made for great river levels. Our first priority was to find an Italian pizzeria and cold Peroni beer. We found what we wanted in the quaint town of Allegna.

We rolled into a campground on the Sesia River at midnight to find everyone with tents pitched and crashed. Typical European camping with very close quarters.

Next morning, after espresso, we were ready to hit the Mastalone River, a tributary of the Sesia. The wonderful thing about this part of the world is camping in one spot and having a panoply of rivers within an hour's drive.

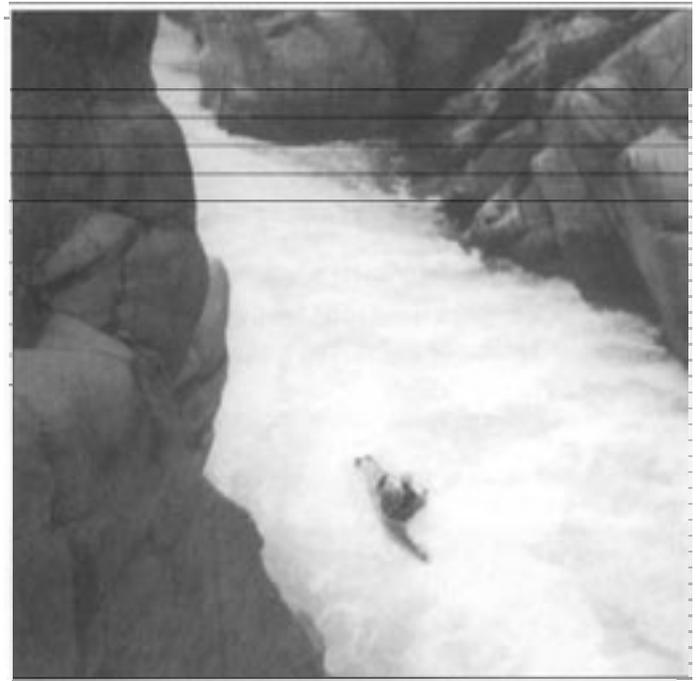
The Mastalone flows through a valley and gorge and offers great Class IV-VI, depending on which section you choose. Willie, one of my favorite characters, joined us at the campsite. This was to be his only day with us. Willie has been paddling for 10 years, but, as he freely admits, Willie is still at the "training level." At one of the first significant rapids, Bruno, our strongest paddler, came through backwards. He pulled into my eddy and I said, "Bruno, that was

a Willie Move." Sure enough, 10 seconds later, Willie came through the same drop backwards.

After a few enjoyable kilometers we came to our first Class V, a double drop peppered liberally with boulders. I didn't feel like testing fate, but after watching Bruno and Koen run in style, I gave it a second thought. Willie and Monique asked me if I was going to run and I said, "I don't know, I'll wait till I get back to my boat." Willie said, "No way for me."

Arriving at my boat, I had that overwhelming feeling that I could do it. Over the first ledge I sailed, then the whole world was swirling whiteness. I surfaced, picked my way through the boulder pile, and reached the bottom safely. Nothing but pure adrenaline, and all was right with the world.

Next, I saw Willy flip in the second drop and lose his paddle. Bruno rushed to the rescue. Willie blamed Bruno

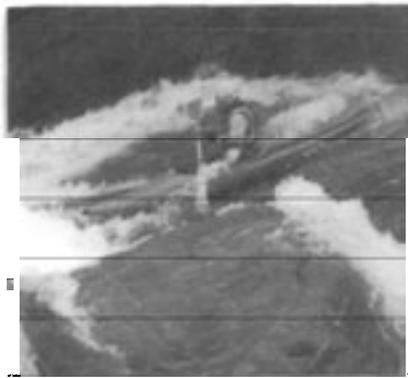


Bruno in "Little Canada" Sesia, River

for not being able to roll because he "bumped my boat." C'est la vie. The rest of the river was great. Fortunately there were not many more "Willy Moves."

We took off the Mastalone and headed to a section of the Sesia above our campground. The most significant rapid was a small gorge called Little Canada. It looked like pictures I've seen of the Grand Canyon, with huge monster waves. Here we go...wave, whiteness, upside down again! Koen, Bruno, and I cruised down to our campsite and collapsed. It has been a great day.

Due to the high water we were able to catch a rarely run Sesia tributary, the Sessara, the next day. Driving through tight Italian villages perched precariously on mountainsides,



we reached the put-in. Another pristine river in a gorge. This was whitewater heaven. Bruno, Koen, and I developed a scouting system. One of us would paddle ahead to the next horizon line, get out to scout, then either point the way or tell the others to scout. We had a couple of portages, over a Class VI and a dam.

The menu du jour next day was the upper Sesia. Big water. I'm not used to being backendered in my Freefall! After some big water survival, we went to look at another tributary, the Sorba. We paddled this last year and I thought it the best run of my life. This year it looked like a different creature because of the extra water. Scariieee! We spent the rest of the day hiking its headwaters, checking out the stone chalets high in the mountains.

We reluctantly packed and headed to our next base camp the next morning. On the way we paddled the Strona. There were numerous 2,000-year-old Roman arch bridges spanning this stream; we used them for access. We canyoned the lower Class VI section with some good climbing and swimming. We headed to my favorite camp that afternoon on the Lago (lake) Maggiore. This is in the "great lakes" section of Italy near the Swiss border. Our camp was on a secluded beach. Since ice is an anomaly in Europe, we threw our beer and liquor in a gear bag and let it sit in the frigid lake.

The next morning we were down to four paddlers.

Above: Bruno running a drop on the Ribo, Switzerland  
Below: Monique on the San Bernadino River



Praying at the Put-in at a Madonna alter, Italy

Fatigue and injuries had claimed casualties. We did the Cannobino gorge in the morning. It has one Class V with a Class X portage. You have to jump off a cliff into the river. A big river wide hole that I call "Topo Eater" ate Bruno and Koen. I walked after watching their thrashings.

We wanted a full day, so we loaded up and drove to the San Bernadino Gorge. This was a cakewalk last year and I expected a relaxing evening. We put-on about 5:30 and the action started immediately. The river was confined, big and pushy. Bruno's turn to scout. He signaled me to run river left. I slid down a chute into a huge hole, then surfaced, safely, in an eddy in the bottom. What a rush! I looked up to see the gang waiting for a signal. All I could say is "Ok, I guess."

Koen came through in his Topo, but was eaten by the hole. He swam out with half a paddle. Another Topo eating hole. Kudos to Koen for having the foresight to have a breakdown paddle. I've got to buy one of those someday!

We arrived at camp at 11, exhausted. Monique graciously cooked dinner, even though she had done the same paddling. What a sweetheart!

On our last day we cruised across the border into Switzerland. We intended to run the Isorno, but the put-in road was blocked, so we went to a tributary, the Ribo. It was another great run and another country to add to my paddling resume.

C'est la vie. All wonderful things come to an end. We were packing up and heading back to Belgium, the flatlands, and

worrying about a war in a far off tragic land. This week gave me time to reflect upon the priorities in life. Being a father and husband, I've grown much more conservative in my paddling. That week in paradise helped me sift the important from the "not so important."

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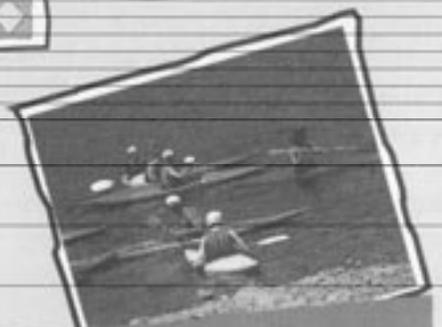
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# Coach, Can I Skip Practice?

## *The North Fork is Running!*

by Scott Stough

The two "W" sports seem to go together: whitewater and wrestling. By "wrestling" I don't mean the WWF extravaganzas on TV. I'm talking about wrestling, ho! to muscle combat waged on a 40 by 40 foot piece of foam. Ask yourself how many of your paddling friends were high school or college wrestlers? I'll bet you know a few.

Probably the most renowned paddling wrestler (or wrestling paddler) I ever met was the late Rich Weis. Rich was a U.S. Whitewater Slalom team member and a two-time New Mexico wrestling state champion. Another wrestler turned boater is Scott Collins, who was a Pennsylvania high school state champion and an NCAA national champion for West Virginia University. Other well-known boater-wrestlers include Jamie McEwan, who competed in whitewater events in two Olympics, and his brother Tom, a noted expeditionary boater and whitewater instructor. Former U.S. Slalom team member Jed Prentice also mixed wrestling and whitewater in a cross training regimen.

Then there is the inimitable Chris Koll, the Emeritus Editor of American *Whitewater* and the principal organizer of AW's Black and Moose festivals. Chris wrestled for Penn State during the early seventies, before he found his true destiny as a Class V boater. Those of you familiar with his antics probably thought that Chris whacked too many rocks with his head while upside down in his kayak. Actually, he just took too many cross faces on the mat.



## Coach, Can I Skip Practice?

I am currently the wrestling coach at Northern Garrett High School in western Maryland. I teach kids from the town of Friendsville, the home of the famous Upper Youghiogheny. A lot of my students and wrestlers have asked about kayaking since 1986, when I started teaching. These included the usual questions: How do you roll back up? Where do you put your feet?

But not many of the local kids ever get around to trying whitewater. This is unfortunate, since they live in the middle of one of the premiere whitewater regions in the east. The Big Sandy, Blackwater, North Fork Potomac, Stoney, and Savage are all less than an hour away. But most Garrett County kids are

focused on fishing, hunting, and ATVs. Their parents tell them that running whitewater is a dangerous pursuit best left to crazy out-of-towners. One year I took a group of my students rafting as a field trip. The next year the local board of education would not let us go, saying that experiencing whitewater was not a worthwhile educational experience. Old Appalachian prejudices die hard.

