

BOWLINES

Newsletter of The Bluegrass Wildwater Association July/August 1998

Special Boaters & Boater Stories Issue

In This Issue: Your Only Reality is Your Next Move!
Me, My Whimpy, and A Plastic Grumman
A Treatise on Death
El Niño



Boaters Tell Boating Stories

Return to Elk River

Mike Clark

I fought as hard as possibly to extract this boat from the jaws of the hole. It wasn't moving. Punching out was not considered an option until this point with a 40 foot waterfall looming only 30 feet away. One tug of the grab loop and I immediately felt violated by the churning maw.

It was about 4 years ago, on my first run of Twisting Falls section of the Elk, that this swim occurred and I had not returned until the late April rains of 1998 afforded an opportunity to avenge this humility. Some friends from the plateau had planned a Linville trip this day, but when we checked the gauge at the takeout, it was a bit on the juicy side. So after checking with the TVA gauge, (admit it, don't you love the sound of her voice?) the Watauga was running a robust 791 CFS, so we scampered up to Banner Elk.

They had never seen the Elk, and after getting lost 7 or 8 times on the shuttle to the takeout, weren't sure if they ever would. After the ordeal, we finally put on at

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Sometimes I Miss those Days

Here's a favorite story of mine that I actually started to retell in response to an email from John Davis. Here's the whole dialogue - I never did send it to John... perhaps he'll read it in the Bowlines.

SURFBWA listserv - HOT off the press
Barry,

I think that blasting Pedro even in jest is inappropriate. One of the reasons BWA "events" run smoothly these days is there has been a 15-20 year learning curve. You, my freind, were on the same part of the curve as the rest of us through those years. Mike, Don, Sam, Tubbo, Ed, Dad, myself, You and many others slaved for hours, days, weeks and months in order to screw things up so that it would be better next year. So please remember your history and some of the scary things you and I had happen in early Film fests. Also, messed up shuttles and the like went hand in hand with "Dads" dinner theater, Hot Tubs, Tom Berg and Chief hanging upsidedown in the rafters eating cake and on and on!!!!

A lot of the "good ol' days are in our minds and I am glad to hear the the clinic was good.... I just hope that you laughed as much as we used to get to do!!!

Hey to everyone from the left coast,

John

Continued on page 12

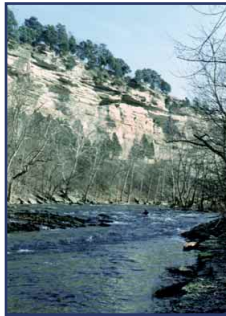
The Elkhorn.....Is it Time We Get AW Involved?

Folks,

I have just gotten off the phone with Jason Robertson, the AW staff Access Director. I filled him in on the problems we are having with the Elkhorn takeout. Jason outlined some of the steps we should consider following in our quest to resolve this situation. They are:

1) Call the Dept. Of Transportation.
Have one spokesman ask:

- a. Why were signs erected?
- b. What are the right-of-way restrictions on the road?
- c. Where is parking permitted?
- d. Is there alternative parking?
- e. Ask if boaters were consulted.
- f. Ask who requested the signs or what action necessitated the placement of the signs.



Bluffs on Elkhorn Creek

Sometimes the DOT will place signs over a wide section of road when they could get away with just one or two in particularly sensitive areas such as areas beside embankments or driveways. They might consider removing some signs or even creating pull-outs.

We also need to call the KY State Police, ask what they know of this situation and let them know who we are.

2) Draft a proposal of our solution.

This will entail identifying the property to be leased, purchased or declared as a takeout. I know that this is the toughest problem - but we now need to bear down on and come up with something to address. We need to revisit the Franklin Co. courthouse and identify ALL of the landowners that own property along the section we would consider as takeout possibilities, and what their property boundaries are. Once we have this information we should then contact each landowner (regardless of what position they may have expressed in the past) and obtain their opinions regarding "their" solutions. It will be imperative for us to convey to these landowners that we are actively and collectively persuing a resolution and we desire their input to make it work.

3) Hold a "paddler's summit" to discuss the Elkhorn.

would propose that we get together representatives of the BWA, Vikings, Elkhorn Paddlers, Canoe KY, Ohio clubs, Indiana clubs, and other paddling or river use organizations. If we can present a united front that is in agreement with our proposal it will constitute a formidable group. There is strength in numbers.

4) Create a form letter to distribute a one page letter outlining our solution and who we are. Send it to everyone we can think of including The Judge Executive, city council,

BOWLINES

Bowlines is the Newsletter of the Bluegrass Wildwater Association, POB 4231, Lexington Ky, 40544

Club Officers 1998-99

President	Bill Lynch	502-682-3967
Vice-President	Ben Newman	606-278-5694
Treasurer	Richard Smithers	606-887-5906
Secretary	Dave Merrifield	606-223-5943
Safety	Ben Askren	606-255-2768
Program	Tim Miller	606-224-3827
Newsletter	Don Spangler	606-277-7314
Conservation	Steve Powers	606-264-9678
National Paddling		
Film Festival Co-ordinator	Barry Grimes	606-623-9067
Equipment Coordinator	Mike Molnar	606-263-4430
At-Large Members:	Zina Merkin	606-268-2508
	Amy Shipman	606-278-4236
Past President	Bruce Rishel	606-245-8096

Join in on the Fun!

BWA website: www.surfbwa.org
Join the BWA! BWA Membership \$15/individual; \$20/Family year entitles you to receive the newsletter, 10% discounts at many local and out of state outfitter shops, use of club kayak, discount at pool rolling sessions, a listing in the BWA Handbook, and a stream gauge guide.

Meetings are held the at 7:30, the second Tuesday of each Month at:
Columbia's, 201 N. Limestone, Lexington, Ky.

Submission of Newsletters articles preferred on zip or floppy disk (Mac or PC) or typed. Pictures can be digital or ready to be scanned. Please included stamped envelope for return. Files can also be e-mailed to: donspang@aol.com or to princv@sprynet.com



tourism council, State police, landowners etc..

5) Escalate to State and Federal Level. We need to write letters, email and call Scotty Baseler concerning our problems. If every member in the BWA, Vikings, and Elkhorn Paddlers wrote a letter that would constitute an avalanche of mail and hopefully create an imperative in the mind of our elected official. The election is coming and we vote too.

At this point I would like for the Steering Committee of the BWA to convene an emergency meeting and appoint tasks to SC members to begin this (or a similar) process. Since it is the BWA and it's members who will suffer directly due to this new development - it is our duty to take the lead on this issue.

Barry
AW Director / BWA Steering Committee Member / Elkhorn user

Return to Elk River.....Cont. from pg.1.

2:30 only to see some paddlers carrying back to the put-in. A couple of the folks had taken a "wuppin" in the first rapid, and were waving their arms about the water being too high and other nebulous boater speak. Not to get engulfed in this gaping abyss of negative energy, we feigned empathy with their plight (nobody was really hurt) and asked them to drive our shuttle vehicle to the takeout which they did.

The Elk was fun on this day, the character of the top section a little more boulder strewn and the middle and bottom sections, slides and ledges. Most of the drops are impressive and steep. After the exciting portage around Twisting Falls, (the yet unrunnable drop) I began to flash back to that day 4 years ago

The last 2 drops on river are a 15 foot river-wide waterfall followed immediately by a 40 footer – the right side of the 40 footer of which crashes onto rocks, and the left side which grand mothers in duckies are running on a daily basis (not really, but the author is trying to make you believe this so that as the story unfolds later, you will immediately accept what he did as rational). The problem began with the 15

footer.....after what seemed like the entire boating populous had cleaned it, my boat angle was all wrong and ended up in the carnivorous (who knows.....it must be) hole.....after the mighty struggle, (and doesn't it make you feel great when your buddies come up to you after the swim and tell you "if you could have just hung in there for another 10 seconds....blah, blah."

