



THE EDDY LINE

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Looking Back at the Nantahala and the NOC

by Fred Couch

My whitewater experiences began in a canoe on some Class One streams in northeast Alabama, with several married, (14 years) younger couples while I was still single. We gradually tried harder stuff and I tried kayaking, but had no roll ability, or knew anyone who could teach me. I was unaware of any clubs, or organizations that taught about paddling nor gear needed other than a paddle, helmet, nose squeezer and life-jacket. That was when Saturday Night Live began, to give you a time period. Bill, the 'ringleader' of this group (mostly graduate ATO's from a nearby college) had heard of a challenging waterway in North Carolina he thought we men should all try before we took the women. He started cutting up a plastic shower curtain, using it to patch an old raft six of them were to float down in.

It was the Nantahala in NOC's second year of outdoor operation. We found the put-in on a spit of land below a dam, dropped the raft, kayak, paddles etc., then two of us drove the vehicles to the bottom and thumbed back up to the top. With no knowledge other than what I saw from the road, we embarked on towards Patton's Run, which was a cold wake-up call to us, making us wonder what we might further experience. It got a bit easier after those monster rocks. We got through, but found out it was damn cold and real challenging.

I skirted just about anything all day that looked ominous - which made me miss a lot of fun. When I got to where the Quarry Rapid was, then made that second turn and big drop, I looked upstream proud of what I did, with a huge Cheshire Grin at my raft buds, and suddenly the whole sky turned dark brown. It took me a few seconds more to realize that in dragging my paddle the river had flipped me, and I was UPSIDE DOWN. So I pulled my skirt to get out, floating/bobbing all the way down that long chute to the gravel bar at the end, not then knowing to keep my feet downstream. Everybody else got a good laugh - I sure was glad it was a sunny summer day.

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On we go - Bill, in the back of the raft, had five guys in with him paddling. Actually, the guy in front (Jim) had never been in a raft, or on a paddling trip, so those guys kind of 'fibbed to him' telling him he was the steerer at the very front. The whole way down he was continually poking that paddle out straight, thinking he was totally in charge while they put it into and over many waves. When we got to the big last rapid we noticed people were pulling their canoes, rafts, and kayaks onto the right side shore, walking downstream and looking at what was ahead. When I saw it (Lesser Wesser) I was totally afraid to try it, and did not.

The guys were thrilled and got going past what I later learned was Billboard Rock. When they hit the first big standing wave, it ejected 3 of them like being shot out of a cannon. Jim was oblivious, concentrating on his front steering. The second standing wave ejected 2 more, making that group look like Keystone Kops swimming in all directions, leaving just Jim in the raft. He went through the whole scene without a hitch, then turned around to proudly smile at a totally empty raft behind him, his skin instantly turning ivory white in shock. How I wish I had a picture on film of how he looked. Somehow he got it over to the shore but quite a ways downstream, as he suddenly realized he had no clue of how to steer. We all caught up with him, loading everything into the two cars, and went to look for a campsite.

Every place we tried was full, then someone told us about Old Mine up near a road top. It, too was full, but we were all wet, and obviously dragging, it was getting close to dark, so the lady owner took pity on us, letting us camp in her front yard. One of our men was a college history professor and a metal table she let us use had a map of the USA on it. After showers, dry clothes and some food, he started a beer game for people guessing state capitols. I had other ideas as I wanted to run that rapid and safely. So, in the dark, with no flashlight I started going to other campsites, seeking someone who could help me. After what seemed like 50 campsites, I came to what I learned was the overflow site for large groups. I saw something immediately that I had never seen - kayak trailers - wow! This in my mind just had to be the folks who could help me. Walking up to their roaring fire ringed with people, I introduced myself, talked a little about paddling and their obvious knowledge, then asked the question, "How do I safely run Lesser Wesser in a kayak?" You would have thought by their warmth, demeanor, genuine hospitality and serious replies, that they had known me for years. The basic answer was to skirt the first waves, then go straight over the large last standing wave and drag my paddle in a calm place just past it - which they told me was called an 'Eddy.' They said it will be so quick that I need to be ready to brace from being flipped on over... then calm down and paddle out into the current lightly dragging my left side paddle which would put me in the main current and on downstream on what they called a 'Line.'

The next day, I ran the river again, practicing in the Eddies I was brave enough to try, and becoming more proficient in water reading. Running the last big rapids, the turn into Truck Stop (I later learned that Eddy is named) was lightning fast, much more than I expected, but, it worked. Who were the people sitting on either side of me at that campfire - the Editor of Canoe and Kayak magazine, and a top officer in ACA.

