



# THE YUKON PADDLER SPRING ISSUE 2004



## THE PUT IN

Hi Everyone:

The Yukon Canoe and Kayak Club (YCKC) had another fun kayak water polo season this past winter. It was a great way to keep honing the paddling and self defence skills.

Thanks to all the volunteers for organizing this.

A big thank you to all the executive in the past year and especially to the president , Andy Hyde who handled club's issues while the rest of us were having fun in the Grand Canyon!

A *special thank you* to Violet Vanhees for all her work on the Future Rock the River Plan and updating our constitution( dry, tedious, but a very necessary job).

The YCKC has another great season coming up. The Youth Program will be expanding to include a beginner kayaking for girls on Monday nights. Mary- Jane Oliver will organize a volunteer committee for this program.

Vernon Beebe and John Quinsey will continue on with their Youth Program and further advance the paddling skills of these kids.

Eyvi Smith will continue doing the RCMP Youth Program for Youth at Risk.

Our drop in Thursday nights for kayakers and canoeists will be starting again in late June. The Whitehorse White-water Rodeo is scheduled for July 28th but this date could change.

Don't forget to come out to the YCKC Annual General Meeting or AGM at Sport Yukon, May 26th at 8pm.

## YUKON RIVER QUEST NEWS RELEASE

Sixth annual Yukon River Quest entry deadline May 26

WHITEHORSE, YUKON – Nearly \$15,000 (Cdn.) in prize money will be up for grabs in the longest annual canoe and kayak race in the world, the Yukon River Quest, which will have its sixth running in late June.

Under a new prize structure, the top 10 teams overall will receive prize money, and cash bonuses also will be awarded in several categories. The first place team will receive \$3,000 plus entry in the 2005 race to defend their title. Boats are divided into these classes: tandem canoe and kayak, voyager canoe, and solo kayak, and there are bonuses for top mixed, women's, and senior entries as well.

The 460-mile (740 kilometers) paddling marathon is held on the Yukon River from Whitehorse to Dawson City in Canada's Yukon Territory. The race begins with a Le Mans style start in downtown Whitehorse at 12:30 p.m. on

Wednesday, June 23.

The race record in elapsed time on the river is 44 hours, nine minutes, but most teams average between 55 and 70 hours. This does not include 10 hours of layovers at Carmacks (7 hours) and a new Kirkman Creek checkpoint (3 hours), which has been added at the request of racers this year for extra rest time before the final stretch. The first teams are expected to arrive in Dawson during the late afternoon or early evening of Friday, June 25.

The Yukon River Quest grew out of the gold rush centennial Dyea to Dawson races and has increased in popularity each year, from 16 teams in 1999 to more than 30 teams in each of the last two years. Organizers expect to reach the 40-team mark this year, and are actively soliciting teams in Alaska and the Yukon, as well as internationally through paddling magazines, canoe and kayak clubs, and its Web site, [www.yukonriverquest.com](http://www.yukonriverquest.com). Race brochures are available at outdoor stores in many northern communities.

As of mid-April, 20 teams had already registered, including entries from the Yukon, Alaska, British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, New York, Michigan, California, and England. This year's race has already drawn media attention from the BBC and Explorer Magazine.

Entry forms and other information, from race rules to prize breakdowns per category, can be downloaded off the Web site. Deadline for entries is May 26.

Whitehorse E.M.O. and Canadian Rangers from several Yukon communities will assist the race safety crews again this year, from Lake Laberge all the way to Dawson.

Official sponsors include: The Whitehorse Star, Acuvue Contact Lenses, Up North Adventures-Wenonah Canoe, PR Services-yukoninfo.com, Integraphics, City of Whitehorse, and Norcan Leasing.

The race is organized by the Yukon River Marathon Paddling Association, based in Whitehorse. Volunteers will be needed this year in Whitehorse, Carmacks and Dawson City. To sign up, contact the race office at 867-333-5628 (33FLOAT) or Alaska rep. Jeff Brady in Skagway at 983-2515.

