

**New Zealand**

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# **CANOEING & RAFTING**



**1983 Winter 29**

# New Zealand Canoeing & Rafting Magazine

PUBLISHED BY THE NEW ZEALAND CANOEING ASSOCIATION  
P.O. Box 148 DRURY SOUTH AUCKLAND

The NEW ZEALAND CANOEING ASSOCIATION is the administering body of canoeing, kayaking and rafting in New Zealand. Although individuals may be members of the Association, the majority of paddlers are members of the Association through membership of a local paddling club. The NEW ZEALAND CANOEING ASSOCIATION operates through a number of sub-committees and liaison officers. These are:

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VICE-PRESIDENT	Bill Ross, 160 Valley Rd, Mt Maunganui
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The Association also works in close consultation with numerous other organisations and government agencies, such as the Environmental Defence Society, Education Dept, Sports Foundation, Council for Sport & Recreation.

NEW ZEALAND CANOEING AND RAFTING MAGAZINE is the quarterly magazine of the N.Z. Canoe Association, its committees and member clubs. The editorial board of the magazine is entirely separate from the Association and the views expressed in the magazine do not necessarily coincide with those of the Association, its executive committee, nor the Editors.

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\*\* COVER PHOTOGRAPH: Donald Johstone in Aniwhenua Falls, Rangitaiki River. Photographer was Jayne Murphy.

## Comment

I was talking to the man from the Met. Office the other day. Seems that up in the North Island - particularly on the East Coast, they haven't had much rain this winter. Something like 50 - 60% of normal - and that comes on top of a drought! I happened to be up Napier way last week - ran the Waipunga River with some rafting friends - took a big Avon Adventurer and a similar sized Achilles raft down this rather small but very exciting river. The Mohaka, I noticed was very low for September - flowing about its normal summer flow. So what's that got to do with the Met. man? With the sort of activity that has been increasing on our rivers over the last few years - like last year an estimated 20,000 people ran the Wairoa and 6000 took on the top of the Kowarau - it would seem that these people will not be able to raft and kayak on our small streams this summer and no doubt will all be trying to get down the few navigable rivers left. The Commercial Companies are going to find it tough - last year we had something like 25 companies operating; this summer we expect 41. With good snow falls this winter down south we can expect good spring flows in our South Island rivers, at least up until around Christmas. Another problem with the low flows this winter is that a number of people - particularly rafters, have found winter flows have not offered the usual high-flow excitement and these people are now itching to get into good whitewater after rain. Because the fine weather has dried out the top-soil, when the rain does come we will get fast run-off and experience quite sudden flooding and very fast water - that spells danger - so watch it!

The N.Z. Canoeing Assoc conference in Picton saw some new faces on the Executive, and some very interesting projects are in hand for the coming summer. Sad to hear of the demise of Christchurch Canoe Club - one of the oldest clubs in the country and reasonably well off, financially. But it seems that a city the size of Christchurch cannot support 4 clubs plus the University Club. Good to hear the formation of clubs in new areas - Huka Falls canoe club for example, and Westland's club in Greymouth is gathering momentum. It seems that there are a few rafting groups getting together too.

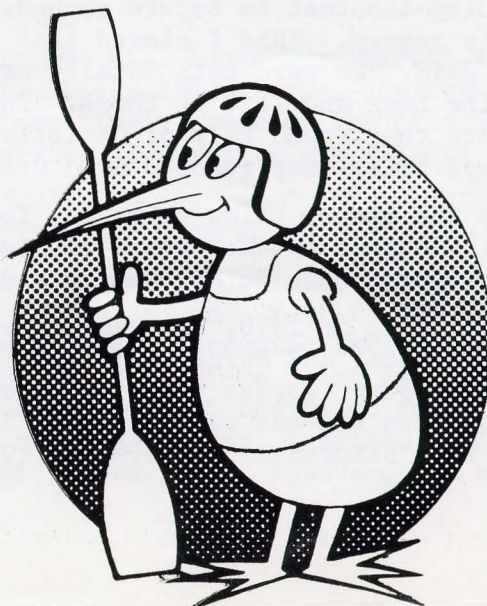
Canoeist of the year this year went to Paul Caffyn - at last recognition for his expeditions - all have started out with a team of paddlers - two or three, but Paul's trips are never chosen because they are easy - so Paul ends up paddling solo. We will be bringing you a story of Paul's Australian Expedition next issue. Meantime, Paul is planning another circumnavigation - more details at a later date when things are more definite.

Well done North Shore Canoe & Youth Club for their entry in the Dragon Race in Singapore - the team did include some members from other clubs - but the initiative came from North Shore. Looks like this event will become fixed in our calendar. A New Zealand equivalent - Waka Racing - is being planned with the design of a 'one design' boat now being finalised - more details as they come to hand.

Did you notice we didn't have an Editorial in the last issue? It was a little controversial and the other half of the Editorial team censored it! Well I guess we have to maintain standards too.

Regards,

Graham & Jan Egarr  
EDITORS.



# ALASKA'S SISITNA RIVER

In August 1970 the first two kayaks explored Alaska's Sisitna River. Since then only a mere handful of the very best have attempted it - most portaging or swimming the difficult Devil Canyon. In August 1982 it claimed its first fatality. Today, just to mention this river among knowledgeable heavy water boaters presents the ultimate challenge. Those who have seen the Sisitna River film will know why this river is called the Mount Everest of rivers. The film is now available for hire in New Zealand and in order to give viewers a perspective we reprint here articles from 'American Whitewater Magazine' by Jack Allen, and the accident report from 'Canoeing' magazine by Andrew Embrick.

## DEVIL CANYON - JACK ALLEN

July 29, 1979 - We have spent a good two hours trudging the two miles from High Lake down to the Sisitna River. The moose trails on the ridges peter out inexplicably as if the moose sprouted wings in the thickest of thickets, leaving us to slog through ankle-deep tundra bogs, dense alder and Devils Club, and the ever-present swarms of mosquitoes.

At last, reaching the river, we join about 20 others already assembled there. They, as we, have come to this remote and difficult spot in central Alaska to watch four kayakers run the three hundred yard section of river called Devil Creek Rapid - the first rapid in Devil Canyon.

We are the last spectators to arrive and are glad we're in time. The four paddlers, Barney Griffith, Mike Malone, Bob Wallace, and Gary Galbraith, stand on the opposite side of the river, scouting; still black figures in wetsuits. We are told they have been on that hillside an hour, and they do not look impatient to get started. The spectators, mostly friends, are in no hurry either. They are more appreciative than anxious. Shirts are stripped off, a bottle of Gallo passed, and camera tripods positioned on the chutes they expect to be run.

The first kayakers to set boat on the 'Big Su' did not know when they put in 100 miles upstream at the Denali Highway that there was grade VI whitewater between them and the take-out. In early August of 1970, Jack Hession and Dave Christie put in from the Denali Highway for a river-level look at Devil Canyon. They had been unable to find anyone who had been down the river. On the third day the two paddlers came to a big, clean, grade III-IV rapid which, after scouting, they proceeded cautiously to negotiate. But Dave flipped in a hole while lining up for a slot, and swam. He then grabbed Jack's stern loop and they made for shore. Again and again huge boulders and the holes behind them at intervals along the bank forced Jack to back off as they were swept further downstream. Rounding a bend Jack became aware of a new noise, looked downstream and saw the beginning of Devil Creek rapid. Awe-struck by the sight and nearly exhausted by the effort to make the bank he yelled to Dave to let go of the boat they were towing. Dave did and they paddled and swam for their lives. Jack got the bow of his boat up on a small ledge jutting from the bank at the very last possible point. It was starting to slip off as Dave scrambled ashore and hauled the boat to secure ground. Nine years later the picture is still vivid in Jack's memory. "Had I missed that last little shelf, I might well not be here now", he said. "We were both totally exhausted." He dragged his boat up into the trees on the bank and left it there. They took his gear and began bush-whacking downstream where they found half of Christie's boat with some gear still in it. Four hungry days later they reached Gold Creek.

Looking across the river, below where the four kayakers are standing, we can barely make out a white object in the trees. It is Hession's kayak, still there after nine years, waiting for someone to come along and paddle it out.

