March 2008

Guest Editor: Richard Ferguson

President's Letter By Karen Amundson

I'm happy to report that we had 2 winter events this year. The February **Pool Olympics** were lots of fun and are described in a separate article.

The March 15 **Boulder REI Meeting** turned out to be a cool venue, and we had a dozen potential new members join the meeting after the ACA insurance passed its vote by a large margin. We met in a glass room in the middle of the store where Al Johnson's action packed videos kept us all in suspense. I kept leaning in my chair to get Bob Cook, Scott McDonald, and Jeff Evans' canoes out of tough spots. Jill Steckers' Canada photos were beautiful, but the frequent shots of Northern Pike made me hungry for fish.

After more than 6 years of loyal service to the club (this is probably an officer longevity record), Paul Holscher has resigned his position and Kathy Ashworth is the **new Treasurer**. Be sure to use her Boulder P.O. Box for dues renewals. Many thanks to Paul for all of his hard work.

Though many of us sent in permit applications, we had very little luck on nearby rivers. So I'm hoping that Karen Jankowski's persistence will get us a Yampa Canyon phone-in slot. Richard Ferguson managed to pull a Main Salmon permit, and we have several people stepping up to lead non-permitted rivers. They are listed in this newsletter and on our website. We are likely to have 3 trips on Memorial Day weekend, so brush those winter cobwebs off of your canoes and join the fun.

RMCC is preparing to publish a **roster in the June newsletter**. So if any of your contact info has changed, you could proactively notify Gail Campbell (Membership) or Kathy Ashworth (Treasurer). While we prefer to do it annually, it has been 2 years since the last roster was mailed, so we may email or phone you to verify your info. If your membership has expired, be sure to get dues in by May 15 so that we can include you.

The officers are working to get a new **Trip Coordination page** out on the web that will list
the ACA Insurance process along with other
helpful information for TC's and participants.

Jeff Oxenford will give a **Trip Coordinator (TC) Class** on April 11th (evening classroom) and 12th (river) to those wanting to improve their skills. We hope to train a few new TC's and give existing leaders a refresher too. Please contact Bill Ashworth to register.

Note that TC's are not required to take this class or be an ACA member. To be a good TC, we ask that you 1) be organized, 2) be safety conscious, and 3) handle a few items regarding ACA insurance.

The ACA Insurance process will go into effect on all web schedule trips that start on or after May 15. And as of that same date, any RMCC list server emails that initiate trips/events should include a phrase as to whether that trip will use ACA insurance or not. Those that do not use the insurance will not be considered an RMCC-sponsored trip, even though it was started via the RMCC email distribution.

As trip participants, you have the choice of either a) joining the ACA by submitting annual dues and their signed waiver, or b) paying \$5 and signing an ACA waiver on each club trip that you go on.

That's enough information.....LET'S GO PADDLE!!

Joining the American Canoe Association

With the move to ACA (American Canoe Association) insurance, you may wish to consider joining the ACA, if you are not already a member. About 60 members of the RMCC are also members of ACA. The ACA costs \$30 per year for an individual and \$40 for a family; this is a reduced rate since the RMCC is a PAC (Paddle America Club). You can join on line at www.americancanoe.org

You do not need to be a member of ACA to lead or go on trips. You do not need to join the ACA to be a member of RMCC. If you are a member, you sign their waiver once when you join and never again. If you are not a member, then you would pay \$5 and sign their waiver each time you go on an ACA trip - whether it is 1 day or 10 days. The \$5 is basically paying for the ACA insurance, for those who are not ACA members.

In addition to the ACA insurance, another benefit of ACA membership is a subscription to Paddler magazine. You will also be supporting the only national paddling organization.

REI Paddle Demo

May 31, 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. Bear Creek Lake Park just off C-470 and Morrison Rd. (we will set up at 8:00 a.m.) RMCC costs - a few good folks to help out that day REI has asked us to be available to show people the basic strokes they will need to get back to shore! They will not be set up for instruction so this is mainly the type of thing we would do for just the basics. They also suggested we have a boat there that we can show with the typical gear needed and how to load, keep gear dry, etc. As people are waiting to get out on the water they can talk to us and get some added information.