The reality is they spun a whole roll of film while you were in the trenches of this gaping monster and you didn't give them enough time to reload the camera.)

The swim was awful. The hole sucked off one bootie (the same booties that require a jack hammer to peel off at the take out), stripped me of an elbow pad and my pride, and pulled my shorts down to my knees (as if to exemplify a point).

Yep, that hole beat the (for those not predisposed to profanity or those young, impressionable minds that are reading this article, please close your eyes for this next word) * shit * out of me.

But even worse, a mere 20 feet downstream was the right side of the 40 footer.

Didn't see a rope, everybody was too busy filming..... No body was coming out to retrieve what must've seemed like a carcass.....They say I swam on top of the water that day, to the alternate shock and amusement of the throngs of on lookers.



Fast forward to April 1998.....

After leaping over the 15 footer, into the comfort of a calm eddy, I made a finger gesture to the hole that had punished me years ago. Engaging in adolescent acts of defiance is surely the only way the hole would feel remorse.

Now on to the 40 footer. It seems that whenever I walk into a boater's house these days, everyone has a blown-up-poster-size photo of themselves running the falls. It's almost as if someone in the mall was overlaying your face on the same water fall photo (hmm.....not a bad business opportunity). Anyway, when you ask them about the drop and how did "it" feel, the same answer comes back.

"smooth, don't land flat, brace at the bottom, you'll feel like you've been in a car wreck for a few days, but with Ibuprofen

anything is possible".

And so we did it.....Joe went first. Now just a little advice for those who run very big drops first. The folk "up top" are looking for a lot of information. 1) Don't pretend it didn't hurt if you are in pain. 2) Don't just shrug your shoulders as if you just ran Natahala Falls for the 100th time. 3) Make wild gestures with your arms to show you are not paralyzed. 4) Give the "thumbs up" sign several times in succession (if appropriate). 5) Yell and squeal like you are auditioning for a specific part in the movie Deliverance. Joe did none of this. Undeterred, I went next followed by Billy.

How did it feel? Smooth, didn't land flat, braced at the bottom, felt like a car wreck for a few days, and I like Aleve better than Ibuprofen.....Oh yeah, the poster size photo is on the wall.

My Summer Vacation:

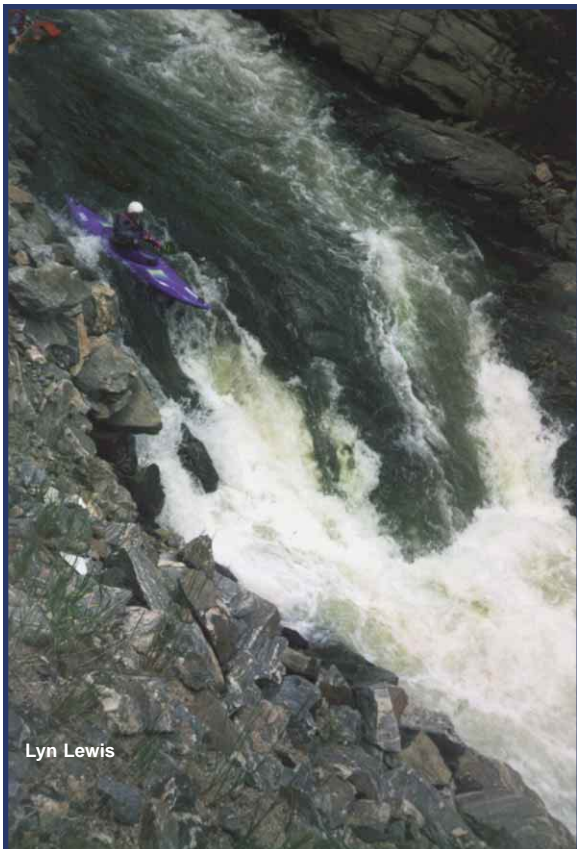
A total of 12 runs in 13 days and five major restaurants.

Rich Lewis

For the first time in 7 or 8 whitewater vacations in Colorado, the snowmelt peaked the last week in June. We met in Idaho Springs to begin our vacation on Clear Creek, a fast and cold 700 cfs along Route 6 leading into Golden.

It was a real awakening, putting in on the Dumont section of Clear Creek. Most of it was class III-IV, with some blind, but down-the-middle big drops that required as much faith as skill. The sun was out, and its reassuring warmth kept us playing the holes and waves in the easy stuff and busting downstream in the bogey sections.

We had a great group of seven: Tim Ryle, Richard Greene, and Dave Holtz from Indiana, Tren Haselton and Robert McCormick from Illinois; myself and Lyn Lewis from Kentucky. All had done Colorado in previous years. Two shuttle drivers rounded out our intrepid group. Our collective interest was class III-IV gorges and eatery gorging.



Lyn Lewis

Clear Creek-The Narrows being run by Richard Greene

The next day we busted down the Narrows Section of Clear Creek, taking out just above Rigor Mortis (Class 5.3). Or should I say, we all put in at the I-70 bridge, and eventually, as swims, broaches, portages, and Class Vs, took their toll, Tim Ryle was the sole boater left to take out just above Rigor Mortis. It was a wild day on the river, and the river definitely won.

Now we were ready for something a little bit easier, so we headed up to the Cache La Poudre near Fort Collins. It was fun Class III, but with 2 BIG class IVs, the second and bigger of which caught us off guard. Backenders, squirts, flips and backpaddling punctuating most of the runs through this rapid. We finished the day in a gorge-fest with some cold ones at the Mishawaka Inn before heading towards Bailey's Canyon.

For all the Colorado experience in this group, none of us had ever been able to catch Bailey's Canyon (North Fork of the South Platte) at a runnable water level. Usually, it's too low (<275) or too high (>450) for a first run down. The guidebooks and our friends who had been down it strongly recommended having a lead because 2 class Vs and a class VI are extremely difficult to recognize before blundering into them. We didn't have a lead, but decided to chance it at 350 cfs.

We cautiously eddy-hopped down the creek. It was easy II-III until about mile 5 when the bottom dropped out. We had eddy-hopping Class IV until we hit Four Falls, the first Class V. The first 7 foot drop had a log in it which promised dental work and plastic surgery if you missed your line. The next three drops required bogey boating at its best. Class IV continued beyond for about another mile, including one shore-scout Class V- that had a triple drop and a boof move. Intense fun!

Then we came to Supermax. This rapid was extremely difficult to recognize from the top. Imagine a tight river bed in the shape of this letter "S", then slant the S downstream so it drops at a 25 degree angle, litter the S-turn with two serious undercut rocks where 80% of the current is going, immediately follow the S-turn by two complex 8-10 foot rocky ledges only 15 feet apart, and you have the essence of Supermax. Easy decision. We carried.

We continued downstream through heavy Class IV and easy V without scouting. It was definitely bogey boating. We caught almost every eddy just to catch our breath. Deer Creek Falls (solid V) was somewhere ahead. After about 1.5 miles, we caught a very difficult eddy just above a large drop where the river disappeared into a maze of pseudo-options. We had to get out and we're glad we did. It was Deer Creek and it was another carry. Unfortunately, there was no wood in the rapid to justify our carry. We were just intimidated. End of story.

The river continues class III-IV for another few miles before mellowing out to Class II. A superb takeout has



Four Falls (3rd & 4th drops) Bailey's Canyon, Colorado
 been constructed by the town of Pine. Look for a right hand turn just before town on the shuttle. It will lead to the new town park in about a mile.

