

In our Own Words.....

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The National Paddling Film Festival 2023 Report
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The Nealy We Didn't Know

The History & Legacy of the NPFF.

**How it has been important to the
Bluegrass WildWater Association**

Looking Ahead

Second Tuesday of the Month, 7:30 pm

BWA Monthly Meeting

Location can vary

For more information on Club Meetings
& Activities always check at www.bluegrasswildwater.org

**Check BWA web site
or look for e-mail updates**

Roll Sessions
For Dates, info and to register go to:
www.bluegrasswildwater.org

Free Pre-Clinic Roll Session!

**Pre-Clinic Roll Sessions!! Come get tuned up for clinic,
or just to hang out and learn.**

Questions? Email HLoller@BluegrassWildwater.org

Pre-Clinic Roll Session!

Pre-Clinic Roll Sessions!! Come get tuned up for clinic, or
just to hang out and learn. Questions?

Email HLoller@BluegrassWildwater.org

NOTE: In case of rain, Hanley will still be there waiting for it
to clear up or maybe deciding to get in the water anyway if
there is no lightning. :-)

**This Monday, come on out to the end of
Strohmeier BYPASS Road, Frankfort**

(about 6.5 miles from Cove Spring Park traveling north on 127)
Road is on the right and ends at a small turn about above the
creek. NOTE: Google mislabels Strohmeier, but the pin in this map
is dead on it.

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/38%C2%B018'47.7%22N+84%C2%B050'51.3%22W/@38.3132482,-84.849788,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m6!3m5!1s0x0:0x480d64dfdc12e53317e2!8m2!3d38.3132436>

!4d-84.8475938

It's a nice big pool of water on the Elkhorn
Get help with your roll, practice on your own, work on your
offside, or practice basics like ferries, peel outs and eddy
turns in the feature at the top of the pool.

Monday, April 24th 6:00pm till 8:00...or 'til it gets dark Where:
Strohmeier Bypass road, Frankfort Ky (see link above)

Cost: Free

**Check out Bowlines Online Archive with many
great issues going back many years!**

Issue Archive: To Be Updated?

A must read for all members, our 30th Anniversary issue:



Bowlines is the Newsletter of the Bluegrass Wildwater
Association, POB 4231, Lexington Ky, 40504

Club Officers 2022-2023

President	Robert Watts	
Vice-President	Ben Mudd	
Treasurer	Kyle Koeberlein	
Secretary	Robert Watts	
Safety	Hanley Loller	
Bowlines Newsletter	Don Spangler	donspang@aol.com
Program	Sandra Broadwill	
Cyber Communications	Michael Broadwill	
Conservation	Angus Milton	
Film Festival Coordinator	Emily Grimes	
Equipment Coordinator	Jansen Koeberlein	
At-Large Member	Damon Rosenbarker	
Membership Coordinator	Terri Covington Brunj	
Past President	Sandra Broadwill	

Join in on the Fun!

Join the BWA! BWA Membership \$20/individual; \$25/Family year entitles
you to receive the newsletter, 10% discounts at many local and out of state
outfitter shops, use of club equipment, discount at pool rolling sessions, and
web site with & a parking pass for the Elkhorn.

Meetings are held at 7:30, the second Tuesday of each month at
location announced on our website: https://www.bluegrasswildwater.org/?ss_source=sscampaigns&ss_campaign_id=60e8495cf8956b6359b4c571&ss_email_id=60e8a0defd470973f3295b7e&ss_campaign_name=New+Website%2C+Vote+on+the+Bylaws%2C+%26+Upcoming+Events%21&ss_campaign_sent_date=2021-07-09T19%3A18%3A13Z

**BWA members want to read your story!
Short or long. Sad or Funny.
Tell us your paddling related story! Please!!**

Article files can be e-mailed to the Editor: donspang@aol.com



About the BWA's Bowlines

The Bowlines has been a unique record of the BWA
and its members. Unique in that it has been more than
a listing of club activities and general information about
paddling and related issues. When you read Bowlines
you read about each of us and what we thought and
did over the years. Members have contributed articles
not only about paddling, conservation, and the club, but
also stories crafted with humor, imagination, and the
spirit of enthusiasm of life and enjoyment of each other.
These are only a small portion of the many articles
worth rereading. There have been songs, poems, soap
operas, jokes, cartoons, wedding announcements, birth
announcements, and unique trip reports among all the
issues. Not what you might think you would see in a
whitewater club newsletter.

We owe a thank you to all the newsletter editors that
spent countless hours preparing each issue. To all you
club members a big BWA hand for your contributions.
Please keep it up! Now dig in and enjoy old memories
or chuckle at the amusing stories, poems and pictures.

NPF 2023 Report

Thanks to everyone who took part in NPF 2023!



This year, there were 3 in-person events that took place on February 18, 2023:

The Main Event at the Capital Plaza Hotel in Frankfort, KY

A simulcast hosted by the West Asheville Canoe & Kayak Organization at the LiquidLogic Warehouse in Fletcher, NC

A watch party hosted at Deerhammer Distillery in Buena Vista, CO

Once again, we broadcast our main event live, and allowed ticket holders the opportunity to watch all film submissions for two weeks surrounding the live event. We are absolutely blown away with how this year turned out, and think we may have set a record (to be fact-checked)!

We found a new home at the Capital Plaza Hotel, the chili queen of Kentucky was upset by a grade-schooler (regrets to Cynthia Grimes, and congrats to Fabian Bernal and his daughter), masks were optional, the frothy beverages were flowing, and the guest hosts were on fire! Brooke Hess joined us to talk about science & her conservation efforts out west, and Jess Wiegandt premiered her conservation film, "A River Called Home"; we were honored to host & spotlight two incredible change makers in the whitewater and film world.

Here's a breakdown of the money; a whopping \$8,744.11 from the online auction, our gross sales in Frankfort & Fletcher totaled \$6,975 (of which, the Canoe KY Boat Raffle brought in \$1,685, and the LiquidLogic boat raffle brought in \$1,650!), \$1,620 in online sales (folks who tuned in solely online, and who purchased tickets in advance), and our pals at Deerhammer in Buena Vista donated \$645. This is a total of \$17,984.11 brought in from NPF 2023!!!

