



The Voyageur's Companion

NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN CANOE CLUB
Issue Number 5 Oct 1999

New President Needed

RMCC President's Column

By Jim Holloway

As I said in the last Newsletter, it's time to find next year's president. The election/draft for all "officers" will be held on October 23, 1999, at our fall meeting and slide show extravaganza. And yes, you can be selected *in absentia*, so you better be there if you want to vote for or draft somebody else.

Fall Meeting, Business, and Slides- and-Pictures-Show

The meeting will be held on **Saturday, October 23, 1999, at St. Jude's Youth Center, starting at 6:00 p.m.** See map. It will begin with a pot-luck dinner - bring your favorite dish to share. After dinner, we will conduct some business, including the election or designation of "officers," and then we'll begin our slide-show.

As for business besides the election, etc., we have been asked to furnish a copy of our membership list to American Whitewater so that AW might mail invitations to us to join them in their efforts to promote whitewater sport and to preserve or secure access to whitewater rivers. Opinions on doing so varied widely among the officers so the decision will be up to you. We have also been invited by friends in CWWA to participate in an attempt to address issues that commonly arise when paddlers and landowners debate the "right to float" on rivers that run through private land. Club member, Ric Alesch, and others over at CWWA have already begun to meet with interested parties at the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, which is facilitating the meetings but taking no position in the matter at this time. The next meeting is on December 13, 1999. We have to decide just how deeply involved we want to be in the effort.

As for fun, bring slides of your recent

boating adventures or pictures, **bring your projectors**, and be prepared to amaze your friends with evidence of your heroic status as paddlers.

South Platte River Clean-up

Hey! Where were you guys? Our turn-out for the event was pretty puny. I don't want to be a scold when most of us are just trying to have some fun, but last spring the club urged the "powers that be" to move the event from May so that more of us could be there when the river was low and loaded with a summer's worth of goodies. Well, the powers tilted the universe, scheduled the event for September, ensured that there was enough water to float a boat, and waited for us to arrive in droves. Kudos go to those who showed, but gosh, we had best be careful next time we ask anyone to change their plans to accommodate us.

(Continued on page 5)

Accolades For a Job Well Done! --- '99 Nationals Participants Have Their Say:

"Thank you for an excellent weekend of racing. I look forward to paddling at Clear Creek again. Kudos for a fine job well done!!!"

Pat Cleary

"Let me add my congratulations to those of others. You put on a wonderful event. I was not very excited about racing, but was talked into it by a friend. Now I see that rather than being a strictly dog-eat-dog Competition, it [slalom racing] is a chance to develop and test precision paddling skills, and to learn from those who are doing this well, with grace and power. It was wonderful. I want to do more of this. Gratitude to you and the many volunteers that made this a wonderful event."

Bob Cook (continued on page 10)

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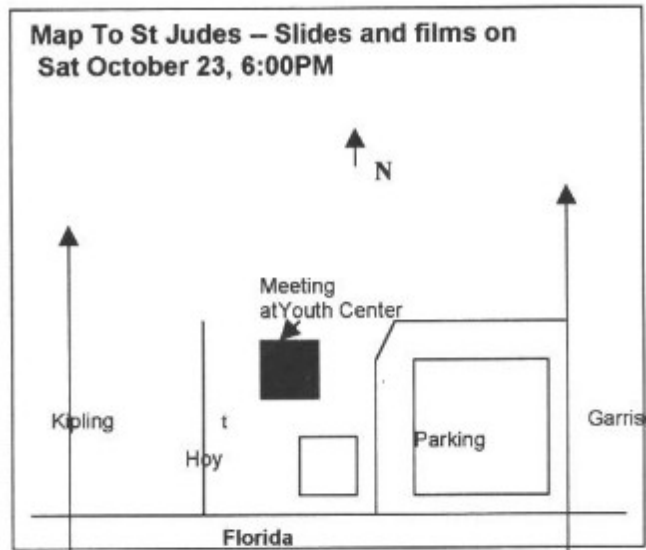
Shall We Elect a President-Elect Too?