We did the river again the next day at 425 cfs and it was more challenging. Eddies were more scarce and harder to catch. Despite the higher level, we all were hooked on this river and can't wait to ply its waters again. Finishing off the day with a dinner at the Crow's Foot Inn at the put-in has got to make this river the highlight of any Colorado vacation.

The whitewater vacation continued with a total of 12 runs in 13 days and five major restaurants. The Numbers, Brown's Canyon, Royal Gorge, Gore Creek and Roaring Fork were excellent at the higher water levels. Can't wait 'til next year!

(Editors note: I suspect there were also a number of runs to the woods on this trip...but I am sure that story will be told at another time and place)

July BWA Meeting: New Officers elected, Conservation Efforts Reforted, Russell Fork Rendezvous supported with \$1,000

New Officers were elected for 1998-99

- Members-at-Large - Zina Merkin and Amy Shipman
- Program - Tim Miller
- Safety - "Safety" Ben Askren (he's safe, very safe)
- Conservation - Steve Powers (he's not a conservative)
- Equipment - Mike Molnar (he is)
- Newsletter - Don Spangler
- Film Festival Coordinator - Barry (B6) Grimes
- Secretary - Dave Merrifield
- Treasurer - Richard "Mr. Party" Smithers
- Vice President - Ben Newman
- President - Bill (Beel) Lynch

CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS FINE SLATE OF OFFICERS;

We also had the usual stuff that we have every time we have a meeting, and it went something like this:

Treasurer's Report - \$3050 in the bank, dues are due July 1, 1998.

Conservation - Marrea told about the 2 cleanups, one on the Red River and the other on the Elkhorn.

Russell Fork Rendezvous - Brent gave status report on the RFR, which will be held on the first weekend in October, and will last for 3 days under a full moon. He reiterated that the club did not actually sponsor the festival last year. He also talked about the festival promoting other related issues like mining impacts to rivers.

MOTION - Barry Grimes made the motion that the BWA give \$1000 seed money to the RFR, c/o Brent Austin. Motion was seconded. Discussion ensued.

MOTION - Table the RFR issue until later. Not seconded.

Discussion continued until a call for the vote was made on the first Motion. The first motion (B6's) carried the vote and the money will be deposited into Brent's escrow account. Brent assured the group that he will keep the accounting straight for our records.

New Business - Barry Grimes talked about an AWA membership incentive plan, that would have BWA sponsorship. The BWA would contribute \$10 to the AWA towards a new membership for BWA members in good standing, available only for those who have never belonged to the AWA. This would make the members' co-pay \$15. Discussion ensued.

Barry made a MOTION that the club pay \$10 of the membership dues to the AWA, only for first time members. The motion was seconded and it was voted on and passed.

MOTION - the BWA will pay for two roll sessions at Shillitoe Park @ \$140 per night on evenings to be announced. Discussion ensued.

AMENDED MOTION - there will be a charge of \$5.00 per head. The MOTION as amended was voted on and passed.

President Bruce thanked Dave Merrifield for conducting the Nanny Novice Trip, where 25 attended. Dale Perry told about a novice trip that John Foy will be leading on July 18-19 on the Upper New, for newbies. We had trip report and adjourned.

A Very "New" New

.....it's all a matter of steps

Eli Vantreese

Getting on the New River Gorge I was very uneasy. I was bracing, and pretending like I was practicing rolls. The first rapid was Upper Railroad. We took a sneak route down the center to miss the large hole on the right. We then went into the river right eddy to look at the hole. It was the biggest hole on a rapid that I had ever seen!

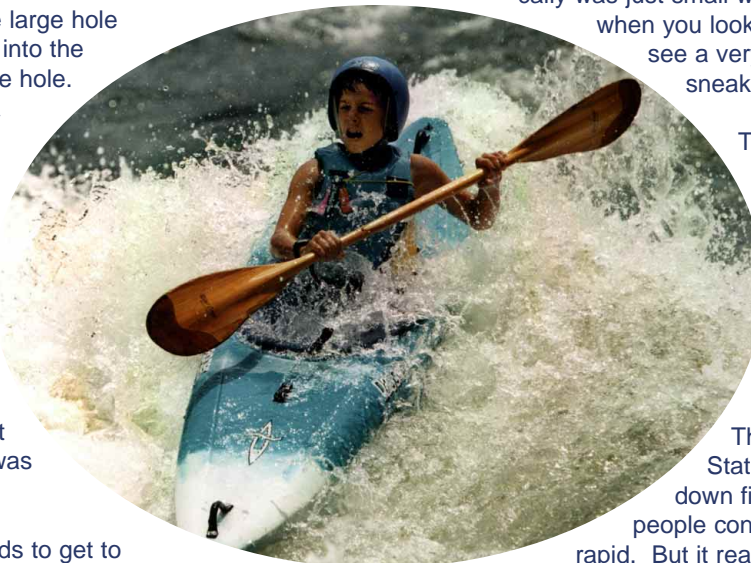
We peeled out and went down the river. Next was Lower Railroad. We sneak-routed around that hole too. It was also large with a peculiar pillow, but not quite as deep. When we went to the left eddy, there as much current flowing upstream as there was downstream!

We went through small rapids to get to Upper Keeny. This was a very straight forward rapid. I felt awkward. The Keeny's cost me two body surfs over two days - one on Middle and one on Lower Keeny. The waves were about 6-8 feet high. Both times I tried to roll. My paddle was ripped out of my hands and I had a hands roll attempt.

After the Middle and Lower Keeny, there was a hot play spot called Surf Wave Rapid. I didn't get into the hole, but there was a pour-over with enough water for a good ender. After I ended once, I was immediately sucked into the pour-over. When my side-surf attempt didn't work, and my paddle in

one hand, I committed to tip over. I then set up for my hands roll. It sounds like hands-rolling under a pour-over would be hard, but the way I was positioned the pour-over helped my roll. That was my first combat roll. The combat wasn't hard - but I was proud. I then continued down the river.

The next rapid was Double Z. It was a smooth run the whole way down. We then went on to Greyhound. It basically was just small waves. But when you looked to the right you could see a very large hole. We took the sneak route on that one too.



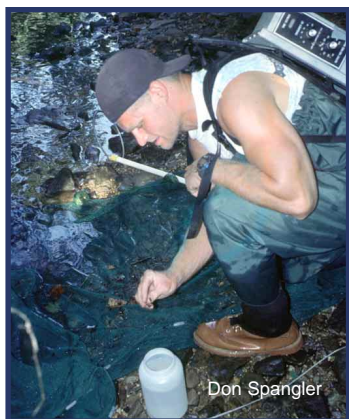
Eli running rapids in the New River Gorge of West Virginia

Then Miller's Folly. This rapid, out of all the rapids, tipped me both days. And my sister, the day she went down it. But, by the second day I had practiced my rolls and came up. That was my first REAL combat roll.

The last rapid was Fayette Station. Both days I made it down fine. But to think. Some people consider that rapid a very hard rapid. But it really is just a straightforward run. The saddest part was taking out.

There I always practiced my rolls and hand rolls. This is a large step for me. From Elkhorn to Wolf to Hiwassee to Blackfoot to Nantahala to Lower Ocoee to New. It's like stairs. Next, maybe Glenn's Creek or Big South Fork or Four-Mile! And then the Yough! Maybe after that I'll do one of those little videos. In time though. As in 6 years. So it's all a matter of steps. And if you take a step too fast, you may break through.

Steve Powers of the BWA does Important River Study at the Russell Fork Drainage...Volunteers Needed!



Don Spangler

BWA Member Steve Powers has been working all summer on an important benchmark study of fish found in the Russell Fork Drainage in Eastern Kentucky. To date there has been no survey of the entire drainage, only the main stem of the Russell Fork and a couple of its tributaries.

