

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Again, as usual, with the fall meeting drawing near it is time to think about what we want to do the remainder of this calendar year and to start planning for next year. The first step in getting this planning process off to a good start is the election of officers: an annual ritual at the fall meeting.

This year in order to expedite the election process I would like members to give some thought (maybe some arm twisting) to whom they would like to see as officers. If a member would like to volunteer himself that is also quite appropriate. New members are often reluctant to volunteer but I would like to encourage them for more experienced members are often willing to help if a person is unsure about something. The officers positions that need to be filled are those that are listed at the beginning of the newsletter.

Also, since the fall meeting is the beginning of the planning process for the next year, give some thought to what you would like to see on the agenda for next year.

So come to the fall meeting prepared to, meet old and new friends, tell lies and railroad an unsuspecting member into an officer's position.

See you there.

Don Clark

#

FALL MEETING AND POTLUCK

Once again we'll head for the hills to enjoy our fall get-together. Vi and Jeff Polk will be expecting you all in Evergreen on Saturday, September 26 at 3:00pm. Address and phone number are:

The following are directions to the house via Highway 285, which is shorter even if coming from way north. I have also enclosed a map with directions via 285 and I-70.

Take Highway 285 south to North Turkey Creek (this is 13 miles from Kipling exit), make a right and continue for 4.8 miles to corner of Danks and No. Turkey Creek. House will be on your left across the bridge.

Bring your summer slides, pictures and river stories. Weather permitting, we can sit outside so bring a lawn chair, and don't forget it get's chilly as soon as the sun sets, so bring warm clothing. The club will provide hamburgers, buns and soft drinks

(bring your own beer). Don't forget the dish for the potluck. In order to have an idea of how many to expect, give Vi a call and let her know YOU ARE coming. If she is not home, her answering machine will gladly take your message.

###

MISCELLANEOUS

- This newsletter is your newsletter, send in your trip reports and any interesting article you come across that you feel would be of interest to the rest of the RMCC members. We would like to publish another newsletter in 1987.
- Keep yourself abreast of what is going on in the canoe industry and receive CANOE magazine as part of the bargain. Once you've read one issue, you know you cannot live without it. Send in your TAX-DEDUCTIBLE Governing Membership fee of \$25 to:

American Canoe Association
P. O. Box 248
Lorton VA 22079
- Enclosed with this newsletter is an updated edition of the RMCC roster. Please check your name and address and if any corrections are needed contact Vi Polk. We would like to have at least one phone contact for everyone.
- The Fifth Annual River Rendezvous will again be held in Telluride, October 1-4, 1987. Three-day registration fee through September 30 is \$20. After October 1, it is \$25. The four-day program is packed with all kinds of events, including films, river rescue, medical workshops, C.P.R., a writer's seminar and a fabulous picnic B-B-Q on Sunday. Some of the workshops are an additional fee. If you are interested, flyers will be available at the fall meeting, or call Vi to obtain one if you are unable to come.
- No one has mentioned the possibility of a Thanksgiving Day trip this year. If you would like to do something different and would be willing to lead such a trip, call Vi and she will put it in the next newsletter in early November.
- RMCC members are concerned about river/wilderness conservation and a majority of us are probably against the proposed Two-Forks Dam. The Upcoming River Rendezvous donates its proceeds to river conservation; the proposed dam has again been put on hold by the Colorado outdoor organizations; and Denver is hosting the Fourth Worldwide

Wilderness Conference (the third was held in Scotland and the second was in Australia's Great Barrier Reef). This seems and appropriate to reprint a letter from RMCC member Bill Nelson, temporarily living in Philadelphia, which was read at the March meeting.

March 18, 1987

Dear RMCC,

I see once again we question the need for activism by the canoe club in terms of saving the environment in general and Two Forks Dam in particular. I can still hear the argument that the club is just a social entity, whose purpose is to paddle the rivers, but not save them. I give you the perspective of someone who has just moved to the east from the west.

The land is much more crowded in the east and most of it was settled in times where there was little environmental awareness. Things were done in the name of progress and monetary profit and little attention was paid to the surroundings one lived in or the enrichment one could find in being a part of those surroundings. Subsequently, the rivers have all been dammed, there is little in the way of open space, national parks or forest, and there are few places to recreate with ease. All this happened because no one had the awareness to see what was happening or the will to fight it.

Western lands, on the other hand, have had the advantage of having been settled for a relatively shorter amount of time and also of having had relatively less in the way of human pressure to alter it. There is still time to save the rivers and the land because they are still undammed and undeveloped.

What is it that will save the freeflowing rivers etc? Paradoxically it is people. But it will have to be people who use them and love them. It certainly won't be the city folks who have never been in the canyons and don't know the magic, and it won't be the developers and those who stand to profit once again from nature's destruction. It will take the lovers of wild, those who know the song of a stream and the dance of its waves, the chill of its splash.

