

PADDLE SPLASHES

October 2013

Canoe & Kayak Committee
Appalachian Mountain Club
New York-North Jersey Chapter

MY WEEKEND
at MOHICAN 2

FIRST DESCENT 4

Exiting a Canoe 5

Safety First 7

INSTRUCTION 9

LOST 12

Russ Faller applies his expertise to escape a labyrinth of marshes in the Adirondack's Raquette River.

MY WEEKEND *at* MOHICAN

by Jennifer Grim

Growing up surrounded by the natural beauty of Long Island's suburbs, there's always been a place in my heart for the great outdoors, even if the outdoors were marred by the bustling sounds of trains, planes and automobiles. All too often, we are attached to our cell phones, never having any time to truly appreciate what Mother Nature has given us. My weekend canoeing excursion at the AMC's Mohican Outdoor Center was just what the doctor ordered.



Jennifer Grim, left, and aunt (and fellow student) Liz Alexander at the Sept Basic Canoe Instruction.



MY WEEKEND *at* MOHICAN

As we drove deeper into the hills of Jersey to arrive at Mohican, the service bars on our cell phones quickly disappeared. Having no choice but to disconnect with our technological accessories, we were blessed with great nights of deep conversation with fellow campers, stepping outside and breathing in the fresh, crisp woods' air, looking up at the clear blue sky and appreciating the fact that I was given the opportunity to join the group this weekend.



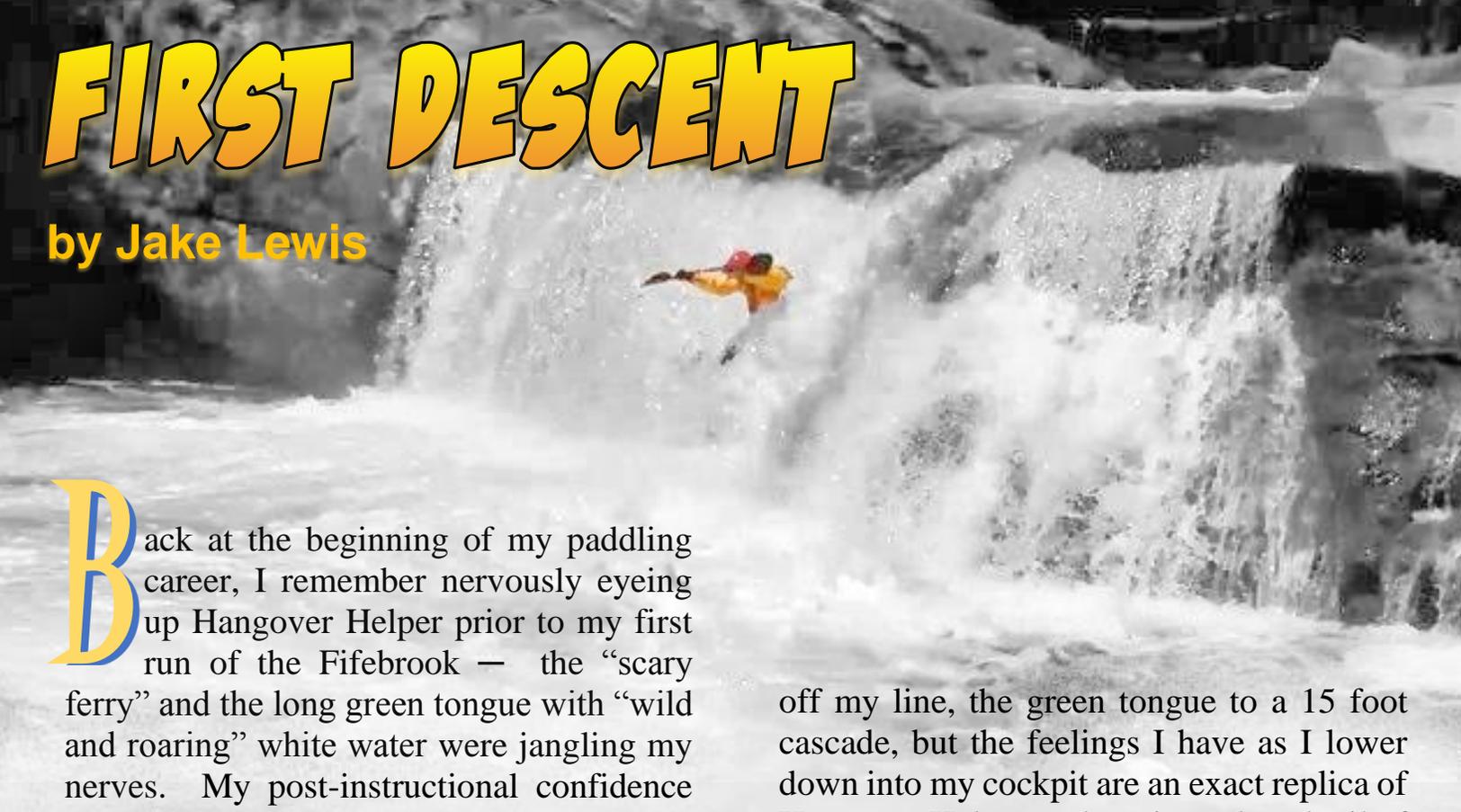
As a novice canoeist, I was extremely relieved that the instructors gave us detailed explanations not only of how to paddle, but also how to load and unload canoes off a trailer, how to cut into eddies, how to safely perform rescues with boat-over-boat assistance. All the instruction allowed me to feel I could confidently paddle my way down the Delaware River with excitement, not fear.