In the early weeks he has already found significant information about the species of fish gathered. He plans to be outside Elkhorn City until sometime in September. If you want to learn more about fish and fish gathering, or just contribute your efforts to this important effort, please call or e-mail Steve. He needs help during the week or on the weekend. Since he is trying to stretch the 500.00 contribution from the BWA, living is simple & free (the takeout beach for the Gorge run). Bonus is that he will lead you down the river if time and water levels permit.

For more information or to Volunteer call him at home at 606-264-9678, or e-mail him at STUPOWST@ACS.EKU.EDU

A Day on the Gauley

Date: Friday, July 31, 1998 3:53:59 AM
From: cara@s867.thu.edu.tw
Subj: Story for Bowlines
To: DonSpang@aol.com
cc: bagrim1@pop.uky.edu

Dear Bowlines Editor in Need of Stories:

I have one for you. It's a LONG one, but I'm rather partial to it and you may like it too. And it has some of our favorite characters in it. It's from 5 years ago, though, but a story is a story. Also, I'm not a BWA member, not for a while, anyway. Still, it was a BWA trip with BWA people having a BWA good time. If you like it, please let me know. If you publish it, please send me a copy of it so I can put it in my scrap book.

The story is from my journal (written up the same night as the run down the river) and the poems sprinkled throughout are a Japanese form of poem: Haiku. It is in the tradition of Basho to keep a journal in which poems are inserted like photographs to encapsulate certain images or impressions.

You might want to run it past some of the main characters to make sure they don't object to anything I may have said about them. I don't think they will, but it's always polite to check. Barry & Cynthia Grimes, Don Copeland, Marrea Matthews, and Perry somebody (never did get his last name).

Hope you like the story. It is printed out below.

Cara Lin

Cara Lin Bridgman
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A Day on the Gauley

by Cara Lin Bridgman

I had been fussing all week about how it had been such a long time since I'd been in a boat that I was having withdrawal

symptoms. I told several people that if Saturday was clear, I'd go search quadrats for salamanders, but if it was raining, I'd find some way to go kayaking.

The forecast was for rain.

While asking Barry Grimes about buying his boat, he and Cynthia told me they were going to run the Gauley Saturday and did I want to go? Did!! He said Cynthia

wanted someone to run the Lower with. I spent the next hour on the phone breaking commitments to hunt salamanders, making connections, and rounding up gear.

Asleep by 11, up raring to go by 5. The alarm went off at 5:15. I drove like heck to get to the dam by 10. In fact, I drove too much like heck as I went into a spin, a 180, on one of those 90 degree turns on 129. No one was coming and I stayed on the road. I thanked God that it wasn't as bad as it could have been, shifted into reverse, and went on up the road. The whole incident was over in a minute.

At the dam, none of my friends were there, so I hung around, changed into kayaking gear, and talked to other waiting folks. One of them, Perry, was waiting for the same bunch as I. Barry and Cynthia showed up and said that they weren't going to run the river. Marrea and Don and Perry were, so I could go with them and run the Upper. Cynthia said "Now is the perfect time, there will never be a better time or a better bunch to go with." And Marrea told me to ask to borrow Barry's crossfire. "Barry can I borrow your boat? It came to paddle, even if you didn't." Barry and Cynthia outfitted me from head to toe to boat: neoprene booties, polypro top, pile sweater, dry top, spray skirt, and crossfire. So I was sent off blessed by Cynthia's, "If you break my dry top, you're buying it" and the light rain.

We did most everything on the fly. We actually got out to scout two: Pillow Rock and Iron Ring. The latter was considered a mandatory portage until the last few years, primarily because of the consequences of screwing up. Now most any one runs it, because it is, basically, a straight shot. And so it was.

We began with Initiation: aptly named. They all shot down center and ducked around some rocks into an eddy on the right. I missed the eddy and went on downstream backwards, trying to catch any eddy (there seemed to be none), or to get to shore so I could wait for the rest. We hadn't talked about the line through the rapid (we were to do that in the eddy I missed). So I went backwards, crashing through holes and dodging waves until I flipped. On the second try, I made it back up, and then found my way to shore, beaching myself on a rock. I got up on it really well and waited for the rest. They came down and eddied out just below where I was. Trying to get off the rock and out into the stream, I got pinned on another rock and went upside-down. Under there, I pushed at some rocks upstream and I know I waited for the current to catch my boat and send it spinning on downstream. I came up on the first try and paddled like crazy up into the eddy where the rest were waiting. Then, going down the next section to the pool below, I broached up onto a big sloping rock, going in circles, before I got out of the rapid. It was serious business. Marrea was waiting for me. "Why did you stay in your boat when you were pinned?" "Because I knew where I was." She told me that most of the time, you don't wait to get unpinned, you get out of your boat and swim. It wasn't until I was half way home, in the car, that I realized why: pinned like that, against a big rock with water piling up on it, the force of the water could wrap the kayak around it, trapping me inside, upside-down. She did say my answer was correct: knowing where I was made all the difference.

After the Initiation, the rest of the day went smoothly with me, and the rest, getting to where we wanted when and how we wanted. I flipped lots more times. Once, going through Pillow Rock, was because I lost my head and went on over. I think I could have prevented it with a good brace, but, being worried about avoiding the rock, I went on over. Regardless of all the flipping over and all the time I was spending upsidedown, I was complimented on my line, and told that I had done everything ok.

Marrea, at one rapid whose name I cannot remember, told me how to do it, then told me what to do if I missed the eddy, then told me what to do if I missed the next eddy (She must have had Initiation in mind!). I did it right the first time. At the bottom the river was split into three channels, one was rocky (right), one was just barely a boat-width wide (center, I had heard of people swimming through it and how they wondered if they were going to make it or not), and one was the right one (left).

There were two rapids, described as Class III+, which were really more because of the consequences from screwing up. Both, I believe (I can't really remember the first one, it was the very first rapid), involved undercut rocks. I think the first one was a deceptive eddy on the right. From what I heard, anyone knowing what they were doing had no business being over there, as the eddy was a sieve and the water just drained out like water from the tub (no whirlpool). Don described his brother getting into it, getting his stern pinned, climbing out of his boat to get his foot pinned and finally managing to swim for it. It sounded really intense. The other was Table Rock. A very easy rapid, really, but for this huge flat-topped rock set in the middle of the river. It is severely undercut. Apparently raft guides now stop in an eddy upstream to tell their customers that if they fall out here, they have to swim for the right shore, for there is nothing that anyone can do to help them. Of all the people that have been swept under Table Rock (n=?), Don only knew of two that lived to tell the tale. One was a squirt boater who was playing a wave upstream and then got flipped and swept into it.

He had plenty of air under there, and was there for several minutes before he was popped out at another spot on the upstream side of the rock. His boat went through another way, turning up in the eddy below the rock. In that eddy, I could see the water boiling up from under the rock. There was an amazing volume of water going through it. I wanted to know if anyone had come down when the water was turned off to explore its caverns. Surely someone has.

It wasn't all seriousness, although that is an important part of Class IV and V rapids (some boaters now argue that there are no Class V's on the Upper Gauley; some old guide books apparently describe some of the rapids as Class VI!). We found a wonderful under spot and Don said "Do you have your flying license?" I went vertical on my second try. No fancy pirouettes or flying completely airborne for me, though. The cold water was getting to me and I figured I was getting enough rolls without asking for it. So I didn't push. I mentioned to Marrea "Just being able to go down this river is enough." She came back with "I'm always conservative when I jump up a level." There was a

wonderful hole for 360's. There were some waves for surfing, and some wonderful wave trains: some real YaHoo's. One, I slid down and at the top of the crest, started to yell, only to get my mouth full of the next wave.