Since that first trip in 1970, two names have become associated with kayaking Devil Canyon: Walt Blackadar and Barney Griffith. Today, Griffith stands with the three other wetsuited figures across the river, pointing out the run's pitfalls. He is the only one of them who has paddled Devil Creek Rapid before. Barney is pointing out the route that Blackadar pioneered in 1976.

Walt Blackadar, who died in a kayak in Spring, 1978, first came to the Susitna at age 50, in 1972. He and his two companions - Roger Hazelwood and Kay Swanson - stopped and scouted Devil Creek Rapid from the spot where Barney and the others now stand. Later Blackadar wrote, "It might be paddable but none of us was interested". He diagrammed the rapid but carried around it. It was not yet in his blood.

Four years later it was. ABC-TV was looking for a river to do a kayaking sequence. They asked movie producer, Roger Brown, who in turn asked Blackadar to pick a river. "Devil Canyon:" he said, "it's the Mount Everest of kayaking - the most fearsome of rapids I've seen that can be paddled." He had diagrammed the rapids in 1972 and in the margin had wrote "huge water of unbelievable strength...should you miss the ferry you'll be in for the ride of your life - and you won't live unless you roll up".

By 1976 only six kayakers had considered - and rejected - the idea of running Devil Creek Rapid: Hession and Christie, Blackadar, Hazelwood and Swanson, and John Spencer who had floated the rest of the river solo in 1974 but carried around Devil Creek Rapid.

Many variables make up a river's total difficulty, but sheer, massive volume is one undeniable ingredient. When 12000 cfs are forced into a constricted channel terrifying things begin to happen. Huge cresting haystacks curl back and continually explode at the top like ocean surf. Eddies become boiling whirlpools that hoist you atop a slippery dome of moving water. The rocks that manage to endure in this channel are sizeable and create foaming holes correspondingly large. Devil Creek's power and pitfalls are evident even from Walt's diagrams. On the outside bend he shows a series of 12-foot drops followed by holes. The keeper holes are labeled 'holding', others simply 'huge' and one 'Humongeous'. The Susitna is big water of the ultimate variety. Once, during the 21 years for which records have been kept, it climbed to 90,000 cfs on June 7 1964. But 1976, the year of the ABC-TV expedition, was a low flow year, with an average flow of just under 20,000 cfs for July and August. When the TV crew arrived on August 3 1976 it was 21,000 - a level which in no way mitigated the daring or skill of the paddlers attempting to run the Susitna.

#### 1976 - THE DEVIL CREEK FIRST

On August 3 the four paddlers of the ABC-TV Expedition had floated down from the Denali Highway, 100 or more miles upstream. The team consisted of Dr. Walt Blackadar and three other kayakers; Cully Erdman, John Dondero, and Billy 'Wouzle' Ward. Barney Griffith, 18 years old, was not with them. He had met Walt Blackadar on a warm-up run made on the Sixmile Creek near Anchorage. Barney had paddled the Sixmile, considered an expert run, over a hundred times and knew it as well as any boater alive. But on the day he wanted to impress the good doctor, the river threw him in. He had swum and Blackadar refused his request to join them on the Susitna. The camera crew was flown in by helicopter and deposited just upstream of Devil Creek Rapid. Walt met them and handed producer Roger Brown a note he had received from one of the earlier helicopter pilots the day before. It was from Barney announcing that he was at High Lake with his kayak and wanted to know if he could join Walt; if not he would run it that day.

"Blackmail" choked Roger, "if he makes it, we will loose our 'first' for ABC". So Barney Griffith became the fifth kayaker. Later Brown wrote, "Barney remained a mystery, noncommittal, shy, silent. Interestingly, none of the others seemed to resent his actions". Two of the five survived the entire run without swimming, one was Cully Erdman; Barney was the other.

#### 1979 - ATTEMPT IN HIGH WATER

For this current Devil Creek Rapid attempt, I had accompanied paddlers Barney Griffith and Bob Wallace on a float-plane flight up the canyon. We flew low and Barney pointed out such notable landmarks as Hotel Rock, Screaming Left-Hand Turn, and the ledge where Roger Hazelwood spent a night in 1972 before being rescued by helicopter the next day. About eight miles above Devil's Creek, the pilot found a place he considered smooth enough to land on. I had some doubts, inspired by two-foot waves, but held my peace. The pilot's judgement proved sound, however, and minutes later

we were tied along-shore. The other two kayakers, brought in earlier, Mike Moreline and Gary Galbraith were making last minute adjustments to various bracing devices and extra sprayskirt attachments. A popped skirt in this water can bring deadly consequences.

We unloaded the gear and got ready to take off. The plan, which I had nothing to do with, was that I would be in the plane while the pilot untied the rope, pushed it into the current, then tried to scramble aboard and get it started. I envisioned him tripping on a strut and me making the first attempted run of Devil Canyon, in a float-plane without a paddle. Yet despite my fears, I was flown safely back to High Lake and hiked to the river bank where I have now joined the other spectators.

Suddenly a cry goes up from one of the more alert. A boat is approaching, looking very small among the towering waves. It is Barney. He seems too far left to hit the first wave just right. Movie cameras whirr. Barney caroms into a small wave and is flipped. (Later, he tells us that he was aiming for a larger wave downstream, and the little one caught him off guard.) He snaps up in a roll, but his bow is pointing upstream and the big wave is on him. He slides in backwards and much too far left. The wave engulfs him from view. Seconds pass. Across the river I notice Wallace and Galbraith still watching from the opposite bank. They watch Barney flipping over and over in a hole to the left of the wave. Finally, he is shot out of the hole upside down and tossed into an eddy. He rolls up, but does not find a breath-catching haven. Instead he teeters on an unpredictable boiler twist sheer rock walls of the canyon and the more violent waters of the main current. The circulating current in the eddy draws him down and out toward the hole he has just graduated from. Circling with the flow, he tries twice to paddle out of the eddy, but the main current is a foot above him and keeps pushing him back in.

Suddenly, another boat shoots into the eddy - bottom up. It rolls and we see Mike Moreline. It is all they can do to keep from being jammed up against the wall or sucked back into the malevolent hole. Each strokes furiously, hardly acknowledging the other's presence. Mike is at the bottom of the eddy when a boil unexpectedly lifts him the necessary foot or so to the level of the main current. He seizes the opportunity and slips out. Cameras whirr again. The second big wave lies dead ahead, flexing its muscles to the massive depth charges exploding rhythmically beneath the surface. In 1976 this wave knocked one boat almost completely out of the water in a cartwheel. In 1978 it tore Mike Hughes out of his boat. Today it is 4000 cfs greater than in 1976 and 8000 more than '78.

Mike swerves left, dodging the full impact of wave number two, but he skirts uncomfortably close to the canyon wall which juts out and pushes the river into deep furrows. He looks relaxed - too relaxed. His boat pauses for a second, hanging twist the rock and the exploding wave. Then in full control, Mike slips down into the trough separating them. We see him again as he rides up a third large cresting wave. He crashes the crest ... then on a long low brace coasts toward a fourth. Crash .. he slams it broadside ... it thunders atop him ... he somehow hangs on, pulled through by a strong downstream current. Barney comes out of the eddy close on Mike's heels. He pierces the second wave head on. It drives his bow down and flips him end over end. A quick roll and he's up.

Below, just on vision's edge is The Nozzle - a massive 'V' formed by two diagonal curlers crashing at angles into each other. From river level it resembles a giant sausage grinder. Just downstream of the Nozzle point the river broadens with eddies on both sides. In '76 only Barney and Cully Erdman survived it without swimming. We can now scarcely glimpse Mike and Barney. Suddenly we see the stern of Barney's boat pop up in the air as he ends again. Later we learn that they both survive without a swim. The other two boaters thought better of the operation, crossed upstream, and portaged their boats up to High Lake - a feat vastly more difficult, but less dangerous than running the rapid.

1982 - THE FATAL TRIP - From Andrew Embrick.