We can't say thanks enough to all of our donors/sponsors, partners, volunteers, filmmakers & photographers, and attendees for making this event so successful! This is a true grassroots, community supported event, and everyone who took part should share the pride!

Spring is truly our most favorite time of the year at NPF Headquarters - the temps are getting warmer, the creeks are starting to flow again, and we get to divvy out loads of dolla's!!!! Exact amounts & a full list of beneficiaries will be announced on Earth Day, in April. To tide you over, we do know we will be donating to the following organizations that embody one of our missions - to protect, conserve, and make rivers accessible:

American Whitewater (a portion of this will be from the Deerhammer Distillery funds)

The Grand Salmon Source to Sea (in honor of guest host, Brooke Hess)

Buena Vista River Park (a portion of this will be from the Deerhammer Distillery funds)

WACKO's Organizations of Choice

We would be remiss to end this year's recap without a HUGE SHOUTOUT to Barry Grimes who has been the National Paddling Film Festival's number 1 volunteer since its inception 40 years ago. In 1983, Barry and members of the Bluegrass Wildwater Association came together in a barn at the KY Horse Park to host the inaugural NPF. Since then, Barry has been the director several times, and has tried to quit the NPF many, many times, but has never really been successful with that endeavor ;-). When we made the pivot to online in 2021, Barry understood the vision, and emerged from his dream of retirement, to run a smooth, brilliant stream! Not only has he been instrumental in our pivot to the online arena, but he is also the backbone of the NPF's Roadshows (of which we've already had 2 in 2023!). The NPF world wouldn't turn without Barry, and mine wouldn't turn without him, either. Thanks for all your help & support, Dad!

Thanks again to everyone involved with NPF 2023 - we sincerely hope you'll join us again in 2024. Please reach out to npfdirector@gmail.com to see how you can get involved.

Emily Grimes

Congratulations!

Thanks to all the filmmakers who submitted their work, and congratulations to the



Baffin Vacation

2023 NPFF Winner
Professional

Erik Boomer and Sarah McNair Landry set off on a bold multi-sport 45 day expedition traveling through the remote landscape of Baffin Island in search of stunning cliffs to climb and unexplored rivers to white-water kayak.

Sarah McNair Landry Nuna-
vut, Canada



Paddle Tribal Waters

2023 NPFF
Winner
Conservation

When the largest dam removal project in history begins, a group of indigenous youth learn to whitewater kayak in hopes of becoming the first people to paddle the restored river from source to sea.

Rush Sturges |
White Salmon, WA



The Red Creek Sessions

2023 NPFF Winner
Accomplished

Red Creek is the elusive Class V+ whitewater gem flowing from the Dolly Sods Wilderness in the West Virginia highlands.

Join Dr. Philip Prince Ph.D. as he takes an in depth look at La Petite Riviere through the descent of Red Creek by a group of local whitewater kayakers on Cheatfest Weekend 2022. And then stick around for a trip down the entire Cheat Watershed as we highlight everything this iconic river has to offer. Enjoy the ride!

Justin Harris/ Mountain
River Media, Davis, WV



La Petite Riviere

2023 NPFF Winner
Amateur

Join us on a 9 day whitewater kayaking expedition in Minganie (Quebec, CANADA). We begin by flying north, deep into the boreal forest, landing on a small unnamed lake. From there we make our way down a small unnamed river which we nickname "La Petite Riviere".

This little river flows into the Saint-Jean River, which in turn flows into the Gulf of St. Lawrence. We also make a small detour one afternoon to explore the Poisset River, another tributary of the Saint-Jean. Along the way we run some rapids, we portage some rapids and we catch lots of trout. The old footage at the start of the video was contributed by Guy Doré, who canoed down the Saint Jean River in 1983.

Adam Gendron Mitchell
Lachute, QC



2023 Best Paddling Image Winner "Benny at Skook" by Rush Sturges

Photo Essay of the NPFF 2023

Photos By Bob Larking, Sandra Broadwell, Don Spangler







Looking Back:

Why did Lexington have a group of paddlers that formed a whitewater paddling club "the BWA" that was a great success?



By Don Spangler

Lexington Kentucky would not be high on the list of places you would expect to have an active and successful whitewater paddling club.

There are no famous whitewater river runs near Lexington, Kentucky. There are no dams that can release water for a good Class 3 or 4 run on rapids nearby. There are some rain dependant class 2 streams, but to paddle really good whitewater, you have to drive at least two or three hours from Lexington. So in the early days of the BWA it was not unusual for us to drive seven hours or so to get to exciting whitewater. Rivers such as the Chattooga River in Georgia, the Yough in Pennsylvania, or the Little River in Alabama. Note that in many cases in the seventies or eighties you did not have all the super highways and Interstate roads we now have that make travelling quick & easy. Also, to get to many rivers, you often drove on slow and winding two lane roads at much lower speeds to sometimes arriving at one or two in the morning

We founded the BWA with 32 members in 1976. Our club was small, enthusiastic, and eager to do anything related to paddling. We made our own canoes and decked kayaks or C-1s, fiberglass or cedar-strip. Gear and other paddling needs were often hard to find such things as spray skirts, paddles, life jackets or clothing. We were passionate about the adventure of exploring rivers, no matter where and how far we had to go to do so.

By late seventies we had made long trips to the Rio Grand in Texas, the Petawawa & Madawaska in Ontario, the Colorado in Arizona, the St. Johns, Allagash & Dead in Maine as well as many other runs in the South and North East. Serious about the adventure of paddling and exploring rivers, our lives revolved around paddling.

What created this cadre of hard-core zealous paddlers in Lexington, Kentucky? It was SAGE, a great school of the outdoors with Bob Sehlinger that gave many in Lexington instruction in outdoor skills and a much needed place to buy outdoor gear.

Some of us had been paddlers for a while, but many folks had also been enamored of whitewater canoeing since the "Deliverance" movie had been released. Kent Ford, a famous paddler, supporter and friend of the BWA said in his documentary video, The Call of the River: "paddling exploded in the 1970ies, spurred by the movie Deliverance, slalom's inclusion in the 1972 Augsburg Olympics, and the advent of nearly indestructible plastic (boats).