The water was cold, but the air temperature was nice. In fact, with the clouds hanging on the trees and rocks, it was an incredibly scenic run. I whooped and hollered my way down the river: now at riding the big waves, now at the Chinese painting just downstream:

Autumn mist hanging
on the trees and hills; below:
swift roaring water.

It was the perfect run, no long lines of boaters waiting to try a hole or a wave, no flotillas of rafts to dodge. We had the river to ourselves. And, we avoided the most unpleasant part -- hiking out 20 minutes uphill through brush and mud -- as our shuttle waiting for us right at the river's edge. It was the perfect run!

Four of us paddled
our boats through Fall thunderstorms
of river and sky.

Driving home, I kept breaking into the biggest grin. I thought about telling parents and friends and grinned some more. I've arrived. I'm a kayaker now, a reasonably good one. Of course there's lots I have to work on: reading water, getting to where I want, how I want. It was a spectacular trip. So I felt really good. All my bones and muscles were wonderfully tired and sore, and I was wonderfully tired. I did the best that I could out of all that I had: and it was good!

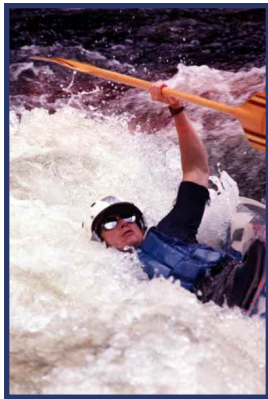
This warm feeling is not
from the winter fire, but
from doing my best.

The next day, I called Barry and Cynthia to warn Cynthia that I had found a booboo on my elbow and that she'd better check her dry top. They told me that they had just run the Cranberry, a wonderful run in the sun and wind. They also said that they'd caught a salamander crossing the road and now had it in a bag with some leaves. It was a Tiger Salamander. I told them how to care for it, if they wanted it as a pet. Salamanders and kayaking. Barry observed that great salamander weather, cold and wet, was great kayaking weather.

The Fall rains have come,
and the rivers are overflowing
with kayaks.

The Only Reality is Your Next Move!

The bridge support is coming up too fast . My bare feet point downstream anticipating a quick push off the trapped debris in order to maneuver into the 5 foot slot to the right . My right arm dangles uselessly in the water.



Kayaking had been part of the picture since that 1980 trip to Madawaska Kanu Camp . Sixteen hours in the car with Sam and Karen Moore laughing our asses off most of the way.

Those week long trips to the Ocoee with Rich Lewis in 81 and 82 playing follow the leader. Daily releases with NO rafts and only occasionally another group.

The Mirage was the hot boat.

The 83 Grand Canyon trip at 30,000 cfs with Tubbo and MacCauley and Moose and Dad. And again in 84 at 42,000 cfs with Gerry Hey and Ric. That epic 84 trip to Costa Rica with the Grimes. Hundreds of trips to West Virginia and Tennessee. Two more to Costa Rica and 2 more on the Grand. No chance of running out of liquor on Spangler's trip

Mostly local runs lately, away from the hypalon chaos of the dam releases.

I peel out into class 3 waters from a river right eddy into a left to right slanting diagonal ledge . A brace hits a barely submerged rock . I feel the sharp twinge in my right shoulder . A roll setup fails to reach the surface . My helmet strikes a rock. I hadn't swum in 12 years . Better get out and take a look at this .

Sam says that on the river it doesn't matter who's mad at you or how much money you have in the bank. "The only reality is your next move."

Gerry, without throw rope or float bags , and a penchant more for the next play move than safety, appears in seconds his stern inches away. I grab on with my left hand . " Get your boat." he barks . I attempt to reach ineffectually with my right. He powers me into the last possible eddy above the bridge. In one move, he spins scooping my graphite

Lightning paddle and tossing it to the bank. He immediately ducks into the narrow far right bridge slot and disappears into into the 5 foot curler of a river wide hole .

Bonds forged on those sacred river days where individuals function as a single organism .

The road is mercifully next to the river . I feel the empty socket though my paddle jacket. Mike Molnar flaunts traffic law in a wild dash to the ER . He drops me off and finishes a run before dark. Not unreasonable as I am the medical director here. I am ushered into a room where I have reduced perhaps a dozen shoulders similarly out. Gerry chases my RPM nearly 3 miles to the takeout.

So many parts stripped away so suddenly. My ability to work , paddling , biking.....Who am I anyway?

I look for meaning .

That life is precious and fragile; that one moment you can do 25 pullups and the next you can't floss.

That it's good for doctors to find the sharp end of the scalpel on occasion to develop compassion and empathy .

That all things earthly are eventually stripped from us.

That life is like the windmill hole in putt-putt where identical shots yield disparate results.

That acute physical pain puts all the emotional BS we torture ourselves with into its proper tiny perspective.

That we must live each moment . Carpe Diem (Latin: Seize the Fish)

That luck is preferable to skill.

That life is like a box of chocolates; you never know when the entire box gets shoved up your

" I always maintain that I have never had a shitty thing happen to me that I have not been glad about in the long run." Tom Whittaker , Costa Rica paddling companion. Tom loses a leg at mid calf in a car wreck and later summits Everest. (May of 98)

Bones are broken; rotator cuff is detached. Surgical repair is needed. Spring looks optimistic for paddling, to once again live the zen like clarity of being wholly in the present, carving a wave.

Frank Loudermilk

A Treatise On Death

Below is a post from rec.boat.paddle. It possibly is one of the most eloquent messages I have read from that - or any other forum. For those of you who disdain email or electronic conveyance as a "substandard" form of communication - read this and then try to defend that position..

B6

PS: If your interested in joining in or reading the discussions on rec.boat.paddle but can't seem to get your browser configured for newsgroups (I did it once - but only with Sam's help) then I suggest you check out <http://www.dejanews.com> This is a web site that I find very helpful for all kinds of news group discussion exploring - not just paddling. Among other features including an awesome search mode you can read individual messages or click on "view thread" and see the original posting and all of the messages in response.

Subject: A Treatise On Death
From: "boater" <boater@usit.net>
Date: 1998/06/17
Message-ID:
<01bd9a2d\$86402b00\$daad0ad0@mypc.tdsnet.com>
Newsgroups: rec.boats.paddle

Bellow is an article on a recent river experience I had, and some thoughts on recent deaths. Sorry for the size of this post, but I don't have a web site to post to.

A Treatise On Death by Boater

I've had an epiphany regarding the recent spate of river deaths. As with most profound revelations that come upon boaters, it was initiated by an "interesting" river experience. Grab a cold beverage of your choice, and read on.

Nestled in Tennessee's Rock Island State Park is as close to a perfect play spot as one could want. Located about two hours west of Chattanooga, access is easy, parking is plentiful, it is dam controlled and runs with regularity.

Rock Island is a feast for the eyes. The deep, narrow canyon is a lush green ridge on river right, and a massive rock-faced ridge on river left. The rock is draped with a spattering of vine, plants, and dead trees fallen from the edge.

Up stream is the dam's powerhouse, a wonderful squirt spot, and a three-boat surfing wave. The current from the hole brushes the rock face and curls back into the eddy pool. You can circle from the hole back to the top with about three strokes.

The 300 yard wide waterfall that magically spawns from the rock wall and dances with the vines and greenery on its way down is the coup de grace. The waterfall exist

because the ridge that ends as the rock wall also forms part of the lake's basin. Over the years, lake water etched an underground path to the face of the rock. The water appears as a steady rain from cracks in the rock about 70 feet above the play hole.

The reality check is that the river left wall is undercut, but not seriously undercut and the wall is easy to avoid. There's no need to be near it. Unless, of course, you want to enter the hole from river left. In which case, you paddle carefully through the slightly boily eddies on the left.