Johim Lang and Florian Lorenc arrived in Alaska on July 27 1982 and had a warm-up paddle on the grade IV Nenana River. They then hitched to the put-in on the Denali Highway and floated down to the canyon for 7 - 8 days, arriving at Devil Creek Rapid and portaging some gear below the rapid in order to be able to run Devil Creek Rapid with light boats. Lorenc was in position on the left bank to shoot photographs while Lang ran the rapid first. Lang picked a left side run, was caught between two large waves, was rolled a number of times and was finally underwater for 30 seconds and was then seen by Lorenc to surface, but not actively swimming, only drifting. He went out of sight after about 200m. Lorenc was not able to give an accurate description of the events as he was not aware of the names of the prominent landmarks, however it is assumed that he finally lost sight of Lang in The Nozzle.

Lorenc went back to his boat and paddled the rapid, taking a route somewhat to the right of Lang's. He was successful, and continued down until the last rapid, Pearly Gates (still in Devil's Gorge) but did not find any sign of Lang. He thus would have paddled Devil Creek, The Nozzle, Hotel Rock, and Screaming Left-hand Turn. He was picked up on shore by a helicopter pilot for Air Logistics who was flying from the Watana Dam site ( they are building a dam on the Susitna).

Lang's body was found late on August 14, at the mouth of Indian Creek below the canyon. When found he did not have on a helmet though he had started with one. The autopsy report indicated death from drowning, with some non-specific bruises on his forehead and nose. The wounds were not sharp lacerations, or abrasions, but rather might have been made by a rounded object. The bruises were not located in any area a helmet would have been expected to protect. The victim was wearing a wetsuit which extended to wrists and ankles, and a life vest which was of a standard type used in Europe, not an especially large one. His boat was a Klepper K-3, a heavy, very high volume German roto molded kayak. His boat was recovered even further downstream, at Gold Creek. The river level was recorded at 13,600 cfs on the 14 th.

The two paddlers had heard of Devil's Canyon in Germany and knew that it had been run, though their information was not fully accurate. They had access to the diagrams made by Blackadar, but these had been made before the first successful run and does not indicate the correct route to take through Devil's Creek Rapid, which is a crucial piece of information. The correct entry to the rapid is right of a 'dump-truck' sized rock, to the left of another similar rock placed downstream and to the left. This gets one into a proper position to hit the huge exploding waves downstream and avoid a recirculating eddy on the left and a huge hole on the right. Blackadar's diagram shows the entry too far to the left. Blackadar's route was taken by Cully Erdman in 1976 and he was unable to move far enough right after the entry to avoid being hit by the first big wave and thrown into a horrible eddy with a hole at its upstream end.

The German pair probably did not know what had happened to Cully, or even where the bulk of successful runs have been made. They talked to no Devil Canyon veterans, a number of whom were available in Alaska. They probably did not see Barney Griffith's movie, and not having flown in they would have missed a chance to scout by air (which is helpful). They may have had the attitude that if anyone had done the run, then they, as top German kayakers, could also do it. They may indeed have been able to make the run, but only after the sort of preparation normally required - research and consultation with those familiar with the Canyon's problems, and practice in other Alaskan rivers to accustom themselves to the cold, the grey, glacial character, and above all, to the speed and power Alaskan rivers have. It is notable that of the list of successful kayakers to have survived Devil Creek Rapid, a large percentage are Alaskans who are most easily able to practice in conditions similar to the Susitna. The Nenana is not an adequate warm-up for the Susitna, rather, a more adequate warm-up would be the Kotsina (grade VI) or the Tsaina (V). Both are intensely cold and silty, and the speed and power of the Kotsina and the technical character of the Tsaina complement each other as preparation.

Lang's wearing a standard size life-vest may have contributed to his death but probably no life-vest can make up for the move of exiting from the kayak. No one can expect to survive a swim in the Canyon, though several previous swimmers have survived. Lorenc commented on the extreme cold of the river and theorised that it may have weakened Lang. Alaskans do not consider the Susitna cold.

As for what happened after Lang left his boat, he may have been underwater initially so long as to lose consciousness and breathe water, or he may have been hit by his boat after leaving it. It is doubtful that he hit any rocks. His boat may have knocked off his helmet and bruised him, or he may have hit a rock lower in the river (such as Hotel Rock) which ripped off his helmet and bruised him (this is possible in the minutes after drowning while there is still some heart beat - you do not bruise once your heart stops). It is not known whether he still had his helmet on when Lorenc last saw him. Lorenc, after seeing Lang out of his boat went back to his kayak and ran the rapid but was some 20 to 30 minutes behind and had little chance of finding his friend.

This accident may not have happened if these kayakers had have spent some time with local paddlers before their run, hearing about the details of the rapids and familiarising themselves with the Alaskan conditions. Equipment inadequacy - the helmet which came off, small life-vest, high-volume boat that was very heavy, and thin wetsuit - may have accentuated the problems. ( the boat weighed 56 pounds).

#### ATTEMPTS ON DEVIL'S CREEK RAPID

1970, August	Jack Hession & Dave Christie - both walked out before reaching the rapid.
1972	Walt Blackadar, Roger Hazelwood, Kay Swanson - all portaged the rapid.
1974	John Spencer - portaged the Devil's Creek Rapid.
1976, August 3	Walt Blackadar, Billy Ward, John Donero - Swam Devil's Creek Cully Erdman & Barney Griffith - first successful attempt.
1976, August 4	Walt Blackadar - successful run. Cully Erdman - swam the rapid
1977	Rob Lesser & Ron Fry -successful runs. Walt Blackadar & Al Lowande - both swam.
1978, August 16	Barney Griffith, Vee Finoff, Darwon Stoneman - successful runs Mike Hughes - swam.
1979, July 29	Barney Griffith, Mike Moreline - successful run Bob Wallace, Gary Galbraith - abandoned run before running Devil Creek.
1979, August 11	Barney Griffith, Gary Galbraith, Gary Steinberg - successful runs.
1982	Andrew Embick, Rob Lesser, John Markel - successful runs
1982, August 14	Florian Lorenc - successful run. Johim Lang - swam and drowned in Devil's Creek Rapid.

NOTE: Two of the paddlers in the above list have visited New Zealand and paddled our rivers. Whilst we don't have a Devil's Canyon both Gary Galbraith and Jack Hession were impressed with our rivers. Gary left us with a copy of Barney Griffith's film shot on Devil's Creek Rapid - an awesome 10 minutes of action that must be the best footage of canoeing film ever made. This film can be hired from:

Graham Egarr  
P.O. Box 26      Hire fee \$5.  
NELSON

DRAGON BOAT RACING 1984

A few places will be available in the 1984 team to compete in Penang and Singapore next June.

All up costs should be under \$1500. Other competitions over the ten day period will include kayak, swimming and hash house runs.

If numbers and interest are forthcoming, a team, or those who can extend their time to three weeks, could also compete in Hong Kong and Macao.

For Clubs wishing to know more, there is a 30 minute VHS Video of the N.Z. team's 1983 trip to Singapore, where they gained third place in the eleven country International races.

For more information, please write to: The Secretary,  
North Shore Canoe Club,  
35A Taharoto Road,  
Takapuna,  
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N.Z.C.A. RACING.

Nominations are required for the following positions representing the N.Z.C.A. and New Zealand in official capacities.

1. Manager: 1984 Olympic Flat Water Kayak Team.
2. Coach : 1984 Olympic Flat Water Kayak Team.

There will be considerable work required both in fund raising and management skills.

Final nominations will be given to the N.Z.C.A. National Committee for ratification.

All nominees will be required to place a detailed resume before the Racing Committee by 15 October, 1983.

G. M. Maire,  
Commodore Racing.

NOTES !

## 90 minute ordeal under water

The following report of a canoeing accident in the Lake District of the United Kingdom has been sent to us. The circumstances are very similar to a near fatal accident that happened on the Rangitikei River some years ago and the accident in the Sun Kosi film.

Canoeing instructor, Ron Treptow, is recommending new safety precautions for the sport of canoeing after a narrow escape from death in steep, narrow falls in the Lake District.

Treptow was trapped in his canoe, with the flood waters of the Great Langdale Beck cascading over him for 90 harrowing minutes as rescuers fought to reach him.