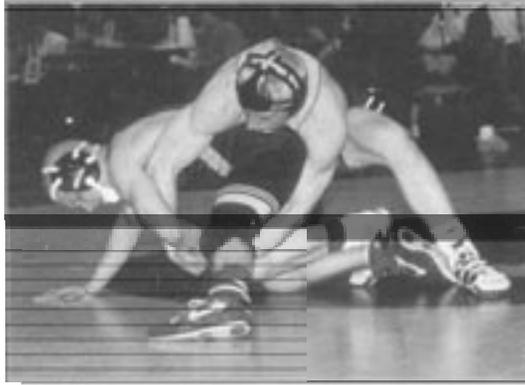
But one of my wrestlers, Jesse Shimrock, didn't just ask the usual questions. A blond, tow headed bundle of energy, Jesse was persistent in his interest in whitewater. Maybe it was his destiny. His parents recall that less than a month before his birth they had not settled on a name. One evening, a neighbor stopped by to visit with her boyfriend. The neighbor introduced her friend as Jesse... a name, which immediately caught the expectant parents' fancy. Just recently the Shamrocks discovered that the Jesse that had visited their house that evening long ago was in fact the famous whitewater innovator, Jesse Whittemore.

On the other hand, whitewater may have been in the boy's blood. His mother used to raft the Lower Yough when she was in college... long before commercial rafting came to Ohio. His father, an art teacher, was a volunteer coach who thought running whitewater would be a good way to keep his rambunctious son busy and out of mischief during the summer. And I had an old boat I was willing to sell. I was cautiously excited. Finally a local kid was going to give kayaking a try.

I fixed Jesse up with an old stray skirt and paddle. He found an old helmet and 70s style PFD. His first moving water experience was on the Class I section of the Youghiogheny between Friendsville and Yough Lake. After his inevitable first swim, Jesse decided to sign up for a class at Riversport, the paddling

school located in nearby Confluence, Pennsylvania. Bob and Karen Ruppel, who, coincidentally, were old friends of Jesse's parents, own Riversport. In fact, Jesse's mom, a schoolteacher, once had the Ruppels' eldest daughter, Kara, as a student. Kara later became a member of the U.S. Whitewater Slalom team.

After his kayaking clinic at Riversport, Jesse spent as much time on the river as he could. Soon he was a solid Class III kayaker. His wrestling was progressing nicely as well.



I thought he had the potential to become a state champion and hoped that his cross training via whitewater would help him take his wrestling to the next

level. After all, both wrestlers and kayakers need a lot of hip control and upper body

strength. Intense paddling can provide a good cardiovascular workout. And paddling is a lot more fun than running or lifting weights. Finally, both kayakers and wrestlers need to develop grit ... the ability to surmount difficult and uncomfortable situations.

As a freshman, Jesse had wrestled as a 103 pounder. He had a 27-10 record that year and placed second in the regional tournament. Unfortunately, he lost his first match at the state tournament. During his sophomore year a shoulder injury and illness had ended his season before the bicounty tournament. But Jesse remained a fierce and determined competitor. Once he did vigorous calisthenics in the back of his father's van the whole way to a match, just so he could make weight. He finished that year with a 19-3 record as a 112 pounder. It was during the spring of his sophomore year that Jesse started to paddle in earnest.

During that summer he had a growth spurt and when he returned to training as a junior he was 135 pounds. It was a frustrating year for Jesse. He repeatedly faced a formidable opponent in Eric Rexrode, who wrestled for our local archrival, Southern Garrett. Rexrode had placed third in the state the preceding season and he beat Jesse three times during the regular season, pinning him twice.

Then, in the regional semifinals, Jesse faced Rexrode again. This time Jesse beat him and went on to place second in the tournament. But he wasn't finished with Rexrode yet. Jesse trounced him again a week later in the state tournament, thereby advancing to the state finals where he finished second. His overall junior year record was 27-9.

Jesse turned sixteen and decided to take a summer job at Riversport: doing maintenance, cooking, and driving shuttle. Of course

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## Coach, Can I Skip Practice?

he found lots of time to paddle that summer, too. By the beginning of his senior year Jesse was following me down the Upper Yough, Big Sandy, and the Upper Gauley. Then, on a trip to Canada, he ran all Seven Sisters of the Rouge. I couldn't believe it; a local kid had become a Class V boater.

That fall Jesse was mentally and physically prepared for some serious wrestling. Another growth spurt left him in the 140 pound class. He was determined to make it through the season undefeated and become the Maryland State Champion. By this time Jesse had befriended his old rival, Eric Rexrode, and they sometimes trained together.

Jesse had always been one to train hard. In practice he always looked for the toughest guy to wrestle. More often than not that guy was Daymond Schmuck, one of our volunteer assistant coaches. For three years Coach Schmuck thwarted Jesse's best efforts. Finally, during his senior year, Jesse managed to turn the tables.

As a senior, Jesse won three regular season tournaments. At Berkeley Springs, West Virginia he defeated a two-time Virginia State champion and in the finals he beat a four-time West Virginia State champion. He also won the prestigious Thomas Chevrolet Tournament in Bedford, Pennsylvania, a competition including 24 high school teams.

After his final match at that tournament Jesse bounded off the mat with a triumphant grin, oblivious to the fact that the side of his face was drenched with blood. He had been wrestling throughout the season with a chronic cauliflower ear... finally all hell had broken loose. His ear was an ugly mess. But Jesse could have cared less. After all, he had won the match. His mother was, understandably, a bit more concerned, convinced that her son would surely be permanently disfigured. Fortunately, his ear healed quickly, so that he was actually able to find a date for the prom.

Jesse breezed through the Bicounty and Regional Tournaments, finally realizing one of his goals by winning the State Tournament. He finished the year 37-0, the first Garrett County wrestler to complete a season without a loss. Talled up, his high school career was 110 wins to 22 losses, making him the winningest wrestler in the history of our school. He was the Maryland State Wrestling

Associations number one ranked wrestler.

He excelled off the mat as well. In fact, Jesse was named a Student Athlete of the Month and was the co-captain of the Maryland State Wrestling Association's All Academic Team. During his senior year Jesse attended classes at the local community college... much to the relief of our school's assistant principal, who had spent three harrowing years dealing with his shenanigans.

Jesse's enthusiasm inevitably spilled over to the team. He led by example. They went undefeated in the regular season with a 14-0 record. At the State Tournament our team battled to the final match for the championship. Sadly, in that pivotal match our 103 pounder, Blake Huber, lost by decision to awrestler

from Baltimore. But Blake was only a sophomore, giving him two more years to redeem himself. And I am convinced he will, since, like Jesse, he has started to "crosstrain" in a kayak. Blake has already tackled the Lower Yough, the Cheat and the North Branch of the Potomac. Last week I led Blake down the Upper Youth for the first time. He did fine.

And Blake is not the only local kid to catch the whitewater bug from Jesse. Another of my young wrestlers, junior Mark Wolf, recently started to work on his roll. Unfortunately, his boating career is temporarily on hold... he is currently recovering from a rattlesnake bite! Who said life in the country is boring?

This summer Jesse is once again working on the river, teaching kayaking, and guiding rafts. As you might expect for a wrestler, he is well on his way to being an accomplished rodeo and daredevil hair boater. Nowadays I sit back and marvel while the kid who used to follow me down rivers like a baby duck paddles his Mr. Clean back into the violent hole at the base of

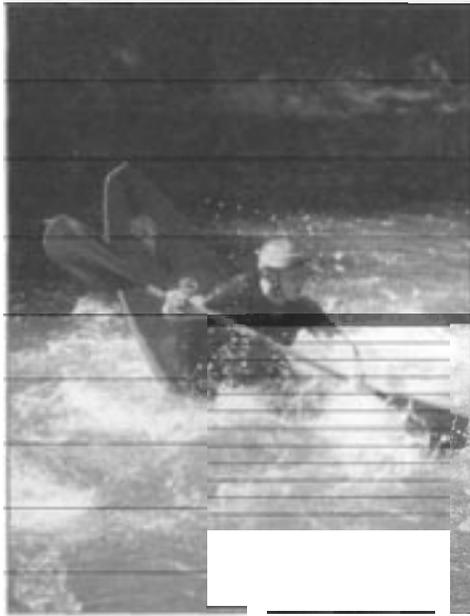
National Fall, just to play. When did he get so good?

Of course rivers have a way of teaching humility to even the most confident and competent of boaters. Not so long ago Jesse got just such a lesson. We were paddling the Class IV North Branch of the Potomac at a relatively low level when we came upon a horizon line that looked a bit suspicious to me. "No problem, Coach," Jesse exclaimed cockily as he sailed over the drop. I must admit I kind of enjoyed watching the hydraulic cartwheel him a half dozen times. Hey, swimming is a good form of cross-training, too!

This fall Jesse will put his boat away and return to wrestling at Embry Riddle University in Prescott, Arizona on an athletic scholarship. His ultimate goal is to be a commercial airline pilot. He already flies solo. Would I fly with him? Damned straight! After all, he paddled the Class V+ North Fork of the Blackwater. Anyone who could manage that ought to be able to fly a plane.

In retrospect, I must admit that North Fork episode did cause me to lose a little more hair. One stormy Sunday, in the middle of his senior wrestling season, Jesse asked to borrow my Corsica. I was happy to oblige... it never occurred to me to ask why. The next day at practice he cheerfully informed me he had paddled it down the North Fork, a low volume super steep creek that has cracked more than a few boats, paddles, legs, and heads. It was not the kind of news a coach wants to hear from his star wrestler in the middle of the season. Jesse thought my concern was kind of funny. But I made him swear off hair boating until the season was over. And I wondered exactly what kind of whitewater Frankenstein I had helped create!

But now, when I see him getting ready to leave for college, a bright, personable and self assured young man, I think he turned out just fine.





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# High Water, Strainers Cause Kayak and Rafting Fatalities

## ACCIDENT REPORTS: First Half 1999

by Charlie Walbridge

*The past five years have seen increases in the number of moving water accidents reported to American Whitewater, and the first part of the 1999 season continues this trend. We have received accounts of 12 kayak, 3 canoe, and 14 rafting fatalities. In addition, there were 3 deaths in nontraditional river craft: a tuber, a pedal boat user, and a river boarder. There were 3 other incidents of some interest to paddlers: a fatality on a raft ride at an amusement park and two hikers who drowned in well-known whitewater rivers. Most of these reports were sent to AW via e-mail, and many originated as postings to rec.boats.paddle. I'd like to thank Kevin Sulewski, Kathy Strelsky, Ada Parkinson, Slim Ray, and the board and staff of American Whitewater for forwarding this material. I'd also like to recognize those who wrote these accounts so that the paddling community could learn from them.*

### Kayak Accidents

February is not a popular month for kayaking, especially in Canada, because of cold temperatures and ice. But on the 7<sup>th</sup> of that month Lynn Clark, 36, an award-winning videographer, was filming two other kayakers on the Ottawa River near Beachburg, Ontario when she was swept against an overhanging ice shelf. Her boat flipped and she was pulled under the ice. Her companions, who did not see the flip, came upon her kayak pressed against the shelf. They summoned help from nearby residents, who attempted to cut through the ice with axes, picks, and even a chain saw! Her body was found 40 minutes later and resuscitation efforts were not successful. Ice is a constant hazard for winter boaters. It is possible that Ms. Clark's filming activity may have distracted her so she did not appreciate its danger until it was too late.