If we who know it and love it, don't act to save it, who will? Some day we will drag our boats on the shore only to find the bed dry or the moving water replaced by a lake. Then it will be too late to complain, but then what good would it do anyway for who could we blame but ourselves.

On the rivers in Spirit,

Bill Nelson

###

TRIP REPORTS

CATAMONT BRIDGE - BLM TAKEOUT

RICK ANDREWS

On Saturday, May 16, six solo canoes, two tandems, and one kayak ran the Colorado river from Catamont to the BLM takeout. The trip is about 13 miles long and through two short canyons. The river was fairly low, maybe 3,000 cfs. At this level, the rapid were fairly small and easily negotiated. The one exception being Rodeo rapid. It was very rocky with large holes. One solo and one tandem boat ran it down the right tongue, providing an exciting run for the rest of the group and the gathering spectators on the road. Several boats from the training gained valuable experience in scouting and paddling rapids. The day concluded without incident or swimmers.

BROWN'S CANYON/FROG ROCK - ARKANSAS RIVER

RICK ANDREWS

On Saturday, May 30, our original plans were to paddle the Arkansas from Howard to Cotapaxi. However, upon arrival, we decided to run Brown's Canyon instead. The river was flowing at about 1200 cfs at Wellsville. At this level, most of the canyon was nonstop Class II-III water. Zoom Floom rapid was probably a IV, with large waves at the top, and a sizable hole in the middle, while the rocks at the bottom were covered. There were several swimmers this day at Zoom Floom and in the Staircase, with simple rescues. A typical day in Brown's Canyon.

On Sunday, May 31, while several of the groups more daring members challenged 1 through 6 section of the Arkansas, most others ran the Frog Rock section just below. This is an exciting run, with a gradient of 60 ft a mile. The first 1.5 miles is nonstop Class III eddy hopping, requiring constant maneuvering. There were three solo canoes, one tandem and one kayak. Occasional views of the Collegiate Peaks highlighted the scenery. This run is through quite a bit of private property, with the takeout in Buena Vista. Keep their rights in mind while on this run.

Only one swimmer this day on Mouse Rock rapid. This is a tricky drop, with a very difficult portage if not run.

This is an excellent follow up to the previous day in Brown's Canyon, ending a great weekend on the Arkansas river.

SALMON RIVER - AUGUST 10-15

RICK ANDREWS

This is a beautiful trip from roads end to roads end. The 90 miles of river we paddled travels through the heart of the Frank Church Wilderness Area. It is the largest Wilderness Area in the lower 49

states, as well as the second deepest gorge.

We had six canoes, one tandem and one self-contained kayak. We found low water this year. The rapids were smaller, and less pushy, but a little more technical. There are about 30 Class III rapids, being pool-drop in nature. Only two boats swam.

There was a variety of weather with several days of headwinds. It was generally in the 70's during the daytime and low 60's in the evenings.

We saw lots of wildlife including moose, an eagle, otter, mink, big-horn sheep, chuckers and canvasback ducks, as well as the rare Cielone double reverse dry-land roll.

It was certainly a rewarding and relaxing week in the wilderness. I would certainly recommend this trip to anybody lucky enough to get a permit for it.

GUNNISON GORGE

KERRY EDWARDS

Those of you who have been on my exploratory trips know that God seizes these opportunities to get back at me for asserting his death. The Gunnison Gorge was no exception. Knowing I am particularly vulnerable in a strange environment on a new river, God finds sadistic satisfaction in arranging circumstances (mostly weather) over which he and the angels can gloat while us poor humans suffer. Well it was a happy weekend in heaven. In the middle of August on a desert river there is rarely anything more certain than having to wear shorts and T-shirts to survive the heat. Think again! Low temperature records were broken all over Colorado that weekend, with the additional complication of consistent rain. The Gunnison Gorge was no exception. The only bright spot was that Rod Martin of Montrose had arranged to have all our cars shuttled to the take out. Luckily, the drivers were able to make it back to the paved road from the put in before the rain started. The put in is about 10 miles off Highway 50 and is reached via a road that requires either four-wheel drive or a high clearance two-wheel drive vehicle. The ten miles take about an hour to cover. The end of the road puts you 700 vertical feet and 1 mile of trail away from the river and actual put in. Needless to say, getting gear from the cars to the river requires time -- about 3 hours I would say (if everyone makes two trips). Consequently, if you don't have people to drive your cars to the take out, the effort on the first day is extensive. If you meet at the dirt road off Highway 50, it takes an hour to the end of the road, three hours to carry gear down, one hour back out to the highway, 30 minutes to take out, 30 minutes back to dirt road, an hour back in to the end of the dirt road and a twenty minute hike to the river. So, a little more than a 7 hour effort later (a little less if shuttle drivers don't help to carry gear down - but if you're a shuttle driver don't expect friendly

smiles when you return) and one is finally ready to put on the river (after lunch that is).

