



# THE YUKON PADDLER FALL 2003



Sprint Racing  
RCMP Youth Program  
Youth Program  
Paddlers in Chiapas Mexico  
(clash with the Zapatistas)

Film "Last Trapper"  
Whitewater Rodeo  
Molson Rule

- ◆ Thanks to Louis Pelletier for letting us know about the sweet Marsh Lake wave. At the end of September it was a 10/10 play wave.
- ◆ An exciting new river was run by Bob Daffe and Theresa Landman near Haines on the spectacular, scenic lower Kelsal river. At the end of September it was a great Class IV run with lots of water. It had one Class IV+ drop and the rest fun Class IV playing. Like the Klehinni river near Haines there are always logs to watch out for. It was an 8 km run with the last 2 km being mellow. The put in is a long way down a steep hill with lots of devils club. A trail could easily be made with the help of volunteers. The take-out is easy and near the road. In higher water this run may be very challenging.

## *The Put In*

We had another great summer for the Yukon Canoe and Kayak Club. A big thanks to all our volunteers and a SPECIAL THANKYOU to Violet Vanhees for organizing and volunteering for the ever popular drop-in nights at the intake. Vi also kept us informed, entertained and organized through the club e-mail!

A BIG THANKYOU to Vernon Beebe and John Quinsey for running the youth program Monday nights. These kids showed lots of talent at the Whitewater Rodeo, which was so great to see!

Wednesday evenings Eyvi Smith, Leanne Lind and Kevin Daffe ran the RCMP Youth Program. They would get youth from the group homes and teach them to raft, kayak and have fun on the river. It is great to see the self-confidence build up that boating creates for these kids.

Erin Neufeld and Stephen Horton organized regular sprint racing Wednesday nights and some long distance races as well. This continues to be very popular especially for the paddlers training for the Yukon River Quest.

Muguette Laflamme organized kayak water polo this fall. Its \$75.00 for 8 sessions + \$20.00 membership fee. Drop ins are \$10 + \$20.00 membership fee. Be there at 07:45pm Fridays if you want to play. Contact Muguette for more information

## **Boater News**

- ◆ Bob Daffe, Kevin Daffe and Scott Burrell are paddling in Africa this fall. They are going to paddle BIG WATER rivers including the Zambezi river in Zambia and the White Nile in Uganda.

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### THE FILM "THE LAST TRAPPER"



Alison Daffe and her friend Nickey decided to take a raft down the Tatshenshini river when along came a couple of soggy, worn out kayakers who beckoned to be in her raft. Mike Swainson and Rob Robinson had enough of swimming, scraping rocks and sandwiching against cliff walls in their kayaks. Kayaking the Tat from a raft looked much more appealing!



The Film "Last Trapper" is a movie production from France, filmed in the Yukon about a local trapper from Ross River, Norm Winters. They needed a stunt man for Norm, to jump in his canoe to avoid a grizzly and run a waterfall. Bob Daffe became the stunt man to run the Tutshi waterfall. The grizzly in the background decided to go after Bob so he wasted no time in running the falls. Notice Bob not wearing his lifejacket.



RCMP officers Eyvi Smith and Leanne Lind having fun rafting with the kids, in the RCMP Youth Program. One of the things the youth in this program are learning is how to be a raft guide.



Fearless Marc Olashek is ready to rescue Norm Winters, who is canoeing a birch bark canoe down a short section of the Tutshi river. Right in front of him is a big grizzly— a trained one from California .



## **CHIAPAS MEXICO 2003**

### ***PADDLERS HELD CAPTIVE***

### ***BY ZAPATISTAS***

Thirteen of us paddlers are ready for some whitewater action in Chiapas Mexico. Shaun Boughen, Bob Daffe, Andy Hyde, Derrick Law, Al Polk, Andrew Walther (Daddy-O) and myself are from Canada., Antoine and Gregoire Ducouret, Gerome and Sebastien Pernot and Xavier Pocard are from France. Ernesto Lopez is from Mexico and will join us later for the Jatate river.

The Agua Azul is a river in a beautiful jungle setting, full of waterfalls, drops and slides in warm, blue water. The wide and narrow waterfalls are formed by travertine (limestone) formations, which is a very unique and special feature.