RMCC will also have a table set up with our Membership flyers, and hopefully some helpful info. for getting started or what maybe the CFS are around the state, etc. Any ideas??

I am looking for any easy to put up canopy, tent fly, whatever for shade....you don't have to 'work' the whole time - but we certainly want to support REI and Bob Cook.

Daily Pass fees for Bear Creek Lake: \$5.00 (Seniors - \$4.00)



AMERICAN CANOE ASSOCIATION

Kayak & Canoe Recreation

Gail Campbell, Membership Chrmn.

RMCC Winter Pool Olympics – February 24, 2008

By Karen Amundson

We went into competitive mode for 8 events at the Meyers Pool in Arvada. With only 2 tandems to start the morning, the Baker-Jarvis (B-J) duo squeezed out the Jankowskis on the slalom course. The tone was set with 1) floats - to mark the slalom course and finish line - that wouldn't sit still, and 2) creative cheating. In the solo slalom, there were 2 heats, with Al Johnson and Jeff Oxenford taking the 2 golds. That is gold-wrapped Hershey's kisses; and silver and bronze kisses were given out too on each event.

Then we replaced the "Pull the Painter" with a tugof-war contest and tied 2 canoes together with a rope between their tails. Karen B-J and Jeff O. each beat their adversaries to take gold. In tandem boats, the Jankowski's showed their strength by towing 2 men across the line.

Our 2 throw rope events certainly proved that we all need to practice. Greg J., Al, and Doug Hurcomb finally put bags through a hula hoop held at the front of a moving canoe that surely crossed the width of the pool 5 times before getting 3 accurate hits. Then Jim, Karen B-J, and Al were able to toss their bags into inner tubes and reel them in.

We switched gears and watched in amazement as Jeff Evans did 10 rolls – all the way around – in 1 minute. The B-J's surprised us with 2 rolls in a tandem.

Now it seemed that if I didn't list every possible thing that was against the rules, people would get creative and find a way to improve their odds. In the "Dump, Re-board, and Race" competition, Jim surprised us by dumping the tandem boat but continuing around with a roll. While Doug H. was struggling to jump in and not all the way over, the Jankowskis had climbed in and flipped their solar bailer switch, thus picking up speed on the race as their boat got lighter. Since both teams cheated, we gave them all gold kisses.

And for the final Relay, Doug Kretzmann and his 2 boys jumped in their tandem, so we had all 13 people racing. Rolls of thick wool socks served as the batons, and were passed from 1 solo to another solo; then the tandems came at the solos for a high speed handoff and a race to the finish. It seemed that there was a tie for first, so 2 people raced inner tubes across the width of the pool to settle it. Therefore Jeff O., the B-J's, and I got

gold.

Since it was hard to tell who were the overall winners (and we needed to pick up all of the slalom floats), we took the top 4 people for the playoffs. Task was to pick up 5 floats of 1 color the fastest. It must have been another case of me not giving enough instructions, because the guys jumped out there and picked them up in no time. Then we finally saw that Karen B-J and Karen J. were neatly rolling up the strings so they wouldn't get tangled in the boat!!



As a result of this very controlled and scientific competition, we awarded the official gold, silver, and bronze medals to Jeff O., Greg, and Karen B-J respectively. The best part was.....we all had a lot of fun and we finished with lunch at the 3 Margaritas restaurant nearby.

P.S. – Apparently the term "Olympics" is highly protected, so if we do this again we will come up with another name.

South Platte River Joint Spring Paddle Trip by Dave Allured

The seventh annual joint South Platte trip on March 16 ran from Evans to Kuner. It drew only about 17 boats, not counting the four upstream racers in Marek Uliasz's Rotten Egg Race. Clubs represented were Canoe Colorado, High Country River Rafters, Poudre Paddlers, Rocky Mountain Sea Kayak Club, and RMCC.