I was called to help the rescue at Chapel Stile, where members of Langdale and Ambleside Mountain Rescue team were fixing ropes and ladders to try to reach the 13 stone instructor who was slumped under a churning hump of water, the point of his canoe trapped by a boulder.

The Beck is a grade IV-V challenge and Treptow's canoe had hit the rock where the fall begins to steepen. "I just stopped dead. My left foot struck the footrest hard. It broke and I slid right down into the boat". Treptow was pinned firmly in the cockpit of his 15-foot Piranha-Everest kayak by the power of the 20-knot current speeding from the high Bowfell catchment to lake Windermere. Watching his fight for survival from the riverbank with Ron's girlfriend Jackie, we distinctly sensed the 'Blackpool syndrome' - a near compulsion to dive hopelessly to the aid of a human being in distress.

In years of mountain rescue in Glencoe I had never seen anything so disturbing, or felt so helpless. Climbers and canoeists were now struggling to solve a problem unique in their experience. Manifestly, the answer was going to take time. Treptow had perceived this and had set himself a target, he said later, of hauling out against the river for half an hour. Survival, even briefly, with a river racing over his head seemed unlikely. Yet, breathing in a small air pocket he had created by tucking forward over the deck, he was able to raise his head and an arm regularly over the next incredible hour, signalling his determination to come out alive.

"The water was pounding my back and kidneys," Ron said. "I was freezing. I thought in this kind of situation there would be panic. Somehow I stayed cool. For spells I would hold my breath then push up on the footrest bracket to see if any rescuers were near. Now and then I thought about Jackie and Sandie, my Golden Retriever. It gave me incentive. I knew unless they got me out soon, the cold and the force of the river would kill me."

Three wooden ladders weighted with a dozen rescuers eventually spanned the gap. As light failed, Ron, resting his arm on the ladder, began to falter too.

"I had got to a stage of fighting just to keep myself fighting. Water pressure forced me against the cockpit edge and my legs were being battered inside the boat. I shouted for an axe to smash the canoe but no one could hear. Ropes caught around my neck and I threw them off. It became hopeless and I thought it would be easy just to let go. When they got a rope over my back I could not push it off from the bracket to coincide with pulls from the rescuers. Then, by luck, I pushed as they pulled at the same instant and I came straight out of the canoe."

Ron's ordeal had stretched to an incredible 90 minutes. More than fifty people were involved with his rescue. He was carried to an ambulance and though unable to speak from exposure and shock his eyes clearly indicated the deep relief of a survivor. He was two days in care at a Kendal hospital and was quickly back instructing. One day, he insists, he will run the Langdale Beck again.

What he learned in that incident he now disseminates at classes held by the Cumbria canoe-coaching panel. Paramount is that the power of water must not be underestimated. Ron is also convinced that high-volume canoes used on such rivers should not be pointed at the bow.

He is also adamant that 'cheese-wire' style rescue lines carried by many canoeists are useless in any serious rescue. Treptow is now much more inclined to a lightweight axe stowed aboard. He is also unsure about the breaking-point set usually at the rear of the cockpit and that this means an escape should be rethought.

At the time of his accident he was well-clothed in a thermal vest, a one-piece Alpine fibre-pile suit, waterproof nylon canoe jacket, buoyancy waistcoat and plastic crash helmet.

But, he added, "When someone on the ladder got hold of my buoyancy aid the close-cell foam simply tore. I think we need some kind of body webbing like a climbing harness."

His rescuers feel, though, that the factors which most certainly brought Ron through his ordeal were his weight, which helped resist the cold, his physical power to resist the torrent and an exceptional fitness that delivered the stamina to hold out in such an extreme situation.

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## Wairoa Dates

KAIMAI CANOE CLUB NOTICE OF DATES THE WAIROA RIVER WILL BE FLOWING THIS SEASON.

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1983:

July 31.

August 28.

September 25.

October 2, 9, 16, 23, 24, 30.

November 6, 13, 20, 26, 27.

December 3, 4, 17, 18.

These dates may be subject to change and should be confirmed by contacting Kaimai Canoe Club, Box 2354, Tauranga. Phone 64473 or 55993.

The 6 hours of entitled water flow are usually between 9.30am and 3.30 pm.

1984:

For 1984 we propose scheduling flow for the first and third weekends of January, February, March and December. The remaining 10 dates allowed will be decided at a later date.

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## SURVIVAL BAGS

The New Zealand Canoeing Association now has supplies of special survival bags. These are large plastic bags made from heavy duty plastic coloured a bright rescue orange. Survival instructions, giving details on how to construct bush shelters, foods to gather in the bush, etc are printed on the bags. These bags are of sufficient size to allow a person to climb into to shelter from the wind and rain. You could open the bags out to form a shelter or ground sheet. Use them as water-proof gear bags in your canoe or raft and then they will be available when you need them. Price \$2.00 from the N.Z.C.A Publications Division, P.O. Box 3768 WELLINGTON.

## Kupe on the KARAMEA

MIKE SAVORY - K.C.C.

The Karamea River, in the northern west coast of the South Island, is a rugged and remote river. A canoe trip down the Karamea was an idea that had been floating around for a while, but there are a number of problems. There is no road access into the upper river but a very good hut and track system exists. Other people have done this river by portaging boats into the area and canoeing, rafting or portaging their way down the river. Most of these people seemed to start at Karamea Bend but a few have canoed from much further up at Trevor Carter Hut.

Descriptions we had of the river were fairly epic so we were a bit cautious about running a trip. A talk with Harry Litchwark of Loburn, one of the first people to kayak the river, solo, was more encouraging and the trip was declared to be ON.

The first problem was to be able to get our boats into the head of the Karamea. We located a helicopter and pilot. Les Maas, in Ngatimoti who we talked into flying our gear in. It was decided that we would walk in while our gear would go by chopper. The news got around and soon there were about 15 people keen for the trip (now an expedition.)

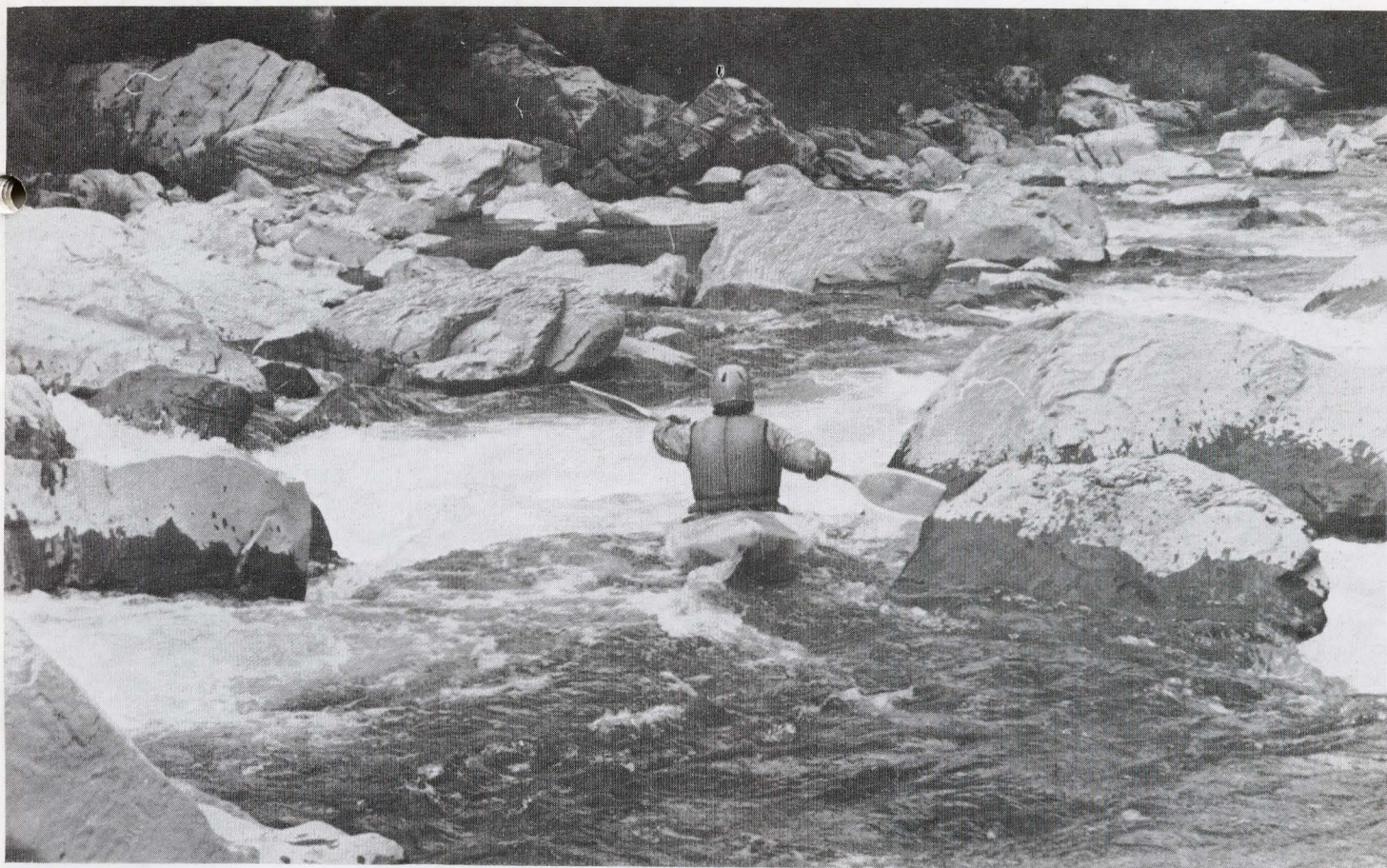
We ended up with eleven people - 4 plastic and 3 fibreglass kayaks and 4 one-man rafts. The group was Wellington-based with additions from Taupo, Wanganui, Blenheim and Christchurch and included an extra three people who tramped in with us and returned to drive our vehicles to the river mouth. Food for 14 people for six days was organised and the transport arranged. This even involved buying a \$900 Bedford Van for the trip.