On February 28<sup>th</sup> Dr. Tom Bell, 52, and a friend were exploring

the Raging River, a small, Class III-IV creek east of Redmond, Washington, at high water. Jock Bradley, president of the Washington Canoe Club, reported that the party came around a blind bend and was confronted with an unavoidable strainer below a ledge. Bell was stuffed under the strainer and drowned. His friend was trapped momentarily, lost his boat, and broke free only after a desperate struggle. Coughing blood and water, he began a four-mile hike out to notify authorities. He was hospitalized for water inhalation and hypothermia. Rescuers recovered the body the next day.

In a similar incident, a kayaker died running the Bull Run River, a Class IV run near Portland, Oregon, on March 1. Jacob Selander reported on rec.boats.paddle that the victim, David Asman, 18, was playing a hole about 100 yards upstream of a large log. He washed into the tree broadside, and was pushed underneath it. His companion climbed out on the strainer, but could not release the boat. Afterwards, he paddled a mile downstream to Dodge Park where he asked visitors to call 911. He then found park workers with a chain saw and convinced them to drive him back to the accident site. There he ferried the saw across the river, rigged a safety harness for himself, and cut the tree loose. The kayak, possibly with Asman inside, popped to the surface and floated downstream where it was later recovered. Despite a lengthy search by boat and helicopter the body was not located that day.

In the third strainer-related whitewater death in the Northwest this season, Scott Richards was trapped partway down a steep rapid in western Washington's Icicle Creek. Richards, a kayaker who had recently moved to Washington State from Pennsylvania, was part of a large group of experienced local paddlers putting in at the Bridge Creek Drop on Friday, April 16<sup>th</sup>. The river level was low. Some of the group elected to run the lower part of this Class V drop while the others got onto the river below it. Reports from Bob Pfannenstiel and Brian Behle describe the accident as follows: The upper run, which Richards took, required a ferry above a strainer. One of the group, paddling a high-volume creek boat, missed the move. His bow was shoved partway under a huge tree trunk, but members of his group were able to retrieve him without much difficulty. Richards, who was paddling a playboat, also missed his ferry. He hit the same tree and was shoved completely underneath it. The party responded, probing the strainer and reaching under the log. Eventually they actually reached into Richards' kayak, but it was empty. The Sheriff was called, but his team did not arrive on the scene until dusk. The next day swiftwater rescue teams arrived with a winch. Using it, they were able to rearrange the strainer and release the body.

On the Friday before the weekend of the Stony Creek Rendezvous a powerful line of thunderstorms slammed into Western Pennsylvania, raising area rivers to very high levels. That Saturday, April 17<sup>th</sup>, a large group put-in on the Upper Stony, a Class III-IV run east of Johnstown, PA. Below the put-in the river turns away from the road, picks up speed, and heads into what guidebooks describe as a tough rapid with lots of strainers at the bottom. Extensive postings to rec.boats.paddle by people on the scene reported the following. That day the rapids became extremely pushy below the put-in; there were few eddies. One kayaker, Ben Stone, 50, flipped and swam after several

roll attempts. He washed into a strainer where he was held momentarily, then released. At this point Ben was swimming weakly and he may have inhaled water. Three kayaks and a raft compromised Ben's group, but there were other parties ahead and behind them. The two other kayakers in Ben's group attempted a boat rescue, but they were forced to pull back above a big drop. They last saw Ben floating downstream with the raft closing in. As the water got more intense, the raft pulled back also.

By now everyone was quite spread out and the group lost track of Stone. The kayakers thought the rafters had him and the rafters believed that he'd swum to shore. Unfortunately, he was washed instead 3.5 miles, through the remainder of the run. His body was found stuck on a midstream bush a half mile below the takeout. Kayakers on the scene ferried out into the current and attached a line, allowing the rescue squad to swing him to shore.

Ben Stone was not the only person to get more than he bargained for on the Upper Stony that day! Many loose boats were reported floating downriver and dozens of people walked out. One posting described how a strong party from Pittsburgh, including a boater who regularly runs Big Splat, got trashed and ended up on foot. Local rescue squads were mobilized, helicopters were called in, and several paddlers ended up in emergency rooms with various injuries. Area officials now have real concerns about working with local boaters to promote paddling these rivers. The moral of the story: festivals are big fun, but don't let the excitement they generate influence your judgement. Just because crowds of people are attempting a run doesn't mean it's right for you! Remember that high water is best enjoyed by those who know a river well enough to anticipate the danger spots. If you are unfamiliar with a run, either wait until you've had a few trips at moderate flows or go with a responsible person who has. High water rivers are terrible places to swim, and rescues are often truly challenging. If your roll is not reliable, wait for the water to drop to more manageable levels.

In an incident that hit American Whitewater board members hard, long-time river activist Walt Shipley met death on Dinkey Creek, a Class IV+ run in Southern California, on May 7<sup>th</sup>. Paul Martzen, who was on the trip, reported that Shipley, 43, was running last in a group of four. Flows were estimated at 500-600 cfs, so the

major rapids were somewhat pushy. Nonetheless, the group was having a great run as they approached the ledges above Cherry Bomb Falls. It was here that Walt dropped into a hole, where he was back-endered, surfed, and cartwheeled. He bailed out, recirculated in the hole several times, then dropped into an even worse hole below. Chuck Estes attempted a bow rescue, but by this time Shipley was unresponsive. Estes then made a tricky landing and got out of his boat on river left. He grabbed his throw bag and hit Shipley with a perfect throw. Shipley was unconscious and did not respond. Then Bill Russell landed and threw Estes a rope. This allowed Estes to enter the river and, in a difficult and daring maneuver, to grab Shipley just above Class V+ Cherry Bomb Falls. The group administered CPR without success, then notified authorities.

□ The East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon near Yellow Pine, Idaho is one of the toughest, most relentless pieces of Class V+ whitewater in the country. On Monday, May 31 Bert Ole Funk, 29, was attempting a highwater run with six friends. An article written for the McCall Star-News by Roger Phillips described the following chain of events: Funk apparently flipped while trying to enter an eddy above Flight Simulator. He rolled up, missed a second eddy, and drifted backwards into a large hole. He washed out quickly, but missed several roll attempts, and bailed out. He swam the rest of this long rapid, getting battered by many large holes. As the group gave chase, several people on shore reached him with accurately-placed throw ropes. The group believes that Funk was still conscious, but he could not grab hold of a rope. He was pulled into shore by another party two miles downstream. They tried CPR, but by then it was too late. Rescuers found deep gouges on Funk's helmet and they believe a blow to the head may have stunned him and left him helpless.

On June 1, Wil Haygood, a well-known Southern boater who had relocated to Salt Lake City, was killed on California's Lower Tuolumne River. (This accident did not occur on the Cherry Creek section as was first reported.) The "T" was running high at 8,000 cfs. This is big water, but not excessive for a strong party. Haygood missed his line at Clavey Falls, the only Class V drop on the river, and pinned frightfully against a narrow "flake" of rock. I've had reports of several similar pins in Clavey Falls over the years. After 15 minutes his PFD, skirt; and the pillars from his boat started washing out. His body remained hidden. After a thorough search the group paddled out and notified authorities. Haygood's body was recovered the next day, over two miles downstream.

From British Columbia comes a report from Ernst Bergmann that Mark Oddy, a long-time river runner and instructor from Jasper, died on the McHale River after becoming trapped in a large hole. His boat and PFD were recovered during a subsequent search, but his body had not surfaced days later. No further details on the river or the accident are available. Anyone with more information is urged to contact AW.

On June 19<sup>th</sup> a group of 8 strong paddlers met in Downieville, CA, for a run down the North Fork of the Yuba. According to a report from John Lester, a member of the group, the first half of this challenging Class IV run passed without difficulty. But John Stoffle, a member of the group, was flipping a lot and missing his first roll attempts. He told the others he was feeling tired and having a bad day. After lunch Stoffle flipped in a long Class III stretch. He did not bail out or even struggle. The group, working together, pushed Stoffle and his boat into an eddy with some difficulty. They pulled him

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onto shore and began CPR. There was evidence of severe head trauma, leading everyone to suspect that he hit his head and was knocked out cold, despite his helmet. Others in the group climbed to a nearby road, flagged down a motorcyclist with a cell phone, and notified authorities. Although rescue personnel arrived with remarkable speed, by the time they reached Stoffle, he was gone.

This was the second incident this year involving a suspected head injury. This raises an important point. Many of the helmets being used on the river today don't offer paddlers enough protection, but there are few improved models available. Safety, not fashion, needs to be the main focus in helmet design and selection. We need to encourage manufacturers to develop models that offer superior coverage and shock absorption and then use them!

The Arkansas River below Canon City, CO is downstream of that river's well-known whitewater. The river, running at a high 3,190 cfs on June 23, contains a few mild rapids. During the afternoon two Canon City teenagers, a brother and sister, were paddling together in kayaks. A mile downstream from the Reynolds Street Bridge the pair flipped in a series of standing waves. The brother swam to shore without difficulty. His sister, Mary Ann Smith, 16, was last seen floating downstream in her life vest. Her PFD and boat were recovered later by search parties, but her body did not turn up until three days later.