## GRAND CANYON 2004

The lava rocks absorb the heat of the sun giving you the feeling of being in an oven with no shade in sight. The roar of the rapid was deafening. The air was hanging thick with apprehension while sixteen of us looked in silence at the murky water, trying to find a way through the maze of holes and pour-overs.

You see, running Lava Falls was something we comfortably filed away for doing another day. But Bob had got behind the oars and took off like a mad man down the river, drawing the rest of the group in the vortex behind him. Our normal paddling day was 15 miles but by noon that day we had already done 20 miles putting us only 5 miles from Lava Falls. It became evident to the rest of the group that we were going to run Lava that afternoon. Lunch was uncommonly silent, the stories and challenge of Lava was on everyone's mind.

For 14 Yukoners and 2 Alaskans, doing the Colorado in March was paradise. The T-shirt weather we were enjoying was like summer for us. At night the skies were stunning with incredibly bright stars. When the moon came out, the black canyon walls lit up and glowed like daylight in the night. It was easy to feel dwarfed in the canyon where you could look a mile up and see snow on the rim. We were in awe and inspired by the overwhelming beauty of the canyon. What a historical and magical land to be apart of for two and a half weeks; if only these walls could talk.

The plant life in the canyon was varied and usually prickly. We saw different types of cactus like barrel, fishhook, prickly pear, hedgehog, teddy bear cholla and ocotillo. There were yucca plants in bloom and century plants, which bloom once in 25 years and then die. Every day we enjoyed the sight of wildlife; deer in lush areas, big horn sheep on cliffs, a ringtail cat stealing a granola bar. We were on high alert for ravens or California Condors, both of whom are notorious camp raiders. One raven unbuckled one of our bags and stole batteries from a camera.

In our group there was lots of joking and scheming and one had to be on guard at all times. One day we hiked up Deer Creek Falls, which was a very narrow deep slot canyon that cut through like a puzzle. We were hiking back and Roger was getting impatient for us to be on the river as we had miles to make. Roger was ahead on the river and had stopped at a small eddy that leads into a spectacular hike called Matkatamiba canyon. We saw Roger perched up a cliff wall, swinging a red throw bag to alert us-- and warn us not to miss the eddy! Robert was rafting just ahead of us and pretended not to see Roger. Robert appeared to be scouting the next rapid and Roger was jumping like an orangutan to get Robert's attention. Robert delayed as long as possible, just making the eddy, grinning the whole time.

While hiking into Matkatamiba canyon there were natural amphitheaters and giant boulders that gave us a haunting, ancient feeling. We heard Lisa playing the flute and the acoustics were surreal. The group gathered around, seated in the natural amphitheater, mesmerized by the music that filled the air and enveloped the canyon.

At camp, Derrick had brought a fake snake and Bob was ready and waiting with the video camera to film unsuspecting individuals. He had planted the snake in Shaun's dry top, but Shaun just walked away holding his dry top while the snake fell out. Bob dropped the snake in the beer bag and three people dug in for a beer but no one felt it. Then Bob planted the snake in the kitchen where Eyvi and Leanne were cooking and yelled, "Look out!" Eyvi and Leanne scrambled fast, toppling over some water jugs and finally, + Bob got his desired footage.

The Colorado River was very cold because the dam draws the water from the bottom of the river. Eyvi and Leanne got their heavy raft stuck on a rock just under the surface of the water. Eyvi was in the water a long time trying to pry off the raft. When he finally did he was so cold and numb that he couldn't jump back in the raft. He held on to the raft while Leanne rowed him to shore, where he managed to jump back in.

The river was drop pool with fun, big waves and squirrely eddy lines. Hermit Rapid had the biggest waves on the Colorado, enough to flip Roberts raft. Len and Leanne decided to swim the rapid for fun using double life jackets. It was hard to find the two little dots in the big water. Clients on commercial trips use to do this but its not done anymore because of liability issues.

Shaun was often kayaking far behind the group therefore he had no backup for rescue. He wanted to challenge himself and scout the rapids on his own. He eddied behind Nixon's rock, a giant rock in the middle of the river. The eddy lines were wild, squirrely and converging at all angles, a nasty place to be. He missed his first roll thinking, "I never miss my first roll, but I can't swim here or I'm going to drown." He managed to hang on and fight until he finally made his roll. After that, Shaun was always with us or at least just ahead of us.