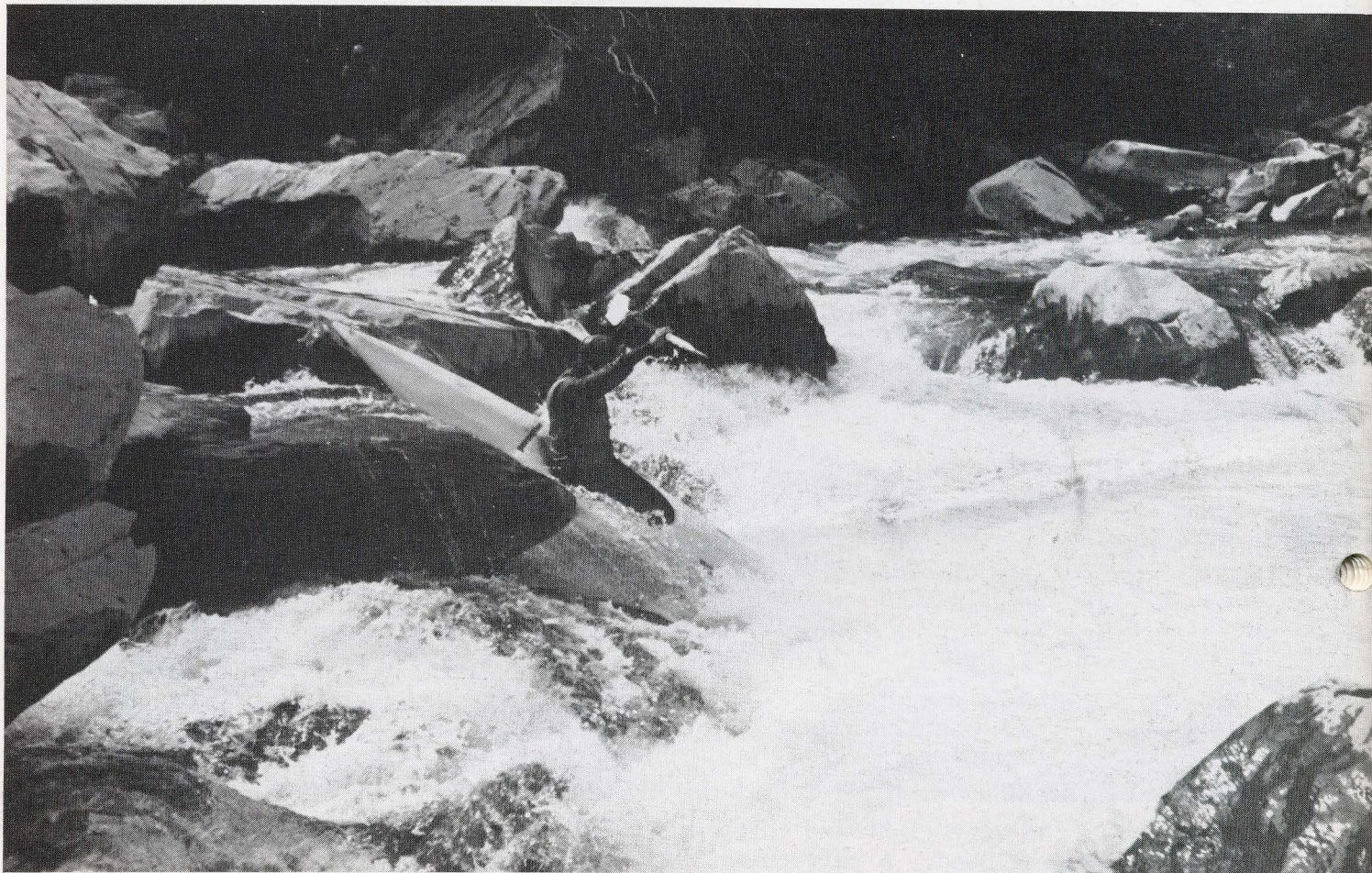


Harry had warned us about this one. Phil Keall rafts the first drop on the river between the put-in at Trevor Carter Hut and Luna Hut.



Mike Savory in the very tight and boney Orbit Creek Rapid. This lies in the upper river above Karamea Bend. A particularly steep rapid





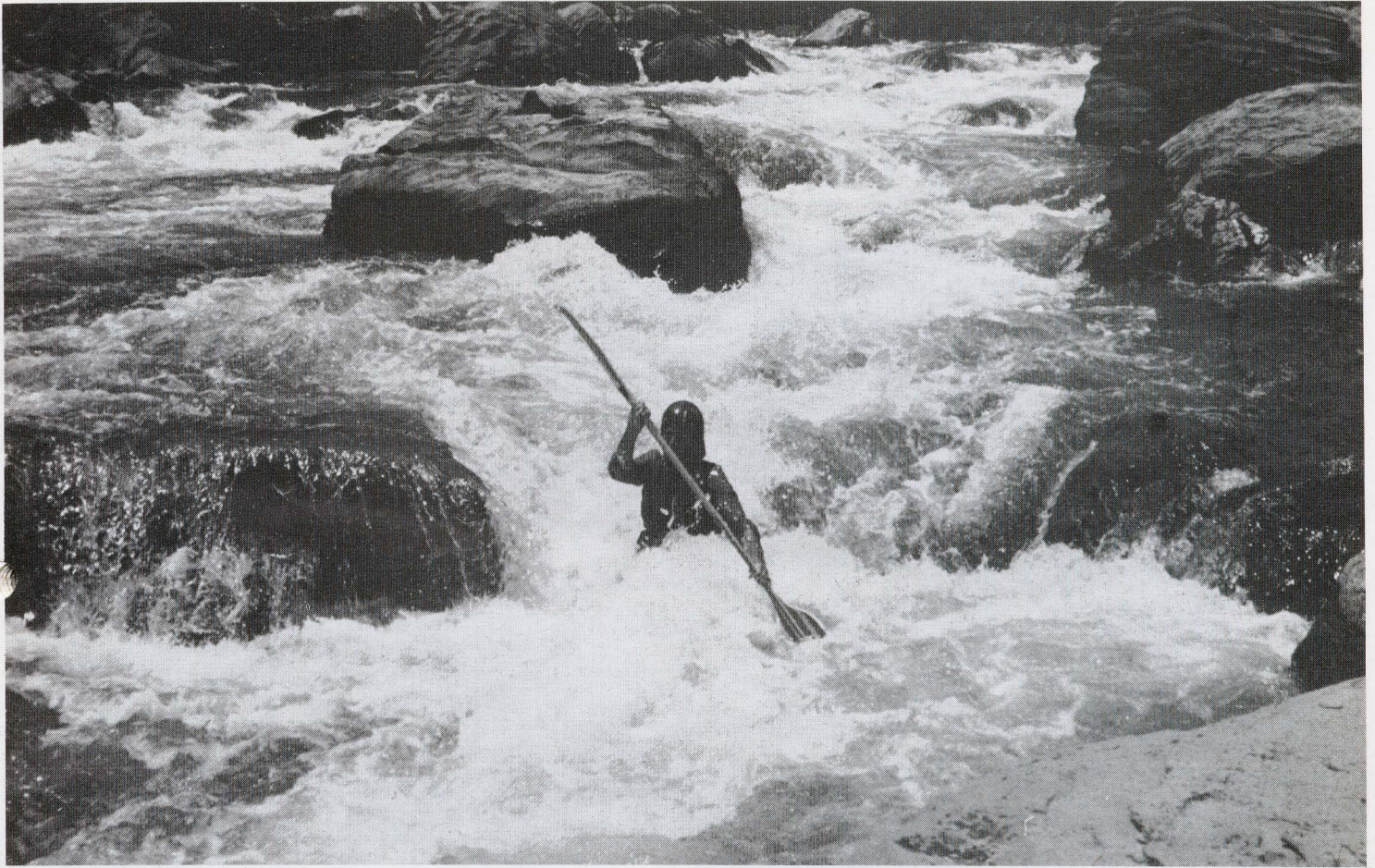
Andrew Crane in Orbit Creek Rapid.