Now that you're worn out from all that effort, it's time to meet the river. First, some preliminary comments about what I was expecting. My expectations were basically drawn from the article in Canoe magazine about this trip. The subtitle of the article is "At last, here's one western canyon trip that's well suited to open canoe travel". I took this subtitle to imply that other western canyons had been tried in an open canoe, found unsuitable because they were too difficult, but here was a river that was easier than other Western canyon rivers. This assumption was reinforced by comments in the body of the article about the suitability of most Western rivers to kayaks and rafts but not open canoes. Since I have had a lot of experience in canoeing Western canyons in canoes and have found all the ones I have done to be quite suitable to open canoes, I assumed the Gunnison Gorge must be easier than say the San Juan, Desolation or Grays, or the Yampa. It is my opinion now that this in fact is not the case. The Gunnison is more challenging than any of the above, probably comparable to Brown's Canyon on the Arkansas, though I think the Gunnison is consistently more technical than the Arkansas river. The article in Canoe classifies this river as a low class III run. I would rate it a challenging class III run, particularly for people used to running other Western canyons where the rapids are usually wide open with large waves. The Gunnison requires technical skills not required on many other Western canyon runs with similar class ratings.

In fairness to the author of the article, I should note that the water was running at 407 cfs according to Dam (damn?) bureaucrats while the information in the article was based on a flow of 1200 cfs. What the river is like at 1200 cfs I have no idea. It might get easier, it might get more difficult. There would certainly be less rocks showing, but I image it might be more pushy.

The first day we travelled 4 miles, running a number of rapids some of which were scouted by some of the boats. A couple might be classified Class II+ - III-, with a lot of class I-II riffles in between. We stopped at Buttermilk campsite due to rain.

The second day of the trip was more difficult. It is ten miles of river with two miles of flat water at the start and four miles of flat water at the end. The middle four miles has numerous rapids. We began this stretch between 9-10am and got off the river between 5-6pm. Much of this time was spent scouting with some portaging. Boulder Garden and Cable are probably the most difficult rapids. The bottom section of Boulder Garden is very tight. The shorter and more maneuverable kayaks and C-1's made it through. Ray and Elaine ran it on the right in Ray's CCA and made it through but proclaimed after doing it they wouldn't try it again. Pauline and I, and Bob and Carol Aikin decided to portage the bottom section. To run it on the left required an eddy turn which if missed meant serious trouble. I

though the probabilities of missing the eddy turn in a Tripper outweighed the possibilities of making it. Rod Martin and Tom elected to portage their gear and have a couple of more experienced paddlers try the left side in the empty Starburst. Unfortunately for the boat, the eddy is even harder to hit than it appears. The paddlers missed the turn and survived the swim but the boat pinned, bent and popped free. It didn't look great but it paddled.

Most of the other rapids were more manageable but for both Pauline and I it was the first time that we felt that a Tripper was not a maneuverable boat. Spoiled by C-1s I guess. On some of the rapids, more experienced paddlers ran Rod and Tom's boat through since they were the least experienced of the group. At Cable, Ray and Don ran all the canoes except mine which I (misleading pronoun-in fact it was me. Nobody could portage alone over the huge boulders in the canyon) portaged. In retrospect, that rapid was probably not as difficult as our response might indicate, but for me I was thinking about the fact that it was late in the day, raining and we, had what I had anticipated to be, more difficult water ahead, so took the conservative choice. In addition, once below the rapid it looked less difficult than it had from the scouting vantage point on the boulders above it. Grand Finale turned out to be an anticlimax since it was not that difficult, and we quickly paddled the last four miles to the takeout while Scott developed the skill of micturating while still kneeling in a C-1.

All in all, I think the trip turned out well given the circumstances. The air and water (54 degrees) were cold, people had prepared for a desert trip with a one-mile carry in so the potential for hypothermia was present. Not everyone had wetsuits so it would have been a job to warm people up. And I had believed the wrong sources when it came to estimating difficulty (Anderson and Hopkinson say there are twelve Class III's and four Class IV's in this section above 600 cfs). But it was an adventure. (Don't ask Pauline's opinion of adventures).

If I were to describe this section in a sentence, I would say that it is a little deceiving. A fourteen mile trip in two days in fact seems too short, but in reality it takes the full two days. There are no campsites in the section with the most rapids so one has to run all the major rapids in one day. With the scouting involved in an exploratory trip, this was a very time-consuming journey. Which brings me to a final note. I'd like to thank Don Clark for his help on the trip. The fact that he was in a kayak and is a very skilled paddler meant that some rapids which would have required scouting in a canoe (Ray and Elaine excepted-but who would follow Ray down a rapid) were able to be run without scouting after Don ran them and advised us from below. Without this help, Sunday would have been a very long day. (Keep in mind that I like to scout more than some RMCC canoeist. I don't know if this indicates my conservative nature or their rambunctious nature). Also thanks to Ray and Elaine for their patience waiting below the rapid with Don while the rest

of us scouted. Most of all, thanks to the friends and relative of Rod and Judy Martin who saved us from two hours of slipping and sliding on red grease in four-wheel drive after eight-hours of paddling.