Also note the overhanging rock that sticks out from the rock wall. It is underwater when the flow is about 3,500 cfs, and at cockpit level below 3,000 cfs. The overhand is about the diameter of a Vertigo spun in a circle. Please note the comparison, it is intentional.

I had an interesting event about 6 months ago while playing Rock Island. The release was well under 3,000 cfs. I decided that I wanted to play the hole from river left. Of course there is the wall but, yes mom, I promise to be careful. FYI, the overhang at this level has about two feet of clearance.

On or about the fifth or sixth time coming up river left, I found myself staring at the overhang. From about 6 inches away.

Oh-by-the-way, can you guess what kind of boat I paddle?

A weird swirl under the rock flipped me. The boat slid under the overhanging rock and stayed in the same spot because the water forms an ever so slight whirlpool at this spot.

Yes, a Vertigo.

All hip snaps slammed the boat against the overhang.. Boy, what a dumb-ass. Yank the skirt, pop up, grab the boat and push off the wall. Thank you, eddy current, for taking me gently to shore.

No words were needed. The gentle smirks of the other boaters told me what they thought of Pee-Wee's big adventure.

NOTE TO SELF: stay at least four feet away from the overhang.

I have played the hole many times since, including a beautiful Friday in mid-May. The level this day was somewhere around 3,000 cfs. Remember, this is slightly higher than the day that a perfect roll was foiled.

I was entering the hole from left to avoid a large group of fishermen on the right. The fishermen obviously feel they have seniority for the spot. Entering on the left kept me at a good, neighborly distance from our fellow outdoorsmen.

I passed the overhang that caused my comical swim several

times. I notice the water was a little higher this time. The spot had a noticeable, but manageable, miniature boiling swell. The swell was a little too strong to paddle through. So I would sit back a health distance rising with the swell and paddle forward as the zen of eddy allowed.

I experienced one particularly large swell in the eddy. The boat rose two or three feet because my cautiously safe distance from the overhang put me at the center of the swell.

Now being at the top of a three foot hill, my boat acted as any object subject to the laws of gravity . It rolled "down hill." Towards the overhang.

No problem - back paddle.

What kind of boat was I paddling?

Now the swell begins to collapse and recede in the direction of entry - the overhang. The finale of this recession is a toilet bowl whirlpool which prompts me into a beautiful splat..

No, it was not beautiful because splating undercuts is considered very poor etiquette.

Oh yeah, I'm paddling a Vertigo.

I know where I am and what is happening. I have been here before, and I will survive. Pop the skirt, bail and grab the rock above the surface. I will pull myself up and swim to shore. I will survive the jokes.

OOPS. The current is a little stronger today and decides to pull me down into the whirlpool.

Well hell.

I am now deep enough to be dark. No problem, my jacket buoyancy will lift me in a second.

Well shit. I'm still down here.

Hang loose, the current will swirl and lift you up in a second.

Oh shit, I'm still here.

Plan B - Self Rescue

The wall is at my back. Yank up on the wall and that will give the momentum to reach the surface. One big pull. Wow, lots of resistance to upward movement. I begin climbing. Two, three, four handfuls, now I see the boat. Grab the cockpit and pull. Now grab the stern and pull. Reach above the surface and grab rock.

Gee, why do I feel like I've been here before? Ya know, it would be REAL nice to have some air about know.

SURFACE! My, this air is nice.

MY OPINION

Compilation of errors is killing boaters.

Several small mistakes eat away at ones safety margin until there is no margin left. The best example I know is the crash of test plane in the late 50's described in a story titled, "The Last Foot."

A test plane had about 200 feet of safety margin in the runway length. The safety margin made certain assumptions. The plane was loaded with a specific weight of fuel, the runway was a certain temperature, the air pressure was at a certain point, his tire pressure was correct. Several other "minor" variables were also addressed.

The story describes how each assumption was a "little" wrong. Too much fuel cost 10 feet, low tire pressure cost 10 feet, and so on until all the errors together made the runway too short. The pilot died.

What are minor errors in boating? Experience, gear condition, physical condition, water and air temperature, etc.

I also believe in a randomness factor. Can you walk a six inch wide plank 100 yards long without falling? What if the plank is 500 feet in the air? What if 1000 people walk the plank 1000 time? What are the odds that one will stumble and fall?

Many class IV rapids are not outrageously difficult. You just have to be right EVERY time.

There are a hell of a lot more boaters today.

There were far less really good boaters when I started over 12 years ago. More good boaters means more good boaters will die.

Rapids have clearly been downrated. I can assure you that a class IV of my early days is a class III today.

Boater today move up in difficulty three times faster than past years. I mean this literally. Boaters took three to four years of development to reach the Gauley when I started. Now I see first year boaters on the Gauley, Ocoee, Russell Fork. I see second year boaters on the Green. I see minors and teenagers on the Green.

The game today is to move up the difficulty ladder as quickly as possible. To hell with paddling rivers at equal difficulty just to gain experience.

Disregard for personal responsibility. A recent rec.boat posting talked about rude paddlers who do not help swimmers or pay attention to those in distress.

Boaters should always help boaters.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY - never go to the river expecting a stranger to SAVE YOUR ASS!! Set your own safety and expect your group to rescue you. On rivers like the Ocoee, there are too damn many swimmers to try and save them all. Strangers will GLADY help if a group needs ADDITIONAL assistance.

And now there is discussion of the length of boats as a factor.

There is no "magic bullet" for why boaters die. They die because of many small mistakes.

Why now? We were lucky.

I expect the trend in boater deaths to continue unless we pay close attention to all "minor" problems.

Forgive me for my grim outlook.

I do not sign this treatise. Not because I worry about criticism but to emphasize that this could be anyone. You probably know me, or know someone who knows me. Some will say I'm not as good as I think, some will say I'm careless.

I have paddled for over 12 years. My repertoire includes The Green (yes, I run Sunshine and Gorilla), early runs on Bear in Tennessee, Nepal, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Corsica, and other countries.

I am better than some, and not as good as others.

I am you.

boater@usit.net

Sometimes I Miss those Days (Cont)

John,
Have you gone PC on me? Since when was anyone, anywhere not been a target for blasting over anything... most especially that historic clinic?

I was in one of the choppers (the Don mobile) that left Saigon (Camp Austin on the Emory/Obed) that cold, rainy BWA Spring Clinic day (circa 1982??). C6 and I had taken the clinic as students in C boats (yes all you c-boaters, we have felt your pain) and had been around the BWA long enough to understand (in those days anyway) that you took care of yourself first, always expected disaster to strike at any moment and never ever lost sight of Don Spangler.

The disaster came when "someone in charge" decided, after everyone in the clinic was already well into the Nemo to Oakdale section, that the takeout was to be changed from Oakdale (where all of the cars for the shuttle were) to Camp Austin (where only Don's car was). I'm sure this

seemed like a reasonable idea at the time, after all, the water was pretty high for beginners and due to the steady, heavy rain was rising even more. The only problem was that there was no way to communicate this takeout change to those already on the river - except to yell at them as they floated past Camp Austin and hoped they heard. A lot heard and pulled over - some (the lucky ones) didn't and floated on to Oakdale and their cars. I was in the former group and pulled up to the takeout, crawled on my hands out of my borrowed fiberglass c boat (my knees were too much in pain to straighten out) and saw the "last helicopter" (Don Mobile) leaving for Oakdale. I suddenly realized what was going on, jumped to my feet, started running wincing in agony and flung myself through the passenger window of the moving Don Mobile into a car already packed with wisened BWA instructors breaking open the Wild Turkey (John, I think it was you!).