Bob Sehlinger teaching a "Aqual Class" group of paddlers on the Cumberland River

For us in central Kentucky Bob & SAGE not only taught (patiently) most of us the skills a good paddler must have, but encouraged and supported the BWA for decades after he went on to great heights, forming Menasha Ridge Press with William Nealy and Holly Wallace to print Nealy's River Maps and Cartoon Books. They were a hit with all Whitewater paddlers, we all often saw ourselves in the books, and in reality, the BWA is mentioned and depicted in some of them.

Since the SAGE days of the seventies and the partnership with William & Holly with Menasha, Bob Sehlinger became a Lowell Thomas Award winning journalist as well as founder and co-owner of AdventureKEEN.

AdventureKEEN is an independent book publishing company specializes in travel, nature, and outdoor activities that includes Menasha Ridge Press, Wilderness Press, The Unofficial Guides, Clerisy Press, and Adventure Publications. The author of 27 books, Sehlinger is a past president of the Publishers Association of the South, and he served at the invitation of the US State Department and the US Information Service on educational missions for publishers in Hungary, Romania, and Russia.

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What is not known by many, including many of today's paddlers, is that Bob was key to the creation of the BWA and also the National Paddling Film Festival.

Back in 1981 when film was the only available way for us to record our paddling adventures one BWA member, the intrepid "Sam Moore", made a first run of the Russell Fork Gorge during a special dam release from the Flanagan Reservoir on the Pound. The Russell Fork is one of the classic Class V creek runs in the United States and it was an important event for serious whitewater paddlers.

When Sam finished the run, he knew he had pushed his skills to their limits. Sam and others in the club realized new river skills and rescue knowledge were needed, so in 1982, to promote river safety skills and knowledge, the BWA put on the Southeastern River Safety & Rescue Symposium. This two-day symposium was the first event of its kind and brought together state rescue teams, Nantahala Outdoor Center instructors, paddlers who had been in critical situations on the river, as well as other safety experts. Our speakers were some of the top experts in river safety and rescue at the time: Charlie Walbridge, Bunny Johns, Russ Nichols, Dave Mason, Bob Sehlinger, and others. The event was well attended and won praise from the paddling community.

That Russell Fork run of Sam's was seminal in another way. In those days only the pros had access to the sophisticated equipment that was needed to produce a film. Due to high cost, videotape & 16 mm film were essentially professional mediums. Film depicting river "exploits, fantasies or humor" did not exist. The few movies around of whitewater paddling were instructional or documentary films. The standard camera for most amateurs was an 8 mm one. Amateur movie making was difficult and primitive. What most amateurs did was shoot a lot of footage (good and bad) then show it with no editing. Thus a "home movie" got a reputation as something to be avoided. So when an 8 mm film, "Roar on the Russell Fork" was made of the run by TBS (Terry, Barry & Sam) Productions with editing, opening and closing titles and music, it was a hit with whitewater paddlers. Amateur

film about paddling a river with titles and music with it was almost unheard of in those days. "Roar on the Russell Fork" was a movie we paddlers could relate to and appreciate. Especially a film that featured a fellow paddler in it. Roar on the Russell Fork displayed emotions of excitement, confidence, fear, uncertainty, and success, all held together with a thread of humor and BWA Bravado. It was a hit at meetings and parties!

The film was also a hit with a BWA member by the name of Bob Sehlinger. Bob was one of the main reasons that there were paddlers in the Bluegrass. While Director at Sage Bob taught many of us to paddle. He had recently left Sage to form Menasha Ridge Press along with William Nealy and Holly Wallace. As I was president of the BWA at the time, Bob contacted me and said that he and Menasha Ridge had a proposal for the BWA. They wanted me to ask the BWA if it would be interested in putting on a film festival.

Bob noted our very successful Symposium, the Russell Fork movie as well as the "we can do" attitude of the BWA. "If any club can do it, I know the BWA can." There is a dearth of whitewater films and I think we need to encourage amateurs and professionals to make some," Bob said. Bob and Menasha Ridge promised financial support. If the event made money it was ours to use, if not, they would cover our debts.

With this promise of support in mind I discussed the proposal with several members and we agreed that it would be a great thing to do. We proposed it to the Club as a whole and we got a resounding yes. The entire BWA would be involved and do what might be needed to make it a success. An organizational group was formed and we were off to the movies! We started holding biweekly planning meetings to hash out the details.

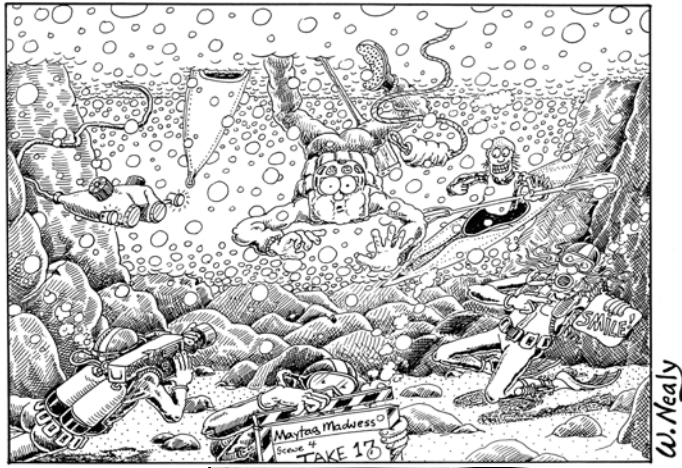
The Film Festival committee soon found that there would be a lot of unknowns. The biggest unknowns were how many would attend and where could we hold the festival. Would we get 50 or would we get 500 to attend? We decided that it was unlikely we would get 500 to come, but we still needed a facility that would be flexible and not too expensive.

Bob came into town and went around helping us consider different locations. Too big, too small, too expensive, none of the locations we saw that day seemed to be what we needed. Bob left and we had no solution for the location of the festival. It became obvious the Film Festival would be a more difficult task than putting on the Safety Symposium. Then it came to us! The state of Kentucky had recently opened the Horse Park and it had a lot of facilities including a theater. We gave the park a call and made an appointment. We thought we had found a place! We listed the reasons for having the festival there: it had a theater, an easy to find location, a campground, nearby motels, and the state was eager to have people visit and use the new park. It was the most promising location we had considered.

Our hopes were almost dashed when we met with the Horse Park. They quickly informed us that they needed the theater to show horse movies to visitors. But how about a Barn? We looked at the barn and decided we could turn it into a theater.