Michigan is not well known for whitewater, but low head dams are a constant source of problems in the Midwest. On July 9 Joe Miranda, 30, was kayaking on the Clinton River near Rochester Hills with a friend. They had paddled here often and knew the river well. Water was high following rains. An article in the Detroit Free Press said that the pair arrived at the low dam near the Yates Cider Mill and found, to their surprise, that there was plenty of water to run it. The two ran the dam successfully, then Miranda portaged back and made a second run to recover a dropped cooler. He was trapped by the hydraulic. His friend attempted rescue, but was sucked into the backwash himself. He was rescued by a man on shore with a rope. Mr. Miranda's body was recovered two days later by emergency responders.

■ The growing number of kayak accidents deserves some comment. The total count of paddlesports' deaths (canoeing, kayaking, and rafting) reported to the Coast Guard (around 120) has not increased since the mid-seventies despite a huge expansion in the participation base. But the burgeoning popularity of kayaking in the last decade, combined with a decline in canoeing activity during this same time, has undoubtedly caused a shift in the types of boats involved in fatalities. In 1985 Coast Guard listed 75 canoe and 8 kayak fatalities, a typical figure for the decade. Recently AW safety analyst Jennifer Plyler, who is currently examining five years of USCG



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accident reports, found that in 1997 there were 53 canoe and 28 kayaking deaths. Since kayaks are the boat of choice for our membership, this may help to explain the increased number of kayaking mishaps reported to us.

The above total contains a number of reports received by AW but not by the Coast Guard, including some high-profile, widely described incidents like the death of rodeo star Chuck Kern. U.S. Coast Guard statistics clearly have significant gaps, so that the increased effectiveness of AW's reporting network has also increased the numbers. Ms. Plyler has turned our material over to the Coast Guard statistician so he can find out why accounts of these deaths were not sent to them by State Boating Law Administrators as required by law.

## Canoeing Accidents

Only three canoeing accidents were reported to American Whitewater this season. On December 28<sup>th</sup> of last year, two men capsized their canoe while running a flood control dam on Louisiana's Pearl River. The two men "hit a whirlpool," probably a hydraulic, according to news reports. One man was able to escape and swim to shore; the other did not. He was presumably caught in the dam backwash.

On April 26<sup>th</sup> a young couple, engaged to be married, launched a tandem canoe on the Buffalo National River at Ponca, AR. A report forwarded by Jim Burton reported moderate water levels on this Class I-II stream. Approximately 1.5 miles downstream their canoe collided with a "root ball" attached to a downed tree. The man washed out of the strainer, but the woman was pinned head-down underneath the canoe. The man made several rescue attempts before seeking help. NPS rangers and campers made the recovery a short time later. Resuscitation attempts followed, and she was transported to a hospital where she was pronounced dead the following morning. The report noted that the left side of the river was open and this channel was not hard to reach.

On May 21, fishermen in a jet boat were in Hell's Canyon of the Snake River when they noticed aswamped canoe, a paddle, and other debris in the river. When no other canoes appeared, the group became concerned and set out after the gear. They found the body of a young Canadian man floating face down in his PFD. He had apparently been travelling alone down this Class III-IV river with no cold water gear. He probably died of hypothermia. A flatwater canoe with no flotation and a mountain bike tied inside was also recovered.

These last accidents were all one-boat trips. It's possible that an accompanying boat could have made some rescues and saved lives.

## Rafting Accidents

On April 24<sup>th</sup> a guide training fatality, the first that I've encountered, occurred at Two Pair rapid on California's North Fork of the Yuba. A report from Matt Buynoski summarized the incident as follows: Boats entering this Class IV drop must choose between a right and a left chute part-way down. Most people go right, but the last raft in the group hit the head of the rocky island that splits the current and was pushed left. They hit a rooster-tail rock at the base of the drop and capsized, spilling all seven occupants into the river. The other boats in the party quickly mobilized to pick up swimmers and collect the overturned raft. A head count revealed that one person, a woman, was missing. The group began an intense search, which included dragging the run-out with a snag line. The Downieville Fire Department arrived and set up a telfer lower using a cataraft and a 300-foot high line. At the same time a helicopter searched the canyon downstream. A PFD was found, but the body itself was not located until early the next afternoon. She was pinned on river left, wrapped around two small rocks in four feet of water. This probably happened soon after the flip.

On May 1 a group of six friends, including a member of a local rescue team, attempted Alberton Gorge on Montana's Clark Fork in a 16-foot raft. AW's Paul Sihler, in a letter accompanying the newspaper article from "The Missoulan" that this narrative is based

on, said that the water level was 10,000 cfs at St. Regis, high but reasonable. He also stated that the water was extremely cold. The raft hit a breaking wave at the top of Class IV "Fang" rapid, flipping instantly. Everyone swam to shore except Sharon Goyette, 53. The group retrieved her from the river some distance downstream and began CPR, but they were not able to save her.

On May 26 William Tichnor drowned after his raft flipped in Skull Rapid, the biggest drop in Utah's Westwater Canyon. The water level was 19,000 cfs, which is high. An article on recent river deaths in the Salt Lake City Tribune reported that the boat apparently broached and overturned in the "Room of Doom," a horrendous eddy/whirlpool part-way down the drop on river right. Tichnor, despite his life vest, was pulled deep under water and did not resurface for several minutes. Another raft party, which included a nurse and an EMT, attempted CPR without success. They also rescued the other three members of the crew.

There's a section of the Neenana River near the gateway to Denali National Park in Alaska that contains Class II-III family-class whitewater often rafted by tour groups. But on May 29<sup>th</sup> the river was unusually low, 3,000 cfs. At these levels a bad pour-over appears just upstream of the confluence with the Yanert River. These low flows are rare during the rafting season, which may explain why an 18 foot oar-rig boat carrying senior citizens from Georgia unwittingly dropped into the hole. The boat surfed upright for about 20 minutes, during which time several people were pitched into the water. Eloise Hubbard and Doris North, both 75, drowned, despite wearing life vests and wet suits. Mrs. Hubbard's husband tried to hold onto his wife after she fell out, but could not. The air temperature at the site was 38 degrees, and the water was icy cold. Although the AP dispatch is not clear, the victims may have been recirculated and could have been caught under the boat for a time. The other boats on the trip missed the hole and recovered the swimmers downstream. Rangers were called and many of the guests were evacuated by helicopter.

There were two similar incidents in Colorado. On June 11 Donna Graham, 64, drowned after her commercial raft flipped in the Mishawaka Section of the Poudre River. AW's Sam McLamb reported that Ms Graham swam about 112 mile. She had an extensive cardiac history and collapsed after being pulled back into the raft. On June 26<sup>th</sup> a paddle raft flipped in Three Rocks Rapid on the Royal Gorge of the Arkansas River, spilling all seven paddlers into the river. The river was running at a high 3,500 cfs. The victim, a 53 year old man, was unable to reach shore. Guides and rangers pulled him in and attempted CPR, but were unable to revive him. We have hard rumors of other rafting fatalities on the Arkansas, but we have no specific details at present.

To the north, in Washington State, William Gallagher, 53, drowned after his raft flipped on the Wenatchee River at Dunkard's drop. The water level was 13,500 cfs; quite high. Gallagher's life vest was torn from his body, and he was lifeless when pulled to shore by kayakers.

The above incidents point out the real dangers of swimming big water, especially for older people. Life jackets alone may not prevent drowning and cold is simply harder to deal with as you age. Poor physical shape, especially cardiac fitness, is often blamed. But I also wonder if older people's survival reflexes change, perhaps making them more susceptible to laryngospasms. These may occur when cold water hits the larynx, causing it to close tightly and block the passage of air to the lungs. This mechanism causes the choking and gasping often experienced during river swims, and in extreme cases "dry drowning" results.

But not all rafting fatalities were the result of swims. On May 8<sup>th</sup> Lawrence Jobst, 34, was rafting with five friends when his raft got misaligned above "The Nozzle" in Washington's Green River Gorge. Brian Platt, in a posting to rec.boats.paddle, said that the raft ran the Little Nozzle by accident. Jobst fell into the river feet first and went down deep. He was badly pinned in an underwater boulder sieve. Despite the combined efforts of dozens of experienced people he was beyond help. Rescue teams were able to recover the body two days

later.

A dam on the Big Hole River in Montana proved fatal to some unway rafters over Memorial Day Weekend. An Associated Press dispatch forwarded by Slim Ray reported that the river was quite high, swollen by snowmelt and recent rains. After the raft capsized in the hydraulic, two men were able to swim to shore. Their companions, Sandra Townsend, 48, and Roxie Oakes, 22, drowned. Survivors said that fast currents prevented the party from taking out upstream of the drop.

In another incident on the Big Hole River, Cora Rader, 63, drowned May 30<sup>th</sup> while participating in a memorial service to scatter her son's ashes. The raft they were travelling in hit the support pillar of the Jerry Creek Bridge near Wise River, Montana and flipped. Mrs. Rader was carried under water where her life vest became tangled on a submerged log. Family members watching from shore called for help and six other people were quickly pulled from the river by rescue personnel. Mrs. Rader's body was recovered a few hours later.

AW's Paul Delaney sent a brief account of a July 4<sup>th</sup> death on the "day stretch" of the Salmon River near Salmon, Idaho. Jason Armstrong, 22, was rafting with friends when their boat hit a strainer and pinned. The others washed free, but Armstrong was caught and held under water. It took rescuers nearly an hour to free him. Local residents said that the tree had recently entered the river and that it was very hard to spot from upstream.

■ Lastly, on June 13, Dusty Lane, a gifted trackathlete in his early 20s, drowned while rafting the Spokane River in Washington State. Mick French reported to rec.boats.paddle that this large Class II-III river was running high at 16,700 cfs. The water was very cold. Lane, who had been tubing, climbed into the raft because he was cold despite wearing a wetsuit. The three people in the raft had only one PFD between them and alcohol may have been involved. When the boat flipped the others made it to shore. Lane was last seen floating downstream at Bowl and Pitcher Rapid. Inexperience, inadequate equipment and lack of backup may have contributed to the tragedy.

## Miscellaneous Accidents

There were a number of accidents involving unusual river craft. On March 22 Valaria Cartwright, 28, drowned after the raft she was riding at Six Flags Whitewater Kingdom in Dallas, Texas capsized. Reports sent by Doug Pineo stated that the other patrons removed their seat belts as the boat swamped, but that the victim did not. The cause is being investigated.

Amanda Smith, 17, drowned in a tubing accident on the Little River in Tennessee's Great Smokey Mountain National Park on July 8. Rangers worked for hours to release her from a very severe foot and leg entrapment.