Some time ago, I discussed the idea of electing a president-elect each year, rather than a president, with a few members of the club. The idea was not warmly embraced, but it was not soundly rejected either. Here's what I had in mind and why: if we elected a president-elect each year, he or she would serve with the outgoing president for one year. The club would have the services of two people, rather than one; and the president-elect would have some time to "learn the ropes" (more like strings, but there nonetheless) as opposed to having to jump coldly into the fray. The president would be able to share the load a bit with his or her successor, and conversely, the president-elect wouldn't have to do every presidential thing on his or her own. Having two people at the "top" of the officer pile would also make for some continuity, so that projects commenced wouldn't just fade away with the retiring president. Let's talk some more about this at the October meeting; or, if you won't be there but have a viewpoint, give me

If you'd like to serve as president-elect or have a nominee in mind, please let me know. Thanks. Jim Hollaway

"If you enjoy what you do, you'll never work another day in your life." --Confucius--

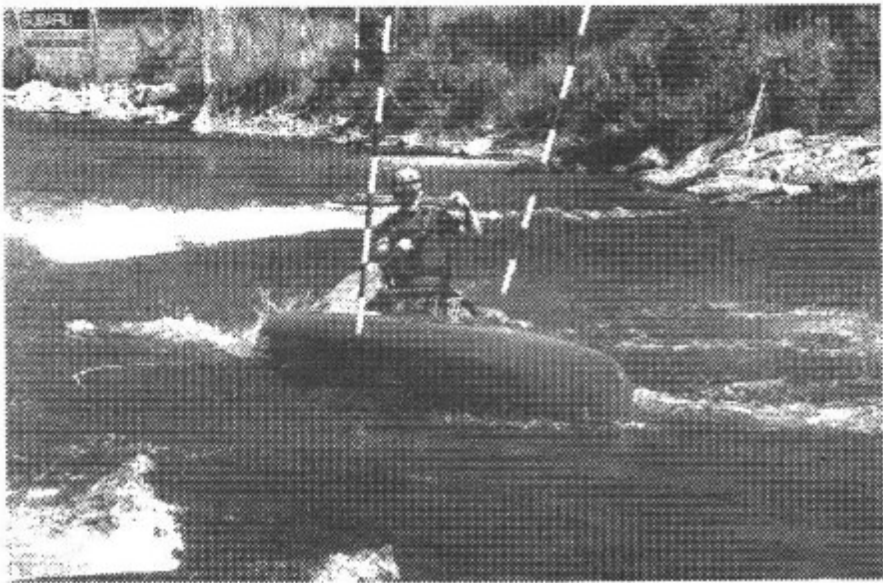
"In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life: It goes on." --Robert Frost--



CLASSIFIEDS--Contact the Editor for personal ad submissions [redacted] and Ann Nye-West for Commercial ads (303) [redacted]

Bob Foote paddle 59" (could be cut down) Great Condition \$65
Call Tim Bardsley [redacted] or email [redacted]

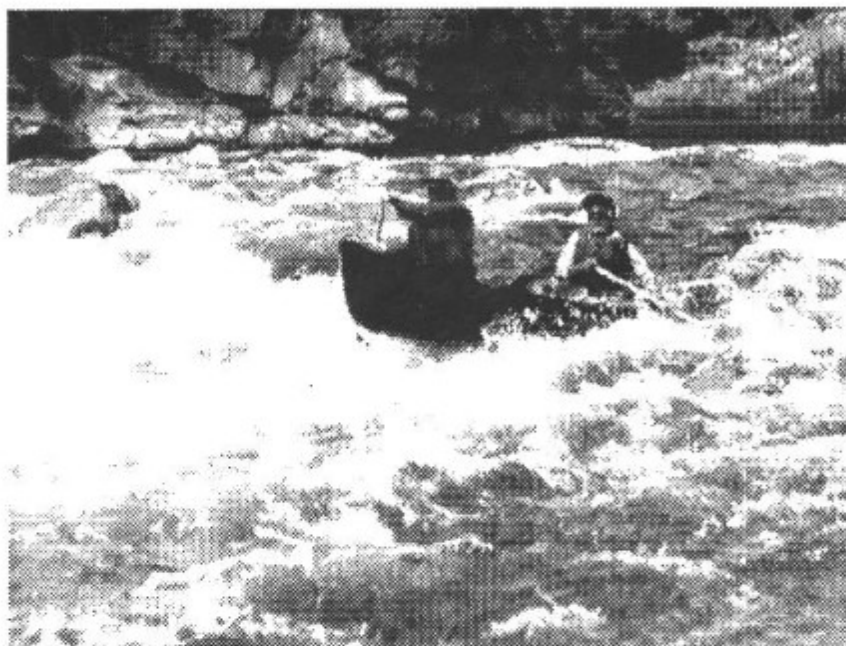
20' Old Town Tripper, good condition, w/full spray skirt and Brrell with straps, totally outfitted, \$750. Call Baker-Jarvis' [redacted]