Probably my favorite activity was when Lenny and Henry had us explore a beaver dam which was wedged near very shallow water and a rocky surface. We used all our newly learned skills to maneuver around the rocks and the shallow water, and we were given opportunities to see all the creatures that were living right at the river's edge. I am so excited to learn more about canoeing and the outdoors, and cannot wait for my next AMC expedition! Thank you for giving me the dose of nature I needed!



FIRST DESCENT

by Jake Lewis



Back at the beginning of my paddling career, I remember nervously eyeing up Hangover Helper prior to my first run of the Fifebrook — the “scary ferry” and the long green tongue with “wild and roaring” white water were jangling my nerves. My post-instructional confidence was all but dried up and I was questioning my enthusiasm for this new sport. A more seasoned paddler, recognizing my anxiety, soon came over and calmly said, “That feeling — down there in the pit of your stomach — that feeling will have you driving all over the country in search of a fix.” Then he smiled paternally and wandered off.

Fast forward four years and a thousand miles distant to Tellico Ledges, Georgia. Only this time I’m nervously eyeing up Baby Falls — my first real waterfall — with that now all too familiar gnawing feeling once more. By far the least experienced of my group, everyone proffers words of encouragement, reassurances of safety, and a barrage of advice, but the words of that long-ago riverside sage is what I hear. The “scary ferry” is replaced by a shallow approach drop that could knock me

off my line, the green tongue to a 15 foot cascade, but the feelings I have as I lower down into my cockpit are an exact replica of Hangover Helper — that visceral cocktail of tension, anxiety, thrill, and focus.

Last minute boat check, peel out into the current, slight hiccup over the approach drop, manic strokes to regain line, frantic boof — and free fall! — angle, head down, paddle up, splash. Cool silent immersion. I resurfaced - uncharacteristically upright - to cheers. Both elated and amazed, I make for the eddy pool, and (for the short term at least) that visceral feeling has been purged.

Now, where to next?

Jake neglects to mention that he was a hero in several “firsts” on the 2013 AMC Southern Rivers Trip. While we’ve all seen helmet abuse on the rivers — some paddlers lovingly name the dents to honor moments of salvation — Jake nearly lost his helmet entirely. He is one of the first paddlers we’ve witnessed who rolled up to find that his helmet had detached. Unfazed, and with group support, he finished the run without incident.

Jake on Baby Falls.
Photo by John Scelba.

The Fine Art of

Exiting a Canoe

by David Vezetti

One of the pleasures of longer AMC river expeditions is linking up with ex-pat New Yorkers who can guide us down the rivers around their new homes. A stellar example is the generous and skillful guidance of David Vezetti. If you're paddling in the southern region, look him up. Whether it was AMC club culture or David's warmth, the recent Southern Rivers Trip bonded instantly with the Vezettis, richer for the addition. Here he hands on more words of wisdom for veteran canoeists.