Well, the rest is history. Almost every member of the club was involved in some aspect of putting on the festival. The BWA was a group that were known to paddle hard, play hard, and party hard together. This was the time of some of the more notorious BWA escapades: hot tub parties at clinics, "Eat Off Contests" at Clinics, Dad's Dinner Theater, Big Time Wrestling, boat sledding contests at Jacobson park when it snowed, paddling the streets of downtown Lexington after a heavy downpour, Boating for Beers, moonlight whitewater paddling, and many other true stories. (OK, mostly true). Characters like "The Ned", "Dr. Danger", "Dad", "The Head Puterbaugh", and "Chief", who all sometimes tended to sip a little too much Wild Turkey (or Wodka in the case of Dad) at night to make it to the river before noon. Even BWA women gained notoriety for dressing up in wet-suits and putting on (sexy) vaudeville type shows.

This aspect of the BWA was not lost on one person at Menasha Ridge: William Nealy. There was a quick connection and appreciation for each other between he and the BWA. We were a club that could have been right out of one of his cartoons. It was no small wonder that Nealy gave the BWA and some of its members acknowledgment in his Whitewater Home Companion! We were often archetypes of characters in his cartoon books. William would also do cartoons for the BWA to use for promoting the National Paddling Film Festival.



Some of the Art William Nealy did about and for the BWA & NPFF



So now this wild and wacky club with Nealy type characters was going to put on a paddling film festival in a big barn! Ads were run in Paddler magazine, press releases sent to TV stations and newspapers and notices mailed to paddle clubs. Movie, video and slide equipment had been rented or borrowed.

That first Film Festival didn't make any money, in fact, it would be a couple of more years before we could turn a profit. But for those of us that attended the Festival It will always be remembered. My thanks go out to Menasha Ridge Press: Bob Sehlinger, Holly Wallace and especially to William Nealy for their encouragement and support in creating the National Paddling Film Festival. The NPFF did spur the creation of river films of all kinds with the NPFF

It has also enabled the BWA to donate a lot of money to river causes and organizations over the years. The NPFF did spurred the creation of river films and videos of all kinds with the NPFF from amateurs and pros. Many of the hosts and visitors that attended the festival over the years include noted and well know members of the paddling community from over the years that added to our reputation.. For us in the BWA the NPFF has always been appreciated for bringing us together for a good time!

The BWA had become a success paddling club in many ways, but it was Bob Sehlinger, William Nealy and Holly Wallace that gave us the idea and support to create the National Paddling Film Festival that has listed for almost 40 years! It was a major factor in making us more than just a paddling club!

As we say in the BWA: a Big Hand to Bob, William, & Holly!

Bob Sehlinger, William Nealy, Holly Wallace & the Bluegrass Wildwater Association

Bob Sehlinger

In about 1976, my Lexington company, SAGE, became a founding member of the Eastern Professional River Outfitters Association (EPRO), the first organization in the eastern US for commercial river outfitting companies. It was a brother to the Western River Guides Association (WRGA) but differed in that members of EPRO were business entities instead of individuals. Shortly after its founding EPRO began having meetings/conventions. These included a trade show where vendors that sold products to commercial outfitters exhibited their products. These included raft, paddle, and river gear manufacturers as well as apparel companies.



Bob Sehlinger

At about our third convention, Williams Nealy and his girlfriend and later wife, Holly Wallace, exhibited William's hand-drawn river maps. William had been plugging along cottage-industry style trying to persuade outfitters and outdoor retail stores to carry his maps. He figured that if he could create some demand in the river outfitting community, he could turn his modest enterprise into a real business. By the time he first showed at our EPRO tradeshow he had completed about 10 or so maps. Fortunately, one of his early customers was the Nantahala Outdoor Center (NOC). The NOC was among the more successful river-running outfitters in the eastern US, and their endorsement carried a lot of weight. Its support of William's river maps influenced other outfitters. They bought maps if their river already had a Nealy map and pressed William to create a map for their river if one didn't exist.



It was at EPRO meetings that I met Holly and William. SAGE had an outdoor retail store in Lexington but didn't carry Nealy maps because we operated on about eight different rivers including the Cumberland, Rockcastle, Kentucky, and Elkhorn which would never see a Nealy map, as well as the Nantahala (NC) and Hiawasse (TN). At the time I'd written several paddling guides and was transitioning from outfitting to book publishing. I approached Williams about collecting his maps in a book. William and Holly were excited by the prospect, so William became my first author and *Whitewater Home Companion* was his first published title.

My friendship with William and Holly deepened during this time. I was quite aware of Holly's extremely debilitating rheumatoid arthritis. She was young and full of life and tried to live as normally as possible, but something as benign as five minutes of dancing would put her in bed for three days. She was extremely bright and had been William's business consultant since day-one. Spending time at an EPRO meeting she confided that her father was wealthy and was all about finding her something professionally to sink her teeth into. Mentally, as he knew, she was super sharp, but she could never have a regular job because of her disease. So, Holly asked me if I would go to Birmingham and meet with her dad. I put together a list of suitable possibilities that I shared with her father, Dan. We conferred for two days, got along well, and I thought we were making good progress.

At the time I was looking at acquiring rights to my paddling guides that were published by Thomas Press in Ann Arbor, Michigan. During my tenure with Thomas Press I helped them recruit authors, including Bob Benner and Paul Davidson, and we had built a nice little list of outdoor books. Thomas Press was shifting its focus away from the outdoor titles and I was pretty sure they would sell me the rights. I had mentioned this to Dan

Wallace in passing in a social conversation over dinner.

A couple of weeks later Dan called me and said he would bankroll the acquisition of the Thomas Press titles if I would give Holly a meaningful job and mentor her in the business of book publishing. I happily agreed and few months later Menasha Ridge Press was born. We set up an ergonomically suitable office in her home in Chapel Hill North Carolina and went to work. She oversaw sales and marketing and caught on at lightning speed, she was brilliant.

Working with William was a great experience. We also paddled and skied together, and he helped me move from Frankfort to Birmingham. We also had a musical connection in that we were both drummers.



Holly Wallace & William Nealy

Being a very artsy person, William was stoked about the National Paddling Film Festival. He and Holly became whole-hearted supporters. Holly did some greeting and other arthritis compatible tasks while William produced some great art for the festival and later served as a judge.