It was a good trip anyway; partly sunny in the morning. After lunch the sun went away, and a stiff cold headwind started up. Three of the eight drivers headed for Kuner bailed out at Kersey, 5 miles early, including me. At least the rain and snow never started until the drive home.

One beginner tipped over in a minor channel in about two feet of water and got rather wet. She got started again with no problem. Several people got rather chilly. Nothing serious.

At 800 cfs, the river was barely spilling over the normal portage spot on the first dam, far river right. There were the usual big sand bars on river right. There was also a very small flowing bank channel right next to the right bank. With care you could get into this channel, paddle up very close to the dam, then get out on the river bank and complete the hop over the dam without getting wet feet.

At the second dam there were large trees obstructing the traditional take-out spot on river left. On Eric Nyre's advice, many of us took out at a couple of nice spots about 150 feet higher up, and had an easy portage after that.

Thank You by Paul Holscher

It was with deep regret that I had to announce my resignation as treasurer of the RMCC at the March 15 meeting. I have met so many great people over the many years of my membership in the club. I want to thank one former member and my wife for causing me to join the club, and several current members for their efforts on behalf of the club and the friendship they have all extended to me.

I want to say "thank you" to Dennis Adams, past president, for putting me in contact with the club during a remarkably unspectacular and wet run down the Platte River one day with my two sons. And "thank you" to may wife, Marsha, who soon thereafter urged me to join the club – she was so tired of running my shuttles.

Of the current officers of long standing who make the club go, I have particularly admired Bob and Jill Stecker and Jeff Oxenford. Though I don't know these people very well, I have great admiration for their abilities, experience and dedication to the club.

Dave Allured's efforts on behalf of RMCC as president, web master, newsletter assemblyman, etc. have been above and beyond the call of duty. Whenever the club has a need, Dave seems to step in and fill it. Without his experience and abilities we would still be requiring people who join in June, July or August to renew their membership on February 1st. I won't forget Dave's understanding of my situation when I occasionally got the membership list to him a little late for the newsletter publication. In spite of my tardiness he always seemed to get the newsletter out on time.

I have enjoyed every one of my trips with the club. Mark Zen in particular had some great trips for me in the early years. If you don't know Mark, he used to lead several trips each year for canoeists who liked class I or easy II. They were relaxing trips: The "Zen master" Dennis Adams once called him. For those of you who want to lead trips but are uncomfortable with your abilities, I would urge you to follow Mark's example and lead easy trips. This club is full of people who want to paddle the rivers but don't want to do severe rapids.

But most especially I want to thank Greg and Karen Jankowski for their friendship and kindness over the years. They introduced me and my son Franz to the upper and lower canyons of the Rio Grande. Together we paddled Santa Elena Canyon several times – in my opinion the greatest 9 miles of paddling in North America. I went to their daughter Jennifer's graduation party and they came to Franz's Eagle Court of Honor. But I had no idea of the depth of our relationship until I told them about the death of my wife Marsha and saw the sorrow that came over Karen's face.

It was Karen's idea to start the "meet & greet" trip so new members could meet old members early in the paddling season. I hope these trips will continue on into the future. Greg and Karen's efforts as co-presidents, trip coordinators, membership recruiters, and, generally, all around RMCC boosters are truly extraordinary. This couple has done more for the club than most of you will ever know. It has been a great privilege to know them and canoe with them.

Volunteers Needed for School Canoe Trip

Platte Valley Middle School in Kersey, Colorado is running some canoe trips for 8th graders on a flatwater section of the South Platte River. They are seeking experienced boaters to come along as safety boats. The dates are tentatively April 14 through 18, week days.

If you have the spare time and would enjoy helping out, I encourage you to volunteer for one or more dates. Please contact teacher Jeff Casey

Also feel free tocontact

me with any questions

David Allured

RMCC Email Discussion List Tips

This is a reminder to our newer members that the RMCC has an email distribution list which can be used to announce information to a large audience or ask paddling questions. To get yourself set up or to unsubscribe, go to the rockymountaincanoeclub.org home page, click on the "RMCC E-Mail Discussion" link on the far bottom-left, and follow those instructions.