Nowadays, when any Tom, Dick or Harry can roll an open boat, it is becoming less and less likely for a canoeist to exit his boat while in the water. (Of course, the necessity to roll is equivalent to an exit in my book.) As a result when such a phenomenon is observed the common response is to exclaim, "Oh, look, he's swimming" or "That's a nasty swim," or some such comment. This lack of imagination in describing all such happenings by the simple word "swim" is, in my opinion, deplorable and results no doubt from a woeful lack of experience.



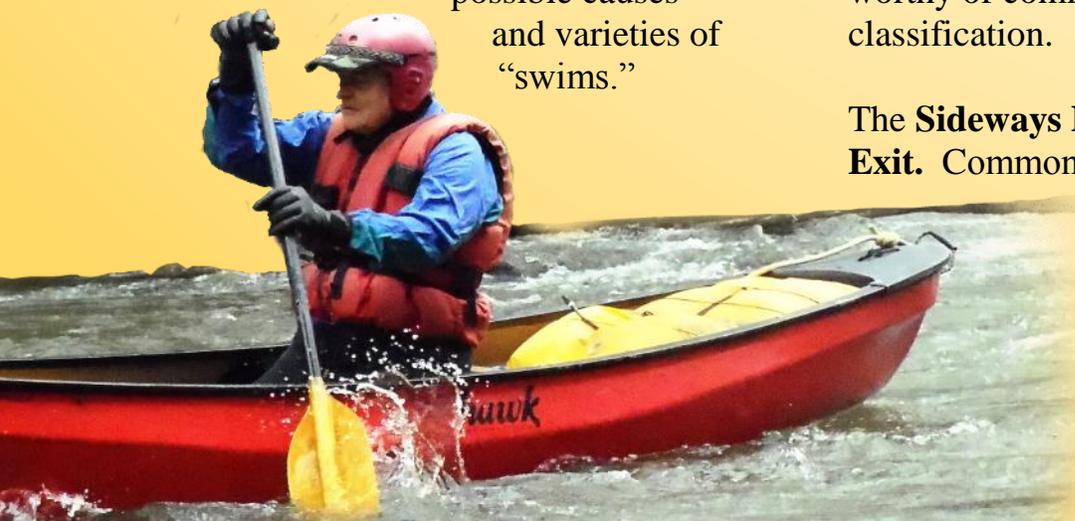


The Fine Art of **Exiting a Canoe**

It misses all the nuance and variety of the experience and displays a total lack of understanding of the important differences in the causes which could have precipitated the event. It is as though the Eskimos had only one word for “snow” when, in fact they have different words for wet snow, dry snow, large flake snow, mushy snow, freezing snow, horizontally blown snow wind whipped snow, etc., probably 30 or more denotations for that form of frozen water. The number of descriptors is in proportion to the importance of the phenomenon. This is as it should be. Anything less would downplay the critical nature of snow in the Eskimos’ lives. Can one imagine an Eskimo peering from his igloo and calling back to his wife “Oh look, snow!”? This is ludicrous on its face. Such a fellow would rightly be thought to be dimwitted or worse.

The same scorn should also be heaped upon the boater whose only exclamation while observing an out of boat experience is “He’s swimming”. And so I shall attempt to explain here some of the huge variety of

possible causes
and varieties of
“swims.”



The Moving Exit. This is by far the largest, and some believe the most important, category.

To classify as a **Difficult Moving Water Exit**, the feature must be generally acknowledged to be at least one class of difficult higher than the typical skill level of the boater. Thus, a common variety Class III recreational paddler encountering violent Class IV waves at the bottom of “Table Saw” might have an experience that would fall under this category. Whether the canoeist maintains a hold on the boat, and/or the paddle, and indeed, even if a “yard sale” should ensue, makes no difference in the classification. Though onlookers may find these aspects amusing and even worthy of comment, and some may even believe them to be sub-categories within the Difficult Water Exit category, scholars of the subject are in almost universal agreement that these “accompanying, extraneous features,” as they are called, should not be allowed to muddle the basic simplicity of the concept set forth here. Finally, the violence of the ejection, while providing amusement, and while worthy of comment, does not alter the classification.

The Sideways Difficult Moving Water Exit. Commonly referred to as a “blown ferry,” these exits also provide amusement, particularly if executed above fairly large rapids. A slight upstream motion is sometimes involved, particularly while leaving an eddy to begin the ferry.



The Fine Art of **Exiting a Canoe**

Moving Water Exit Due to Indecision.