This was when I learned that Don was able to drive without looking at the road - he was too busy talking to those of us in the back seat to look where he was going. I made the parking lot in Oakdale and retrieved my 1979 diesel VW Rabbit and made the return trip to Camp Austin for C6 and our boats.

When I arrived back at the Camp Austin takeout the scene there was from something out of the "Heart of Dampness". Dozens of soaking wet students (many of their instructors had left with Don) standing freezing in the unrelenting rain. When I pulled up I was immediately mobbed and told the first five who accosted me that I would be glad to rescue them and as many boats as I could pile on my massive, solid oak 4x4 racks which weighed almost as much as a Spangler C-boat. Just after loading up, this poor pitiful female student who had just arrived off the river, pressed her drenched face up to my window and asked for a ride. I wanted to take her out with us - but after she took a quick scan of the load - six steaming, smelly people, their gear and as many boats she meekly said, "I guess you are too full". I rolled up the window and will never forget the forlorn look she had as we put-putted away. Terry Weeks also saw her and made the statement that he didn't have to go to Vietnam to experience what it must have been like to leave Saigon in 1972 in the last chopper.

When we finally got to Joe and Ruth's, the country style resaurant in Somerset, KY that was the early BWA after clinic eating spot, we caught up with Don, Mike Weeks and other BWA glitteratti who were just polishing off the first of the fried _____ (add any type of food here you like). C6 and I pulled up a chair and also proceeded to blast our arteries with the best of them. Boating we had discovered is a license to eat. Things were fine until Lloyd Funkhouser (a new student at that time) showed up - about an hour after C6 and I. He minced no words in relating the horror at the takeout and let those present know about it with both barrels. There was a slight, silent pause and then it was back to the feeding frenzy. Lloyd sat down and joined in too. I don't remember very many new members coming out of that clinic - except Lloyd - which meant it was a success by

those day's standards. (Cynthia and I were already members and had passed the "Charles Andre verbal abuse endurance test" long before).

Those were the days when BWA Clinics had a NMY ("new member yield") of 0.5 (long term BWA members) to 50 (students taking the Clinic). When there was no real concern for the "comfort and convenience" of BWA Clinic students. The prevailing opinion in those days was one of "...we'll sacrifice 1 weekend to teach you - but you'd better want it after that..." A far cry from the BWA Clinics of the 90s. and the growing list of novice trips afterward.

So John... your right. We have learned from the "50 ways to scare off new members" experiences in the early years of the BWA. Sometimes I miss those days. Things do generally run so smoothly now - it tends to be a bit boring. Everything goes off without a hitch - where's the fun in that!!

B6

Me, My Wimpy, and A Plastic Grumman

Lloyd Funkhayser

Back in 1985, Debbie Lucas and her husband John invited me to take a trip on Tygarts Creek in Carter County. I was told that it was easy but very scenic. We would put on somewhere around Olive Hill and go almost to Carter Caves State Park. However, they needed a canoe. No problem! I'd bring my plastic Grumman!

I believe I was maybe one of possibly 10 people that ever bought this canoe. It had no rocker and about 4 inches of freeboard. The seat in the bow was so far forward that you had to keep your knees almost together. I never did learn to solo paddle a canoe and I blame it on this craft. And I must confess that I have never seen another plastic Grumman canoe on water. Could I be the only person dumb enough to have bought this boat? If I get no response from this story I'll assume that I was. I still have the Phoenix Kayak but sold the canoe to a former friend.

After joining Debbie's entourage in Rowan County, we drove to Olive Hill and then to Tygart's Creek. Just before we launched I had surveyed the scene. Two canoes with 4 people that had already started drinking and still had two coolers full of beer. I had brought my dog and was wondering if it was safe to bring Wimpy.

Wimpy is half Cocker Spaniel and half mutt and weighed about 40 pounds. He was very friendly and energetic. In the city he was called Wimpy but when I visited country folk he was called Wimpy Bob.

The creek was only about 2 feet deep and it was a warm sunny day. Wimpy rode with Debbie and John. Our flotilla finally launched and no one was as excited as Wimpy Bob.

He kept moving from gunnel to gunnel while Debbie and John would shift to the opposite side to balance the canoe. I stayed behind them in my kayak and it was the funniest thing I'd seen in a long time. Finally fate caught the three on one side of the canoe at the same time and it flipped. Debbie and John stood up in the water and rescued the cooler first and were looking around for Wimpy but couldn't find him. I told them to lift the canoe and there he was thrashing around with just his head and front legs above water. I quickly paddled to him and quickly lifted him onto my spray skirt as I floated past. We waited downstream as Debbie and John recovered as much gear as they could. They lost a knife they had borrowed from me but didn't lose any beer.

The next 2 or three miles were pleasant with bright blue skies and nice one plus water. Wimpy didn't like the swim but after drying in the warm sunlight he soon couldn't sit still again. Although this started the show again, Wimpy's crew appeared to be in control. But alcohol took it's toll on the coordination of the tandem team. Wimpy faked to his left and went right. Debbie and John immediately went right and they were over. This time Wimpy got to shore immediately and waited. Without any coaxing Wimpy stepped onto my spray skirt and we paddled downstream to the canoe.

The canoe was next to a rock that stood about a foot above the gunnels. After a short break I talked Wimpy into the canoe but he was obviously a little concerned. Although Wimpy had webbed feet he was the worst swimming dog I had ever seen. He actually needed a PFD. He was not having a good time at this point. John obviously was drunk by this time. He tried to step into the canoe from the rock like he was stepping onto a pontoon boat. He immediately fell into the water dumping everything including Wimpy again.

Wimpy got to shore and starting walking upstream along a path with a pace that indicated he wanted to get-the-hell out of there. He would periodically look back to ensure that no one was following him. I had to paddle upstream and talk him into getting on my kayak. When we returned to the canoe he refused to get in. I had to paddle about 9 miles with Wimpy sitting on my spray skirt. His head was just below my chin. I had to hold my paddle in a different position that eventually became tiring.

There was only one rapid on this creek that I remember. It was created by a quarry that you can see from I-64 outside of Olive Hill. Although it was only a class 2 rapid Wimpy ran along the creek as I ran the rapid. Then he got back on. The scenery was beautiful with full canopy but as a result cooler. The last 2 or 3 miles I was constantly talking to Wimpy because he started shivering and of course whimpering.

Yes we finally did make it. I would do it again only if I happened to be visiting someone. Although Wimpy is dead now he wouldn't. Somehow he always knew when we crossed into Carter County after this trip. He would put his life jacket on.

El Niño



El Nino! We have blamed everything on it, from high water to no water. When we first decided that this April would be the time we took our whale-watching trip in Mexico, I immediately started worrying that the whales would be somewhere else because of El Nino. Makes sense doesn't it? If the water is warmer in the area, maybe the whales will go to a cooler climate. It was one of the first questions I asked our guides. The whale populations in the Sea of Cortez are resident, rather than migrating; what you see is entirely up to chance, said Mary and Ricardo. They couldn't, (or wouldn't,) give me a definitive answer. It's different, they said, but there's still plenty of whales. I was thrilled.

There were folks from all over the country on this trip; Maine, New Hampshire, California, Washington, and Kentucky. The ice-breaker was a fabulous game called Assassin, where a randomly but secretly selected killer winks at you, the signal that you have 8 hours to plan and execute your own demise in a theatrical and public scene. Of course since the killer lets you know its your turn to die by looking you in the eyes, it is not the best way to get to know people, but in spite of limited eye contact we got to know the trip members. This was as much fun as looking for whales!