THE NUMBERS - ARKANSAS RIVER - AUGUST 29

RICK ANDREWS

This is a short run of about 6 miles which we ran in just over three hours. While it is short, I probably used more paddle strokes than most normal day trips. It is very steep, with the average gradient of 84 feet per miles, with two miles dropping at 120 feet per mile. It is also very rocky, requiring almost constant complex maneuvering. We had four solo canoes and one kayak. Surprisingly, there was only one swim, as #6 continues to be my nemesis.

For those up to the challenge, this run is a real kick at reasonable water levels. Extreme caution should be used at all times.

ROYAL GORGE - ARKANSAS RIVER - AUGUST 30

RICK ANDREWS

This is another short, intense stretch of river. This tourist attraction holds some of the best whitewater in the state. The average gradient is about 60 ft per mile, with a couple of miles at 90 ft. It is a hazardous run and all safety precautions should be exercised.

On this day there were five solo canoes and two kayaks. We scouted the three largest rapids, Sunshine Falls, Sledgehammer and the Wall. Still, they all got a boat or two. All told we had about 8 swims.

The sheer tight granite walls of the Gorge make the scenery outstanding, when there is time to look up and notice.

There was still quite a bit of river traffic, but certainly not the 200 we found in Brown's Canyon.

If you like long, steep, pushy rapids with lots of rocks and holes, this run is for you!

RUBY & NORSETNIEF CANYONS - COLORADO RIVER

VI POLK

Labor Day weekend found three-solo and eight-tandem canoes ready to tackle the beauty of this easy float, along with 50+ other canoeists and rafters who wanted to get one last run. Water level was running at about 3,100 cfs and the days were warm and breezy. The canyon walls were beautiful in their sheer height and color variations and the quiet a welcome relief, except for the "friendly" trains at 3:00 and 5:00 am.

This is a lazy float trip with a couple of Class I rapids to add some excitement - a nice family trip or a perfect father/son weekend. There are enough side canyons where one can get some hiking exercise and the water was just the right temperature for some swimming. We paddled 14 miles on Saturday, which left us nine miles for two days. On Sunday we camped just below Black Rocks where Dick Akins son was brave enough to make the ten foot jump into the river. He thought hard about it at first, but 2 jumps were not enough. After setting up camp, he actually paddled "upstream" to make a few more. That night we were graced with a full moon as we sat by the campfire and saw it come up between two worn-down shale spears. We saw some wildlife, including a beaver and a couple of "mud-covered apes".

This section of river has become a very popular thus no campfires are allowed without a firepan and all human waste must be carried out. In this manner, the river will be as pristine and wild for you as it was for the boater before you and the boater that will surely follow.

On behalf of the entire group, I would like to thank Suzanne Gold and John Daly for taking care of all the minor details that made this a most enjoyable weekend.

P.S. At this time of year, remember to leave enough time at the end of the trip for a stop in Grand Junction to pick peaches, pears, apples and raspberries.

###

RULES OF RIVER ETIQUETTE

The following is an excerpt from an article by Dan Langston published in the August issue of CANOE magazine. We all want to get out and have fun on the river but we must remember that there is more than one of us on the river, some experienced and some not so. We can all learn from Dan's words of wisdom.

". . . The quality of your river experience is dependent on more than the grand design of the river bed morphology and watershed flow dynamics. It is what you, and I and everyone else, make it.

Most sports have tradition based on the context of the environment in which they were created and nurtured. The English are a good example with their splendid tweeds and knickers on the golf course, and their courtly manners at Wimbledon. Whitewater paddling is relatively new and, not surprisingly, it's turbulent development is reflected in the lack of any strong paddling code. Until recently, there wasn't much need. Conditions have changed and, like all things in the universe, will continue to change. Some will complain, others may even curse me, but I believe this is an idea whose time has come. We need a code by which we can live.

(cont. on page 13)



*Boulder
Outdoor
Center*

2510 N. 47th St.
Boulder, CO 80301

Call
444-8420

**Raft Supported
Big Bend Canoe Trips
Try Before You Buy Rentals
Sales of New + Used
Canoes and
Accessories**



Fellow paddlers:

This is my second year as Secretary/Treasurer and it has been my pleasure to serve all of you. Let me offer a big apology to any of you I may not have returned a call to very promptly. It has been a "topsy turvy" year for me, but I know that next year will be better. If no objections are raised, I would like to continue in this post for the 1987-1988 year.

Now, I don't know exactly how we did it, but our "kitty" is nice and full. I know that we can put these resources to good use in the year to come. I want to once again welcome and offer a big THANK YOU to all the new members, over 51 of them this year. As new, interested parties in the sport of canoeing in Colorado, please take this time to think how we may make this club more meaningful to you next year. I, for one, do not want to lose you come next April because you felt we did not meet your goals/needs, so please, put some thoughts on paper and bring them with you to the fall meeting. This is YOUR time to be heard.