After about seven years, the stress of working in entrepreneurial publishing exacerbated Holly's disease and she had to retire. Dan and I continued our partnership and we saw the press through a roller coaster of difficult years including a mud slide that destroyed our office and warehouse. During that period William authored eight new books for us. I still saw Holly and William often and William and I did an annual ski trip. One year we bumped into and had dinner with a group from the BWA.

Holly was always in pain, and William suffered some painful chronic injuries that kept him from sitting. He had to give up playing the drums and had to draw lying on his stomach. Taking care of Holly became increasingly difficult. He presented a strong persona outside but was really struggling inside. Still, his suicide was unexpected. I was out of the country when Holly's brother Daniel called me with the news. Though not altogether surprised, it was quite a blow to lose such a close and longtime friend. Holly survived William by about ten years, during which her disease ravaged her entire body. To the end though she embraced life and was a profile of courage. She died during abdominal surgery.

William's life and story are chronicled in *This Isn't Going to End Well*, by brother Daniel Wallace, published in the spring of 2023. It's a warm and insightful remembrance of a lovable man and artistic genius, and Daniel's lifelong friendship with him.



More about William Nealy & the NPFF

Why the William Nealy Award is Important.

The first William Nealy Award was presented at the 2002 National Paddling Film Festival, 31 years since the first NPFF in October, 1983. Most BWA members know about the NPFF and are likely to have attended a festival unless they have just joined the club. The NPFF has become the star accomplishment of our club and is well known in the whitewater paddling community. It not only was a major factor in spurring the creation of paddling films and art, but has raised thousands of dollars for river causes. But too many paddlers, especially nowadays, know little if anything about William Nealy and his connection to the film festival or what the award signifies. The Film Festival program each year explains the reason for the award followed by a few brief sentences about William Nealy, but it is but a brief mention in a busy weekend when the focus is on great videos, food, beer, friends and a paddling race. So it comes as no surprise that it may be overlooked or forgotten soon after the festival program is laid down.



What The William Nealy Award Is For

The William Nealy award is given to honor extraordinary distinction in lifetime achievement, exceptional contributions to the state of paddlesport arts and imagery, or for outstanding service to the National Paddling Film Festival.

The William Nealy Award is to continue the original goal and purpose of the Film Festival which was to encourage those who would communicate in various art forms the enthusiasm that we have for paddling, the wonderful places where we paddle and the excitement and satisfaction we find in paddlesports.

Each year the NPFF competition produces winning entries, both amateur and professional. The improvement of the quality and the numbers of paddling films has been significant since the first days when almost everything was 8 mm & 16 mm film. Technology improvements have enabled film makers to go far beyond what was possible in the early eighties. But the key factor is still the individual who labors to share a vision of paddling and rivers with all. As with most human endeavors, what is important is not just that first milestone reached, but the continued steps to the next milestone, then the next, and the others that follow that. Just as it would have been wrong to stop the festival after the first one, it would be wrong to not recognize continued efforts in producing new paddlesports art & imagery. That recognition for significant achievement is the William Nealy Award.

With the Nealy award, the National Paddling Film Festival adds to its stature and significance as the authority for what is most noteworthy in paddlesports art & imagery. With over three decades of existence, it is known for its focus on paddling. We have had entries from Europe, Canada, and throughout the US entries have depicted expeditions, paddling rodeos, river guides, given instruction on paddling, shown the beauty of rivers, spoke to river conservation, exhibited the fellowship of clubs & paddlers, and always a

favorite, paddling humor. The NPFF competitors, both amateur and professional, are considered as the best in the paddling arts world.

How Did the Award Get Named For William Nealy?

William Nealy would have been an outstanding candidate for the award that bears his name. His illustrations, books, and other art are unique & distinctive in the paddling world. So true to the river life were his cartoons that Nealy became a paddling-sports cult hero. His kind of wild, somewhat irreverent satire humor (even directed at himself) fit in with the paddling characters that he illustrated in his cartoons. William seems to have found a mother load of these characters in the BWA..... at least we could often imagine ourselves in his cartoons. And there are instances where he even mentions the BWA in his cartoons, such as with "The Women in Rubber" along with several BWA members in book acknowledgements.

His body of work, include many cartoon illustrated SE river maps for paddlers, ten books full of river lore, wisdom, wit and humor. William's wonderfully entertaining art will be popular and appreciated by river boaters for a long time.

So how did William and the BWA connect?

In the seventies, there was a Lexington version of the Nantahala Outdoor Center, SAGE School of the Outdoors. Many in the BWA got their paddling start at SAGE and were mentored by Bob Sehlinger who was Director of Instruction. SAGE & Bob were early supporters of the BWA. In fact it was Bob who came up with the idea for a film festival after seeing how well we had put on a South-East Rivers Safety Symposium at UK. The event was highly successful, and Bob got the idea of us having a Film Festival since we had pulled off the symposium. We proved Bob correct. At that same time Bob formed Menasha Ridge Press with William and his wife, Holly. Bob introduced William to the BWA. Nealy did some posters and art for the first NPFF. At that first event Nealy & the characters of the BWA clicked with each other and he became a solid supporter of the NPFF till he death in 2001.

Because of the years of support by Menasha Ridge (William, Holly & Bob), including several thousand of dollars during the first three years of the festival, which assured the ultimate success of the NPFF, we decided to establish the William Nealy Award. The first person to receive the award was Bob Sehlinger for conceiving and suggesting the idea and for supporting the NPFF till it become established.

Menasha Ridge has continued to support the NPFF, even after it succeeded and after William Nealy died. Holly, attended the next festival and donated some of his art for the auction and gave some of us a piece of Nealy's art to frame. It was to be the last Festival she would attend. Debilitated by Rheumatoid Arthritis and other afflictions, she was not able to travel after that. She died in 2011.

It was a fortunate stroke of serendipity for all of this to happen. A small paddling club with a strong will & heart was able to achieve something that groups much larger than we were have not. The NPFF owes much to William, Holly & Bob. Together we created an event that pulls us together each year as a club and invites all who love paddling to come and enjoy a festival dedicated to paddle sports and it's art.

