



WATERLINES



Newsletter of Poudre Paddlers

May, 2011

The Great Red Cloud Tank Float

By James Work (Retired Professor Emeritus of English at CSU. His latest novel, *Don't Shoot the Gentle*, will be out in September.)

The Republican River begins in Colorado near Flagler where a half-dozen trickles of water spring from scattered draws and gulches

to form a stream heading east by north.

In the next forty miles it becomes a respectable prairie river. It fills Bonny Reservoir, cuts across the northwest corner of Kansas, picks up the Arikara River and enters Nebraska. On it goes, paralleling the Nebraska/Kansas border, running past Holbrook, Oxford and Alma. Harlan County Dam was built at Alma in 1952 because in 1935 the Republican flooded the valley and drowned over a hundred people. That's how big this prairie river can get.

Downriver of the dam, the Republican passes Franklin, Riverton and Red Cloud. About ten years ago I was spending a week in Red Cloud, the town made famous in Willa Cather's novels, to help with a workshop of young writers. Having my bicycle in the back of the truck, I decided one warm day to bike into Kansas and see a town that claims to be the geo-

(Continued on page 2)



Almost Olympian paddlers sprint while captains struggle. Photo courtesy of Nebraska's Heritage Highway Association

In This Issue

Page 4: Early Spring Glendo to Guernsey

Page 6: Fall Boundary Waters

Page 8: Packing for the North

Page 12: High-Water Peril: A Poudre Run Gone Wrong

Page 15: Message From the Prez

WARNING: This year's flows will be dangerously strong! Use discretion!

Page 1

(Continued from page 1)

graphical, or perhaps it's the geometrical, center of the United States.

People who haven't been there might think that the Kansas/Nebraska border region is flat country. On the contrary: it's about as flat as Gina Lollibrigida's profile. Coming back from Kansas, laboring up one hill after another, I finally topped a rise and saw the long green valley of the Republican and the little community of Red Cloud on the other side.

As I pedaled toward the bridge I saw several pickups parked down at the river's edge. There was also a table supporting what looked to be a half-dozen beer kegs and a pair of banners stretched between two cottonwood trees. One banner said "BUDWEISER BEER" and the other read "ANNUAL REPUBLICAN RIVER TANK FLOAT."

Now, riding all the way to the geographical center of the United States can give a guy a powerful thirst so I left the asphalt and went bumping down the dirt road beside the bridge where I stashed the bike in the willows and limped over to the tables in the shade of the bridge.

The fellows in charge of the beer were probably Rotarians or Lions or Optimists or American Legion. All I remember is that they had matching hats and aprons. And the beer was free, but donations were accepted. Other than a half-dozen men in matching hats dispensing cold beer under a highway bridge, nothing seemed to be happening. Then a few cars and pickups began to arrive, and then more and more, until there was a large cheering section of citizens lining both banks of the Republican. One or

two beers later, I saw what they were waiting for. Around a bend upriver out of the cottonwoods came a crew of brave voyageurs carrying on the noble and heroic tradition of Lewis and Clark.

Maybe it would be more accurate to say that I saw a ten-foot diameter galvanized round stock watering tank containing four half-naked, half-drunk men paddling in all four directions at one time as their stock tank drifted downstream. They sat on metal lawn chairs in the tank and their paddles were short pieces of 1x4 lumber. A keg of beer in the center provided ballast. In fact, these boys seemed very well ballasted, indeed.

At the appearance of the stock tank the crowd went wild until both riverbanks reverberated to the sounds of car horns, whistles, shouts and whoops. Then came another floating stock tank, this one painted with garish rainbow designs. Its crew included three women in halter tops and two men with no tops at all. In the center of the tank was an upright pole from which flew the skull and crossbones flag.

The next tank was painted gray with black shark teeth. It had a big shark fin installed in the center. The crew looked to be of college age and when they saw the finish line at the bridge they poured on the power, padding furiously to overtake the pirate tank and the tank in the lead. All three tanks were cheered on by the riverbank crowd, which seemed to cheer indiscriminately for anyone.

All of this happened some years ago, as I said, and the details are a bit fuzzy. But as I remember it, the captain of one of the stock tanks explained it to me something like this:

(Continued on page 3)

To enter the annual Red Cloud Republican Tank Float you first need to assemble a crew and make at least a half-hearted attempt to find a sponsor. Then your crew needs to find itself a tank. Sometimes a member of a crew lives on a farm and already has a stock tank. Sometimes a friend of some crewperson will lend the crew a tank. Sometimes a crew finds a junked tank in the dump and repairs it.