On Utah's Class 11+ Weber River Fredrick Hadden, 43, a riverboarder, tethered himself to a board that was in turn attached to the Center Street Bridge. Foot tethers are not usual riverboarding practice and using one proved to be a fatal mistake. When Hadden fell off, he was held underwater until his son cut him and his board free. The body was recovered 1.5 miles downstream.

Pedal boats are not river worthy, as a young woman found out too late. Fatima Hawley, 27, decided to take one down the Green River near Whitney Bridge Park in Washington State with four other people. This is an easy whitewater stretch, popular with tubers and paddlers. When the pedal boat flipped in turbulence, two adults and three kids hit the water. Only one person, a 5-year old child, was wearing a life vest. The others swam to shore safely, but Hawley washed into a strainer. She was dead by the time fire fighters and medics reached her.

## Hikers

Two hikers met death along popular whitewater streams. On May 30<sup>th</sup> Todd Strickland, 50, was walking along the river bank after dinner on a commercial rafting trip in Arizona's Grand Canyon when he fell into the water. The National Park Service Morning report stated that guides on a second trip saw him float by, calling for help.

They chased him down with a motorized raft, pulled him aboard, and started CPR. They were, unfortunately, too late.

On May 29<sup>th</sup> Rachel Troy, 16, and her boyfriend attempted to wade across the Chatooga River just 20 feet upstream of Raven Rock Rapid. The river was running low, at 1.2 feet, but despite this the pair lost their footing and were swept into the rapid. Ms. Troy was washed into an undercut rock where she became pinned under 8 feet of water. Her boyfriend, who survived, borrowed a PFD from nearby boaters and initiated a series of heroic rescue attempts. On his last try he dislocated his shoulder. Several area rescue squads worked for days but were unable to touch, much less release, her body. However, an underwater camera was used to pinpoint its location.

The girl's distraught parents applied considerable political pressure to continue the recovery efforts. By doing this they collided head-on with defenders of this Wild and Scenic River who wanted to make certain that the area would not be damaged during these attempts. In late June, following pressure from South Carolina Senators Strom Thurmond and Earnest Hollings, a portable dam was carried into the gorge by convict labor and erected to divert the water. This involved drilling a number of small holes into the riverbed. Dennis Kerrigan, a long time rescue instructor and extrication expert, was flown down from Maine to assist. The effort was not successful, and as of this writing Ms. Troy remains in the river. It is unclear what future efforts, if any, will be made to retrieve her.

I'd like to thank everyone who sent in the materials that form the basis of this report. I simply could not do it without you! Please continue to send me press clippings, e-mail accounts, and other info. Don't worry, I don't mind getting duplicate submissions! Always let me know if your name or any other information in your report should be kept confidential. Please send it to Charlie Walbridge, AW Safety Editor, Rt. 1, Box A43B, Bruceton Mills, WV 26525; Phone 304-379-9002; E-mail: [cwal@compuserve.com](mailto:cwal@compuserve.com).

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# River Safety Study Underway

By Jennifer L. Plyler, Ph.D.

With help from Charlie Walbridge, American Whitewater Safety Editor, and various people in the Silver Spring, MD office, I have begun a study on canoe, kayak, and rafting accident reports submitted to the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) for 1995-1998. More than a decade ago, Joan Maybe completed a similar study, described in the *River Safety Report 1989-1991*, in cooperation with the American Canoe Association. Maybe's report summarized the factors contributing to water fatalities and compared accident frequencies between various watercraft.

As part of my volunteer work with American Whitewater, I will be reporting similar information found in Maybe's report. Specifically, I am studying canoe, kayak, and rafting accidents so that the paddling community can learn how accidents occur, and what preventive or educational measures, if any, should be taken. I also want to compare the risks associated with whitewater paddling to other sports and activities.

As a member of American Whitewater and a recreational paddler (K-1) for five years respectively, my interest in whitewater accidents is a selfish one—I want to learn how to be safer on the river and enjoy this exciting and exhilarating sport to its fullest. Having moved to the Washington, DC area two years ago and working within 10 minutes of the American Whitewater office prompted me to seriously consider taking a more active role to support the organization and its mission. I finally made that first phone call a few months ago and my offer to help was received with enthusiasm and gratitude. I strongly encourage you to make that phone call also to show your support for an organization that strives to conserve the rivers we love and enhance our opportunities to enjoy them safely.

Under the Boating Safety Act of 1971, state Boating Law Administrators are required to complete a Boating Accident Report (BAR) on all water accidents and submit the form to the USCG. The information on the form is then entered into a Coast Guard database. Thus far, I have worked closely with Bruce Schmidt, USCG Statistician, to analyze the 1997 data and will work with Bruce on compiling the 1995, 1996, and 1998 data.

My initial impression after reviewing the 1997 data was that a large number of drownings are preventable. For instance, over half of the victims were not wearing lifejackets. The number of fishing trips, swimming outings, or quiet retreats that ended in unexpected tragedy was striking. Notably, very few accidents involved trained whitewater paddlers.

Although we have no way of knowing the exact number of canoe, kayak, and rafting accidents for 1997 or other years, of the 121 accidents submitted via the BAR form and American Whitewater reports for 1997, only 18 were recorded by both organizations. When there were multiple corroborative reports available, it was much easier to determine factors and conditions surrounding the accidents. Hopefully, this project will enhance the exchange of information between American Whitewater and the USCG and encourage the paddling community to continue to report details of river accidents.

Other observations of the 1997 data include:

- **Most accidents occurred in the Summer (44.6%)**
- **New York (8.3%) and Washington (8.3%) states had the highest frequency of accidents**
- **43.8% of the accidents were canoe related**
- **Alcohol was a factor in 16.5%, or 20 of the 121 water accidents in 1997**

Once I have received data for the additional years, I'll submit a detailed article to the American Whitewater journal summarizing the results.

If you have questions about this study, please contact Charlie Walbridge at

[\(304\) 379-9002](mailto:cwal@compuserve.com) or myself at [\(301\) 349-5101](mailto:plylerj@satnet.org). If you want to know how you can become a volunteer for American Whitewater, please contact Rich Bowers, American Whitewater Executive Director, at [\(301\) 589-9453](mailto:richb@amwhitewater.org).

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# A Good Idea

## Pack it in, Pack it out,

By Bill Hay

**T**his may surprise you, but years ago, on a trip to the Ocoee River, I had a run-in with the authorities. I was parked in the take-out lot preparing for the run. Although the river was not particularly crowded, the lot was full. So, I parked in a Loading Zone and proceeded to move boats from the car of my paddling companions onto mine.

As this was going on, a man with an empty garbage bag in his hand approached me. "You can't park their, buddy." He said. "Now move it."

I looked at the boats stacked high on my van. I looked at the lack of ropes on them. I looked at the busy highway. I looked at the garbage collector, "Sure, just as soon as I finish here."

He insisted, "I said, 'Move it.' This is a Loading Zone. You can't park here."

I've never quite understood this incident until recently when I myself went to work for TVA. Now I get it.

Being a boater, I have a problem with authority. Well, perhaps authority has a problem with me. I've never been able to figure out which is correct.

This is why it was such a surprise when I recently was offered a job by the Tennessee Valley Authority as a garbage collector on the Ocoee River. In need of funds as always, I happily accepted the job. The fact that it was located on my favorite brownwater river was a pleasant perquisite.

Like many government jobs, it was very strenuous. I was to go to work at 8 am if you can imagine, so I was a bit late my first day. It

was okay, though, as that gave the mist a chance to burn off the Ocoee Valley. I could easily see the red clay scars left by the copper mines as I drove up the valley and across the divide. I arrived at Powerhouse Number 1 just as the morning break commenced and so I had to stand around in the hot summer sun while everyone drank a soft drink and ate Nabs. Not a pleasant start to my new career, I can tell you.

My boss was an unpleasant surprise, too. I had interviewed for the job at TVA headquarters in Nashville, TN. I was down there auditioning for the Grand Ole Opry, so it was convenient to wander into town and interview for this job, too. Unfortunately, the Opry didn't need a man of my talents at the time. Fortunately, TVA did.

During the interview with TVA, I made it very clear that I worked best under men and under men who were not prone to micro-management. I felt I had gotten this point across, so you can imagine my surprise when a short, blonde female, identified on her official U.S. Government breast plate only as "Ursula," sauntered up to the Ford pickup we were all standing around that morning and barked, "Hay! Get over here!"

I cast my eyes around to see if anyone else would answer this rude call, but no one did. Instead, the blonde looked directly at me and motioned toward the double-wide that served as the main office for the Ocoee River Authority. I followed a few moments after she turned on her heel and marched off toward her office.

We cleared up the confusion about my starting time on the job. "Mr. Hay, we do not tolerate tardiness here at TVA. Your work day starts promptly at 8 am. Do you understand, sir?"

"Sure. Gotcha, babeness."

"Sir? That's Ma'am."

Things hadn't started well, but, diplomat as always, I nodded and we went on to more important things, my job duties.

"Now, Mr. Hay, I want to review your job description with you so that we are in agreement on your duties and how they will be performed. We have a reputation here at TVA that we strive to uphold at all costs. Do you understand that?"

"Yeah, I get it."

"Sir?"

"No, ma'am."

She went on to explain the intricacies of garbage collection at the Ocoee. "Now, Mr.

Hay, your job can be boiled down to this: if you see trash on the road side, you are not to pick it up."

"Sir? I mean ma'am?"

"That is correct. You are NOT to pick up trash on the side of the road. Do you understand?"

"Yes, I think so. I only pick up trash on the river. Right?" This was a pleasing development for me as I had brought my trusty C-boat in hopes of being assigned on river duties at the Ocoee.

"Wrong, Mr. Hay," my boss shook her head. "You do not pick up trash on the river either. That trash is picked up by river guides and discarded the next day. Do you understand?"

I didn't, but it was getting toward lunch time and I wanted to get on with my orientation, so I agreed, "Yes sir, ma'am. I do not pick up trash along the road; I do not pick up trash on the river. I only pick up trash in the parking lots. Yes sir, ma'am." I saluted and turned to go.