The day after Boxing Day, 1982, we all met at the road end of the Wangapeka Track. The weather was atrocious with snow down to 2000 feet. We packed up the equipment and waited. We were worried about possible delay as we had no spare food.

The canoes were tied onto a bolted wooden frame in the same manner as they would be tied onto a roofrack. Boats were filled with food, equipment and the rafts and stacked on both sides of the frame. The paddles were tied on top and four straps from each corner were used to connect it to the chopper. The pilot, Les Maas, said that it flew very well and recommended it as a good technique. More kayaks could be transported using the same method but due to the quantity of gear involved with our trip, the frame weighed over 300 kg.

The next morning was still and overcast but the chopper arrived at 7am and flew Douglas and the boats to Trevor Carter Hut in the head of the Karamea. By mistake, a pack was also flown in so, in order to have a sleeping bag that night, Mic raced off to the hut in one day. Two others accompanied him and the rest of us took a more reasonable day and a half to walk in. The track is in excellent condition but sandshoes and using sacks for packs caused some problems. After lunch on the 29th December, we finally got on the river, 3 days after we left Wellington.

The river was small and fairly placid. Harry had told us there was a good rapid between Trevor Carter and Luna Huts so when we heard a roar ahead we got out to investigate. It was a rocky S-bend leading into a double drop, carved out of bedrock. Paddling and portaging were in evidence - the Karamea had started.



In the second rock dam below Karamea Bend. Peter White in the Northern channel.  
Bruce Webber in a similar rapid.



The largest rapid on the river - not canoed on this trip - or ever? Note the paddler portaging between the boulders on the right. This gives some sense of scale to the photograph.



The river was a continuous series of lakes caused by earthquake slips from the banks of the river. At the end of each lake was a steep, rocky cascade. Most of these were only marginally canoeable but all were done. A day and a half's paddling saw us at Karamea Bend, having covered half the distance, so the pace was eased. A night was spent at Karamea Bend hut where we met the caretaker, Snow, an interesting character who was able to tell us stories of the various other parties who had been through in times past.

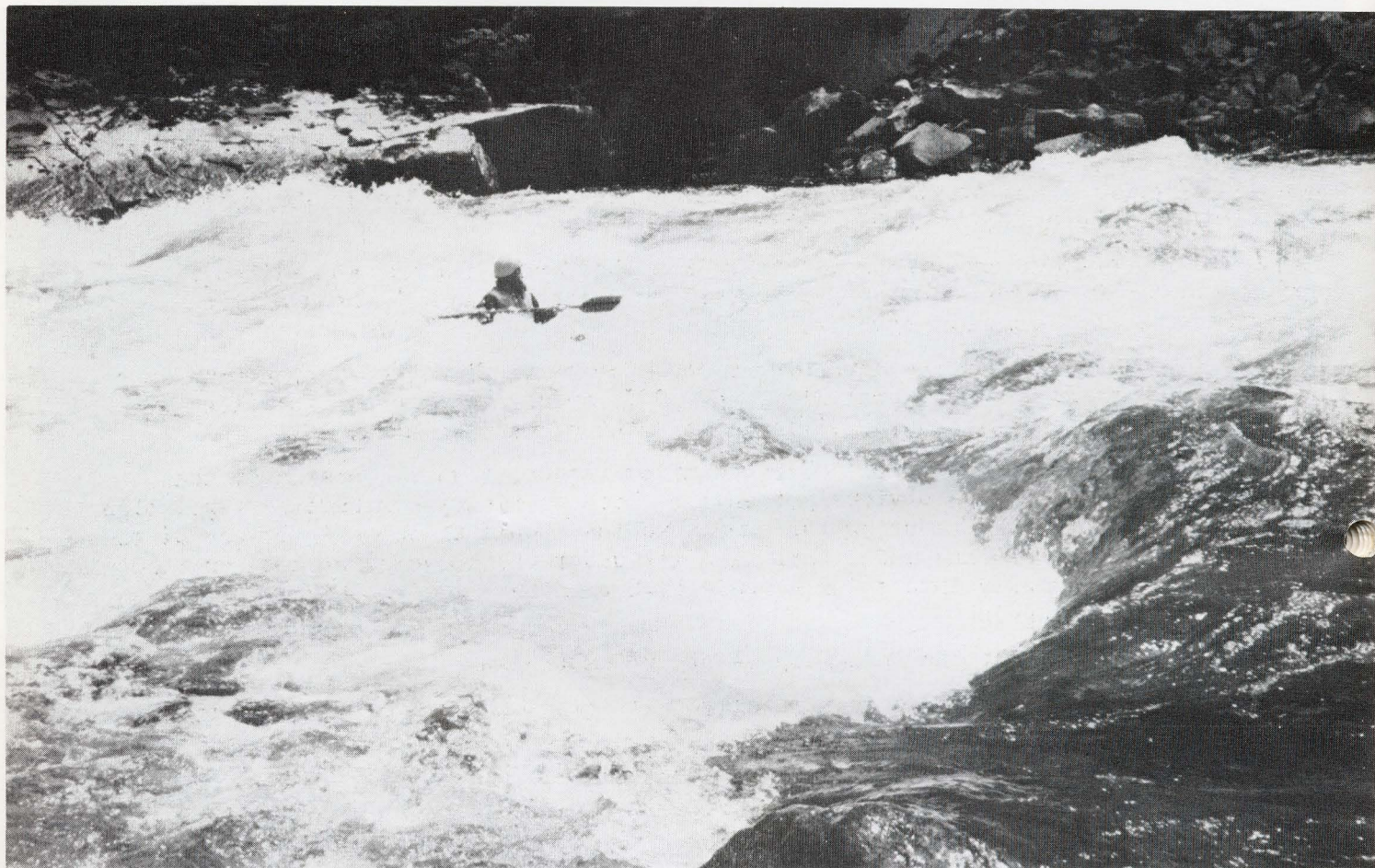
The river was changing in character, the rapids were getting bigger and some swims resulted from overconfidence. The weather on the second day's paddling was overcast with drizzle but the rest of the trip was sunny. The lake and rapid structure became very prominent now with all the drops requiring inspection. The rapid below the Roaring Lion confluence was the big one. We estimated a drop of 50 metres in about 2 kilometres. There was an easier (grade 4) stretch in the middle that one of us attempted but nerves, a slalom boat and a lack of perspective resulted in a swimmer grabbing at rocks and an unpiloted boat being swept into the lower drop on the river. It was never seen again! No one was hurt but we had lost a boat, sleeping bag, gear and worst of all - the trip scroggin!!