Sometimes a farmer goes out in the morning to water his livestock and finds his tank missing. The next job is to roll, lever, push and haul the tank into the back of a pickup. Given a ten or twelve foot diameter tank and a six or seven foot pickup bed, this can be real sport. In certain cases it has to be done in the dead of night and without lights, making it even more challenging.

The tank is then transported to a secret location where it is fitted out for the voyage down the Republican. This appears to consist mostly of making the paddles and then locating a beer cooler and some folding chairs. Some crews add distinctive paint jobs and humorous superstructures such as shark fins and beach umbrellas. One tank I saw had a pipe sticking up with a revolving blue light atop it. I remarked to a cheering spectator that the blue light looked like the ones in K-Mart stores. Or to be exact, like one that used to be in a K-Mart. The tank was labeled "The Blue Light Special."

Some crews take a clue from the America's Cup races and add special secret high-performance accessories such as keels made from a length of 4x4, but generally any sort of fussy refinement like a keel (or a rudder) is frowned upon as being pretty elitist and sissyfied.

One tank crew I heard about taught themselves an important lesson in physics. In obtaining their tank, and owing to the darkness in which they did it, they failed to notice that the bottom was rusted out. No problem: battening sheets of plywood together, they took a Sawzall and made a circular wooden floor for their vessel. What they discovered, though, after putting the tank into the river, the floor into the tank, the lawnchairs and beer cooler onto the floor along with themselves, is that while the plywood floor would float, the tank would go ahead and sink under them. They also learned that a circle of plywood is not very stable in the water. Fortunately, the beer and chairs were saved, so they merely shifted to Plan B, which was to pile into the pickup and join the cheering section.

The cheering section, I might mention, is a "floating" party of its own. The spectators watch the launching of the tanks (making numerous helpful suggestions to the boaters) and then they race downriver to the nearest access point where they gather and cheer until the tanks go by. Then it's back to the road to the next access point to do it all over again.

The point and purpose of the Red Cloud Republican Tank Float appears to be twofold: it gives Red Cloud something to do and it raises money for various charities. It also looks like an excuse to get wet, because nothing in the rules forbids the use of water balloons, water guns, water cannons or water buckets to slow down the opposition. Neither is it against the rules to leap from your tank and attempt to capsize a tank threatening to overtake you. Rumor had it that the crew of the tank flying the Jolly Roger had captured a crewman from a rival tank and made him walk the plank.

(Continued from page 3)

Hazards—other than pirates--are not unknown on the Republican. Having alluvial banks, the river forms mighty eddies that can trap a craft, especially if it is round and has a flat bottom and is propelled by pieces of 1x4 lumber. The standard escape technique for getting out of an eddy seems to be that the crew paddles frantically in random directions, causing the tank to spin in the water. This does nothing to free the craft from the current, but it keeps the crew entertained until another tank comes along and bumps them out of the eddy.

Sandbars are particularly entertaining, at least for spectators. Upon going aground on one, the crew jumps from the tank and tries to push and haul it over the sand. (This is where those effete accessories like keels and rudders become impediments.) When pushing and hauling fails—as it usually does—they unload the chairs, beer coolers, paddles, pet animals, grandma and whatever else isn't tied down, tip the tank up on its side, and simply roll it over the sandbar. Once in floatable water again, it is reloaded and off they go. As I watched this operation, I thought of a few times when I have run into sandbars with my Wenonah; it occurred to me that a canoe would be much easier to portage if it were round in one direction, like a stock tank. A globular canoe designed in the shape of a big ball would be also be easy to get over sandbars, and would be more fun to portage.

As sundown began to paint the Nebraska horizon in colors of burgundy and sherry with just a slight tinge of Bud, I mounted my bike to return to town. Back on the riverbank somebody had started a driftwood bonfire, somebody opened a case of marshmallows, somebody tuned up a guitar.

And somewhere outside of town a Webster County farmer was walking over his land with a flashlight, looking for his stock tank. Or the tracks of a pickup truck.