"No!" The bark of her harsh guttural voice stopped me in my tracks. "Mr. Hay, you do not pick up trash in the parking lots. This job is performed by the park rangers as specified in page 348, paragraph 8.aa, Section 2, subsection 3.5i of the employee manual. I thought you were directed to read the manual before you reported to work this morning."

"I was sir, ma'am. That's why I was late; I stayed up until 3 am this morning reading the manual." I have to admit this was a slight exaggeration; some of the trash I had picked up along the way over to the Ocoee the previous day had read sections of the manual to me as I dozed in my tent. I figured, incorrectly it seems, that I would absorb by osmosis the intricacies of working for the government.

Ms. Ursula sighed, "Well, enough of that. Excuses are not a good excuse here. Now, do you understand your job duties?"

"Yes ma'am, sir," I replied, "I am not to pick up trash along the road, I am not to pick up trash on the river, I am not to pick up trash in the parking lot."

Ms. Ursula frowned and dismissed my remarks with a wave of her hand. I snapped to attention and waved back. Thinking I was free to go after this tough lesson, I again turned to go. Again, I was stopped, "Mr. Hay!! You will not leave this room until we are finished discussing your job duties. Do you understand?"



"NO sir, ma'am, I mean yes ma'am, sir." I was confused, but I turned back around and again faced my nemesis.

"Your job, Mr. Hay, has specific duties and procedures. You are to perform these duties diligently. Failure to do so will be cause for dismissal. Do you understand?"

"Yes." I didn't though. "I am not to pick up trash...."

I was rudely interrupted by a harsh crack of the riding crop Ms. Ursula had been holding in her left hand. She moaned, "Mr. Hay, we are not discussing what are not to do on your job. We are discussing what you are to do."

"Yes ma'am, sir, I am not..."

"No, you are to pick up trash. That is your primary duty."

"Yes ma'am, I am to pick up trash, but not along the road, not on the river, not in the parking lot...." I left my words hanging in hopes of finding some enlightenment.

"Precisely," and with that Ms. Ursula turned on her heel (black stiletto, of course) and strode from the room. I stared at her retreating backside gloomily.

The next morning I arrived at work as the mid-morning break was breaking up. It had been a difficult night in the campground and again I had overslept. However, I had a plan. The first thing I did was go around to the back of my pickup and take out the black garbage bag full of trash I had collected at the campsite the night before. I took it toward the dumpster next to the employee parking lot.

"Mr. Hay!! What are you doing?" Ms. Ursula glowered from the stoop of the double wide.

I paused, bag dangling from my right hand like a dead turkey, "Throwing away this trash ma'am." I was again invited into Ms. Ursula's office for an orientation session.

"Mr. Hay, didn't I tell you yesterday that your job was to pick up trash?"

"Yes ma'am, sir."

"Did I mention throwing trash away?"

"No sir, ma'am."

"Then, what, pray tell, are you going to do with that bag of trash?"

I saw her logic, but feared for my job, so I tried to explain, "Well, sir, ma'am, I knew I was NOT to pick up trash on the side of the road, on the river, or in the parking lot, so I thought it would be a good idea to pick up trash in the campground. I was just going to finish the job...."

I was interrupted by an outburst, "A good idea, Mr. Hay. A good idea? You had a good idea? That's a very bad idea."

I nodded. It was all becoming clear to me. "Yes sir, ma'am, picking up trash in the campground was a bad idea."

"No, you fool, it was a good idea. This is a government job. Good ideas are a bad idea. You should know that."

Having been a draft dodger in my youth, and a boater in my old age, I didn't know that, but I knew it now. "Well, ma'am, sir, what

should I do with this trash?"

She frowned. I just wasn't getting off to a good start here. "Mr. Hay, it would be a good idea if you put that trash back exactly where you got it. Directive 407.3c.49i specifically states, and I am quoting here, Mr. Hay, 'all campground trash is to be picked up by designees of the campground management staff.' Mr. Hay are you designated by the campground management staff?"

I shook my head, "No sir, ma'am, I am not so designated. I am sorry ma'am sir that I had a good idea. It won't happen again. But ma'am, sir, I want to do well here at the Ocoee, so would you please review my job duties again?"

Ms. Ursula shook her head, but proceeded, "Mr. Hay, I will, but this will be the last time. Your job as Garbage Collector at the Ocoee Power Project is to pick up trash. When you see trash, you are to pick it up. This is assuming, of course, that said trash is not on the side of the road, not on the river, not in the parking lot, and not in the campground. Do you understand?"

"Yes sir, ma'am, I understand fully. But wouldn't it be a good idea...."

"MR. HAY! I have told you this is a government job. Good ideas are bad ideas."

"Yes sir, ma'am, I understand. What I meant is, wouldn't it be helpful to tell me just where I can pick up trash."

With that Ms. Ursula's face turned a lovely shade of purple, she straightened her spine, tucked in her chin, and sputtered, "Mr. Hay, you are to pick up trash everywhere EXCEPT where it is prohibited!!!"

I nodded and left to spend the afternoon in a bar in Ducktown, but there wasn't any trash there that day.

The next day, I arrived at work on time. This proved to be a good idea, I mean bad idea, as Ms. Ursula was at the gate waiting my arrival. "Good morning, Mr. Hay, did you sleep well?"

"Yes sir, ma'am," I replied, happy that

things seemed to have improved on the job.

"Mr. Hay, I think it would be a good idea for you to work the parking lot at the take-out for the Ocoee River today."

I nodded, "Yes ma'am, a good idea. I'll do exactly that. I shall go to the take-out parking lot and pick up trash." I was glad I had thought to bring my boat along on this fine morning.

"YOU WILL NOT!! You will go to the parking lot and you will carry a garbage bag with you and you will walk around, but I forbid you to pick up any trash. Do you understand, Mr. Hay?"

I didn't so I nodded affirmatively, "Yes sir, ma'am. I understand. I am not to pick up trash in the parking lot. That is the duty of the parking lot rangers as specified in page 567, Section 6, Paragraph 21, subsection 3.7759 of the Employee Manual."

Ms. Ursula smiled and nodded in agreement. I was relieved to be getting into the swing of things down here at the Ocoee Power Project. "And, Mr. Hay, while you are down there, don't you think it would be a good idea for you to watch for any boaters who might park in the Loading Zone illegally?"

Being a boater myself, I didn't think it would be such a good idea, so I said, "Yes ma'am sir. It would be a good idea." And I went off to paddle.

Now that I think of it, it's always a good idea, when faced with the prospect of work, especially government work, to go off and paddle.

*Editor's note: The infamous curmudgeon Bill Hay is the editor of the Virginia's Coastal Canoeists' CA News, which was recently named one of the four best club newsletters by Paddler. During his paddling career Mr. Hay has had a number of confrontations with women named Ursula. We have documented several of these encounters here.*



## Hoyt Reel painting to be donated to Gauley Festival Silent Auction.

A new painting of Hoyt's will be auctioned at this year's festival. Hoyt generously donated one of his paintings to American Whitewater as a fundraiser last year also. Look for this painting and get your bid in.

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# To See or Not to b a t or **Lightning never Strikes Lice**

By Teresa Gryder

As Charlie Walbridge once pointed out, river guides can become inured to the risks of their home river, risking more in their playtime than the occasional visitor might choose. One way to up the ante is to do without certain pieces of gear, starting with the paddle. Another way is to reduce the use of certain senses, most commonly sight, in order to bring other senses to the fore.

My home river is the Chattooga, Section IV. My only rule on the water is that every day, whether in rubber or plastic or glass, I must do or see something I've never done or seen before. Moonlight excursions, hand paddling, and swimming through potholes are

nothing radical to me. Once I had to safety boat without a sprayskirt after a tourist rearranged my gear during lunch. Swimming in the river was unintentional at first, but becomes more intentional as the years fly by. Potholes and undercut caverns are magical mystery places, and risk is seasoning on life.

I tried kayaking blindfolded. I wasn't crazy enough to do Section IV blind, so I chose the Nantahala for my experiment. I felt certain that on a familiar, easy river on a sunny day, I could feel the wind direction and sun on my cheek, hear the water direction and banks, smell the highway and honeysuckle, and know where I was. I couldn't. Even on the mighty Nantahala I was terrified by the uncontrolled

sweep of water and by the sensation of moving but not knowing where. I made it two miles with ample coaching from a sighted companion.

Years later came another occasion to see what it would really be like to paddle blind. The tale resurfaces every year, and versions wander farther and farther from what I remember as truth. But when I hear someone else's version, it sounds just as true as mine, so I don't know anymore. In my memory, this is how it happened.

Christo and I had already run the shuttle, and as the dusk settled we talked Kory, Cathy, and Ocoee Ed into paddling Section IV of the Chattooga with us. Violent thunderstorms



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wandered through the valleys, and the light was evenly gray. As we circled into the Woodall Shoals parking area, the drizzle turned to a downpour. Five Chattooga guides sat in a steamy van and waited for a sign.

Why do people think guides don't boat? Because they don't see us? Since we spend our working lives on the river, when we play we want it all to ourselves. We come out, like trolls, after the sun sets and the tourists retire. The moon was full that night, but when the moon is full, it rises about the same time that the sun sets—on level ground. In a river gorge you may lose the last glow of reflected sun long before a full moon crests the ridge. Between sundown and moonrise there can be an hour or two of serious darkness.

Our decision to put-on can only be attributed to herd instinct, the same phenomenon that drives lemmings and buffalo to stampede over cliffs. No two of us would have chosen to go paddling in a downpour in complete blackness. The rationale "Well, if you go, I guess I'll go" made the full circle, and though no single person said they'd go, after 20 minutes of hemming and hawing, we went.

We picked our way down the trail in the last shred of daylight. Seven Foot Falls is a quarter mile downstream from Woodall, and

by the time we got there the faint glow of sunset had vanished. Luckily, the lightning had started. With each flash I was mesmerized by the bright colors of my friends' gear, and the bright glitter of the raindrops suspended in air. Series of strobe flashes lit paddlers in a sequence of frozen poses like cheap animation. In between the pulses of lightning the darkness was complete.