Please note that there is a size limitation (it was just increased to 1mb) that puts large emails on hold and requires a manual override by Don Perko, our List Manager. So to avoid delays, it is best to limit your attachments and use links when possible.



Thanks to Bill Ashworth for helping with the assembly of the February newsletter.

Canoe Storage - Looking Up

Like many people, I have limited space for storage. When I got my first canoe, I decided to hang the canoe from the ceiling of the garage. I put in a few pulleys and a couple of cleats, and hauled the canoe up a little at a time. First I would lift the bow a couple of feet, and then cleat off the rope. Then I would lift the stern a couple of feet, and cleat off that rope. Then I would lift the bow some more. Slow, required more effort than it should, and a real pain.

I decided to add a trailer winch to the system. This lifted both ends of the boat at the same time, required much less effort, and reduced the chance of dropping the boat. A big improvement. The trailer winch cost me less than \$20. The winch can be located anywhere in the garage. I think that 1/4 inch rope is plenty, especially since the weight is divided between two ropes.

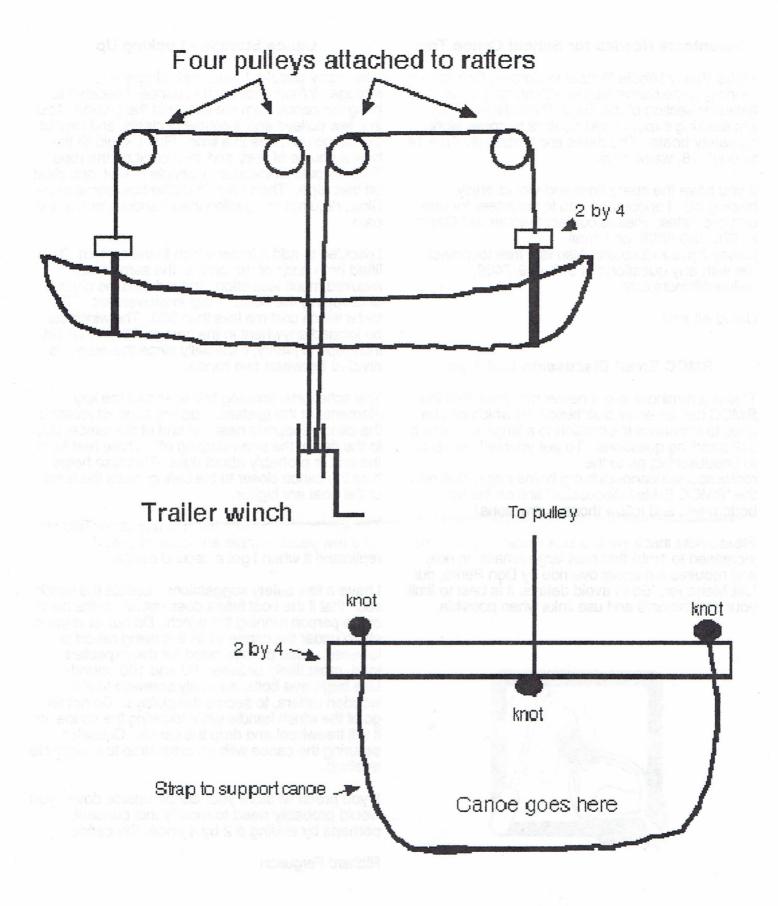
The schematic drawing below shows the key elements of the system. I do not suggest locating the canoe supports near the end of the canoe, due to the risk of the strap slipping off. Three feet from the end is probably about right. This also helps haul the canoe closer to the ceiling, since the ends of the boat are higher.

The system below has been in use at my house for a few years, simple and easy to use. I replicated it when I got a second canoe.