Spring Run on Glendo-Guernsey

By Steve Cassells

After noticing flooding of the North Platte in Scottsbluff throughout March, I finally checked the flows out of Glendo and saw they were over 4,000 cfs and rising. Apparently the Bureau of Rec is anticipating a monstrous spring runoff and is trying to drop all the Wyoming reservoirs in advance. My friend, John Hooper, a Wyoming native and lover of all things Cowboy State, had just gotten a new inflatable kayak and was itching to get the bottom wet, so I suggested we do the Glendo to Wendover run and take advantage of the release. It didn't take long for him to agree.

We kept watching the weather report to see which day would be the best. Sunday, the 17th of April, kept coming up the best, so we circled the date. Unfortunately, I continue to believe weather forecasts the same way I believe politicians' promises. Just before we left, the reports said mid-60s, scattered showers and wind of 20 mph from the west. "No problem," I

said. "We'll have a nice tailwind all the way."

With John's brother agreeing to drive down from Casper to shuttle us, we left at 7 that morning. The breeze was hardly noticeable as we passed through Wellington, but by the time we gassed up in Cheyenne the wind was picking up. Near Chugwater the canoe was being hit by crosswinds of about 70 mph, requiring five stops and all sorts of stabilizing efforts. Strong gusts would hit the car, violently jolting the canoe sideways. Straps had to be run through the upwind front wheel well to hold the bow in place. Canoe clips on the rack had to be strapped together to keep them from sliding downwind and loosening the boat. By the time we reached Glendo, I noticed the rear towers of the rack had slid backwards on the roof about six inches. The lady at the gas station in Glendo said, "You're not going to run the canyon today, are you?"

We dropped the boats below the dam. John inflated his kayak and launched it to see if he could handle the breeze, which was considerably less in the deep canyon. He decided he could, so we ran the ridiculous 90-mile shuttle, and we put in at 1:15. Rain had just come through, the sky was cloudy, and the prospects for the run were certainly iffy.

Heading downstream, we soaked in the beauty of the canyon, and watched a young eagle soar over us. Some mergansers and pelicans viewed us skeptically from the bank. We ran the first rapid and made it around the big corner and headed east. The breeze, now quite manageable, pushed us swiftly downstream. More pelicans greeted us, along with a pair of bald eagles, one of which swooped down just in front of my canoe in a futile attempt to catch a



Tom and Mary Peck run the Haystacks on earlier trip

fish. The sun came out.

Within two hours we reached the wave train of the haystacks, deep in the folded limestones of the anticline canyon. The waves were really churning where the fast-flowing entry chute turns left and meets the big slow eddy. The waves were pushed up at least five feet high from trough to crest. Not wanting to chance a swim, I skirted the wave train just along its left side, still getting enough turbulence to provide me with a cheap thrill. John followed and hit it straight on, and the nose of the 13' inflatable buried deep at the bottom of the big first wave, stopping him momentarily. It turned him sideways, but NOT over. The stability of that craft was immediately proven - money well-spent. He bounced on through, sporting a wide grin and a wet head.

The rest of the trip was swift and picturesque. We hit the take-out before 4:00, less than three hours. When we got out, we found the ramp area literally paved in recently-fired .45 caliber brass casings and spent shotgun shells, along with a mutilated paper target of a full-sized human tacked to a shattered door. That was sort of an ominous ending to the otherwise

(Continued on page 6)

glorious day.

Considering the way the day started, battling Mother Nature and her 70 mph bad breath trying to separate me from my beloved blue Old Town, we were quite satisfied. We scratched the pre-season itch and could talk about it afterwards with smiles on our faces.

Fall Float in the Boundary Waters

by David Karan photos by Dave and Roberta

After a two-year delay and many fantasies over the years, Roberta and I did our first adventure in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area (BWCA) in September. This is a land where feisty French Canadians plied the waters in 25-40 foot canoes filled with beaver pelts. These Voyageurs wore colorful outfits and stopped hourly for “poses” to smoke their pipes. Usually small men, they carried at least two 90 lb. bales each across portages up to three miles. So heavy were the loads that they used tumplines (straps across the forehead) and ran the portages to stay upright. Days were fifteen to eighteen hours paddling at 40 strokes per minute. This was the scene of competition between the Hudson Bay Company from the north and the North West Company to the south, between “pork-eaters” who spent the winter in the comfort of Montreal and the Men of the West who spent harsh winters in forts to the west. History abounds.