The following is the Treasury as of August 25, 1987:

1986 Carry Over 99.68

| INCOME | | EXPENSES | |
|---|------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Training | \$ 530.00 * | Printing | \$ 302.04 |
| Dues | 1560.00 | Postage | 220.04 |
| Caps | 47.00 | '86 Fall Meeting | 204.68 |
| Advertising | 70.00 | Film Festival | 215.79 |
| Bank Interest | 34.01 | Spring Meeting | 5.45 |
| T-Shirt | 7.50 | REI Day | 33.78 |
| Other | 31.00 | Nail Soup | 33.35 |
| Total 1987 Income | \$2279.51 | Office Supplied | 52.03 |
| | | Dues Refunded | 10.00 |
| | | Bank Service Charge | 5.00 |
| Total Income '86-87 | \$2979.19 | Total Expenses | \$1082.16 |
| Balance as of September 15, 1987 | | | \$1897.03** |

* \$200 of the training money is still outstanding.
** Red Cross has not yet been paid

Respectfully submitted,

Vi Polk

Padding behavior should be consistent with the laws of nature, and particularly the laws pertaining to the nature of the river. More simply, rules of common usage and courtesy should make sense in respect to natural laws like gravity, inertia and thermodynamics.

Law Number One: The Time and Space Law: Two river craft cannot occupy the same place on any river, at the same time.

This may seem blatantly obvious to you, but a casual observer of most river trips might surmise that many boaters are conducting experiments in an attempt to disprove this law. I suspect most of these experimental collisions were the result of a failure to communicate rather than academic postulation.

Visual communication is essential on the river because of distance and river noise. Knowing and using the American Whitewater Association river signals is part of this skills, as is making hand signals for: "quiet!", "thirsty," "hungry," "tired," or "look!". These basic signals allow you to communicate over some distance without yelling until hoarse, not to mention scaring wildlife and generally disturbing the peace.

Visual communication also includes seeing the message of the river. A bend in the river means "caution" and a blind drop means "Stop!". Being in touch with the power of the river means always knowing where the next eddy is. Rule Number One: Go with the flow or yield to those who are.

You are responsible for knowing where you are on the river, relative to everyone else, all the time. This is essentially a communication skill: between you and other river users and between you and the river. If you commit yourself to a rapid with narrow chutes at the same time another craft does, there is likely to be a collision. It is also considered to be bad form to drop over a ledge on top of someone surfing in a hole.

This is a good place to introduce Woodall's Theorem of Flow Reversal: a paddler and his craft surfing a hole tend to stay in the hole, unless set in motion by collision (with another craft) or conscientious decision (by the river and/or the paddler). Simply put, it is usually easier to get in a hole than it is to get back out.

So look before you leap if you are a surf jock about to jump into a hole. Hole surfers are going against the main flow and should not unreasonably impede the downstream progress of others. Hollywood Hank, the Hole Hog, is being as rude as the golfer who takes a couple of "practice putts" on each hole while the foursome behind him simmers in the sunshine. A paddler waiting patiently in the eddy above the wave you are surfing on its exhibiting a high form of river courtesy, you should respond by reasonably limiting your performance and offering a thank you smile.

Keep track of river craft moving downstream. Camping out at a congested play spot is also bad form, frowned at in same way as the rowdies at the pool hall.

The novice "I can't stop now" paddler about to commit to running the next drop is responsible for knowing who (as well as what) lies downstream. Keep an eddy you can catch between you and the craft ahead. Don't commit before the route is clear.

On crowded rivers, the hierarchy should be based on need. The Coast Guard has already thought about this in establishing their rule for Inland Waterways. The bottom line is maneuverability which leads us to the next Law and the related Rules.

The Law of Craft Momentum, Gravity Flow, and Real Mass: A craft in motion tends to continue in motion if there are no eddys to catch and there are no big holes to stop it. Abortive collisions and other attempts to defy this law are usually spoken in terms of a real mass (pardon my southern accent). Rule Number Two: The least maneuverable craft has the primary down-stream right-of way.

This is almost self-explanatory. Kayaks are more maneuverable than canoes and should give way. Canoes are more maneuverable than rafts and should yield to the rubber mammoths. So far, so good. But what happens when two equivalent craft meet at the critical point of flow?

At the risk of creating confusion, Noah's Corollary of Compromise should be introduced. Albeit an advanced theorem, the beginner should know that to aspire to an where the road leads. Simply stated it says "The higher class boater should yield right of way." Much confusion exists over the interpretation of this pearl of wisdom. Some authorities claim the defined class as skill, others say social standing. Why quibble? Assume he meant both and that the terms are mutually inclusive.

The law of Volume Flow and Proportional Carrying Capacity: The ability of the river to absorb different size groups is directly proportional to the volume flow of the river. The bigger the group, the more water you need to flush'em down the river. Basic research for this law was done in the bathroom fixture industry.