When you float the same river day after day, year after year, you learn its signs and texture better than you'll ever know the back of your hand. When you paddle it at night, you become aware that because of the rise of a hill, or the shape of a boulder on a distant shore, a tree branch overhead, or the sound of a wave, you *know* where you are. But *this* night was dark. Cavernous black. So black that the eye could discern not a glimmer. I repeatedly closed and opened my eyes, wondering if by chance I'd forgotten to open them, or if, I had suddenly gone blind.

The rain was noisy too, splattering and hissing, obscuring all but the deep boom of Seven Foot Falls. As I approached the stair step drops above Seven Foot, the lightning returned in earnest. Three bright flashes blazed the path past the first hole, through funny water to a vigorous right boof. There are lots of ways to go wrong there, and we know them all first hand. I hooted "too-hoo,"

and heard other people hoot and the clash of a paddle on rock. Everyone was down, but Cathy was not in her boat, and Kory, the burly future fireman, was helping her to shore. I thought to myself, "Bad night for swimming—we might never find all the pieces," and castigated myself for not bringing glow sticks. To this day Cathy swears it was a red boat, but in my memory the boat was black.

Cathy is nothing if not a self-rescue wizard. She's surprisingly young to be old woman of the river, but she started early. One of the first guides on the Chattooga, she tells tales of how it used to be, driving flatbed trucks loaded with flaccid rafts and squealing customers on heinously rutted mud-slide roads—and paddling 10 miles to school and back, upriver both ways.

We found all the pieces and continued downstream into Stecoah Rapid. The lightning ceased, leaving Braille as our last resort. The hair prickled on my neck and the air was sharp with ozone. We paddled head-on into rocks, missed eddies, and broached. Just as I was falling over a 5-foot slide known as Raft Trap, a bolt of lightning obliterated a tree not 100 yards away with a blinding and deafening impact.

We regrouped near the familiar pattering of Long Creek Falls and allowed our eyes and

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ears to resume function after the close blast. The water had risen from 1.5 to 1.7 in half an hour. I had a headlamp and, in spite of weak batteries, I was unnerved enough to consider hiking out. Ocoee Ed hadn't exited the rapid, and we were beginning to worry. There are not many places to get in trouble there, but had he found one, rescue would not have been timely. But, true to form, Ed had found the perfect Braille surfing wave, and was completely at one with black water as he tore it to dark shreds in a black boat.

The prevailing theory about lightning among river guides is that the safest place to be was in a plastic or rubber boat on the water. We rationalize that if you go sit on shore and the lightning hits a tree nearby, the 'tricity might track through the roots to you. But if you're in the river at the bottom of a gorge, you're in the absolute lowest elevation to be found, and thus the lowest likelihood of getting a direct hit. Most of us have felt a jolt from a wet paddle when a strike travels through water, but it's generally less unpleasant than touching an electric fence. Besides, if we can't be calm when bolts are falling all around, who's going to calm down the tourists from Florida?

Above Ravenchute there was another barrage of strobe lightning to illuminate our path, and we discoed in hissing drizzle

through the shoals above the Five Falls. Moonlight began to infiltrate the clouds, and the rain stopped.

Corkscrew is the second and darkest of the Five Falls, even when the sun is up (ask any Chattooga photographer). The bottom hole chomped Cathy. We found her because she was yelling, but her boat did a Houdini. We criss-crossed the moving pools above and below Crack in the Rock, hoping to bump into a plastic hump. No luck. After we'd almost given up, the boat was ejected from the bottom hole in Corkscrew.

Jawbone passed uneventfully but the water had risen enough that Soc'm Dog, a vertical drop into a bodacious hole, was hungry for fresh meat. Kory and I boosted the obscure light by training our head lamps on what was left of the Launching Pad, the hump of water and rock ideally used to facilitate a killer boof. Ocoee Ed barreled over the drop and flipped. Unsatisfied, he carried his boat back up. The second time Ed flipped before even getting to the drop. He drifted upside down over the Launching Pad without hitting his head. We cheered with blood lust for more entertainment. The only thing that could have improved his performance would have been landing right side up at the bottom.

Avague orb of light submitted the ridge,

giving gent'e gray light to black shadows. We laid on a rock and watched the clouds shift and dissolve across the sky, grateful for our lives, for the river we love, and for the senses that connect us.

## TIPS FOR MOONLIGHT (OR MOONLESS) PADDLING:

Go three or four days before the full moon; on those days the waxinggibbous moon rises three or four hours before sunset, thus you can put-in at sundown and have good light in the early evening.

Develop a system of verbal signals, including individualized sounds for each person to indicate their whereabouts and that they are OK.

Don't swim.

In case you do swim, attach something glowing to your boat, and yourself, or at least wear some light colors.

*Editor's note: Boating at night or during thunderstorms can be dangerous. American Whitewater does not endorse or encourage night boating. Night boaters so go at their own risk.*

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# A Newbie on the New

By Joe Napora

How do you know if you are out to enjoy a warm Sunday afternoon on one of the most beautiful rivers in the country or if you are there to get the sh\*@ kicked out of you in order to learn a lesson in humility? Going through Lower Railroad backwards should have been a clue. And then there was flipping and swimming at the top of Lower Keeney. And what about flipping under Undercut Rock in Miller's Folly and feeling good that a paddle was the only thing I lost? The lesson in humility was learned. But it was still an enjoyable warm Sunday afternoon on one of the most beautiful rivers in the country.

The water level was minus a half foot at Fayette Station, 1,880 cfs. The guidebooks call this low, so low that it is too boring for many boaters. But this seemed a perfect level for my first trip down the Gorge. The water level was perfect, but I wasn't. I went smoothly through Upper Railroad, taking a line right of the center rock and making it easily down the wave train. Middle Railroad wasn't much and I wasn't paying much attention to it because I was thinking about the undercut rock in the

center of Lower Railroad. I caught the eddy behind a rock at the top left of the rapid. But instead of pausing in the eddy and figuring out what to do next, I peeled out low and inadvertently spun upstream into a small eddy I hadn't noticed. Next I went down the steep drop on the left backwards, hitting a rock at the bottom with my stern. I stayed upright, though I was sitting on my water bottle, it having been forced between my legs and under my ass. I don't want to think what would have happened if the blunt end of the bottle had been facing me instead of the neck.

Next came the warm up rapids...warm ups for the Keeneys. In the second of these I flipped and set up perfectly for a roll. But when I tried to roll I popped my skirt and the boat filled with water. I swam. I was starting to think that at 55, I was just too old to be swimming any of these rapids. My confidence level was hugging the river bottom and not about to rise as I approached the Keeneys.

Upper Keeney was easy, just a straight-

through ride down the center into an eddy behind Whale Rock. Middle Keeney wasn't all that difficult either, though I don't remember many of the details. I was thinking too much about Lower Keeney, knowing that it was going to be the toughest rapid on the river. I still don't know how hard Lower Keeney was. All I paddled was the very top. I flipped there. I spent a long time upside down, trying to get some purchase on the swirling water. I eventually decided that I didn't want to go through the rapid upside down. I bailed out after I hit my head on a rock. Then while clutching the stern of my kayak, I hit various other parts of my body on other rocks. It was a long and not easily forgotten swim. Perhaps once the aches and pains go away, I will forget it, but for now, I have body memories that Tylenol can dim but can't erase.

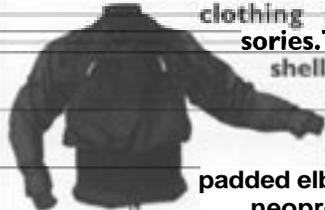
Lollygag and Dudley's Dip went by quickly and without mishap. I was beginning to feel better about Double Z. With Lower Keeney behind me the worst was over. Double Z proved to be double easy. I made a clean eddy



Photo by Collin Heagher; Dan Gavere at Kootenai Falls Montana

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on the right and paddled down through and around the holes and pour-overs with no trouble. It was my cleanest run of the day. I ran Turtle Rock down the center, rather than the far right through the boulders. It was a smooth ride. Greyhound was easy enough, though I got caught for a half second in the surf, reminding me how tough this rapid is in high water.

Below Greyhound I anticipated an easy ride. Up ahead were the two Kaymoor Rapids, Miller's Folly (a.k.a. Undercut Rock), and Fayette Station. After running the Kaymoors I felt I had left my swimming behind me. I rationalized the first really wasn't my fault: with the right skirt I would have rolled up. The second, well, getting flipped in Lower Keeney's can happen to anyone. No blame there, just a resolve to work on my whitewater roll.

But Miller's Folly and the Undercut Rock loomed ahead. The other paddlers ran far to the right and paddled hard to keep from being swept to and under the rock. They made clean

slot moves that slung them around the rock and down river. I tried the same line, but I didn't paddle hard enough. And I didn't remember the most basic rule of river running: lean down stream into the rock. In a blink I was over and under the rock. I couldn't roll, so I bailed. I reached up and felt my boat and the rock, saw nothing but darkness, then finally saw light. Before I could think of what to do, it was done for me. I flushed out down river with my boat but not my paddle.

We looked for the paddle but couldn't find it. I did find a raft paddle and my friend Brad used that while I used his paddle to get to the pool above Fayette Station. Then I gave Brad his paddle and hit the shore above Fayette Station Rapid. I didn't want to try it with a raft paddle. I was exhausted, disappointed, exhilarated, exasperated, and glad to step on shore with only a couple bruises to my hip, elbow, and ego. It was a good day on the river.

## The Beautician and the Hair Boater

By Marion Boyer

New guy came in today.

Yeah, cute.

I think we hit it off. No, I'm tellin' ya we had this simpatico thing goin' —

Like I asked him, "so, whatcha doing with yourself?"

and he says he's a boater, and I'm thinking

sailboat, I'm thinking yacht maybe

and he says he's going to some whitewater river out east.

Turns out he's a kayaker.

You know, them boats that go upside down

and then they flip 'em upside right?

He's all telling me about this thing,

this skirt thing, that he wears

to keep out the water and how he likes to do rodeo moves

and he paddles some boat called an "ESP"

or something

and I'm thinking this guy is like a river cowboy or whatever.

Then, he starts in talking about "hair boating" and I'm thinking,

Okay, now we're into what I know, you know?

He's all talking about side curlers and waves —

and I know from waves and curlers!

So we're talkin'

and getting into this groove and he's talking

flips and rolls, bangs and tangles

and I'm like into this

'cause hair is my business, of course.