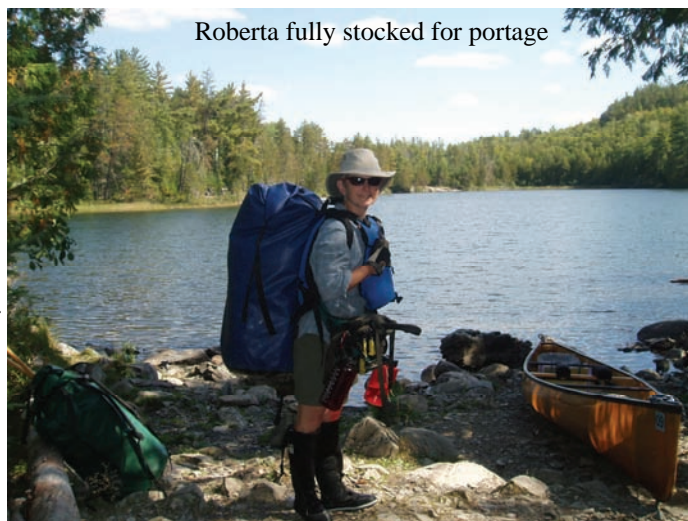
Unlike the Voyageurs, ours was a one-couple, one-canoe trip. We camped at the put-in and were shuttled by motorboat up to the top of Moose Lake to get farther back. The majority of the trip was spent on the boundary waters of Birch and Knife Lakes. Choosing to put in the Sunday after the Labor Day weekend proved a good plan, since most canoes were

exiting. After the first day, we saw few folks; after the second, no one. We scouted virtually every campsite as we paddled east and the campsites steadily got better the farther from Indian Portage (this is a local label not shown on maps) we got.

Our campsite the first and last nights was on a point 7 miles and 5 portages in. The view west was of open lake and wonderful sunsets. Across the point was a view more intimate but harder to describe: The beach was underlain by rock jump-off points for landing and diving into the crystal-clear water.

Remote enough for bare-assed diving and sunning at this perfect time of the year, this was one of those, “it-doesn’t-get-any-better

(Continued on page 7)



Roberta fully stocked for portage

-than-this” spots for which we make these voyages of discovery. Laying over a night allowed us to take a side-trip into the small lakes that really are the signature of the BWCA. Amoeba Lake and Topaz Lake and Cherry Lake were incredibly scenic. A campsite on Cherry Lake across from two islands within swimming distance would have been incredible. Alas, Roberta could only cobble together seven days, and it’s a full day



Cherry Lake

drive from our Rochester home. The rest of the circuit through Lunar and Gijikiki Lakes (or Hanson and Ester Lakes) would have to await another trip.

The wildlife experiences too were fantastic, with more bald eagles than any other place we’ve traveled (at least equal to Snake River in Teton National Park). Every stage of their development was evident. I think otters are always the most enjoyable of sightings. A cluster of three river otters played 20 feet off one campsite for 20 minutes. Loon calls graced our nights, mornings and evenings. On the way out to Indian Portage, we even saw our first wolf feeding on a kill or on fish entrails. We saw neither bear nor moose though they are supposed to be plentiful. Hanging food from trees is a must but easier in the Northwoods than in the dry West.

Here are some logistical notes for those intrepid enough to drive the 1150 miles from Fort Collins to Ely, MN. Portages are measured in rods: 1 rod = approx.1 canoe length; 320 rods to a mile. We did double portages. I carried the canoe with Roberta carrying a

pack on the first trip and both of us with packs on the second trip. We used two big dry bags and one frame backpack plus one smaller dry bag & two fanny packs. We filled one 3-gallon, expandable water cube at camps. We filtered all drinking water. Our set-up worked well. Duluth-style traditional packs in my opinion are really only superior if you want to do 1-trip portages. Duluth packs allow you to simultaneously carry a pack and a canoe. (Even outfitters and locals rarely do single portage trips, however). Large dry bags with waist belts would be nice but also heavier. All campsites in BWCA have open-air outhouses—so, no groovers! Camping is allowed in designated campsites only. There are many places to rent a Kevlar boat in Ely, MN. We bought a used Winona Minnesota II from Voyageur North Canoe Outfitters instead. The Minnie II is a fast, less stable boat. There are many other canoe choices. Ely is the main, but not the only, base, for BWCA trips. Feel free to e-mail me at poudreman@comcast.net if you want to