***** I stopped climbing and started paddling because I can swim way better than I can fly *****

The '99 Nationals held at Golden's clear Creek White Water Park this Summer could not be run smoothly without the help of the rescue team. To the left is Jerry Clower assisting a capsized boater.

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"Ask A Mentor:"

Welcome to the Dear Abby of the canoe world. Each month in this section, we'll feature responses to club member's questions. When subjects are open to debate, we'll ask more than one person and may even go outside the club for comment. Send your questions to Jeff Oxenford,

This month's question: We always heard that you should back-paddle in big waves. Should both the bow and stern paddler back-paddle?

Response from Jeff Oxenford: In most cases, I try my best to avoid big waves, either by choosing a path around them, running alongside them, catching an eddy, etc. When they're unavoidable, or just plain fun, my first reaction is to go forward, power through the wave by quartering it (trying to hit the wave at an angle between 10 and 45 degrees). Then I think about leaning back and finally taking a backstroke if I see the front end starting to dip below the wave. Rarely do I approach big waves thinking about backstroking. Sitting here comfortable at my desk, I'm also trying to imagine what the paddle strokes do to the front of the canoe. For example, if the bow paddler's backstroke goes in front of them, are they actually pushing the bow down? Behind them they are lifting the bow? In the stern, what impact does the back-stroke have on the front of the boat?

A good club resource on back-paddling through big waves is Liz Shoberleine. She and an inexperienced paddler put on a show on the upper Dolores. They ran some difficult water, in a loaded Sunburst, and by going slower than the water made it though pretty dry and without incident. They showed the power of the backstroke!

Response from Bob Stecker: The skills needed are closely related. If you merely want to slow boat speed (to stay dry, or to lessen a hard bump on a rock) then both bow and stern paddlers simply do back strokes--with vertical paddles--not reverse sweeps. When setting over (especially important when carrying heavy loads) the stern paddler emphasizes power while the bow paddler emphasizes correcting angle (using

mainly reverse Js and draws). To learn how to do this, both bow and stern paddlers should first practice paddling backwards on a pond in a solo boat--and get good at it. Then, in a tandem boat, they should practice backpaddling when going around bends in the river, riding the inside of the bend to stay clear of the wave train that builds on the outside of the curve. (That's backpaddling 101; here's 102)...both paddlers can use compound backstrokes, as needed. But for a simple backstroke, bring the paddles in at a quartering angle from the rear, not from straight behind you (which feels solid but only lifts the boat).

"There are two main reasons for backpaddling on whitewater. One, to slow boat speed as you move down a wave train, and two, to set the boat over to avoid big waves."

Response from Dennis Adams. The back ferry is a maneuver that I learned about from reading Bill Mason's *The Path of the Paddle*. For years, my beginner, swim prone years, it was my maneuver of choice and I still feel reasonably proficient at performing it. A large part of my reasoning was that the back ferry, in my opinion at least, was a false prophet, especially in large waves. It is usually no dryer than simply paddling through waves and it is nearly impossible to do an eddy turn when your boat is traveling upstream. In real rough, "large," water one has to think of a forward stroke as being "the best brace". Backing upstream in the face of a serious wave to me is much like kneeling before the executioner. I back paddle in smaller waves only when I am looking to back surf it.