Passing other group's boaters should be done in flat water, not in mid-rapid. Within a given rapid, boaters in eddies should yield to those out in the current and move over to make room for those headed downstream. Rule Number Three: Small is Beautiful. Limit the size of your fleet. Four to six people is ideal, more than 12 boats is obscene. Larger groups should sub-divide. Paddling clubs, please take note.

The Law of Local Rule and Cross-Cultural Conflict (also known as the Rambo Law): Foreign behavior is poorly tolerated by the locals.

Rural America clings to traditional values not in vogue with the "New Wave" generation. Public drinking, nudity and disregard for local traffic are common complaints about paddlers. Rule Number Four: Do unto your rivers and river friends, as you would have them do unto you. Rivers, like the once great herds of buffalo, are a finite resource. Competition among tribes for this shrinking resource is growing. The time has come for all of us to learn to share what we have, or it may not be worth having.

Defining what it takes to be a "Class Boater" is easier than rating the class of a given rapid. A class paddler blends with the Environment. They can be expressively excited and hoot like banshee or become a peaceful part of the greater cosmic flow. There is a difference between the creative initiation of playfulness and using the river as an ego trampoline. There is nothing inhibited about having perceptive awareness. All it really takes is a sense of who... and where you are. (Dan Langston instructs at the Nantahala Outdoor Center)

###

RAPID RATING

Kerry Edwards

Rapid rating is at best an inexact art and at worst totally useless. The following article, reprinted from Paddler's World, the newsletter of the International Long River Canoe Club which in turn reprinted it from SA Canoes and written by Graeme Addison of the Rivermen based in South Africa, addresses the problem.

How do you grade a rapid? I wouldn't be asking this question if I hadn't myself been asked it a thousand times -- and each time my explanation has left me less satisfied. The question comes up again and again on the river trails and wildwater schools run by The Rivermen. Novices entering kayaking for the first time want to KNOW - positively - "What makes a rapid a Grad 6?" Finally in exasperation (at our own lack of clarity) we've got into the habit of saying: "It's a 6 if there's a slight chance you will survive . . . you'll know it's a seven if you wind up in heaven."

The simple truth is that we are a long way from establishing a satisfactory approach to river grading. The problem isn't theoretical - it's practical, since the gradings you apply will inevitably be taken by yourself or others to mean; Okay, shoot it - or Whoa! Stay clear. In many ways the same problems apply in rock climbing and kayaking. The climbing scale from "A" (simple) to "H" (for spiders only) resembles river grading. Generally the six point system of rapids grading is applied as follows:

1. Fast current, small waves. Very easy.
2. Open rapids and small drops. Exciting for novices.

3. Heavier water with obstacles. Intermediate paddling.
4. Steep gradients, sudden drops. Intermediate limit.
5. Extremely serious water. For the advanced only.
6. Every trick a river can pull. Kamikaze stuff.

This approach helps us to rate a rapid as one rates a climb - as a whole. The advantage of doing so is that it gives an idea of who should and should not attempt the different grades. That's useful when you're asked for your advice. But the approach has serious shortcomings.

Who will say that an 'easy' climb or rapid has no inherent dangers? It may be easy but one slip and you could be a goner. I've heard experienced climbers argue for an hour over the correct grading of a route up a cliff. One says it's easy - the other points out that some of the handholds in a chimney or overhang are extremely difficult for beginners.

The first responds that the climb as a whole is easy, and one can't rate it on just one or two harder moves. The second says the hard moves are the measure of the climbing danger, and the route must be graded accordingly.

Clearly the subjective points of view of those doing the grading often influence their 'objective' judgements. Subjectivity aside, do you grade on technical skills alone, or on danger or on both? Technique and hazard may be two separate things, in climbing as in kayaking. Still most climbers can agree on gradings, not so for kayakers. There are many reasons for this. Rivers move and change, rock faces don't - unless the rock is rotten and shifts or breaks off in your hands. Consequently, the rapid you saw last week may be an entirely new proposition after heavy rain - perhaps easier (because the rocks are covered) or harder (because the holes are bigger). The river is always shifting and breaking around you: that is its attraction, but also its danger. Playing on that moving checkerboard of rocks, drops and eddies gives the kayaker much the same adrenalin high as a glider pilot feels in a heavy updraught, or a skier feels on a 60-degree slope.

Gliding, skiing and kayaking are games of wits with the elements. Not against the elements, mind you, for it is a foolish sportsman who imagines that he can take on wind, ice or water and win. You have to use the power of those elements to your best advantage.