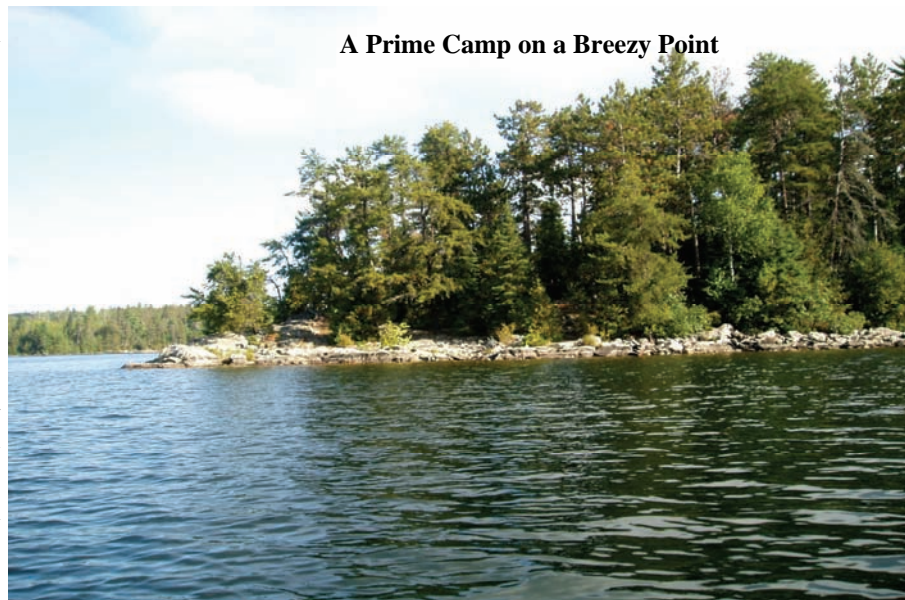
(Continued on page 8)



David Karan on portage

talk about boats, etc. Here's our "itinerary," though we played it by ear.

1. First and last night at Canoe Country Outfitters campground right on Moose Lake who did shuttle up the lake and back. Other outfitters also do shuttles. Shuttles go up to Quetico as well.
2. Day 1: 7.5 miles with 5 portages from 15-75 rods. We camped SE of Robbins Island – "good but not great, one tent site, good sunset, lake view, no shade." Also bigger ones nearby. Better campsite .75 miles farther, on a point with more shade and an island



A Prime Camp on a Breezy Point

- to paddle to.
3. Day 2: 7.5 miles and no portages. Days 2 & 3 at our favorite camp 1.5 miles short of Little Knife Portage. Notes on camp = "Great! Swimming, views, sun & shade, breezes, great base camp. Only one small and one larger tent space but around the corner by boat a campsite has another small tent site. Little Knife Portage would take you into Otter-track Lake which is supposed to be even more scenic than Knife Lake.
 4. Day 3: Side trip to Cherry Lake our favorite lake. 3 portages 5-20 rods through Amoeb Lake (a Minnesootism not a spelling error. Quite interesting with its multiple "arms") and Topaz Lake.
 5. Day 4: 9 miles, no portages to camp near Big Knife Portage. Camped near B.K. Portage to have shorter day out for the 5 portages.
 6. Day 5: 6 miles and 5 portages out to Indian Portage and home.

Packing for a Northwoods Voyage

Jim and Karen Baker-Jarvis

The equipment and packing for a canoe for a week to a month canoe trip in Northern Canada is usually different than how we pack for trips in Colorado. In addition, the equipment we bring is slightly different for a one-week trip vs. a three-week trip or sub-tundra vs. tundra canoe trip; however the basic concepts are the same: good durable, proven equipment; dry proof systems; enhanced flotation from gear; and everything geared toward prevention of emergencies. Having canoed many, many times in Saskatchewan, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, and British Columbia over the last 40 years, Karen and I have our own approach. Of course, we don't believe it is the only way or best way to outfit, but it what we've evolved to over the years. We have learned tips from many others, for example, Bob and Jill Stecker.

We never bring any cotton clothes since they never dry out and keep you cold the whole trip. We like to go relatively light, but weight should not be more important than quality of the gear that has been shown to work; for example, when we encounter two weeks of constant rainy weather, sleeping bags need to keep working. We have had excellent results by using lightweight synthetic bags. I suppose one could get by with goose down bags, but our experience is that since we usually get out of the tent a number of times each day over an extended wet period, gradually the down bags get wet and cold. The tent needs to be bombproof for both rain and mosquitoes and needs on a point with backpack straps.