Mike Jacobson and Douglas Hull in the lower gorge. Douglas had to hitch a lift after losing his boat in a particularly bad rapid.



Typical water in the lower gorge.



Once the party was back together again the rafts were reorganised to put two people on one raft and one person with two packs on another and we continued down the river. After two more short days of excellent river, we emerged from the lower gorge. We had taken six days to travel from Wangapeka to Karamea on what we all agreed was the best river we had all paddled (that includes the Motu, Rangitikei, Waitoto and Landsborough.) The helicopter cost about \$500 and the total trip cost would be about \$250 each for eight days - a great investment. After the trip the group split up and half of us headed for home whilst the others carried on down the West Coast to do some more canoeing in the Cromwell area. (P.S. The Taieri is a neat river too.)

Members of the trip were:-

Peter Morrison	tramper
Barbara Dallas	tramper
Gina Easton	tramper
Bruce Webber	Olymp 6
Mark Scanbury	Olymp 6
Peter White	Perception Mirage
Dave Glenney	Perception Mirage
Andrew Crane	Perception Eclipse
Douglas Hull	SL80
Mike Savory	Perception Eclipse
Mic Paul	Rafter
Mike Jacobson	Rafter
Phil Keall	Rafter
Annette Wood	Rafter

# Fire risk a problem

Paddlers should take note of the fact that forest fires are expensive, both in the damage they do and the cost to fight them. With another dry season coming up, and a drought too, the fire risk is going to be extremely high this summer. In Nelson we have already, (the first week of September) had a scrub fire. Campers whose fires get out of control and start grass, or forest fires, could be liable for fire-fighting costs and for the damage caused by their fires.

The following extract comes from a letter from the Forest Service and although it applies to the Clarence River in particular, paddlers should take heed of the comments made when camping anywhere.

"...The Forest Service is the governing agency for rural fires, operating under the authority of the Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977, and is responsible for fire protection, suppression, and surveillance, on land of many tenures.

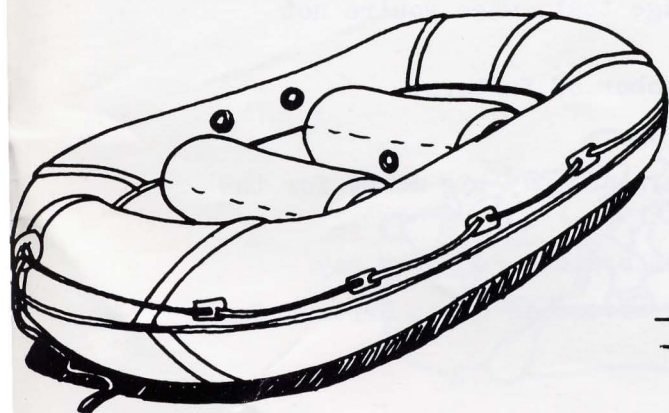
During a recent inspection of the Clarence River region, several remains of camp fires were noted which had obviously been lit close to highly combustible vegetation. The Clarence River region, during the summer months, would undoubtedly be one of the driest parts of New Zealand and a camp fire lit under the above described conditions could erupt very quickly into a large scale high country wildfire which would be very costly to extinguish.

We urge you to carry out the following safety precautions:-

**COMMERCIAL COOKERS:** The use of commercially built gas cookers are preferred rather than open fires. An adequate 'pad' should be cleared to ground/earth level before lighting, clear of overhead vegetation.

**OPEN FIRES:** Open fires should only be lit if a cooker is not available. All such open fires should be only lit in the creek bed at least 20 metres removed from any vegetation. Open fires should not be lit in North Westerly winds..."

**Note:** North Westerly winds in the Clarence and Canterbury are known for their dryness and strength. For other areas, winds that blow with any strength will quickly spread a fire. If camping along the coast, you should beware of strong sea-breezes that will blow towards the land in the afternoon. Noon-time campfires thus can spread to scrub along the coast very easily. Needless to say, both thoroughly wet, and bury all fires before leaving, and ensure that all coals, embers, or burnt materials, are buried - wind can reignite fires if embers are exposed to the wind.



NOT UP TO GRADE IV RAPIDS YET ?

See those wild and scenic rivers with a commercial raft trip. Before you rush off and book that trip - check to see that the company is a member of the

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NEW ZEALAND PROFESSIONAL RAFTING ASSOCIATION.

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That way you know they have safety standards to ensure your safety, and boatmen who are competent.

## A NEW ZEALAND PERSPECTIVE OF CANOESPORT IN THE UNITED KINGDOM.

by HUGH CANARD.

At the risk of boring you all silly, I thought you might like to hear about some canoeing snippets from a trip (business mostly) to Europe and the U.S.A.

I did get some weekends off, but since it was mid-winter over there I did not expect to do any more than spend over my credit card limit on pieces of equipment I could ill afford to carry, and risk getting slogged for duty at N.Z. customs.

### CANOEING IN THE FAR NORTH.

In Scotland at Christmas it gets light at 9.30 a.m., quite dark at 3 p.m., with daily 'highs' of 1°C, so when I was invited out for a paddle on the Firth of Forth (i.e. the edge of the North Sea) I was full of excuses ... no wet suit, no life jacket, etc. Unluckily, my host had tons of gear and the next day I found myself looking at a slate grey sky, a dark green sea and a six metre sea kayak.

Having never paddled one of these craft before, I was nervous about staying upright and wondering what you do if you can't roll up in the middle of the ocean.

We paddled out a wee bit and I was alarmed to discover that the waves looked bigger and that there was a 4 or 5 knot tide running with the wind. We are used to 2 metres of tide and this area has nearer 6 metres of rise and fall so all that water can really move. The scenery along this coast is truly superb, with small villages, the odd castle and, of course, the magnificent Forth Bridges. We paddled against the wind and tide, revealing my utter lack of fitness as here on swift rivers we mostly drift along and then paddle like hell only in the rapids. The canoe was a magnificent boat as it held a course in a quartering sea with a beam wind. In fact, the hardest job was making a turn. Sea canoeing, both the touring variety and, increasingly, surf canoeing, is gaining in popularity in Britain because of the mind-boggling (by our standards) problems over simple access to rivers.

### WE DON'T KNOW HOW LUCKY WE ARE.....

I had been told and had read about the problems of access to rivers in Britain and how canoeists and anglers were generally at loggerheads, but the reality of the situation came as a profound shock.

- A gamekeeper for a big estate in Scotland blew the entire stern off a canoe with a 12-bore, with the canoeist actually in the boat at the time.
- A canoeist showed me the scar on his cheek where an angler had deliberately cast at him and snagged his face.
- When Mellors, the gamekeeper, is not having it away with Ms Chatterley, he takes his surplus energy out on canoeists!

Canoeists have to prove 20 years or more continuous previous navigation to establish access on some rivers. (How do you manage that, when you're not allowed on in the first place?)

This sad state of affairs is brought about by a number of factors:-

- 20 times the population density
- anglers and landowners own the rivers and pay big money for the rights to fish
- there are 3,000,000 anglers in Great Britain, so they say
- there aren't too many good canoeing rivers in Great Britain for the number of canoeists
- the social structure is a factor.

Early in January, due to more 'good fortune', I was invited out for a paddle on a weir near London. We had to sneak onto the river because we hadn't paid our £5 licence to paddle on this one mile stretch of flat water. At a weir, the local

canoe club had set up a few gates and to the delight of the canoeists the support cables were liberally festooned with fishing tackle. Any fish in this water would need to be pretty tough as it was the colour and odour of what was probably its main constituent!

Despite my advanced culture shock at finding myself paddling a canoe in the middle of a city - ever paddled under an 18th century warehouse? - (it reminded me of "Phantom of the Opera") - I had to admit that this weir was a great place to practice or teach because the casualties didn't get whisked away hundreds of metres down the river as they do here.

The whirly on the outlet was good enough to pull your stern under and some of the local heroes paddling very spiky slalom canoes were mostly to be seen in various stages of submersion. I was the only one stupid enough to have to roll and I came up with weed and all sorts of grunge all over my helmet. The main hazards were supermarket trollies which the more creative local youth toss into the river.