This is the first of a group of exits whose cause lies not so much in the difficulty of the water but more in a certain lack of mental acuity, alertness, or the like. The boater must be required to make a decision, usually whether to pass left or right of a rock or which of several chutes to negotiate while passing over a fairly simple ledge. The decision is beyond the time when it can be acted upon, and, as the canoeist finally makes a flailing attempt to choose, the boat spins wildly around the rock or tips drastically in one chute or the other and the exit follows.

Onlookers are frequently dismayed and comments such as “How did he do that?” can be heard. But the dismay and comments are truly testimony to the woeful ignorance of the spectator who fails to realize that he has just witnessed a classic Exit Due to Indecision.

Miscellaneous Moving Exits acknowledges the other numerous moving exits easily understood. Among these, we may cite the “Easy Water Exit (downstream or lateral), the “After Lunch-Full Stomach Exit”, the “Lost Paddle Exit,” the “That Tree Wasn’t There Last Week Exit,” etc. Before assuming that he has discovered a new category of **Moving Water Exits**, the reader is cautioned to consider carefully whether the “discovery” fits into one or more of the above classifications.

The In-Place Exit This category of exits differs from the **Moving Exits** in that the boater is not making headway in one direction or another (except possible downward, which doesn’t count).

For example, in the **Side-Surfing Exit** the boater, while displaying his expertise in side surfing, gradually finds his boat full of water and gracefully slides from the boat on the downstream side. Alternately, in bouncier holes, the boater may be ejected quickly on the upstream side.

In either event, much cheering and or jeering generally accompany these exits. Rarely serious, the boater generally extricates himself from the hole in a brief time and continues with a graceful downstream swim.

...the boater may spend considerable time testing the buoyancy of his PFD and wondering why the sport used to seem like so much fun.

The Stopping-Hole Exit. Here, the boater, proceeding downstream, is stopped by a hole of some size and after bouncing up and down for a second or two spills from his canoe. The exit frequently occurs just below a wide ledge. Occasionally frightening, the boater may spend considerable time testing the buoyancy of his PFD and wondering why the sport used to seem like so much fun. Onlookers with rescue skills generally assume the best and delay rope throws, etc., adding to the time for the boater to consider his future (and past).



The Fine Art of **Exiting a Canoe**

Miscellaneous In Place Exit: Again there are a large number of miscellaneous In Place Exits, most of which occur so infrequently that they do not deserve special classification. One of the most entertaining ever observed by the author occurred on the Nantahala River in the large hole on river right just above the final drop at the falls. A private raft entered the hole, ejected its passengers, and was bouncing happily in inverted position. A kayaker coming from above paddled into the hole and landed upright in his craft on top of the raft. After taking one or two strokes in the air, and realizing his position, he toppled over, popped his skirt, and swam through the falls, followed by his kayak and the raft. Purists may object that this is simply a double case of the Stopping Hole Exit. They are probably right.

Exits caused by other boaters often involve law-abiding, innocent open boaters moving properly downstream under perfect control, such as when a canoeist approaches a surfing wave or hole and an unthinking Neanderthal raft guide surfs his fully occupied raft onto said wave or hole at the last possible moment. The canoeist finds she is swimming to the nearest eddy. In the rare variation in which the offending surfer is a kayaker, the collision is of no consequence, since the kayaker is simply run over and the canoeist continues downstream.

Canoeists should make reasonable attempts to avoid crushing kayakers, as this breed is populated by pleasant folk who are sometimes useful during out-of-boat experiences and hence should be preserved in spite of their obvious other shortcomings. A simple “sorry about that” may suffice in most cases.

Veronica Malone swimming Esopus Creek during the September Whitewater Safety & Rescue Workshop.



Avoid the Worst. Put Safety First.

“There wasn't time to get scared,” Rich said. They always say “stay calm,” but talk is cheap. Your best chance to stay cool is to be prepared: proper gear, skills, navigation and weather info.

Undoubtedly, training like AMC's safety and rescue courses will give you the confidence to keep your head cool.

It's a lesson Rich Dabal and Anthony Melo drive home in their memory of a very close call recently on the Savage River.

“Panic wouldn't get the situation cleared up any faster — it only make it last longer.” Years of boating and experience enabled Rich to rescue his paddling partner, Anthony Melo, from being pinned on a strainer and nearly becoming entrapped.

At a bend in the Savage River, the flow pushes to the right, where large branches appeared. Following his friend, Anthony didn't have a chance to move left fast enough, and he broached facing upstream right on the branch.