I have a few safety suggestions. Locate the winch such that if the boat falls it does not fall on the head of the person running the winch. Do not let anyone stand under the canoe while it is being raised or lowered. Use pulleys rated for the expected load, most likely between 50 and 100 pounds. Use large eye bolts, securely screwed to the wooden rafters, to secure the pulleys. Do not let go of the winch handle while lowering the canoe, or it will freewheel and drop the canoe. Consider securing the canoe with an extra strap to a separate eyebolt.

If you prefer to store your canoe upside down, you would probably need to modify this concept, perhaps by adding a 2 by 4 under the canoe.

Richard Ferguson



Trip Schedule

RMCC trips are cooperative adventures shared by members and their guests. The entire group is collectively responsible for the trip, and each participant is individually responsible for judging their own qualifications, skill level, and safety on the rivers being run. The trip coordinator may refuse to allow a participant on a trip, but the responsibility for judging one's own qualifications lies solely with each trip member. The trip coordinator also may restrict trip participants to RMCC members only.

Call in advance! Trips can fill up. Organizers need time for planning.

For more information on any trip or activity, contact the person shown, or check the web site. If you think that you might go on the trip, be sure to contact the person shown. The most current and detailed information can be found on the club web site, www.rockymountaincanoeclub.org/schedule.html.

April 11-12 - Trip Coordinator Class, taught by Jeff Oxenford. (Friday evening classroom, Saturday on the river). Call Bill Ashworth to register

April 18-20 - Gunnison River, Escalante to Whitewater, Class I-II, novices welcome, David Allured

April 27, 10 to 1, - Last pool practice session of the year, George Meyers Pool, 7900 Carr Dr, \$7, Contact Karen Jankowski for any questions

May 2-4, Colorado River, Loma to Westwater, Class I - II+, experience needed, Karen Amundson

May 20, 7 PM, Basic Canoeing program at REI Denver, Karen Amundson

May 24-26, North Platte River, 6 mile gap to Treasure Island, Class II except one class III rapid that can be portaged, family friendly trip. Mike Langello

May 31, REI Paddle Day at Bear Creek Lake, Gail Campbell

June 14, South Platte, Brighton to Fort Lupton, Bill Ashworth, Class I, 7 miles, family friendly trip, Bill Ashworth

June 21-22, Yampa River, Craig to Duffy, Class I, beginner trip, suitable for families, Karen Amundson

July TBD - Annual Rendevous, at Radium on the Colorado. Stay tuned.

Sept 4-10 - Main Salmon River, Class III, Richard Ferguson

Westwater Wild and Serene By Eric Hermann

"It's no place for an open canoe. Westwater has a rapid called Skull that flips rafts regularly, and a whirlpool called Room of Doom that can lock you inside for good." That was my introduction to Westwater, voiced by a kayaker friend, and reinforced by several tales of flips and swims and rescues. And last April, on the night before we actually tried the gorge, our leader, Dennis Adams, had enlarged the image--and its fear--with more grisly tales of the size of the waves and grip of the holes.

Westwater Canyon is a 17-mile stretch of

the Colorado River beginning three miles into Utah. The first seven or eight miles is class I and II water-rippling current through most, with a few stretches of waves. A paddler notices a narrowing, a closing-in of walls, which become sharper and blacker, as the river cuts through a bed of ancient metamorphic gneiss and schist. Then comes a grumble around a bend, and comes the gorge, a four-mile rip through continuous rapids, rated big-water III's and a few IV's. Dizzied paddlers then drift a placid four or five miles to the take-out at Cisco Landing.

Naturally, my thoughts swam the gorge, so I didn't sleep well on Dennis's lawn that night before, but my partner, kayaker David Schelly did, dreaming of hydraulic play, of rolling through class

IV holes, pirouetting like a seal. So why worry? I'd had good training the summer before, and plenty of practice on the Poudre. Avid and skillful paddler Susan Graham had paddled Westwater in November, had done well and loved the canyon's thrills, although her group discovered of a rafter's body, from a freak mishap--a rope entrapment-from weeks before, still trapped in Skull Rapid.