Mason used back ferries to take a relatively fragile boat, fully loaded boat with unsecured gear and no floatation, down shallow, rocky class III rapids. I paddle a nearly indestructible

"I eventually came to change to using mostly forward stroke based maneuvers and now seldom use the "let's back-up the rapid" style."

boat, with floatation (or with my gear tied in tightly in sealed containers that serve as floatation), on rivers that have far fewer rocks and much larger waves. If one reads Mason's later books, and especially his son Paul's new book, *"The Thrill of the Paddle"* you will note that there is less of an emphasis on the back ferry and a lot of paper dedicated to new techniques. I occasionally use a backward move, no more than a few strokes at the most, to miss rocks or to line up in the clean water above a drop.

Continues on next page

(Ask: Backpaddle...)

Response from Marge Cline: (aka. Rivermom, ACA Instructor Trainer from Chicago). The decision to back paddle in big waves varies with the type of boat you're in and the consequences of shipping a lot of water while going through the waves. In a decked C-2 or a

"Control of the boat only happens when the craft is going faster than the current or slower than the current."

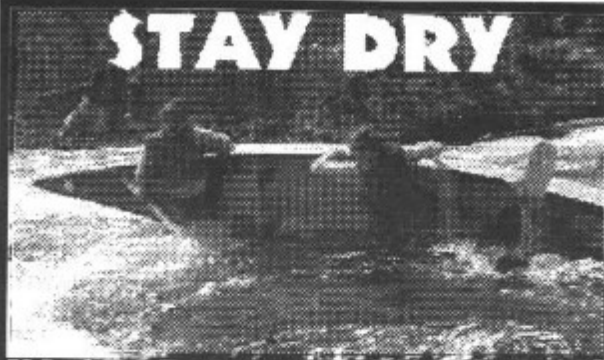
open canoe with a spray deck. I'd be tempted to power through the waves, as shipping water is not in the equation. ...and it's

great fun to get splashed in the face! One would have boat control by virtue of the fact that you would be travelling faster than the current. In a loaded tandem open canoe, I wouldn't want to ship any more water than possible. Quartering the waves will help keep the water out of the craft, because the bow of the canoe will not simply fall off the top of the wave. It's also possible to position the boat on the wave so one does not hit the highest part of the wave. Back paddling will slow the boat down so it rides easy up the face of the wave, then slowly down the back of the wave; there's no big splash as you go over the top. Adjusting the angle of the boat relative to the current will also set you up to back ferry in case it's needed in a hurry. The bow paddler controls the angle when paddling in reverse using either bow draws or prys as necessary to angle the stern in the direction you want to go; then paddling backwards when steering is not needed. The stern paddler simply does a backstroke and supplies the power for the ferry. Compound or combination backstrokes can also be used for a longer application of force. On quietwater, the bow paddler may chose to use a reverse J for steering, however, the greater force of the bow pry is usually needed in whitewater situations. *end*

Photo of Jeff Oxenford by Bob Foote




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Minutes From
The Clear Creek
Whitewater Park

Freestyle Canoe Outing: Saturday October 30th

by Bob and Jill Stecker

Last year we were weather-out when Ted Bell of Bell Canoe Works brought his demo Freestyle Canoes to Golden. But Ted Bell, and Jerry Nyre of Canoe Colorado, has loaned us some truly remarkable solo and tandem demo canoes. We plan to use these in our future canoe classes (in both our private instructional classes and in the yearly RMCC Instructional Program).

So, on the 30th of October, from 3 to 6PM, come to the Clear Creek Whitewater Park's Golden Goose Pond—you might bring a dish and we'll have a bite to eat afterward—and try out a Bell Canoe Works Flashfire or Wildfire (solo), and Starfire (tandem). We will demonstrate some "Figure Canoeing" techniques, and let everyone try some really high performance sport canoes as well as some high performance Patrick Moore freestyle paddles.

Give us a call and leave a message or email: (new email address) to let us know you are interested in attending. We will have a rain check if the weather is disagreeable.

SIZING A CANOE PADDLE

by Mark Molina

There is more smoke and mumbo jumbo about sizing a canoe paddle than there is almost any canoeing topic. My favorite paddle measurement formula is to take your weight, divide it by the waterline length of the canoe, then multiply by the beam at the paddler's station, take the square root of your age multiplied by the inverse of the distance to the moon at high tide at your longitude. Got it?