It took us a couple of days to find them, (the whales, I mean,) but actually there was so much to do and explore, that I didn't miss them much. We kayaked around Isla San Jose. Pure, clean sandy beaches, clear water, stupendous sunrises. We snorkeled and swam with the tropical fish and rays. We hiked across the island, learning about the unusual vegetation and how it survives the heat and drought. At one camp, after a hike up to some mission ruins from the last century, a few of us bushwacked our way a mile further, Indiana Jones style, through swarms of bees feasting at the blooming trees, up to a fresh water spring pouring out between a cleft in a rock. Our guide, who knew his way there, had trouble finding it. There were several false trails and a lot of backtracking, but what a treasure when we found it. Everybody took turns climbing into the 2x2 foot cave the water was splashing into to get soaked.



We paddled across the straight to our next camp, stopping at a tiny village of four families. All travel is done by boat or skiff. The 13 children of the village have school every other month. A teacher comes out every day by boat for four weeks, then they have a month off while the teacher goes to a different hamlet. No school building, few supplies. All water and supplies are boated in. Just like our trip to Nepal many years ago, this trip was an eye opener in terms of how others live.

All the time, we are scanning the sea. Finally from the top of a bluff we got the word; someone saw a spout. Like a Chinese fire drill, we scrambled down the 200 foot cliff on the rocky, sandy trail and hopped into a skiff to chase the whales. They blow a couple times and then swim for 5-6 minutes, so you have to know which direction they're going in and guess at the next surfacing. And there they were, 2 blue whales and a calve. The largest mammal ever to live on this planet. It was a point where the term awesome loses meaning. And there were more. A mother finback and a calve, too.

Let me make this perfectly clear. This was not Sea World. We did not get out and swim with the whales. These were whales with a purpose, moving steadily at a brisk clip. I know that people have, but we did not. It didn't matter. Even just to share the salt water from their spray with one of these unbelievable creatures is a gift of great magnitude.

El Nino did affect us in a more direct way the next few days. A Northeaster, a wind pattern which normally stops in early March, blew in and made the paddling quite a challenge. 4 and 5 foot swells and whitecaps, as well as the wind, gave the boaters a great feel for the power of the water. When you were down in a trough you couldn't see the boats ahead of you. Fortunately for me, when my back finally said 'You won't do this anymore,' I had a skiff to crawl into. This wild water also nixed our trip to the sea lion colony; not only were there no sea lions to swim with but it was too rough to put down an anchor! We did stop at a pristine beach with aquamarine water and swim for a while, though.

All in all, El Nino didn't defeat us, it only made us want more! We saw four different kinds of whales, the blues, the finbacks, one humpback, and a couple pods of pilot whales. Next year we want to do the Pacific side where the gray whales migrate, where you can get up close and personal with the travelers. But this trip to Baja and the Sea of Cortez was a stunning and thrilling experience, for the whales, the scenery, the emptiness and the sheer vastness it conveyed. Take a trip there. El Nino won't be around forever!



One of the Whales we saw!

The Bluegrass Wildwater Association Presents the 4th Annual
Russell Fork River Rendezvous

October 2-3-4, 1998 Kiwanas Park, Haysi, Va.

A 3 day Gathering supporting the Russell Fork River!

Nestled in the midst of the Appalachians, the Russell Fork River runs through a deep gorge known as the "Breaks". As people have become appreciative of the area a new level of environmental awareness of the fragile river eco-system is evident. The Russell Fork River Rendezvous is an example of this energy at work! As it grows, so can the protection of this magnificent handiwork of nature be more assured.

The RFR is a three day, open microphone music scene of Bands, Musicians, and Drum Circles for River Runners, Hikers, Mountain Bikers, Climbers and any who are concerned about the river and its environment! The River Festival is unique....It has no corporate sponsors, no commercial vendors. The Cost of the event is \$10.00 for 3 days of camping, music and fun. No friend of the Russell Fork will be turned away at the gate. If you volunteer for a few hours of helping the festival



the fee can be waived. There will be almost no limit to the number of campers & festival participants that can attend due to the huge size of the Festival Grounds.

All proceeds go to River Conservation with the focus on the Russell Fork River Corridor. Organizations supported will include the American Whitewater Affiliation, Appalshop, and Headwaters, Inc. For more information please call Brent Austin at (606)-278-2011.

Spirit of the Festival!

"The rivers are our brothers. They quench our thirst. They carry our canoes and feed our children. So you must give to the rivers the kindness you would give to any brother." As we are part of the land, you too are part of the land. This earth is precious to us. It is also precious to you! One thing I know: there is only one God. No man, be he Red Man or White Man, can be apart. We are brothers after all."

Chief Seattle of the Suquamish Tribe

Note: We are sure that Chief Seattle today would say "brothers & sisters!"

This festival gathering is to celebrate the value and beauty of the Russell Fork River, the mountains, and the people that live here. It is a gathering of friends, kind energy and understanding, much like the best of the gatherings of the sixties. But, wearing your tie-dies or your poly-pro, come to have fun, hear good music, boat, hike, bike, or climb in a beautiful place.

Fun for all! Come Give to the River!

Music by many musicians & bands



Janie Gray
Heavy Weather
Sara Day Evans

Bacchus
Fuzzi Logic
Majikal mythical Vand ov
Lythperth

Emily's Garden
Roxa-Kola
AppalJam
Peace In the Jones
Marla Land
Ballroom
Sunny Payne

Also Bluegrass Acoustic & More!

- Continuous Drum Circle (Full Moon Weekend!)
- Expert Class V whitewater race through the Gorge!
- Activist Exhibits, Vegetarian Foods, Private/Personal Vending and spontaneous happenings!

BWA Members!

Your help is need for the success of the festival. Please call Brent Austin @ 606-278-2011 or Don Spangler @ 606-277-7314 (e-mail donspang@aol.com)

For more information on the Festival call: Brent Austin: (606) 278-2011 or go to <http://www.surfbwa.org/russellfork98> or to <http://www.kymtnnet.org/wwatch/wwatch.htm> or send e-mail to James Stapleton at surfin@kymtnnet.org

Final issue of Bowlines if you forget to renew your membership !

Join the BWA! BWA Membership \$15/individual; \$20/Family/year entitles you to receive the newsletter, 10% discounts at many local and out of state outfitter shops, use of club kayak, discount at pool rolling sessions, a listing in the BWA Handbook, and a stream gauge guide

August 29 & 30: Join everyone at the BWA Annual Reunion & Party!

Hey there folks. Its time once again for our annual club party and reunion. We will be gathering at the OAR camp-ground on Welcome Valley Road just outside Benton TN. The site has hot showers and flush toilets and is near the Ocoee and Hiwassee Rivers (And not too far from the Nantahala). The party will be held on the weekend of Aug. 28-30. Cost for camping will be \$10 per adult. Past President Bruce Rishel is in charge of the event. He has been working to make this a fine party. Please pay your camping fee to him.

The theme for Saturday night*s pot-luck dinner is *Comfort Food.* Bring a dish that makes you comfortable. If green beans make you comfortable, bring them. If sardine casserole makes you comfortable, go for it. Sockeye or Hebble will eat it. **There will be a competition for best entree, best side dish and best dessert.** Some really cool, very elaborate and extremely costly prizes will be awarded.

We are also having a used equipment sale. Tubbo has volunteered to run the sale. All you need to do is bring the gear you want to sell and tell him the price you want for it. He will manage things while you go paddling. This will be a great opportunity for new paddlers to purchase used gear.

In the spirit of good relations, we are also inviting the Viking Canoe Club to this year*s party. We look forward to having our Central Kentucky paddling buddies join us for some fine boating and good food. This will be the 22nd year for this extravaganza. I hope to see you there!

**Next Issue: A Look at the Russell Fork Rendezvous.....
Check Pg.15 this issue for Annoucement**



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