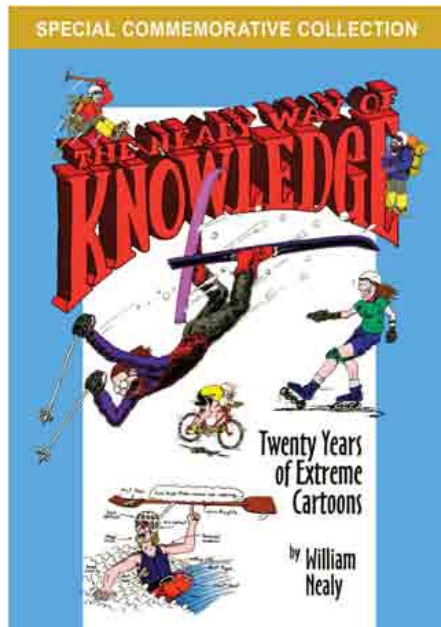
That is why the William Nealy Award is important and a part of the BWA's heritage that should not be forgot.

Don Spangler



Holly Wallace presenting Bob Sehlinger with the William Nealy Award in 2002

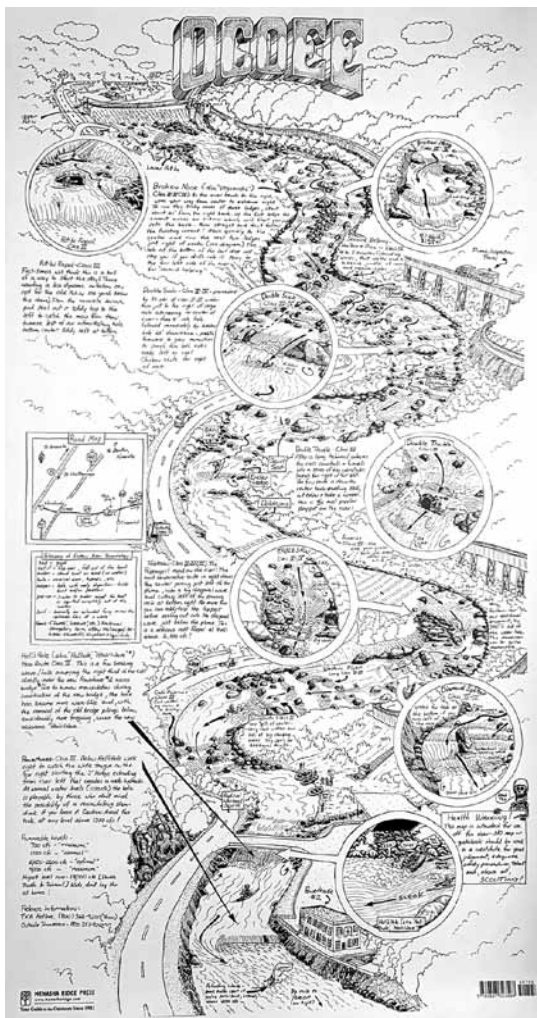
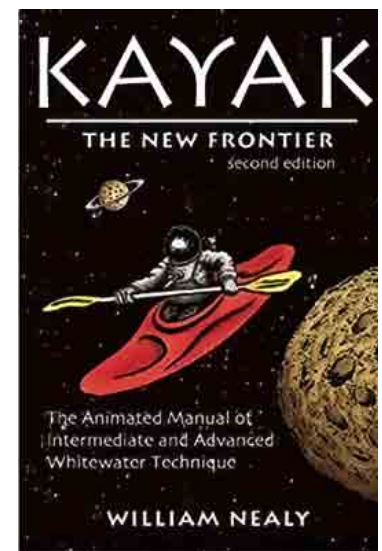
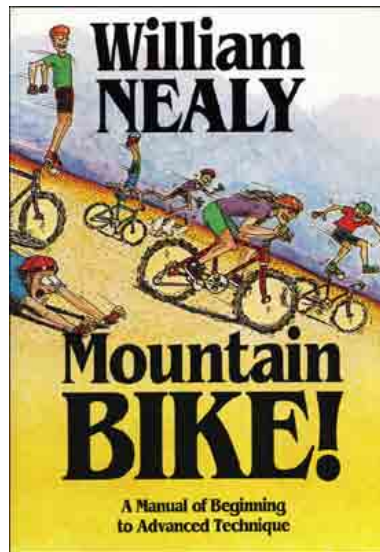
Some of Williams Nealy Books & River Maps



The Nealy Way of Knowledge: Twenty Years of Extreme Cartoons

(The William Nealy Collection)

Due Out By May 23, 2023



Look for the dozens of Books & River Maps by William Nealy that are published by Bob Shelinger/AdventureKEEN. You will want have some of them!



Here is a great Article by Alton Chewing of the Carolina Canoe Club about a Book that has just been published by Daniel Wallace, Holly Wallace's brother about William Nealey. It is a great review of Daniels' Book "This Isn't Going to End Well". This is a "must read" about the incredible William Nealy. It is with much thanks that I reprint Alton Chewing's article with his permission.



About Alton Chewing

Alton Chewing started on flatwater with a folding kayak about ten years ago. Now he does whitewater for thrills and challenges and flatwater for camping and nature appreciation.



The Carolina Canoe Club has a great website, worth your visit: <https://www.carolinacanoecub.org> They have a lot of great articles on line that are worth reading.

Last summer Alton took over the editing of the Carolina Canoe Club's dormant newsletter, the Paddler. The name was changed to Carolina Paddler and made more of a journal of stories and profiles of people and places.

The Nealy We Didn't Know

A Carolina Paddler article

by Alton Chewing



Daniel Wallace, Holly Wallace, William Nealy

William Nealy is one of the most cherished figures of whitewater yore. William “Not Bill” Nealy is our teacher, our class clown, our artist, capable of turning kayaking into an elevated form of child’s play, like rolling down a hill in a cardboard box or swinging on a Tarzan vine and letting go... Nealy helped us to understand the fun, the devil-may-care joy of doing something a little reckless and wild. He also taught us about water: the runs and rapids of some of the most beloved rivers of the South.