Anthony on the Savage.





Avoid the Worst. Put Safety First.

They were lucky to be near one of the few eddies on the Savage.

“I grabbed my rope and ran upstream through the brush,” Rich recounted. “I had no sight of Anthony. I yelled out, he answered. GOOD! Anthony was broached but ‘stable.’ The borrowed paddle he was using was long gone. Moving the boat was not possible, too much flow, and it would sink under the tree with him in it. I was able to sit securely on the tree. I grabbed his wrist and pulled him onto the tree. He was safe.”

Saving the boat proved harder.

“Standing on the tree we watched the boat flounder as the water pushed on it,” says Rich as he persisted. “Next step, we tried to snag the boat with the rope. No luck. We set up the Z Drag. First pulling, start simple and then setting up the full on drag. As we did this, other boaters were coming down we yelled and waved them off. One Shredder and three kayaks went right over the boat and came close to flipping as they bounced over it. They had no time to get left.”

All this can happen in a flash, though it may seem like forever. “In the space of 40 minutes, I saw one broach and one near entrapment, on the same tree It was *get in there, act, re-act*,” Rich says.

Anthony is a former rock climbing guide so was accustomed to staying cool in the midst of crisis that day on the Savage River.

“His boat could have shifted the wrong way and he would have been under,” Rich admits, “but skill, strength, knowledge and Vulcan watching over us got us out at the Savage River... We’ll be back there and be ready for that left curve.”

This account underscores the need to carefully select one’s paddling partners, ensuring they’ve been fully trained by experts like AMC’s Marty Plante or Butch Futrell. In fact, firefighters and professional first responder teams have sought out AMC to supplement their official training with sorely lacking swift water rescue skills.

**TO BE
CONTINUED!**

by you!

Have a story about a near miss or expert rescue to share in the next issue? Send it to paddlesplashes@amc-ny.org



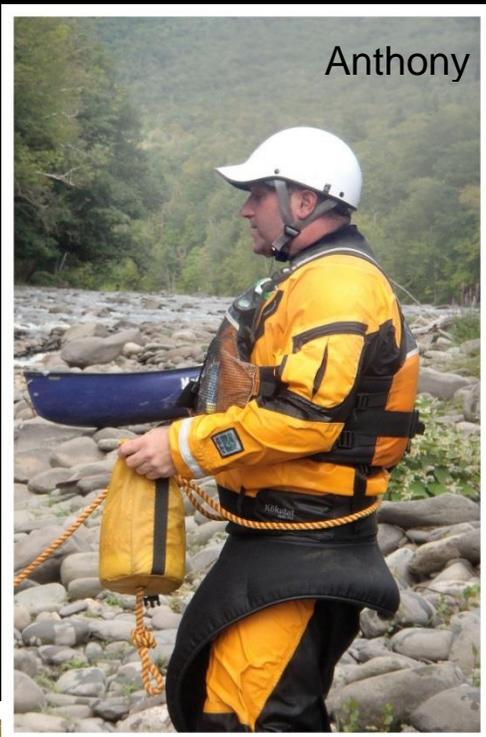
Our hard-working party planners are finalizing the arrangements for the best

Paddlers Party

**ever! The location is
Hartley House, 413 West 46th St., NYC.
Details coming soon to your email in-box.**



WHITEWATER PADDLERS RESCUED



Anthony

BY QUICK THINKING INSTRUCTORS

Risk management is a critical component of outdoor activities. With each new trail or waterway, you also explore and challenge your own limits. The trail stretches farther or higher. The rapids get longer and more technical. We become more courageous and joyful, growing in experience and confidence.



Jake Lewis
Rescues victim
Veronica Malone.

To challenge yourself though, it is important to pursue safety and rescue courses that inform you about correct actions in potentially nerve-wracking situations.



WHITEWATER PADDLERS RESCUED

On Saturday, September 14, lead instructor Marty Plante, with assistant instructor Matt Schaefer, guided eight fellow paddlers of varying skill levels on the Esopus Creek through instruction designed to educate about common river dangers and the appropriate safety and rescue tactics.

Matt and Tom



It was a gorgeous brisk morning that began with a discussion of paddling terminology and water movement, enhanced by Marty's use of props and volunteers. Immediately apparent was Marty's significant experience with and impressive knowledge of river rescue situations. His enthusiasm helped quite a few of us jump into the colder water of the creek as Matt helped instruct on proper river crossing technique.