Most manufacturers sell canoe paddles by overall length—a totally useless measurement! Paddles of the same overall length may be very different. Aside from blade shape, blade length varies significantly. I have paddles of the same overall length with blade lengths from 18 to 24 inches. Most paddlers strive to have their blade entirely submerged during the power portion of a forward stroke. A six inch difference of blade length in paddles of the same overall length could lead to an awkward, uncomfortable, inefficient, and—quite possibly—unsafe situation. The paddler may not bury the blade fully, may plunge the blade and a good portion of the shaft below the surface of the water, or vary hand position much higher or much lower than is comfortable, efficient, or shoulder safe.

Many experienced paddlers and ACA instructors now recommend selecting a paddle by the combined grip and shaft length, that is, the length from the top of the grip to the top of the blade, or throat. Blade length is relatively meaningless in paddle sizing, but is important when considering application: whitewater, advanced quitewater, Canadian Style technique, shallow water, etc. An easy way to determine an approximate length from top of grip to throat (where the blade starts) is to sit on a flat surface, place a yard (or meter) stick on the surface between your legs near the crotch area (OOOH be careful!). Next, sit up straight and place the tip of your nose on the stick, then note the measurement at your hairline—or where your hairline would be, or where you wish it would be. That measurement yields your approximate top of grip to throat length. Another quick way to determine the right paddle length without a measuring device is to simply go through the same

process using an upside-down paddle. Sit up straight on a flat surface. Place the grip on the flat surface near your crotch and place your nose on the shaft. The location of your hairline is where the throat of the paddle should be. If the throat is below your hairline, the paddle may be too short. If the throat is above your hairline, the paddle may be too long. If the throat is right at your hairline, the paddle may be just right. In my case, I measure 34" from my crotch to where my hairline used to be, so I generally buy paddles that measure 34" from throat to top of grip. The method above usually yields the right size canoe paddle. Allowances for slight variations in boat design, seat height, width at paddling station, paddler weight (extremely light or heavy), etc. can be made. Paddlers who use bent shafts may want to dock about 2" from the standard measurement. If you are a solo Many canoe shops and manufacturers try to push buyers in to accepting the "overall length" criteria for selecting a paddle. It's easier **FOR THEM--- NOT BETTER FOR YOU!** Many very experienced paddlers can feel a difference in paddle length down to ½" increments. For most canoeists, a variation in length from 1 to 1 ½" is within comfort limits. Ultimately, it's what feels good, works efficiently, and is safe to use that determines paddle length. Peace and good paddling!

Mark Molina is an American Canoe Association Instructor Trainer Educator specializing in advanced medallist in the North American Interpretive Freestyle Championship, Mark is the author of numerous articles on solo open boat technique and is co-author (along with his wife Becky Molina) of Freestyle Canoeing: A Reference Guide to Advanced Solo Boat Handling. Mark and Becky have also appeared in many instructional videos, including Paddles in the Stream and Solo Freestyle Canoeing. The Molinas teach at events throughout North-America. They live in Ft. Pierce, Florida.

For more information about how to obtain copies of their reference guide or video mail to Beckmark@aol.com or visit their website at: <http://www.riversport.com/freestyle>

25 WOMEN IN SPORTS

ROCKY MOUNTAIN SPORTS

Sept. 1999 issue

JILL STECKER, WHITEWATER CANOE RACER by Alli Rainey

When biologists Jill and Bob Stecker found out that they needed access to an island in a pond east of Boulder back in 1983, they decided to paddle out to it in a canoe. In the process, this married couple rediscovered an activity they had both enjoyed as teenagers, and they haven't stopped canoeing since.