Vernon and John were very cautious at first, as this was their first foreign whitewater river trip. John had a few swims and had to beat the head game of kayaking. Later on in the trip as they gained confidence, Vernon was hitting the biggest surf waves and John was rolling up like clockwork.

At Lava Falls we were scouting intently, Bob quickly told us our options. The favorite route was to run the burble line right of center, go right of the pour over and left of the hole on river right, then hit the diagonal where two massive waves crash into each other and shoot for the big waves downstream. I could hear Derrick echoing, "Sure glad I'm

not in a raft!” Three of the rafters decided to walk around the rapid. Lisa kayaked first and flipped on the very top of the rapid continuing the whole rapid upside down till she rolled up at the bottom. She then walked back up to run the rapid another three times, with her kayak more right side up each time she ran it. Most of the kayakers flipped in the giant diagonal waves, but everyone rolled up.

Bob, Leanne and Roger were going down Lava in the rowing frame. Roger was asking “Bronze River Bob” our fearless guide where to go, and Bob held his paddle like a guitar and said “Downstream”. They all started to laugh as they dropped into the maw while Roger skillfully guided the raft through Lava Falls.

We reached Pumpkin Springs, which is orange travertine deposit around the rim of a pool. Roger informed us that if we wanted to go the way of Napoleon and die of arsenic poisoning then to go ahead and swim in the springs. It looked grungy, so we weren’t tempted.

After 17 days of a great paddling adventure and isolation from the rest of the world, it was quite a surprise to see our old school bus waiting for us at the take out. We were on our way towards Las Vegas but could not cross Hoover Dam with the bus because of tightened security since 9-11. Eyvi showed his RCMP badge and convinced the security guards to check our luggage for potential bombs. Kayaks were unloaded from the top of the bus, while all our bags were opened on the ground beside the bus. We watched as security guards inspected the luggage and gear of 14 Canadian suspected suicide bombers, off the Colorado River in an old school bus. Paranoia is a weird thing!

At the end of our trip we were all glowing happy inside, reveling in the experience and natural high of having paddled the Colorado River through the spectacular Grand Canyon.

*By Theresa Landman*



Len and Robert running the wild Lava Falls Rapid



John, Vern, Eyvi, Leanne and Lisa float lazily in the sun on the Colorado River.



Bronze River Bob was our guide, a.k.a Patrol River Bob as he knew all the park rules and requirements needed to get us down the river.



Leanne, Shaun and John cooking up another incredibly delicious meal thanks to Bob’s secret recipes.

**Thanks to The Yukon Youth Project (part of Crime Prevention Yukon) who did a great job in building the change rooms at the City Intake!**

**Thanks to the City for the materials and Skills Canada for the use of their shop and tools!**



Ann Chapman her children Jakov and Thomas and avid canoeist Tracy Rempel on the Takhini river in May.



Removing injured kayaker using a kayak as a stretcher

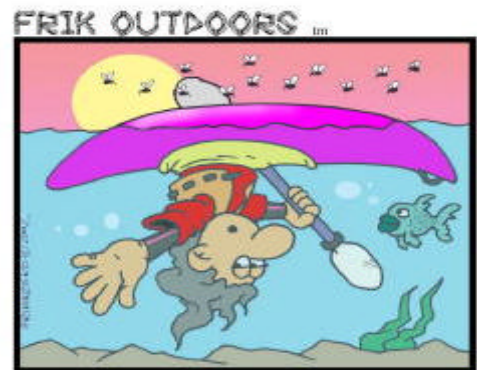


Vern getting his head twisted by Mark Zrum during a rescue exercise.

The Yukon Canoe & Kayak Club would like to thank all those who attended the Kayak Rescue evening at the Whitehorse Lions Aquatic Center. It's great to see that all of you are interested in the safety of those you paddle with. Hopefully we will be able to put on more evening in-services over the 2004 - 2005 season

All the best and safe paddling

Rob Robinson



A YUKON PADDLER'S ALTERNATIVE TO BUG SPRAY