We took the women several times after that, wrapping canoes on Patton's rocks and having some epic swims and other fun trips. My prowess led me to even more challenges the couples decided not to follow. After an almost disaster, life-ending bad run at Chattooga Bull Sluice, I quit kayaking. I had been one of the first to canoe the Ocoee - a river guide did his best to talk me out of it! I did not learn to roll a kayak for
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over 10 years, when I was normally running Class 4s and 5s. Over the years I took the first Rescue Course NOC taught, and a variety of advanced canoe courses, eventually becoming an instructor in my area of beginner canoe and kayak for 25 years.

For those of you reading this who are instructors, let me share my egg challenge that helped us (buds of mine would often help) learn who had learned best / who needed more instruction. Prior to the students arriving, we put hard boiled eggs in the rushes downstream, in protruding roots, rocks and on the banks, which someone could reach without getting out of their canoe or kayak. It would normally take about 3-4 hours to teach the (average class of 30) students forward, reverse, sweep, eddy, ferry in the Class one stream area (about 100' x 50' pool). Then, after lunch, graduation consisted of a 15 foot slide which dropped 6 feet and had a strong left Eddy and a half mile of eggs to pick up.

To a beginner that slide sounded like Niagara Falls. From the Eddy, a 76-foot ferry that raised you 2 feet by the end was possible. Only two girls in one canoe ever made the whole distance - years later one became a CNN reporter. The folks who came to us after that half mile with the fewest eggs needed more work. We also taught how to negotiate strainers, rescue rope throw, and how to float if you were out of your boat. My last on-water class was November 1995 teaching a Rescue Squad whitewater rescue techniques on an 18 degree day. Since then I've taught 100's of kids on Earth Day in two counties how to paddle (a land exposure exercise) and throw rescue ropes. I'm proud to say that none of my students has ever had an accident. - EL

Chattooga River Clean Up

The GCA Chattooga River Cleanup will be held Saturday, June 24, 2023. We will meet at 9:45 a.m. at the US Forest Service Chattooga River parking lot at the northeast corner of the US Hwy. 76 Chattooga River bridge. We will clean the access area there and at Thrift's Ferry Landing on foot. We will then clean by boat the 3 miles of GCA's adopted section of the Chattooga, from Thrift's Ferry down to the Hwy. 76 bridge. If we have enough volunteers we will also clean from the Blue Tag Trail to Thrift's Ferry and perhaps other sections of this beautiful Wild and Scenic River along the Georgia and South Carolina state line between Hwy. 28 and Lake Tugaloo. Volunteers who will not be boating may help by cleaning at the access areas in the morning. The afternoon will be spent on the water, and volunteers must provide their own river craft and equipment, though they may call ahead to reserve possible spaces in rafts or canoes provided by others.

These river sections contain class II and easy class III whitewater and one class IV rapid, Bull Sluice, which can easily be portaged. Prior whitewater experience is necessary if you plan to boat the river. There may be an optional additional 2 mile class III recreational paddle from Hwy. 76 to Woodall Shoals following the cleanup and complementary liquid refreshments and dinner together nearby that evening. Paddlers in kayaks, open and decked Canadian canoes, or rafts are all very welcome. This event is co-sponsored by American Rivers, which supplies our trash bags, and is open to all qualified persons with permission of the Trip Coordinator.

Prior registration is strongly requested, but unexpected arrivals will also be welcome, including qualified paddlers and land cleaners who are not GCA members who obtain prior approval. Call, text or email trip coordinator Roger Nott, 678-316-4935, rogernott@att.net.—EL

Who Are These People?

A Series of Interviews with GCA Officers, Board Members, Volunteers and Other Notables

Did you ever wish you knew a little more about the people who have given their time and effort to make our club what it is today? Hopefully this series of articles will give you some insights as to who these people really are and why they are so generous with their time.

Interview with Diane Windham, Vice President

Eddy Line: How did you become interested in boating?

Diane: I have pretty much been boating all my life. I was raised in Western Pennsylvania in an area with numerous rivers, creeks, and streams as a result of glacial carving from the Ice Age. During the summer, my mother would send me out the back door and lock the screen until dark. I, along with all neighborhood kids, would spend the day by the creek wading, swimming, exploring the flora and fauna, and building forts. I feel my love of streams developed during those summer days. Although my family was more interested in boats with motors, every summer at church camp canoeing was an integral part of the program. The silence and solitude of handling a craft solo really hooked me.

Eddy Line: How long have you been a GCA member?

Diane: I became a GCA member during the summer of 2020 for obvious reasons. After being on lock down it was a great way to get outdoors on the water while social distancing with a community of fellow paddlers.