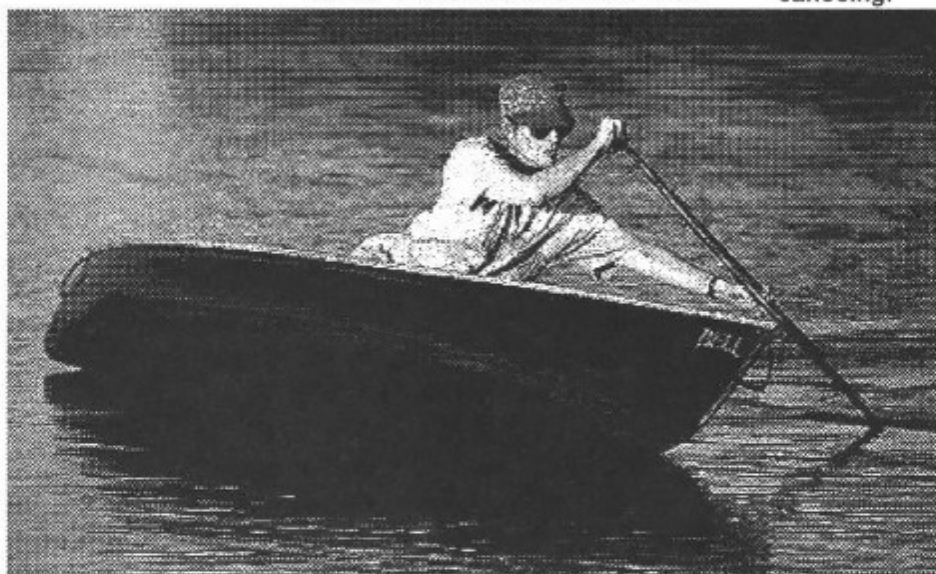
Rarely will you find them in separate canoes. In fact, 52-year-old Jill and 64-year-old Bob race

exclusively in tandem canoes, as they have done since they entered their first race in 1994, placing third in the Slalom Canoe Nationals that year in Durango. Strong performances have followed every year since that first race, including a national championship victory in the tandem mixed masters race this past July and a third-place finish in the tandem combined race.

What made these recent achievements particularly special was the fact that they were held in Golden at the new Clear Creek Whitewater Park. Jill Stecker played an instrumental role in the park's construction by finding support for the project from the City of Golden Parks and Recreation Department.

Stecker was thrilled when the park was completed fast enough to host the 1999 American Canoe Association's Open Canoe Slalom Championships. She and Bob coordinated the event, acting as the regional representatives for the American Canoe Association and also on behalf of the Rocky Mountain Canoe Club, where they serve as the chief instructors.

"We wanted to get it done so that people could see what canoes can do," says Stecker of the successful event, which drew canoeists from



all over the world.

In fact, Stecker says, canoes can do so much that she does not think she and Bob will ever run out of options, from the intensity of the whitewater racing to the long trips they take each year to explore wilderness areas.

"Living with nature and being a nomad living out of a canoe is a wonderful experience that we both enjoy," Stecker says. "In racing, when you're going down a rapid, you are totally focused on that and there are no other thoughts. Racing and living out of a canoe are two totally different things."

But it's that difference, that diversity, which ultimately makes canoeing so fulfilling for the Steckers: To date, they have 12

different canoes, and the 13th is on its way.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN SPORTS

July 1999 issue

CANOE OPPORTUNITIES by Brian Metzler

When the runoff is right, Colorado is a whitewater paradise. The state boasts some of the country's most epic rafting and kayaking rivers. But many of Colorado's rugged waters are also ideal for canoeing.

The Rocky Mountain Canoe Club is hosting the American Canoe Association Whitewater Open Canoe Slalom Championships July 10-12 on Clear Creek in Golden. The event will be held in the year-old Whitewater Park, which was funded by a \$165,000 donation from the

Colorado Lottery. The championships feature race and recreational categories and several divisions for solo and tandem entries.

RMCC was founded in 1975 by a handful of canoeing fanatics from Boulder, and it now boasts a membership of about 250 enthusiasts. The club has events nearly every weekend from early spring to late autumn, ranging from relaxed day trips on flatwater to week-long camping excursions.

Aside from trip planning, the club also offers solo and tandem instruction for whitewater and flatwater and gives clinics on conservation and water safety. Most members own canoes; those that don't rent boats or paddle with other members.