Unfortunately, when you miscalculate, the game is not over - it may only have just begun! A river carries you from one situation to another, from chute to chute, hole to hole. Once at the mercy of fast moving water, you will find that situations develop and disappear with bewildering speed. Nothing stays the same. At one moment you may be tumbling over a series of ledges into horrendous suckbacks. Next, you are in a quiet eddy - with nowhere to go but back into the current to face who-knows-what further perils. When a

climber gets into a tight situation or falls off, he is (usually) protected by ropes, pitons, and belays. The kayaker is (usually) isolated in their rapid, and while there may be rescuers in nearby boats or on the bank, they aren't attached to him: they have to reach him physically or throw him a line. So the grading of a rapid must take into account what will happen as a consequence of a mistake. Amongst Natal's top kayakers, a system of 'double grading' is now being used to separate these aspects.

A rapid may be technically easy - a straight line - but at the same time, the consequences of taking the wrong line and landing in a serious hazard could make it a deadly risk. An extreme example is a waterfall, where all you may have to do is paddle straight over the top, drop into a pool and carry on paddling. But if you miss your line and drop left or right, you'll get jammed into a siphon - a situation familiar to Cape canoeists.

That waterfall could be graded 2-6 (2 for technical difficulty if you do the right thing; 6 for the skills and cool head necessary to get you out of a life-threatening situation). The double system of grading has a lot to recommend it. What is needed is further refinement. To begin with, you can't rate an entire rapid - only a particular route on it. For instance, whilst the chicken run may look simple it could have a kamikaze twist. There's a so called chicken run past Four Man Hole on the Tugela where, if you paddle dead straight down the side chute you'll successfully scoot past that monster-munching hole. BUT if you allow your craft to turn just a fraction left or right, you'll be sideways onto car-size rocks before you know it, with every prospect of getting pinned there and finally swimming into the hole. I'd rate that chicken run 3-5; it's 3 if you go straight, 5 if you get caught by the eddies and have to maneuver out.

This is where river savvy counts. A good leader will recognize that a rock in the middle of the chicken run is a treacherous obstacle, requiring grade 4 skills if it is to be avoided. Paddlers might have to break out of the current beside the rock, ferry glide across a swift channel, break into the current again and possibly execute an eskimo roll if the cushion of water against the rock flips you over. All this is a positive and confident way - ignoring the wild roaring of the hole not ten meters away.

It's simple for an advanced paddler. But the nervous novice shouldn't attempt it; the cost in shattered boats and psyches is potentially too high. Wide open rivers like the Tugela generally do not pose much of a grading problem because almost all the rapids can be taken straight down the middle, giving a grading of, say 2-2 to an average-sized chute with noisy feature but no serious complications. Big pools at the bottom of such rapids make them safe for paddlers who botch things up and go swimming. The volume of water and height of the waves doesn't necessarily make the rapid difficult or dangerous. On the other hand, shallow, rocky confined rivers where

the bank seems comfortingly close often create some nightmare rescue situations.

Many times I've stood on the bank explaining these differences to groups of doubtful novices who look in fear at big waves but seem cheerfully ready to head down a rock channel. This is where double grading helps a lot. It tends to objectify things.

You can say, "Look, anyone who's got the skills to paddle a grade 3 can get down this central chute. But watch out. If you miss the main line and go left you'd drop into that hole - and then you need grade 4 skills and steel nerves. We'll put a rescue boat and a man with a throwline there just in case."

The double grading system implies that someone experienced in reading the water is doing the grading, not just some idiot holding a copy of this article. And naturally, the rapid has to be scouted and graded each time you visit it - since last year's memories are not today's water. You've got to try to foresee the accidents that could happen and set up rescue in advance. Finally, the rapid should be graded with the type of boat in mind. What to a kayaker is a massive challenge is, to a ten-man inflatable just another omnibus ride . . . Amazing how some people get their jollies.

REFLECTIONS

This two-grade system may apply well to our circumstances also. Think about the rapid called the Chutes on the south fork of the South Platte. Technically, I think it is a class II drop. No great skills are needed to go through the drop - just keep the boat straight. In fact, in terms of technical skills, the rocks immediately above the chutes probably require more technical skills to negotiate. However, the possibility of danger should something go wrong in the Chutes is very high. This leads me to suspect that a class III+ or IV danger rating may not be inappropriate. I watched a C-1 go through the drop and pin sideways halfway down. This is not completely unforeseeable. The first wave kicks boats hard to the left (particularly solo canoes and C-1's - they don't have the weight in the bow that tandem canoes or kayaks with legs in the bow have). On the left wall, just where the boat is thrown is a notch caused by pieces of rock that have fallen away. If the bow catches there, the stern swings right. The river is less than 12 feet wide here and consequently the boat will pin between the walls as long as the bow cannot swing downstream. In the instance I observed, no serious consequences occurred because the boat was completely upside down when it pinned and the paddler was forcefully dragged out of the boat by the rushing current. The boat stayed pinned for a short period of time, but without the paddler in it, it eventually bounced upward and freed itself. However, should the boat pin with the paddler facing upstream, the current is likely to hold the paddler in the boat and not force him or her out. In those

circumstances, rescue would be nigh impossible without climbing equipment since the banks are so steep there. Any attempt to push the boat out from upstream would only further pin it between the walls.