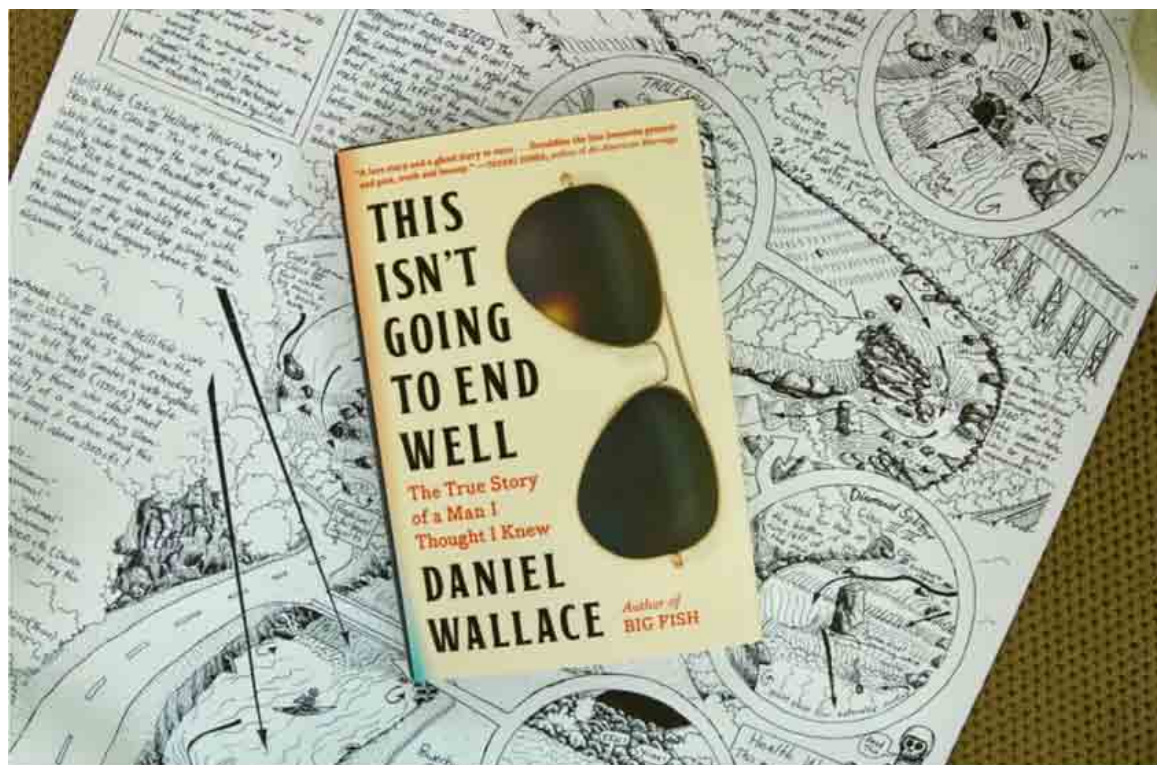
Many a boater’s walls are decorated with his epic cartoon maps of classics like the Lower Haw or Chattooga Section IV. His “Kayak” and revised “Kayak: the New Frontier” are the go-to instructional books for paddlers hoping to move past novice status. Together the books and maps have sold over 100,000 copies and have been translated into many languages. His explanations of the dynamics of water and rocks and incline help us to see what lies below the water and what the movement of the water might be. His offbeat humor and reckless enthusiasm still charm us after decades of change. We love William Nealy as much as any icon in our sport.

I came to Nealy late, only learning of his work in the last few years. Like so many of you, I was delighted with his visual clarity and wit and his what-the-hell humor. His cartoons recall an earlier time in the hazy eighties and nineties, but the insight and instruction are solid and still current. When I learned he had died from suicide in 2001, I was struck with the eternal question of a person taking their own life: Why? Why did this seem the best option to someone who had accomplished so much, and with such vigor?

Somewhere along the line, I learned William had been a long-time companion of Holly Wallace. They shared crazy love and wild adventures in their teens and early twenties, and when Holly was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis at age 21, their bond deepened into a more tempered and resilient relationship. About this time, I learned Holly was sister to Daniel Wallace, the acclaimed novelist, perhaps best known for his first novel, “Big Fish,” and the resulting Tim Burton-directed movie of the same name. Together they made a heady trio: Holly, the effusive driving spirit; Daniel, the accomplished novelist; William the wildman cartoonist and “fun-hog.” Now, Holly is dead, claimed by her debilitating disease; William, dead from his own hand, and Daniel, alive and left to make sense of it all.

“This Isn’t Going to End Well” is Wallace’s first non-fiction book. He explains his youthful worship of all things William and how betrayed he felt when William abandoned Holly by committing suicide. For all of us who have loved William “Not Bill” Nealy, as he often signed his books, it’s a look into the complex history and psychology of a person who could make the reading of water seem so simple and clear compared to the opacity of his personal life.

**Photo by
Alton
Chewning**



The cover of “This Isn’t Going to End Well” has a set of aviator sunglasses, turned on end. The book is a memoir, a collection of memories drawn from Wallace’s life and the people who influenced him. A way of investigating his relationship with Nealy, his object of adulation, and how Nealy shaped Wallace and molded his own life. The sunglasses on the cover belong to William, a pivotal part of his guise, his costume, his disguise. He wore them often, even in dark places. Like many people who don’t want to have their eyes seen, maybe William was covering something incriminating: his bloodshot eyes, dilated pupils, and dulled gaze. Or maybe he was just being cool. Maybe it was for outward appearance, not a cover up, but an enhancement, an accessory, like earrings or a wallet chain. Or maybe the world was too bright.

Daniel Wallace lives in Chapel Hill and teaches creative writing at UNC. He followed Holly and William to Chapel Hill after they left Alabama as “political refugees.” William, a high school dropout, had been working at an outfitter’s store in Birmingham. The shop and its hippie patrons ran afoul of some local folks and the building burned. William and Holly fled town, heading for a more inviting area with lots of rivers and a more embracing climate.

Holly started school at UNC and William approached Howard Du Bose at River Runner’s Emporium about employment. William offered to work for little money and unlimited hours; he needed a job. Howard liked the sound of this arrangement and William became a part of the Triangle paddle scene. Du Bose said despite William’s initial enthusiasm for a job, he spent much of his time drawing or writing. Du Bose liked him and tolerated it.