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Squirtin' Salmon: photo by Weenie Wilson

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**RACERS AND OTHERS
RESPONSES ABOUT THE
SLALOM NATIONALS '99**

> I want to thank you all for putting on a great event!!! It was not only one of the high points of my summer, but of my boating career. The course was extremely fun, the racers were friendly and supportive, and you folks were very organized. I only wish we had arrived a few days earlier just to have enjoyed it that much more!

> Alan Burgmuller

> Thank you for a superbly run race. Everything was first class. The assigned start times were a real plus.

Everyone knew what they had to do. Great course, good water, great venue. Lots of fond memories off the river too. And thanks for everything,

> Mike Boyd

> My hat is off to you and thanks for all you did to make the Nationals possible. You did a super job.

> Take care - Bob Foote

>



Alan and Kathy Whittern

The Clear Creek site is exceptionally

nice and we look forward to events there, and in other Colorado locations, in the future. We appreciate all your communications, information, and hard work.

> Kathy Eichfeld

> "GREAT JOB!!!!!!" One of the best Nationals ever. . . It's a great testimony to the two of you that so

many from your club contributed.
>Sincerely, Linda Kazimierczyk

> Thank you during our stays of last month. I was surprised that race administration of you party was smooth. We were able to enjoy Open Canoe

Nationals fully. I think that I want to go to Nationals of next year if it is possible.

>Yoshi Yoshiwara

> Thanks for sending me all these responses it was nice to hear how happy everyone was. This is what I had in mind and visualized during the time we were convincing city council to allow us to build

the park. Great job and thanks for making us all look good.

>Charlie Fagan, Director of Parks, City of Golden

you guys did a great job organizing the Nationals. It was very successful.

Thanks for the link to the results. We got your e-mail address from a link at the ACA web site-I think in the events section. Several of the racers are friends of ours, and we just wanted to see how they all did. They're all home now-safe and sound from their travels. Hope you're resting up from the race.
Donna Kallner Whitewater Specialty

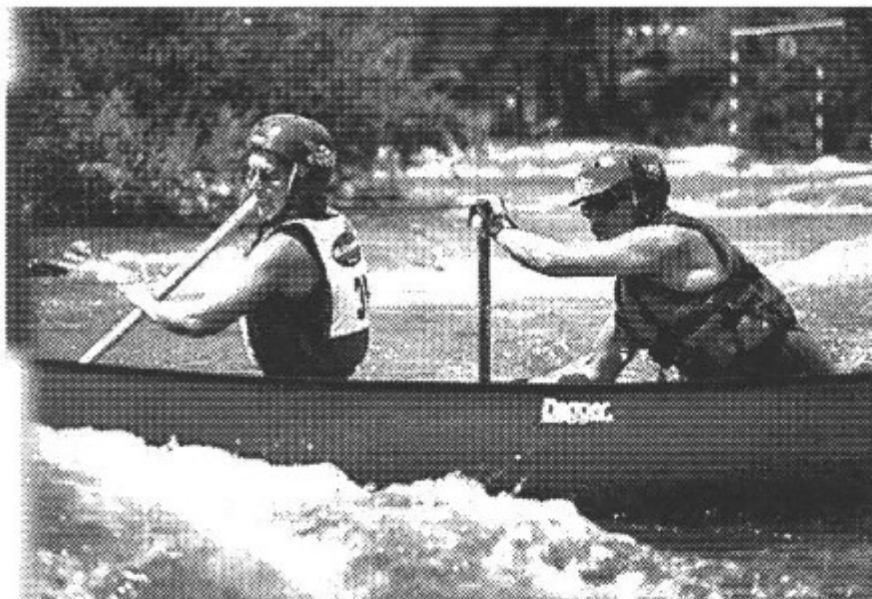
Thanks!! everyone I talked to out east this past weekend said it was a great race. Congratulations!!
Chris Kelly



Bob and Jill Stecker

Great job all around! I enjoyed helping out at the start gate even though it was hard work and, at times, stressful. Quite interesting to see how a race like this works and how much work it is to pull it off.
David David Karan

Many thanks for your efforts. It was a terrific race. If you have a picture of me, I'd appreciate a copy e-mailed to me. Take your time on it though. I suspect you're still winding down from the race.
Bob Putnam