Westwater was everything I'd hoped for, and more--apprehension soon became awe, exuberance, and adrenaline. But the lasting impression includes a serenity of a moonlit bivouac--a night unplanned and unpacked for--in a

wilderness canyon.

At the put-in we packed and I fretted, and the calm river belied the thrashing that waited below. I had thirty pounds of gear, and my Thermorest pads were inflated and tied behind the saddle as extra flotation in my solo canoe, a Dagger Genesis designed for big water like this. David had sleeping bag and warm clothes crammed into his kayak hull. I carried the food, porta-potty, and fire pan. Jokingly, I stuffed an unopened bag of tortilla chips under my flotation-extra air, I called it--and four beers into my saddle compartment. Then Dennis talked me out of the camping.

camping.

"You'll need a light boat," he said, "because one missed move in a crucial situation can mean disaster." So, out came the potty, the warm clothes, the thick steak, tent and sleeping bags. This would be a one-day run. And so it began.

The seven miles were practice miles; it had been five months since I'd done any paddling outside of roll sessions at the pool. Then came Wild Horse Rapid, an easy class II, about like easier stretches of Filter Plant, and a more serious Little Dolores Rapid.

"You'll want to play here--surf and eddy and so on--but resist the urge a bit: You will want all your strength down in the gorge in the big water," Dennis advised. I resisted. David played.

Dennis was right. Marble Canyon and Staircase were trains of three- to five-foot waves, like rodeo ponies high-stepping across an arena. David knifed some and spun on others; I congratulated myself simply for coming through dry.

By now the black inner gorge had risen around us, gleaming like the polished black sculpture of Henry Moore. The walls necked in,

funneling us into Funnel Falls.

"Take Funnel middle-left, but get to center," Dennis said, before he peeled into the current. Then he disappeared, vanished, dipped over a horizon as I followed. When I came to the lip of Funnel, he was there again, but he'd plunged twelve feet down the tongue and was climbing over a roller about six feet high! I gasped, waiting for my stomach to climb into my throat. I relied

upon my technique, my skill, and my poise--that is, I yelled like hell, ruddering the boat with a pry and a ready brace. Up and over, then into the wave train, where successive waves became smaller, but sharper, some boiling back at us. We pulled into an eddy to dump--all but Dennis who has a solar-powered bail pump that empties his boat in seconds. David spun in an eddy, smiling, waiting for the slow guys in open canoes.

Then came Surprise, a chute between house-sized boulders, each with a surging hole. "We'll fill here," said Dennis, "so hold on, eddy out and dump. Then let's talk about Skull." I held on, I filled, I eddied. Then, sitting on a submerged rock, I pulled the boat, midships, against my chest and rolled the boat back over me, pouring about 50

gallons of water around me.

Skull is massive in its lore and impressive in reality. It demands two or three fairly crucial but simple moves--in four- to six-foot waves however--with some real consequences if those moves are missed. To get a crossing momentum, we positioned ourselves river right, just above the hole and Room of Doom, then ferried across the chute into a small eddy, where we let the pool catch our prows and spin us around into the current to finish the wave train in reverse. It worked like a dream, but I kept stealing glances into the hole and legendary Doom Room, a whirlpool reminiscent of the Greek Charybdis of Odysseus' fame. To picture it, imagine looking into a medieval tower, 50 feet across, with a churning whirlpool as its floor, its air choked with mist. The water rips free of the keeper beast hole, then slams into the Rock of Shock--the canyon wall--and sweeps into a side cauldron about twenty yards across, before seething and twisting back to the hole of Skull. Once, legends tell, a herd of sheep bobbed and bloated in Skull for several months before flushing

But then there was Sock-It-To-Me, or Sock for short, called by many the crux rapid in the gorge, another enormous hole under a rock that shoots the current across the stream, against the cliff wall,

rebounding back.

"I'm going to boof this one!" David yelled, then bit into the current, right for the rock, which he flew over, and disappeared. It was fully five seconds before he surmounted the crest into view again below. So hard to believe he had just begun kayaking the spring before, practicing in Filter Plant and the North Fork with me, then finishing the season with solid kayakers in the Poudre's Lower Narrows.