#### EQUIPMENT.

As far as I could gather, people still go for the Olymp type kayaks for the bigger rivers and if not, the general style is similar. There were all sorts of touring and slalom boats around but there seemed to be one or two models that cropped up regularly.

The most interesting things to me were -

1. Comfortable footrests including Yakima footrests which you can adjust easily and quickly on a ratchet arrangement.
2. The use of toggles, not loops, on the ends of river (not competition) kayaks.
3. The lower backs of cockpit rims so that you can lean back properly without causing a prolapsed disc - also easier to roll for geriatrics like me.
4. Spraydecks with twin releases.

Toggles seem to be easier to grab and you can't get caught if the boat or your body rolls around in a rapid.

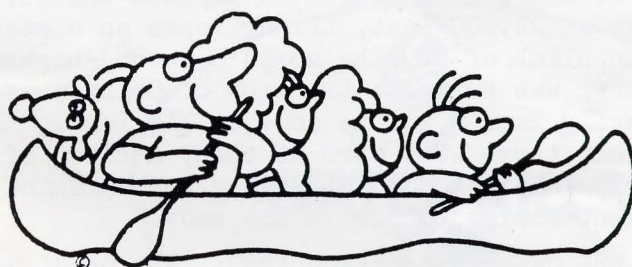
There is also some pretty flashy clothing available which I didn't buy on the principle that my canoeing would never hope to match my exterior. The Instructor's Jacket was very neat with two pockets and a metal ring attachment for rescues (yourself or another.)

I couldn't go canoeing in Canada as all the lakes and rivers were frozen over - thank heavens...

#### THE MORAL OF THE STORY.

Count your blessings here in New Zealand and resist any attempts to close off any of our wild rivers to dams or fishing or the aristocracy (here it's big money and the Government.)

And... pick up your barley sugar wrappers and supermarket trollies!



## Life on the edge

Life on the edge is becoming a national phenomenon. Millions of secure and comfortable people are trading the pool-side lounge chair for a raft on the Zambesi River, a trek across the Greenland ice cap, a balloon ascension over the Alps or a dive in the shark-infested Bahamas Trench.

Adventure is in, and the thrill business has never been better. In 1979 some 40,000 novice adventurers paid \$US39 each for a one-day raft trip down the rowdy American River in California. Last year, the number swelled to 120,000; and they eagerly shelled out more than \$5million for the privilege of doubling their pulse rate, according to a major travel outfitter.

"At least 2 million Americans will participate in some type of organized adventure travel this year," says Christian Keller of Sobek's International Explorers' Society, an Angel's Camp, California, outfit that sends clients down remote rivers all over the world. "As for the number of people who will be adventuring on their own, it would be impossible to hazard an estimate."

During the summer, amateur climbers actually line up with guides for a chance to scale the Matterhorn in Switzerland. Portland's Mt. Hood is described as an ant hill crawling with climbers. River guides on the Colorado have to limit clientele because it simply gets too crowded.

But beyond the realm of the amateur adventurer is the arena in which only the professionals compete - organized expeditions that pit endurance, stamina and the lure of danger against the forces of nature.

The expeditions compel ostensibly sane and normal individuals to go to extreme lengths to challenge the unknown at great personal risk.

Why? What is the motivation?

"Boredom", says John Long, a documentary filmmaker and one of America's foremost rock climbers. A professional river runner at age 14, he swam the length of the Colorado River at 16. "The challenge has been removed from our lives. There was a time when just getting through the day was an adventure. That has been taken away, and the psychological void that was left simply has not been filled."

Dr. George Serban, associate professor of clinical psychology at New York University, agrees that the life of the average American has become "banal and routine", but he believes that men undertake dangerous activities to "prove their masculinity."

Long agrees, "but it's an awfully general statement. I would say that the reasons for risk taking are as diverse as the people engaged in the activities."

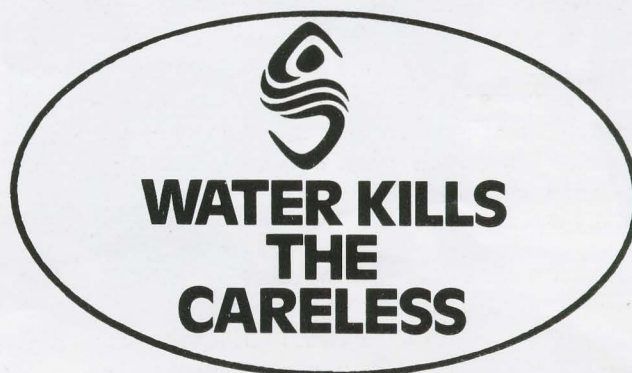
Marti Martin Kuntz, a female speed skier from Colorado, who topped 120mph in the 1983 Camel International Speed Skiing Championships, thinks it's pointless to get too cerebral about physical activity. "I just like to ski fast, and it's fun to compete," she said. "I don't know that it serves any purpose to keep asking why."

Rick Ridgeway of California, evokes poetic images to explain the lure of dangerous expeditions. He was at 22,600 feet, fixing ropes on a steep, treacherous ridge during the 1978 American climb of K2, the world's second-highest and most dangerous mountain. The weather was perfect; the view of China awesome. Suddenly, while he was resting, a butterfly landed in the snow at his feet. "A butterfly at 22,000 feet," he says. "Then there were more of them, a cloud of magnificently marked butterflies flying up from some unknown place in China, rising on air currents up the mountain, coming to die in the snow."

In July, Ridgeway embarked on the Camel Expedition 1983: The Great Borneo Traverse, a gruelling eight-week crossing of one of the most primitive areas in the world. The six-man team, which includes John Long, will travel hundreds of miles up the Kapuas River, haul supplies and inflatable boats over 70 miles of uncharted jungle highlands, and then descend the Kayak River, which contains whitewater as fierce as any in the world.

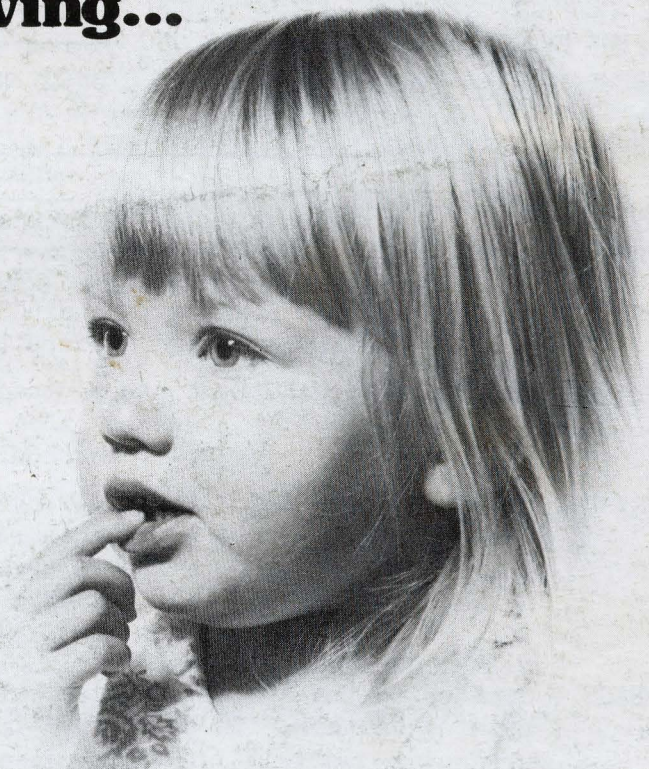
Why are they doing this? Long ponders the question. "It's good to discover you have inner resources that transcend your environment," he says, then frowns. "No," he adds, "that sounds too phony. I don't know how to explain it, but it's going to be a blast."

Facing the difficulty of articulating their inner motives, some adventurers might borrow trumpeter Louis Armstrong's answer to an inquiry on how to distinguish good jazz from bad. "If you got to ask," he said, "you ain't never gonna know."



**Susan Applesmith.**

**Nine months on~the~way...  
three years growing...**



# **2 minutes drowning**

**KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE UNDER FIVES.**



**WATER KILLS THE CARELESS.**