Karen and Greg Jankowski

Congratulations on the success of the



Jeff Oxenford and Carol Aikin

Nationals. The grape vine is, as usual, a strong and long one and I heard that it was a wonderful event. I am now leaving Sequim, WA following a very nice family reunion with the Bridges. This is the branch of the family that includes Andy Bridge (Dagger Composites director and world champion wildwater racer).
Cynthia Bridge cynthia bridge

Congratulations to everyone on some exciting races. (If you can, please give this e-mail to Harold Deal) Hope everything is going well for you. I logged on to the Internet and caught a glimpse of the WWOC Nationals. The results were great!!!!!! Of course, I wish a "special

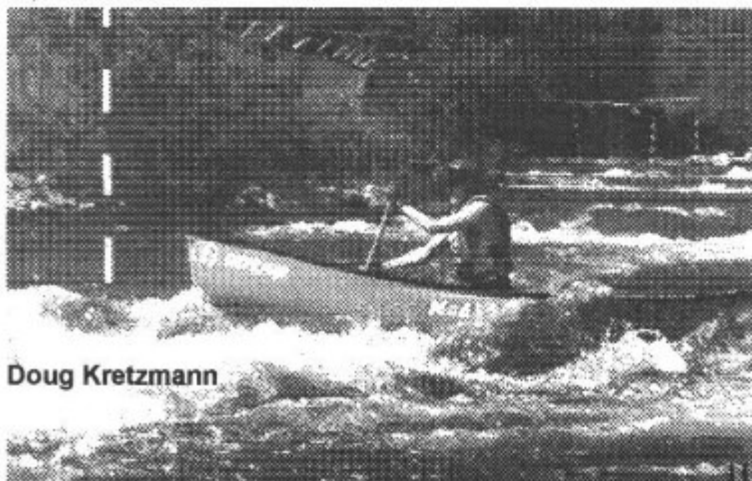
you!!!!
Love, Bets Deal

I can add my thanks to the list. I was very impressed with how well the whole event

proceeded. The hard work of Jill, Bob, Alan, Kent, and Jim was obvious, but also the significant contribution from dozens of volunteers many from the canoe club was encouraging to see. The Nationals also proved to the local and national boating community something we already knew. The Golden Park is a fantastic location for such events. Thanks! Tim Bardsley

Thank you so much for taking the time out of your busy schedule to come on the radio show last week for the interview. I hope everything went well at the races!
Alli Rainey Alli Rainey

Photos by Bob Foote and Ron Schmidt



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Alan Whittern's RMCC site: <http://www.classvi.com/winroom/rmcc.html>

Mark Zen maintains a trip page: <http://diac.com/~zen/rmcc>

Upcoming Dates of Note:

October 23 Fall Meeting & Video Film Fest at St Judes, Election of President

Nov 20 Deadline for submissions for Dec Issue

Oct 30 Freestyle canoe outing, Clear Creek WW Park Goose Pond

Submitting Articles: The Voyager's Companion is primarily the venue for the RMCC to post trip schedules, classified ads, and related material, enabling members to share and enhance their canoeing interests. We invite members to contribute articles on trips as well as informative articles on subjects such as the following: Paddling techniques, Equipment, rigging the Canoe, Environmental Issues, River Safety, Camping Techniques, or Canoe History. The editorial staff appreciates your efforts to limit wordiness of superfluous details, and to restrict the article to under 1,200 words (about 2 pages).

The Voyager's Companion is a bi-monthly publication of the Rocky Mountain Canoe Club. Editorial material for The Voyager's Companion is welcomed and should be sent to : Diane Binder, Editor, The Voyager's Companion, Longmont, CO 80501. OR email Documents in the following file formats: Word 6.0, 7.0, WorkPerfect, Word 95, Word 6.x. Graphics files: .jpg .gif .pict .tif .pcx .dxf .cgm .cdr .eps .emf .gif .pcd .pct drw .pcf .tga and .bmp

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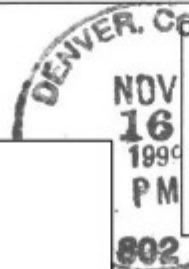
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The Voyager's Companion

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