WHITEWATER PADDLERS RESCUED



Throughout the afternoon, we repeatedly followed Marty's examples of maneuvering through water around rocks, utilizing paddles, and familiarizing ourselves with common river challenges, like dynamic eddies and strainers. The paddlers in the latter part of the course, enhanced by our growing confidence, dealt with rescue situations for others including potential spine injuries and working with a team of rescuers.

By allowing participants to experience a variety of water situations in a more controlled environment, Marty and Matt gave each of us the ability to work outside of our levels of comfort and learn how to navigate a self-rescue.

Coming up onto the bank at the end of the day, we were not the same folks who had stepped into that river five hours earlier. The course was a great beginner



Loretta

of confidence in dealing with some of the hazards that paddlers can encounter.

Veronica Malone



PolyOne, a global producer of plastic and polymer materials, has announced that it is closing its Warsaw, Indiana plant that produces the world's supply of Royalex. The plant closing will take place in 2014 and Royalex will cease to be made unless a new buyer for the product line is found.

Invented by Uniroyal, Royalex was first used in mass-market canoes when Old Town introduced its Chipewyan 16 in 1972. The Mad River Canoe Company quickly followed with the Royalex Explorer.

Prior to the introduction of Royalex, whitewater canoeing required heavy, noisy aluminum canoes, themselves an improvement over the fragile wood-and-canvas boats of earlier years. Embodying the old advertising slogan, *Better Living Through Chemistry*, Royalex was a gift from the plastics industry, allowing whitewater boats to be made of unprecedented durability and at a reasonable cost, despite the monopoly on production. It will be missed.

ARE YOU SURE YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET

LOST



It started out as an ordinary July camping expedition in the glorious Adirondacks. We were to follow the ever-changing Raquette River, winding through marshes, carrying over falls, and camping at four different sites, each one more blissful than the last. Then the weird weather of 2013 suddenly changed. Fog engulfed master leader Russ Faller and his four intrepid followers. Everything went horribly wrong.

Well, no, it didn't, but it *could* have. Tune in to our next winter issue to learn what happened. We'll share our stories of sea, river and portage navigation that almost went awry.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Just can't wait for the next issue? Until then, there are numerous AMC offerings you can pursue now, so you'll sleep better in the meantime.

[Wilderness First Aid \(Tuxedo, NY\)](#)
[Wilderness First Responder Course](#)
[Wilderness First Aid \(SE Mass.\)](#)
[Map & Compass \(Mohican\)](#)
[Wilderness Canoeing: Expedition Planning, Equipping, & Provisioning](#)

SUBMIT and share your stories of navigation feats or fiascos! Contact the editor at paddlesplashes@amc-ny.org



Bernie Gastrich, left, and Don Getzin tie up Fran and Al Braley on their 55th wedding anniversary, recreating a Tahitian ritual that the Braleys had experienced on a Polynesian cruise. An enthusiastic round of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" was substituted for the traditional Tahitian chant.

Photo by Lenny Grefig.