We put in at the visitors viewing and everybody is excited to see the kayakers braving the waterfalls. We have lots of fun running many of the falls until one 15-ft drop. There is a tricky entrance to avoid rocks at the top and half way down. Andy and Bob run it no problem. Xavier runs it, flips and can not get his paddle to the surface. It is difficult to roll near the cave, which was formed by the falls. He swims and is thrown a rope that just happens to land in his hands while he is kept under the surface. Sebastien runs it, flips and swims too. His boat and paddle are sucked into the cave, as well as Xavier's favorite carbon paddle. The trick to this rapid is to point left. If you point right at the bottom of the drop you are headed for the cave. Derrick, Antoine, Gregoire and Shaun help to lower Bob down from the top of the drop. Using a rope tied to his rescue belt as safety, and another

rope to lower himself, Bob drops out of sight into the cave. He throws the paddles out and hooks up the boat. They can not pull the boat up as it is full of water. Derrick throws the rope across the drop to Al and he pulls the boat sideways and out to a big eddy. Bob has lost his rope that he used for climbing because the boys let go of it when it got tangled with the rope attached to the boat. He only has the rope attached to his rescue belt left. Thankfully, the guys haul him up safely and all the gear is retrieved.

While scouting a double falls, walking on the shallow travertine, we see a deer get caught in the current. The deer loses control, tumbles and is swept over both 25-ft falls. To our surprise, the deer walks away, apparently unhurt. It is too hard to see if there are rocks at the bottom of the falls. If you run the first one, you are committed to the second. It is getting late. We decide to portage.

The last waterfall of the Agua Azul River plunges 40ft into the Shamulja River. Andy finds a lower 30-ft drop, river left, and is planning his route. It is hard to predict one's landing, especially off such a shallow take-off on sticky limestone rock. Andy decides to jump the waterfall instead of kayaking it. The next day, the French guys want to kayak the same falls. Antoine decides to go first. He lands a little flat and hurts his back, so the rest of the French guys decide to run and jump instead of kayak.

Meanwhile, an Indian woman invites us to check out a view point. We hike up the hill with her. It is a spectacular sight looking upstream to the backdrop of a series of big waterfalls, in the heart of the jungle. Unfortunately, we don't have money with us. Bob gives her some food and promises to be back the next day with money. She returns the food, except for the cookies, because she is

only interested in our money. The next day, Bob pays her and Shaun films him giving her the money. She wants money for that too, but Bob tells her that he has already given her more than the normal amount. He tells her "Poverty is in the soul, not in the pocketbook". As we are getting ready to leave, the woman starts waving her machete, using short strokes, directed towards Shaun. She wants more money. A couple of us decide to stick around and wait till Shaun is ready to leave as the machete-wielding woman is making him nervous. This is our first encounter with unfriendly natives, but not our last.

The Jatate River is a five-day, Class 3- 5 river trip in the jungle of southern Mexico. It has many travertine formations creating many exciting drops. In 1993, a year before the Zapatistas rebellion, Bob and I, with a group of paddlers, paddled the Jatate and had no problems with the Zapatistas. We paid the Zapatistas to help us with our portage and they were very friendly. Some of the Indians toured us through their land, always smiling, showing us what they grew for crops. We paddled right next to them and offered the kids a ride in our kayaks, which they loved.

This year is different. We put in on the Rio Real and join the Jatate a couple of hours later. Some people along the river are telling Bob and Ernesto that villagers down the river will not let us through. We had talked to quite a few people before the trip, including Zapatistas that were blockading a road at the popular tourist place of Rancho Esmeralda. They all assured us that it is OK for tourists to go down the Jatate River, so we continue on.

We reach the village of San Manuel and there is an agitated local on the bank. He runs up the bank and comes back with the whole village to the river. They are aggressively waving machetes and telling us gringos to get out. They grab our paddles and kayaks and threaten to knife the raft. We all have to carry our gear to their village up the hill. One kid painfully pokes a stick in Daddy-O's back. I keep my helmet and gear on, hoping they will not notice that I am the only female in the group. They detain us in a little unused schoolhouse for several hours. They search through all our gear and take our cameras and passports. Unbeknownst to us, one kayaker has a bottle of tequila and a little pot on him. The Zapatistas make a huge issue about the drugs because they claim they are always falsely accused of dealing with drugs. They fined us 200US for the pot and tequila and put the kayaker in their jail. It is a tiny room 1.5 meters by 2.5 meters. They allow him a change of clothing and say they are going to burn the drugs in front of him. The young guys in the village are always staring at us through the windows of the schoolhouse, one is wearing a thumbs up to Osama bin Laden t-shirt. We wait as they radio their headquarters to see if we can continue the river trip. We are denied passage. They think we are videotaping the river so the Mexican government can learn where to place the dams. They tell Ernesto that our stuff looks like military issue –flak jackets and helmets. Immediately after we pay the fine, they free us. They return all our possessions and one kid tries to return the pot to us - so much for the burning of the drugs. We camp there that night and are supposed to catch the first truck in the morning. However, the truck is packed with people so we arrange for a ride later in the day