These barrels are completely dry so sleeping bags and clothes go in one and much of the food in another. Things that can get wet, such as tents, stoves and cooking gear, we pack in large 60-liter dry bags with backpack straps. These bags we consider as 95% dry. Over the years they tend to get pin-hole leaks.



We have a strict rule: no food or clothes in any pack with gasoline in it. We had an experience on a 10-day backpacking/climbing trip in 1975 in the Wind Rivers in Wyoming when some of our food got contaminated by a small amount gasoline from a leaky bottle. It happened again to me in 1977 on a winter climb of the Grand Teton.

When anyone burped, it smelled of gasoline. I have no idea what that did to my body, but it cannot be good.

On big lakes and all rivers we tie all gear in to tie straps on the bottom of the canoe. On very small lakes on portage routes we may not tie all gear in, but make sure there is nothing loose and all packs float. The canoe is packed so all packs are tied in and are below the gunnels. Some people use the approach weaving a thin cord back and forth across the gunnels, using installed loops on the gunnels, above the packs, to hold them in an event of a capsizing.

A good carrying yoke is indispensable. We use one sold by Piragis.com. This yoke has never failed us for portages of over a mile.



For navigation we bring map and compass with a spare set of maps stored deep in a pack. We also bring a GPS, but never need it since we keep track of where we are within a 1/8 mile or so at all times on the map.

The question of emergency communication gear comes up. We went the first 35 years into Canada without any radio or beacon. More recently, we have brought a satellite phone for emergencies, but never have needed it. You can rent these for about \$50/week on the internet.

First aid. We bring the usual bandaids and

tape, etc. We also bring epinephrine for possible allergy to insect stings, a bottle of antibiotic from our physician (make sure no one has allergies to the antibiotic that is brought along), and a bottle of pain killers. We have never used these last two items.

Typical Gear List (not exhaustive)

Waterproof dry bags and barrels with backpack straps,
Light wind breaker
Boots with ankle support (some people bring sandals additionally)
3 paddles/ tandem canoe
Light bow and stern lines for tying up and possible lining of canoe around rapids (10-20')
Straps to tie gear in canoe

Socks

Fleece or equivalent jacket
Raincoat (pants optional, but recommended)
2 shirts made of nylon or poly
1-2 pair pants, 1 shorts (swimsuit) (optional)
Stocking hat and mittens
Brimmed hat (Tilly) with toggle for the wind
Water filter (we do not use in northern Canada, but there always a risk of water contamination)

Tent (proven to keep the water and mosquitoes out), tent pegs and poles
Headlamp and batteries
Pad
Sleeping bag (we prefer synthetic)

Light, nestable, cooking pots and coffee pot (we use fire to cook)
Lightweight back packing stove with only 1 quart fuel for very rainy days, etc.
Cups, bowls, plastic utensils, large spoon,

and spatula
Scrubby, soap, and dish cloth
Sunglasses/ Keeper straps for all glasses
Mosquito repellent and headnets
High quality compass (correct for declination)
Water/windproof matches, fire starter.
During first day of trip collect birch bark and put it in plastic bag for starting fire on rainy days.
Fillet knife for fish and sharpener
Fishing rod and lures and steel leader, short gaff, needle-nosed pliers to get fish hooks out, small fishing box. Fishing rods break down for portages
First aid kit, group-size
Satellite phone (optional)
Chapstick
2 locking carabineers, one on life jacket, one on canoe grab loop for rescue

Sun screen
Small roll of duct tape
Roll of orange flagging for bushwhacking
Roll of small nylon line
Folding saw for bad portages and fires
Maps, good compass, and waterproof map case, plus each canoe has a compass and a Xerox copy of maps, and each member of group knows about where you are
Knife sharpener
Good life jackets with emergency whistles
Tooth brush and paste
Toilet paper (or use moss)
2 quart water bottles for portages/canoe
Carrying yoke or equivalent

Go light, some portages may be hard.
Things not to bring: Chairs (crazy creek type all right), wheels, coolers, tables, no cotton clothes (stays wet whole trip), shovel, and axe

A Favorite Place...



From Bill Ashworth: I took this picture of my wife Kathy in mid-June 2010 at mile 70 of the Green River (the Bowknot Bend) in Canyonlands National Park. It was my first photo-mosaic attempt (I think it represents about 5 exposures) [Ed. Note: On Kathy's right is the Green River at least a mile downstream of the Green on Kathy's left.]