The other incident which outlines the danger of the drop occurred in higher water when a strong recirculating eddy appears on the right below the actual drop but still within the steep walls. If a paddler exits his or her boat and is not flushed up against the undercut wall on the left and out into the pool below, help from shore may be necessary to escape this eddy. The rock walls are too steep and smooth to offer hand or footholds and a rope thrown from the shore to the swimmer may be the only alternative to a long battle with the eddy current.

The dangers that become apparent when this two-part grading system is used explains why some RMCC paddlers no longer indulge in the pleasure of the Class II part of the drop.

###

BOOK REVIEW

The following is a book review written by Cliff Jacobson. With the holiday's coming up, it might be just the right gift for that someone who is so hard to buy for.

Wilderness Visionaries, by Jim Dale Vickers, ICS Books, Inc., 1986, Hardbound, 263 pages, \$19.95.

At the outset, let me make it perfectly clear that I disdain philosophy. Like the late Cal Rutstrum, I am intrigued with the "how to," not the "why not." It's disconcerting then, that I am so entranced with Jim Dale Vickers's book **Wilderness Visionaries**. For I stayed with Vickers right to the end. I simply couldn't put the book down!

Wilderness Visionaries details the lives of six men whose greatness illuminated the spirit of man. Whose verve and persistence stripped the armor of would be developers who otherwise would surely have crushed the wildness in this nation's wilderness. Bob Marshall, John Muir, Sigurd Olson, Calvin Rutstrum, Robert Service, Henry David Thoreau need no introduction. Their names and deeds are burned into our wilderness heritage. We speak proudly of these men. Reverently. With unquestioned respect.

But what of substance do we know of them? In his books, **Challenge of the Wilderness** and **Chips from a Wilderness Log**, Rutstrum wrote his own biography, though much detail is lacking.

And Thoreau? Was he really a solitary hermit, engulfed solely in the philosophy of wilderness? Or did he, like other mortals, possess a

human spirit that demanded closeness, compassion, love?

What of Muir, Marshall and the others? Why were they more than mere wilderness men? Where was the pulse of their greatness? Their frailties?

My first impression when thumbing through **Wilderness Visionaries** was that at 263 pages and \$19.95, it is terribly expensive, even in hardbound edition. Granted, there's a complete index, bibliography and list of source notes. And the cover - Vickers's own photography - is breathtaking. But is this slim little book really worth 20 bucks?

Absolutely!

Wilderness Visionaries is among the most carefully and best written books I've read. Every line on every page suggest painstaking thought. Vickers believes in the philosophies of his visionaries. He totally understands the inner self that so deeply motivated his subjects. Consider these sketches in the life of John Muir.

"When the Muir family moved to Micky Hill Farm, Daniel (John's father) tried to dynamite out a well but failed. He decided instead to have John chip almost 90 feet down into hard sandstone with a hammer and chisel until he hit water. At 80 feet John almost died of choke-damp; carbonic acid that had settled to the bottom of a self-made hell. . . One of his last glances prior to collapsing unconscious into the windlass hoist bucket was of a bur oak tree branch. . . A day or two later his father lowered him back down, and the work continued. It had taken months. John eventually struck water, but not without reaching a new depth of disdain for his father, his father's farming, and his father's religion. . ."

Or, "The same winter he, (John) supplemented his income by teaching school. . . he astonished everyone by contriving a machine that lit the school's woodstove at a set time. . . perfected the mechanical bed that set him on his feet every morning. . . a kind of bed-flipping alarm clock, but now with added attachments. Not only did the machine light lamps but. . . it pushed a book onto a desk. . . opened it, then closed it and replaced it with another when allotted study time was up."

Vickers has left no stone unturned as he unfolds the stories of the six great wilderness visionaries who shaped out wilderness heritage. He interviewed family, friend, acquaintances. Sorted through tons of correspondence. Documented everything. His notes in the appendix have the thoroughness of a doctoral thesis.

It's fashionable when reviewing books to find at least something wrong with text or execution - to prove the author and/or publisher are human. But I could find nothing but joy and wonder in this book. Its style, format, type size, even down to the tiny wolf tracks that separate major thoughts portrays quality. Vickers and

publisher ICS have done their homework.

And there's philosophy I can appreciate. Four years before Rutstrum died, he summed the dreams of all visionaries with this comment: "If you want to do something for me after I'm gone, live so as not to defile the precious earth."

There is greatness here. In the lives of Marshall, Muir, Olson, Rutstrum, Service, Thoreau. And in **Wilderness Visionaries**, here is a classical work and I commend it to your attention.

###

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Vi Polk for doing the newsletter this time. I have elected to go back to college at Greeley and time constraints were making it impossible to get this done prior to returning to UNC.

Merla DeSantis

###

Printing of the newsletter has been done by

P & L Printing
419 West 12 Avenue
Denver CO 80204

303/592-1677