While waiting, the army drives up the road and Bob stops them. He tells them that we have been detained against our will and have been here a full day. After the army left, the villagers were pretty steamed, they told Bob it was against their laws to talk to the army. Bob replied “How am I suppose to know your laws? The basics of human rights is freedom of speech, the very thing that is written in your school.” The villagers want us to move 3 km down the road as we are now becoming a problem for them. We won’t move because it won’t help us get back to the town of Ocosingo and it will just cost us more money. One of their spokesmen says he could use gas to burn our boats and Bob tells him “The French and Canadian Embassy, your government and the army already know that we are here, so you better think about it.” They don’t like what Bob has to say, but they back off.

A French gringo is present on the villager’s behalf. He refuses to talk to us or even to the French guys in our group. The villagers gather around this gringo for advice and he take notes furiously while looking at us. There are two other Spanish gringos in the village. We think that they are reporters as they are allowed to take pictures. We are warned a couple of times not to take pictures. That afternoon, our emotions of feeling scared are changed to anger as we were still stuck waiting in the village of San Manuel. Our driver arrives later that afternoon so we pack all our gear in the truck and pile on in. After the usual dickering about money with the driver, we leave and the whole village, including the French gringo, laugh at us in mockery.

After the trip, we return to Rancho Esmeralda. It’s a 10-hectare ranch beautifully landscaped with eight guest cabins. They grow macadamia trees, coffee and fruit trees and offer horseback riding trips. The Idaho owners Glen and Ellen were in the American Peace Corps before buying the ranch. Glen has to smuggle us into his own

ranch because the Zapatistas are blockading his road and will not let tourists in. He has the curtains drawn in his bus and we all duck as we approach the gate. The Zapatistas stop the bus and shine flashlights inside. They ask Glen to open the door, which they have never asked before. We are lucky they don’t come into the bus. Weeks later the Zapatistas take over Rancho Esmeralda and Glen and Ellen lose their farm.

In San Christobal, the guys spot the Spanish reporter that was at the village. They run up to him. He is shocked to see them because no one was suppose to know he was there, kind of a reporter incognito. He says that the Zapatistas were checking our tent poles for cocaine and that they thought our Mexican guide Ernesto was a police officer because it said department of police in fine print on his driver’s license. He felt we should go to the police but we know this will not help. After all there is a huge army base right across the road from Rancho Esmeralda and they did nothing to stop the blockade.

The Zapatistas are very paranoid of anyone foreign who might want to develop their land. They are suspicious that we might plant drugs and they would get blamed for it.



The paddling crew with Glen at Rancho Esmeralda

The Zapatistas are against NAFTA and being a part of it didn't help our situation. We are not sure why they changed their attitude towards tourists but they definitely don't like us now. There is a real military presence that was not there in 1993. The army won't touch the Zapatistas because the government fears another rebellion. We question why the gringos that refused to talk to us were in the village. Were they spreading bad propaganda about foreigners and influencing the Indians in a negative way? A new gringo arrived just as we were leaving the village.

The ironic thing about not liking tourists is that you can buy Zapatista dolls and t-shirts. In a restaurant called Frida in the touristy area of Playa de Carmen there is a painting of Marcos, the leader of the Zapatistas, on the wall with black mask and smoking his pipe. There is also a poster saying, " Marcos eats here when he's in town" treating him like a celebrity.

To end the trip we head to Zipolite, on the West Coast for several days of great ocean surfing, partying and relaxation. Everyone is super happy to be there and out of Zapatista territory.



Antoine kayaks the last falls on the Agua Azul and hurts his back

By Theresa Landman



### Molson Rule

Are you a "swim club member"? As in, you have swum once, or twice, or perhaps even more often, in (or out of) your paddling exploits?? I am, and have. Wanna be sure that your rescuers are happy to see you swimming and are fighting to be the ones to save your carcass and gear?? Then implement the "Molson Rule". Or, in honour of our local brew masters, I'll call it the "Yukon Brew Rule".

This is how it works: If you swim, you owe anyone who rescues you or any of your equipment a brew (or in the case of Minors, a soft drink.). Simple!

This GUARANTEES the Fastest Rescues In The West, since every paddler will be battling to get to you and your gear first - rescues suddenly take on a whole new appeal! I figure its cheap payment for making sure I and my pricey gear are all picked up and stuffed back into my boat faster than I can blink.