Epic Carnage on Spencer Heights Run

Editor's Note: Last June a handful of Poudre Paddlers tried out a section new to all of them. Although Mike Pearson suggested they try the run, all knew it was an exploration for him as well. Clearly, all should have scouted, and planned their lines through the tougher spots. Mike, a very competent kayaker, had a bad line and a bad swim. Mark Riffe, in a 17-foot tandem canoe by himself, had a worse swim, with damage to the boat and battle scars to himself. Karen Roth, Mark Klug and Debbie Hathaway, experienced kayakers, pulled out of the water when the others got into trouble. Jon Prouty ran the section above, even more difficult, and this section as well. It was a good lesson about running unknown water and about appropriate craft. The guidebook, *River Guide to the Cache La Poudre*, by Bryan Maddox, has this to say about the section Mike describes below: "Here the river changes from a tiger to a rabbit... becomes a Class 3 river with lots of play spots and time to read the rapids. This [Tunnel] picnic ground is a great spot for rafters and intermediate level kayakers to jump in." Following this, Maddox gives a warning about a low bridge to scout for clearance just below the Spencer Heights Resort. Now, check out what happened. AND SCOUT ALL NEW WATERS CAREFULLY!

by Mike Pearson

Everything that could have gone wrong, did go wrong on that Saturday afternoon.

I had scouted the run the weekend before from the road as much as possible and only noticed that the first rapid below Tunnel Picnic area was a possible Class 4. The first mistake when scouting the first rapid was the length of the rapid. It seemed shorter than I remembered. I believe we all had a thorough scout of this rapid, which led most of us to put in below it.

The next rapid is what created the carnage. From the road scout, it had seemed easier than than the first rapid—shorter and tamer, though the distance from the road may have clouded judgment.

To compound the problem, I chose a horrible line, and the faster current didn't give much time to react. Once I got into the rapid and tried to avoid a ledge hole with the swift current, I ended up taking a long swim.

A positive from the experience was that everyone who did not swim decided to pull out of the run after two of us swam. This was a good plan, since they didn't know what was around the next corner. My plan was to scout the islands and the unseen corners, but we never made it to that point. Plus, with the swift current and lack of eddies in the beginning,

this would have been difficult with a group of six boats

The guide book, *River Guide to the Cache La Poudre* by Bryan Maddox has been pretty reliable for me until that description. I have had bad descriptions from the *Colorado Rivers and Creeks* guide. One problem with the guide books that Debbie Hathaway pointed out was that the books are written by Class 5 boaters and sometimes they will underrate certain runs. Unfortunately the rest of the run was not scout-able from the road. I agree with Mark Riffe that walking the river bank for a solid scout would have been a better idea. I don't know how everyone else felt that day, but I felt like everyone seemed a little out of focus and easily distracted. It seemed like the communication was lacking between everyone.

Anyway I would definitely try this run again, but I would look at the second rapid a lot closer this time. In the end, the experience was definitely a learning experience for future unknown rivers adventures.

Just to add on to the worst-day-ever entry: Besides losing my boat for a couple of hours and still searching for my paddle [Mike never found it], I came back to camp to see that I had left my tent home. Thanks to Mark Riffe for letting me borrow his tent for the night. Next, at about 11 that night, my three-year-old daughter decided, loudly, she did not want to camp anymore. Roughly around 2 in the morning, we loaded up the car and headed home, arriving at home around 3:30. By the way, the Mish was still rocking at 3am in the morning as we passed.

Another view from a Tunnel Swimmer...

By Mark Riffe

The Tunnel run of June 26th taught me some lessons I should have known without the experience of a long uncomfortable swim. The conditions that led to this swim included: paddling a run that none of the participants had done before, cursory description of the run in the guidebook, nominal scouting before putting in, bad scouting prospects once on the river, and a lack of plan to deal with the unknown. The obvious lessons that come to mind are:

- 1. Don't accept a guidebook's characterization of a run as a substitute for a description of river features.** A characterization is not a description. If the description does not prepare a paddler for what lies in the river, it isn't a guidebook at all. Want to see a good one? Pick up any guidebook for technical rock climbs.
- 2. In light of point 1, there is no substitute for scouting.** Even a detailed description cannot anticipate the seasonal effects of water flow, changes in river course, and the introduction of obstacles (strainers, etc.). Sometimes paddlers cannot scout while on the river. For instance, there are no good eddies and access to overlooks. Then, scout before putting in—at least, at the known crucial points. And if the crucial points are unknown, it makes sense to find them.
- 3. Class describes the technical nature of a run but not its difficulty.** Actual difficulty includes other factors, including ex-

perience, the type of boat paddled, and visibility ahead. I never felt in control on this run, even in its abbreviated form—even when I was still in the canoe instead of in the river. In my case, the primary difficulty of the run came first from my own ignorance of what lay ahead (see point 2).