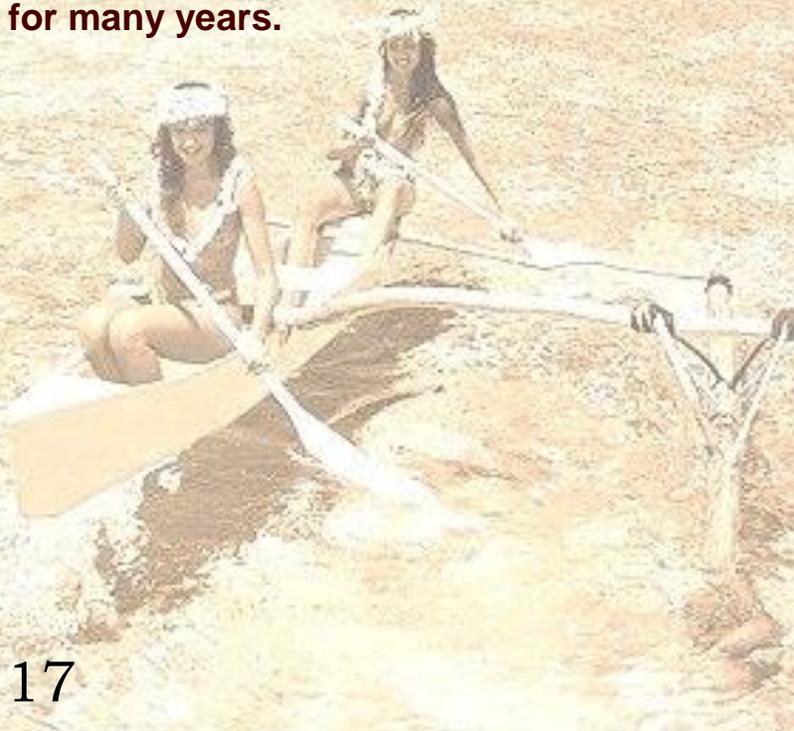
**HAPPY
ANNIVERSARY**

Fran & Al were Co-Chairs of the Canoe Committee in 1984-85. They led hundreds of AMC paddling trips, including the Mullica River trip each February for over 20 years and another Mullica trip each summer for families with small children. They were the editors of *PaddleSplashes* and the authors of the Committee's handbook *The Feathers* and the first Trip Leaders' Manual. They also conducted the Trip Leaders' Training sessions and the Class 2 Canoe instruction for many years.

Al was the NY-NoJ Chapter Chair and then Regional Director for our area. He was the chair of the Interchapter Canoe Committee, now known as the Interchapter Paddling Committee, and the AMC's Outdoor Leadership Committee. He was also the Committee's first webmaster.

Fran was an Appie of the year and the secretary of the Outdoor Leadership Development Committee.

Please wish them a Happy Anniversary.



A Life *Well-Lived*



Bob Husted

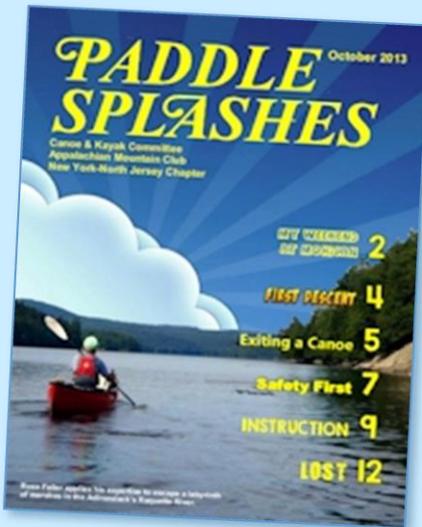
1940-2013

Bob Husted, a resident of New Paltz and a longtime AMC member, passed suddenly from this life on Monday, September 9, 2013. He enjoyed hiking, backpacking, biking and kayaking. "I think that Bob came on almost every Fall Foliage Trip that I led for the past 17 years," said Rich Breton. "He had many good friends among the people who come on this trip each year. He was always cheerful, helpful and friendly, with a warm sense of humor. We will all miss him."

PADDLE SPLASHES

Loretta Brady, Editor

Marty Plante, typesetter/copyboy



PaddleSplashes is published by the Canoe and Kayak Committee of the Appalachian Mountain Club, New York - North Jersey Chapter.

Guidelines for Submissions

Photos are preferred as high resolution color jpeg files attached to email. Please do not crop, compress or resize them. Contact the editor if you need assistance sending large files. Current and prior issues of *PaddleSplashes* are available on the Chapter's website at

<http://www.amcny.org/recreationalactivities/canoe/newsletter>

Send all submissions to:
canoekayak.newsletter [at] amc-ny.org

**SUBMISSION DEADLINE
FOR NEXT ISSUE IS JAN
15, 2014**



AW AMERICAN WHITewater

American Whitewater is the primary advocate for the preservation and protection of whitewater rivers throughout the United States. It represents whitewater paddlers and over 100 local paddling clubs across America, including our chapter of the AMC. By becoming an American Whitewater member, you can support this great organization and take a role in restoring our rivers.

As an American Whitewater Affiliate Club, **AMC paddlers are entitled to a discount on their own memberships.** Getting the discount is a bit like gaining entry to the cool kids' treehouse - you have to know the secret code. To become an AW member using the discount, go to <https://www.americanwhitewater.org/>
> Support AW > Join or Renew. In the form, select \$25.00 - *Affiliate Club Member* in the Membership Level field, then enter *AMC NY-NoJ* in the Affiliate Club field.