I'm hoping he comes in again

'cause I gotta find out

if a boof is like a pouf or if it's something different.

But, this guy was cool, you know?

and like, we talk the same language.

## A Tale of the Green

By Bruce Foster

Listen fellow paddlers and you shall hear,  
A tale of hair boating, a tale of fear.

The tale of a river, steep, twisting and lean,  
My story of the Narrows of the Green.

With drops like Groove Tube, Gorilla and Sun-  
shine,

It's best if a paddler is not of sound mind.

Off the drop, deep you go, into the rivers  
roaring belly,

Up you pop, breathing hard, arms turned to  
jelly.

Lean forward, don't get typewritered, uh oh  
too late,

Go hard right! Go hard right! Or man your  
hole bait.

Hang on man! I'm coming! Scramble and  
grope,

Heads up man here it comes! Throw the rope.  
A steep drop, a hard turn, a turbulent eddy

line,

The next drop you make is completely blind.

Watch my line very closely, from it do not  
stray,

For here, the price for a missed line, is a high  
price to pay.

Down the blind slot, off the pillowed rock, keep  
paddling don't quit,

Catch an eddy, look back, did I just paddle that  
shit.

## Blue Heron

By Marion Boyer

You do not need to be expert.

You do not need to pirouette high,  
twirl your paddle, crash over the cascade,  
valiantly.

You need only to let green currents rock boat  
and body

suspend your weight.

Meantime the shore drifts by.

Meantime the water splinters the sunlight;  
the shine

glints off steel railway tracks running,  
running the riverbank, through tunnels,  
past dense woods and gray shanties.

Meantime a blue heron arrows low over  
clear water,  
a soft rustle of wing.

Whatever you boat, no matter how well,  
the river opens itself,

whispers to you like the blue heron, wild and  
skimming free,

pointing a way through  
the shallows of your life.

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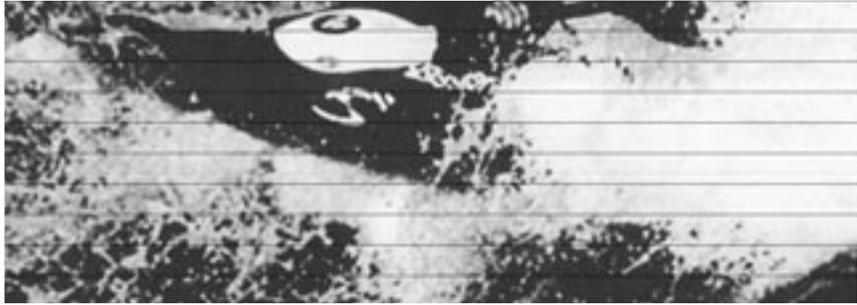


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## The AW Interns '99: Solid Workers and Players

By Risa Shimoda Callaway

What a difference a summer can make! The '99 team of AW interns has filled the AW office with energy and enthusiasm and will leave behind a body of accomplishment that will serve AW in the years ahead.

### Inquiry, Curiosity in Common

Bryant McCully is the bona fide summertime academic. He recently graduated *summa cum laude* from the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland. Brian was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and was a 1999 Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar.

Bryant answered a solicitation for interns in *American Whitewater* and is focusing his three-month service on the completion of his master's thesis in environmental science. His research recommends a wilderness management approach for the Grand Canyon National Park, summarizing and analyzing laws pertaining to the Federal Wilderness Bill. It will provide a comprehensive reference for the complex challenge facing the National Park Service as they try to simultaneously meet the needs of users and take responsibility for the long-term integrity of the resource.

Steve Ledbetter is a student at the Northwestern School of Law at Lewis & Clark College. He discovered the AW internship program on a placement center list of national non-profits. Steve is completing a compilation of case law concerning the statute of river navigability for all 50 states. As battles over access and land and water 'ownership' continue to wage around the nation, this handbook will be a welcome reference for legal professionals, land managers and paddling advocates.

'Mo' Maureen Phelan, a Geology and Biology Graduate from Youngstown State University in Ohio, was looking for a break from her job wrestling *topo* maps at a USGS office in Pittsburgh. She called AW and... Voila! She became an intern! This summer, Mo is compiling a comprehensive database of foundations and other organizations with whom AW may want to partner over the next few years.

And then there's Adam Mayo, who is pursuing degrees in Anthropology and Environmental Studies at the University of Tennessee. Adam plans to complete the 1999 AW Member Survey database and has taken on the role of AW Office Photographer!

### Their Focus

The interns are psyched about working on meaty issues, knowing their work will truly have an impact. For Bryant, completing a comprehensive reference that supports the Wilderness designation for Grand Canyon National Park "has been the most rewarding aspect of my time here. By working on a current and constantly changing issue, I am gaining a valuable experience working within

our political system. This kind of experience is not accessible to a student doing 'book research.' Working at AW has given me the opportunity to interact with the people who make decisions concerning the fate of our rivers, and has increased my desire to make a positive impact on these decisions."

As Steve notes, "It is fantastic to be able to speak and work with the directors on the pressing issues you read about in the Journal... the work done this summer will have a direct impact on what/how AW functions."

Keen to pursue a career working with non-profits, Mo adds: "Working for AW has provided great exposure to the non-profit world. AW is an amazing organization created by many people; without this intense group of volunteers, the organization would not be where it is today."

### Then There's Play

It is pretty sweet for the office to be twenty minutes from the impressive whitewater playspots on the Potomac. Steve notes: "It is great to take off after work with your colleagues and head for the river together. The opportunity to boat together influences how we work together, and solidifies the bond between us through our mutual love of rivers."

### Dear Aspiring Intern

*If you are considering an AW Internship experience, Bryant advises: "Go for it. AW is riding high on recent victories for the Tallulah, Coosa, and Nisqually. There are many other issues that need attention. The paddling community is rapidly expanding. We need paddlers to embrace a river ethic and to join the effort to protect our rivers. Choose a river or issue that is close to your heart, and I guarantee that your time at AW will be a wonderful experience. An internship at AW is a great combination of hard work, wonderful people, and paddling..."*

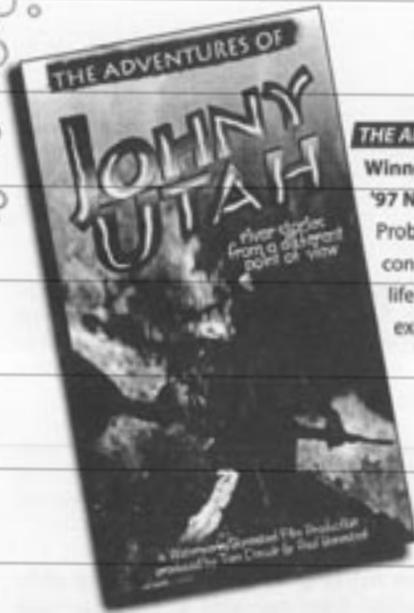
*Steve adds, "There is still much to do: the more interns AW has to help, the better!"*

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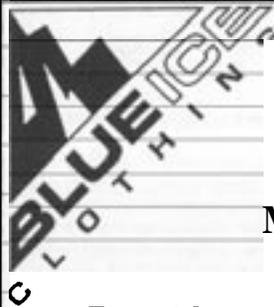
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# Kids Corner



## Snicker, But It Works!

**H**ello, my name is Robyn Abernathy and I am nine years old. I have been kayaking for 2 years. I paddle an EPI Tike. It's gray. I had a pink Protec helmet, but my dog chewed the padding. Really! I love kayaking. My mom says I caught on to it fast because I'm an Aquarian. I'm not sure I know exactly what that means, but I LOVE to kayak. When I first started, I was a little afraid. Sometimes on a new river, I still am a little afraid. So I have this thing I do to help me overcome my fears and maybe if I share it with you, it will help you too!

It all started when I was 7 and a half. I decided that I wanted to run the Hollywood rapid on the James River in downtown Richmond, VA. I had paddled the pony Pasture to Reedy creek part, and I had even run most of downtown, including Pipeline. But I was very nervous about running Hollywood. My mom and my Stepdad, Gene, told me that I could scout Hollywood to find the right line and if I decided that I didn't want to run it, I could walk around it. My mom always says that the rapid will be there next time, the important thing is to make sure you're there next time too.

So I looked at the rapid and the more I looked, the more afraid I got. So, I decided not to run it. I was very mad at myself, but I was more afraid than I was mad, so the afraid part of me won. You see, I know that Murry lives in the water. Some people think paddlesnakes are what causes you to tip, but I know it's really Murry. Murry is the river god. I know some people call him other names, but I like Murry. Murry makes you tip, he flips you when you least expect it, and hides rocks from you until you are right up on them.

Murry will steal from you. He stole from my mom. He stole sunglasses,

part of a paddle and a paddling jacket, and one earring. So don't leave your earrings on! Also, put your sunglasses UNDER your helmet! My mom learned the hard way!

Anyway, when I got to Pipeline I was watching people play in the hole. I made a deal with Murry. See, I had heard this legend that says that you need to take a Snicker's bar on your paddling trip and throw the first bite of your Snicker's to Murry. If he gets the first bite, he will not trash you. So the next day, I decided to run Hollywood. But when we stopped at First Break, while everybody else was surfing, I got out of my boat and got out my Snickers. I bit into it and put the first bite in my hand. Then I yelled, "Ok Murry, here's your bite of the Snickers' bar! It's the first one like I promised. Now behave and help me stay up right! I threw the candy into the water and it disappeared. Most of my fear disappeared too. I'll have to admit that I was still just a little nervous, but I ran Hollywood! I just knew that Murry would look out for me. He had his Snickers; he didn't need to tip my boat to look for it. It worked!

Not long after that, we went to the Nantahala. My mom and stepdad showed me the big drop at the end on the way to the put-in. Believe me, I threw that bite into the river...far. I even gave him the whole Snickers that day because I saw what was waiting at the end. Guess what? I didn't tip! I ran the last drop on the "Nanty" without flipping. People were cheering and screaming for me, but I knew that Murry appreciated the whole Snickers.

So now, whenever we run a river for the first time, I always have a Snicker's bar and the first bite belongs to Murry. Giving him the first bite will keep your mind off of being scared. I guarantee it. Try it out next time you're on a new river

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(see you on the river-  
with a Snicker's bar)



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