So next time on the river, "bring adequate supplies" with you... and know that you and all there will be happy any time you choose to be one with the river!

**by Violet Vanhees**



Spiderman Bob Daffe is being lowered into the cave to rescue a boat and two paddles.

# YCKC Whitewater Rodeo 2003



What is Kurt Tyler doing? Throwing his paddle away? Actually he just popped his shoulder out and is putting it back in, so he can keep surfing the great play wave near Marsh Lake dam. Many boaters were out in the unusually warm October, lining up to get on the wave.



The Youth Program for kayaking was very active this summer thanks to Vernon Beebe, John Quinsey and many other volunteers. Here, the kids are about to brave the big waves below the Whitehorse Dam. Spectators were very impressed with their paddling skills, at the Whitehorse Whitewater Rodeo.

Thanks to John Quinsey, Vernon Beebe , Marc Oleshak Andy Hyde , Rob Robinsion and many other volunteers that organized the rodeo this year

### Rodeo Results:

**Open Slalom** 1st Bob Daffe 2nd Scott Burrell  
3rd Theresa Landman

**Junior Slalom** 1st Olivier Roy-Jauvin 2nd Brendan Zrum 3rd Dean Bennet

**Junior Wave Event** 1st Dean Bennet 2nd Brendan Zrum 3rd. Olivier-Roy-Jauvin

**Open Kayak Sprint** 1st Bob Daffe 2nd Brendan Zrum 3rd Theresa Landman

**Junior kayak Sprint** 1st Jason Zrum

**Solo Canoe Event** 1st Violet Vanhees 2nd Steve Hahn  
3rd Vic Menkel

**Tandem Canoe Event** 1st Brendan Zrum and Dean Bennet 2nd Vernon Beebe and Mike Swainson 3rd Theresa Landman and Tracy Rempel

**Team Raft Challenge** 1st Guides 2nd Sweet Six  
3rd Raft Masters 4th River Rockets



Bob Daffe takes first in the kayak slalom and kayak sprint race.

## 2003 YCKC Youth Kayaking Program

For many years the Yukon Canoe and Kayak Club volunteers have provided a venue for youth to kayak. And then, two years ago we had the idea to shift our youth programming from a drop in, summer only chance to explore kayaking to a formal Youth Kayaking program that would allow youth to progressively develop skills in whitewater kayaking. The youth range from 10 to 16 years old and come in all shapes and sizes of both genders. We are now two years old and this past year was fabulous for our fledgling program.

For the majority of the youth this was their second summer on the river and a full winter in the pool. It is amazing to see the skills that they have developed. We started out with low water surfing at the intake which the kids quickly began to put the adults to shame with their boundless energy. Then, when the spin wave (aka the "Butt Hole") and slalom gates were ready we made the mistake of teaching the more adventuresome ones how to side surf and spin. This meant that we had to share the wave and face the fact that in not too distant future they would be better at this than most adults. Three of our more skilled youth, Brendan Zrum, Jennifer Willems and Dean Bennett have even been out shredding the Marsh Lake wave this autumn.

Next year, we are looking forward to moving towards even more skill development with our core group. This means that next summer, we are going to be looking for volunteers to help out with that new wave of beginner youth kayakers.

This winter, we will be in the pool the first Sunday of each month for Youth Try-It for kayaking, from 4:30-6pm. This is a great opportunity for the kids to further develop their skills such as getting or improving their roll, learning their off-side roll, hand rolling, etc. We are always looking for volunteers to come out and give a hand with these sessions.

This year, we applied for and received funding to provide River Rescue and First Aid training to our core volunteers. The River Rescue course took place in July and we are just now organizing the First Aid course for our volunteers who work with us on the river.

And a big thanks to Bob Daffe and Tatshenshini Expediting for providing an excellent evening of Kayak Rescue Skills for the youth, parents and volunteers. We are looking to do more of these kinds of sessions next year.

We want to thank all of our parents and volunteers that came out this year to make this program work because it just would not fly without that support! Whether the help came from on shore with the rescue rope, shuttling, and/or paddling with us on the river or help with any of the many other tasks that make this a great program, there is always a need for all of you!

These fabulous supporters include:

Mary-Jane Oliver, Kathy and Mark Zrum, Mark Oleshak, Rob Robinson, Barbara and Murray Scheck, Mugette La Flamme, Shannon Willems, Clements and Renaud Roy-Jauvin, Alastair Smith and Tracy Rempel

Thank you all and see you at the pool this winter!

Vernon Beebe and John Quinsey