Sock socked me. I soared over the lip and down, then up the first smooth crest maybe eight feet high. The first crest after a big drop, I learned, is easy; the real beaters are the boiling, breaking waves--the second and third crests. I made the second, but the third looked like the exploding tip of

a loaded cigar--like those scary pictures of Grand Canvon brown foam eating rafts. I fell into its trough with the paddle poised for a stroke I knew had to count for all it was worth, then pounded it home as the prow sliced into the boil. The boat slipped through, about three feet deep into the wave, but the wave nailed me, slammed into my body and shut out the light. I was all too conscious of a force like some giant's hand trying to capsize the boat—luckily in the direction I had expected. The momentum of the boat and a hard brace were true, however, and carried me out the other side of the wave, and through another, totally swamped, of course. But I was headed right for the cliff wall. A grunting, sculling left draw with a boat full of water worked, though, and I barely touched. Our fourth paddler flipped, but David caught his boat and steadied it as he climbed in.

We whooped and high-fived in the guiet water below, and toasted the wild gorge with two beers from my hold. Then the serene overwhelmed David and --a mixture of 70-degree sun, sand, a successful joyride, and the longslanted rays of canyon sun.

"Sure wish we were camping," I said. "Yeah. Too bad we don't have stuff with

us."

"Ya' know, I kept the Thermorest pads with me, and some food, and some clothes, and these canyon walls are warm," I began, planning to win him over with a careful argument.

"You're on!" he ended the discussion. We said good-bye to our companions, thanking Dennis for his guidance and hospitality. Then we glided downstream until a small stream opened in the walls on river right. Curious, I paddled into it,

into a night I'll never forget.

It was Cottonwood Creek, about three feet wide, six inches deep, and winding like a ribbon through walls burning red in the setting sun. We followed fish scurrying ahead, sliding beneath the surface like kittens under a satin sheet. Then we slid under an overhang, and along banks of grass, like yellow-flamed velvet in the sunset. Ahead, the stream bent toward the red wall, and the current became a sinuous scarlet strand rippling before us until we scraped bottom among new-green box elders. This canyon was to be home for the night. We knew that higher up, in the rocks on a westfacing sidewall, we'd find some leftover heat.

We found small, grassy flats above, but no previous camp, so we vowed to be careful and leave no sign. Dinner was luxurious: I ran to the boat, pulled out two last beers, and, behold, an undamaged bag of chips! After being shoved beneath my flotation, and pounded through the gorge in a swamped canoe, they were still air tight, with almost no broken chips! With cheese they became nachos, followed by tortillas and ham, washed down with river-cool beer.

Hunkered on the pads, wearing all we possessed--I in my wet suit and light fleece shirt, Dave's head wrapped in a fleece shirt, we lay back and slept immediately.

Until one a.m., that is, when we awoke shivering. Not wanting to violate the pristine canyon with a fire, we walked into the full moonlight to warm ourselves, over several ridges, up a canyon clad in silver. We walked and marveled until two, casting long black shadows on gleaming stone, brushing sage that rose in pungent fumes.

Finally, in an undercut along the creek, we discovered some leftover heat, maybe fifty degrees. David slept; I just listened as his quiet snores mingled with the quiet rush of the stream. At four we arose again, then hiked down to the river, where we found a cavity under a flat rock, even warmer, and pulled the pads under to finish the night. Before long, geese were honking in the new-

gray of a Westwater dawn.

Winding back down the creek to the Colorado, we eased into the river, and glided the remaining mile to take-out. There was water to drink there, and clean, warm clothes. There was a hot, heaping breakfast in Grand Junction. A long drive home awaited, along a river alive with currents of memory. Westwater had been furious fun, but more lastingly, had left an image of a red satin stream in sunset, a cold silver canyon in moonlight.



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Membership: \$20 per year, per household. See Membership section of our website,

for forms and information.

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