Many people were coming to River Runners and asking for advice on the rapids of the Haw River. William suggested they produce a map that would show the rapids and the best routes through them. Howard and William noted the features and William did the drawing, adding his comic style and deft understanding of the movement of water. The first map was born. The Haw was a small start. Later the rivers would get bigger, the maps larger, the market greater. The next breakthrough in Nealy’s mapping and marketing was a side trip to Nantahala Outdoor Center, returning from a visit to Birmingham. Nealy asked the manager, John Barber, if he was interested in buying a few. Barber ordered 1000. Nealy was surprised and emboldened. Maybe he could make a living doing something he liked.

***Daniel Wallace holds
a rare
Upper Haw map
by Nealy.***

**Photo by
Alton Chewning**



Most of us in the paddling community know this origin story. Holly, William, Bob Sehlinger and Holly's dad start Menasha Ridge press. Nealy goes on producing more river maps, about a dozen in all, and ten books. His book, "Kayak" is one of the best advanced kayaking instruction manuals of all time. Some of the books were skills based, always with his clear drawings and distinctive printing. Others were more for laughs. Nealy had a genius for presenting a rapid or hydraulic from multiple viewpoints, both physical and emotional. In a drawing of paddlers scouting a rapid, some characters find the prospect terrifying. Some are jazzed. Others confused. His drawings often included someone who has done the wrong thing and is trashed in the process. Often, William was the model for each of these behaviors.

Daniel Wallace was Holly's younger brother and like many others, he idolized his sister's boyfriend. Nealy was smart, daring, and handsome in a knock-off, casual way. Wallace quotes a story, told by a friend of William's. The friend's fiancée observes, after meeting William and seeing him dive in a pool and then towel off, he was the most handsome man she had ever seen. This was said to her betrothed.

William projected cool, a risk-taker and rule-breaker. He drank freely and did drugs, but he knew how to do constructive things, too. He volunteered on the rescue squad. He could build houses and fish and climb and play drums. And Daniel's sister adored him. Holly and William were an idyllic couple, not chained to each other-they had other lovers- but devoted in a soulful and rooted way, like the weaving of trunks of trees, separate but leaning on the other.

"This Isn't Going to End Well" is a story of how Daniel loved Nealy and loved the relationship William and Holly had, until it all started to change. Holly developed rheumatoid arthritis and William struggled with his own depression and uncertain purpose. William cared for Holly, cooking and cleaning, tending to the house and animals and to her, trying to ease her pain and to make her feel loved and appreciated. At the same time, he found it increasingly difficult to console himself. He was doubting his being; he always had. Growing up with childhood traumas and severe asthma had left him uncertain of his worth and his path. William had built the house where he and Holly lived near New Hope Creek. He had also built a public image of a hip adventurer, an adrenaline junkie. The posturing of toughness and cool had helped him endure his early adulthood but entering mid-life, his armor was wearing thin. Back injuries suffered while biking ended his whitewater paddling. Alcohol and tobacco and other drugs carved into his drive and expressiveness. The childhood asthma resurfaced with a vengeance. He was becoming incapable and depressed. Again and again, in the private journals he kept, he surveyed his options and thoughts of suicide gathered weight.

This story takes so many turns. William's best friend, Edgar Hitchcock, a hobbled and endearing writer and drug dealer, had been murdered, back in Birmingham. William and Holly move back and spend a year trying to unravel the case, at first with the support of local police. The investigation becomes a crusade for Nealy, and he embarks on a scary, ill-conceived plan of befriending the main suspect. Ultimately, the case goes unsolved, and William and Holly's sleuthing perhaps contributes to the lack of a clean case against the suspect. William is flattened by his impotence in avenging his friend. He couldn't bring the suspect to justice and he didn't have the temperament to seek his own revenge. Nealy couldn't let it go and move on but was at a loss on how to continue.

Life back in Chapel Hill fell into a rhythm at times pleasant and consoling. William and Holly had the beautiful house built by William, single level to accommodate her arthritis. Single level except for William's study, his retreat where he would go to write and draw and ponder. And work on his private journals.

New Hope Creek was nearby and sometimes William and Holly would load up their pigs and other pets and go there for a picnic. The pigs were Asian, with fierce samurai faces but gentle dispositions, a trait William surely loved. It was tranquil and refreshing and removed from the cares of the world.

Holly's health was declining, and William became her full-time nurse. One wonders if he should have sought more help in caring for her. Often more help brings complications, and he may have felt he could handle it all by himself if he tried hard enough. He was a creature of routine. For example, his rigorous journals, written late at night, index the day's events in a terse shorthand. Back pain level: 1-5, dinner menu, chores accom-

plished, all the notes in the same printing as in his books. Sometimes he ventured into his internal realm, a dark chamber of fears and failures and voices that told him what he was not.

Ten years after William's suicide, Holly dies and the hidden journals, accumulated over many years, fall into the possession of Wallace. Wallace was reluctant to read the journals but couldn't throw them away either, so they sat on shelves in his study, an unrelenting reminder that more was to be learned about William if he could bear the knowledge.

William couldn't find redemption through bringing Edgar's killer to justice. And he finally realized he would never find redemption through saving Holly's life. She would ultimately die from her disease and all his love and caring would not change this fact. William would be left with himself, his constructed life fallen like a decaying shed of hopes and memories, left to be overtaken by vines. Instead, he would burn it down. But not all of it, not the journals.

The critical question in the how and why of William's suicide is this: If William loved Holly, how could he kill himself, leaving her with grief and regrets and her own her slow demise. It's not an easy question. Wallace could find no reasonable excuse and develops a pure and consuming hatred for William, the man he had idolized for so much of his life. Wallace does many things to remove William's presence, to exact a revenge. Here is one. Holly and William had often stated that when their time came, they would like their ashes to be mingled and cast together for eternity. This was not done. Holly's ashes are buried next to her father's, a man who never much cared for William. Then, one angry night, Daniel unceremoniously casts William's ashes into a dark place in the woods.

"This Isn't Going to End Well" could end here, with Daniel's bitterness and hatred of William. Instead, he reads more and more of the journals, 1200 pages in all, and he begins to appreciate the traumas and defeats that tormented Nealy: the recurring asthma, the back pain, the addictions, the failure to save Holly or Edgar, the voices speaking to him, the final orders. This book is much like the belated ceremony Daniel conducted at Holly's grave site, as an absolution of sorts: a combining of ashes, an offering of grave goods, a willingness to forgive. A veil of secrecy lifted in compassion.

Kiss Goodbye

***Photo by
Henry Unger***