4. Organization matters. The group has to function as a team and not a collection of paddlers. Strong boater in the lead signals back to group: “Paddle” or “Stop to Scout!” Lead sets rescue. Strong paddler for sweep.

5. Say “No” when that’s the appropriate response. This applies to every feature of the run. We do this on known runs—there are conditions under which, on the Town Run, I elect not to run the Cheese Grater—but we must apply it to the unknown, too.

These are all lessons that will affect my future paddling. Will I try this run again? Yes: I think that parts of this run would be a nice addition to the Sleeping Elephant run, and I like the idea of continuity in the run-able stretches of the river. But the first thing I’ll do is make my own map of the run based on a walk upstream from the Sleeping Elephant campground—sort of a first run on foot rather than in canoe. This is a good approach and a good skill for dealing with any stretch of river when working in “exploratory”

mode. Then, it will be time to test point 6: **patience.**

And yet another paddler...

By Debbie Hathaway

We put in just below the tunnel inflow, thinking that we had left the class 4 material behind. I knew that Mike hadn't run the section and that we were "exploring"; though all thought we were headed for class 3 territory based on what was in the guidebook.

The fun stuff for us came around the next bend, which maybe is class 3 at lower flows, who knows. This stretch is fairly well-hidden from the road. Anyway, it was instructive to me to experience read-and-run at a fast and instinctive level. I am a lazy boater and don't work too hard if I don't have to; this put me to work!

All I can say is that the half mile we ran was super-fun; that is, if you like riding the fine line between exhilaration and terror, and happen to be lucky enough to stay right side up. If you could take all of the Bridges waves and features and squish them into a half mile, that would be the Mile 77 rapid. I'm guessing that Mike P. is already planning for a re-match!

Poudre Paddlers Says Farewell to Donna Dancen

One of this club’s most avid paddlers, Donna Dancen, died March 24. Wherever Donna danced her paddle, she was one of our most enthusiastic members. She laughed at our meetings, worked hard in paddle classes, and brought up the rear of several trips as she mused over the river and its beauty. We’d like to print a collection of Donna Memories in the newsletter. Please send some to Eric Hermann, editor, at ehermann@frii.com

From the Club Prez...

I would like to welcome all of you to another season of paddling in Colorado with the Poudre Paddlers Canoe and Kayak Club. We have some great activities coming up this summer, many of which are already on the event calendar on our website and others that soon will be. Make sure that you keep an eye on this calendar to keep abreast of all of the upcoming trips. Also keep an eye on your email in-box for any of those trips that just seem to happen on the spur of the moment.



For anyone that does not get the Fort Collins paper, or gets it just for the crossword, there was a recent article about Poudre River access improvements at Shields street that are of interest to the club. You can get all of the details at <http://www.coloradoan.com/article/20110424/NEWS01/104240337/Improvements-target-Shields-Street>

I very much want to help each and every one of you folks have an enjoyable and safe paddling season this year.

Mike Koliha

[Ed Note: Mike's adventurous daughter and fellow paddler, Brie, is getting married soon. I believe the photo is the look Dad gave his to-be son-in-law when he asked for Brie's hand.]

Flotilla: Poudre Paddler Officers

President	Mike Koliha	970 226 0426
Vice President	Greg Brigham	970 221 0896
Trip Coordinator	Richard Ferguson	303 499-2871
Newsletter	Eric Hermann	970 482-8339
Instruction	Eric Hermann	
Conservation	Steve Luttmann	970 691-4572
Librarian	Roger Faaborg	970 269-4182
Membership	Randy Knauff	970 667-7150
Treasurer	Mary Peck	970 484-6309
Webmaster	Will Golson	
Past President	Will Golson	970 207-0101

Check out our website at
www.poudrepaddlers.org

There you can begin or re-
new memberships for 2011

Checks, etc., to

Poudre Paddlers Club
P.O. Box 1565
Ft. Collins, CO 80522