

Don Wegeng's Report

From: dw

Date: 8 Jul 87 13:53:45 EDT (Wednesday)

Subject: New River Trip Report

We're pleased to report that the Seventh Annual GSP Raft Trip was a big success! In all seventy four people spent up to five days camping, rafting, funyaking, hiking, swimming (a few times unintentionally), cursing the rain, and of course drinking beer and catching up on what their friends have been doing for the past year.

As usual, this year's event was held near Summersville, WV. Honors for being the first to arrive go to Paul and Roger Carlile, who drove in on Monday afternoon.

Throughout the week many activities took place. New ones for this year included a short hike down to the Meadow River (which is a very challenging kayak run during high water conditions) and a funyak (inflatable kayak) trip down the Upper New River (class I & II rapids).

The Meadow River hike consisted of following a 4WD trail for about a mile from Route 19 down to the river valley. The river itself is basically a rock garden, forming all sorts of pools and small waterfalls (a fun place to swim/play) at low water levels such as we encountered. Everyone agreed that at high water it undoubtedly turns into a whitewater nightmare.

[See below for Rsk's description of the funyak trip.]

The main event on Friday was the annual hike into the New River Gorge, ending at a series of rapids called the Keeneys. This is always a lot of fun, for there are several nice places at the river's edge for sunbathing and watching the rafts, kayaks, and canoes (!) run the rapids. This year we watched several canoes attempt to run the hole at the bottom of Lower Keeney. The first three, as you might expect, swamped. The last two, however, made perfect runs and stayed upright. We were all very impressed. We also watched a private four person raft flip in this hole, giving us a nice scare as we didn't see all four people immediately come back up.

Little did we know that this rapid would also give us a few thrills.

/Don

Rich Kulawiec's Funyak Report

From: rsk

Malcolm and Ed came along in kayaks, and of course received appropriate abuse when their initial roll attempts failed. Speaking in their defense, I should point out that doing a roll in moving water without a warm-up is really difficult; and besides that, I may have my chance at this next year.

The people who went were Deb, Eileen, Renee, Kris, Bill Bean, Dw, Paul, Roger, Troy, Jeff Treece, Tony Frissorar, Ks, Malcolm, Ed, and myself; we were accompanied by a couple of guides in a small raft. The

morning was fairly uneventful; we all got the hang of our boats, and soon learned that they were stable in almost any position, even in whitewater.

Lunch was terrific (as per the usual MRT fare); Eileen managed to get hammered by an angry bee who didn't want to share the beach we were on.

In the afternoon, things got interesting. We had an "incident" at The Ledges, which is a rapid formed by a 3-4 foot drop of nearly the entire riverbed that extends from bank left to nearly bank right. The guides in the raft and the initial run of duckies ran it far right; then the guides worked back left to do a little surfing. when Ed (in the kayak) and I (in a funyak) came up on the drop, we simply headed straight for the raft. This was a bad move, because by then the raft had become stuck in the hydraulic, which was surprisingly powerful. I'd say we were, oh, twenty feet from the drop when I finally got the trip leader's attention with a yell asking for directions. He looked up from what we was doing and screamed "Noooooooooo!", and waved us off. I think what followed was some of the most frantic paddling I've ever done -- don't know if Ed would concur or not. We managed to work river right enough to find a chute down the drop and run it upright; luckily, we weren't snared by the hydraulic.

What followed is the now-famous "Duckies to the Rescue!" episode; we lined up about ten of the funyaks, grabbed a line from the raft, and eventually managed to yank them off the hydraulic. Of course, since the Upper New is "bambi whitewater", they hadn't tied anything down...so then we had to chase down all the gear that had fallen out of the raft. Later, we heaped much abuse on the guides for being the only people who needed to be rescued that day.

The biggest rapid of the day was one of the last: Silo is about a Class III. The guides ran it first, and then lined us up for it with hand signals. Dw and I hit it about the same time; I guess I was the lucky one who hit the big drop square on. The last thing I heard before I fell off the edge of the world was Don laughing hysterically; the last thing Don heard was "OOOOOOOH SHIT!". Yes, funyaks can go vertical.

Ed and Malcolm redeemed themselves by executing nice rolls later on; Tony Frissora went rock-garden exploring but managed not to get pinned anywhere. All in all, a great time, and so I think we'll have a couple of funyak trips next year

Rich Kulawiec's New River Trip Report

From: rsk

Subject: New River Trip '87

The first thought that comes to mind when trying to describe this trip is a line from the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy; Arthur Dent finds this his travelling companion's use of the word "safe" to describe their situation does not square with his notions of reality, and says...

"Obviously this is some new meaning of the word 'safe' that I wasn't previously aware of."

Rafting the New River is, of course, "safe". This definition becomes somewhat stretched however, when you're in one of the several boats that lost passengers, guides, and whatnot passing through various rapids. If my scorecard is correct, seven GSPs and one guide took a swim in Lower Keeney; this is impressive, but not entirely desirable. Luckily for all, no one was hurt, though a few people spent more time underwater (or just *in* the water, or on the rocks) than they would have preferred. Offhand, I'd say I came within seconds of becoming possibly the first voluntary swimmer in Lower Keeney, but good

sense and submission to authority figures (guide) prevailed. Also, DW would have probably slapped me around a bit if I'd gotten silly. :-)

In particular, our guide, having an off day, managed to take his second swim of the day at Lower Keeney -- and Lollygag for good measure -- before finishing off the day by hanging us up on Tabletop Rock at the entrance to Double Z and then running Greyhound Bus Stopper right down the middle, which is an enlightening experience. Other boats had their share of fun as well -- one lost half the crew at Lower Keeney, and one group of particularly intrepid (or deranged) individuals managed to pull off an "ender" at Flea Flicker. (10 of 10 for style, grace, and artistic impression; but 2 of 10 for failing to roll up afterwards.)

We found that using the smaller paddle rafts made the trip more challenging; big waves tended to throw the boats about much more readily than we were accustomed to, even at moderate water levels. We also found that this year's crop of River Virgins turned out to be good paddlers, probably due to the added boost to their morale given to them during their initiation ceremony.

Finally, even though he's never filed his official trip report (how could working on a dissertation possibly be more important than this?), Ed "Raft Trip King" Bronson did an exemplary job of combining organization, lunacy, beer, and traditional American cheap souvenirs into a fine package.

His orange cowboy hat is still terminally ugly, though.