Eddy Line: How did you hear about the club?

Diane: I have been a recreational paddler most of my adult life. I received a teacher scholarship to participate in Paddle Georgia in 2010. As everyone in the club is aware, GCA provides the safety boats for that event. I'll never forget while our group was enjoying the hospitality of a local resident on the river, a loud knock on the door accompanied by an intimidating voice to "get on down the river" was made by the sweep boater, aka Vincent Payne. As a rules follower, I quickly got back in my boat. I appreciated the emphasis GCA placed on safety during that event.

Eddy Line: Why did you join GCA?

Diane: Whitewater paddling was a whole new game for me. GCA provides paddling opportunities for beginner paddlers, instruction, and a safety net to learn new skills. It was a really good fit for me. As a result I have feel that I have a community of paddlers that have become life long friends.

Eddy Line: What positions have you held, elected or appointed, in the club and which was your favorite?

Diane: Currently, I am the Vice President. It is my first office with the club, which feels a little overwhelm-
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(Who Are These People?, continued from page 4)

ing at times given it typically means stepping into the big shoes. I hold an office for my local greenway commission, serve on the board of two non-profits concerned with water quality issues, chair our local water trail effort, and serve on the steering committee for my local Rivers Alive effort, therefore leadership positions on boards are not foreign to me.

Eddy Line: What other positions in the club would you aspire to serve in?

Diane: River Protection

Eddy Line: What type of water craft do you / have you operated in your boating career?

Diane: As with most folks in the club I have a fleet of boats that I use for a variety of paddling experiences. I have a Dagger Alchemy for sea kayaking, a LL Stinger cross-over for overnight trips, a LL Remix and a Piranha Macho for whitewater, a SUP board for lake paddling, a Mohawk Solo for river clean-ups, and a 6-man raft for family outings.

Eddy Line: What has been your favorite boat and why?

Diane: Not sure I really have a preference; it's more about matching the boat to paddling experience acknowledging my current skill level. I love all kinds of rivers and varieties of challenges they present. More importantly, I have a bucket list of rivers that I'm in the process of checking off. If the river is above my skill level, I'll hop on a ducky or a raft.

Eddy Line: Who has been a major influence or mentor in your boating career and why?

Diane: My son has been my major influence. As a family we have always engaged in water activities. However when my son was in college he took it to a whole new level getting hooked on whitewater paddling. I would go watch him race the Green River Narrows, an extremely nerve wracking experience for a parent. During this time he was a team member for a boat manufacturer, which enabled me to acquire my first whitewater boat. As he continues to work in the outdoor industry, his contacts and knowledge of the sport have been extremely valuable to my continued paddling.

Eddy Line: What is your favorite boating destination?

Diane: Wherever I am at the time.

Eddy Line: What's the most unique place you've boated?

Diane: Probably the Apostle Islands on Lake Superior. I was with a group of friends on a guided trip island hopping and wilderness camping. The scenery was so unique and we hardly saw a soul outside our small group on the entire trip. I was surprised at the energy of the waves generated by the immense size of the lake. It was my first experience with sea caves and surfing into shore on six- foot waves was unforgettable.

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Eddy Line: What's the coolest thing you've ever seen on the water?

Diane: I was paddling over to Cumberland Island and saw a pod of dolphins circle up to capture shrimp for dinner. It was amazing to see them work together as a group.

Eddy Line: What's the most unexpected thing you've ever seen on the water?

Diane: A mink on the Main Salmon. It's the only time in my life I have seen one.

Eddy Line: What's your favorite underrated boating location (that you don't mind sharing)?

Diane: The Big Bend area of Florida. The rivers are intimate and in the spring it has flora and fauna unrivaled by any rivers I have ever paddled on. An added bonus is the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, which is well worth exploring.

Eddy Line: What / where would be your dream trip(s) of a lifetime?

Diane: I'm going to the Grand Canyon this summer on a classic guided raft trip. Two weeks on the river sleeping under the stars is my dream trip. I am certain it will live up to my expectations.

Eddy Line: What do you do when you aren't boating or doing volunteer work for the club? (Career, job, other hobbies & activities, etc.)

Diane: I am a retired educator. True to my calling I believe that learning is a life long experience. I am currently working on a Native Plant Certification at the State Botanical Gardens and frequently attend conferences to increase my knowledge of water quality issues. I participate in citizen science groups such as Frog Watch, Adopt-a-Stream, pollinator and bird counts to provide data to scientists in the field. I also volunteer providing instruction to school groups at the botanical garden as well as our local nature center.

Eddy Line: Can you share some photos) of yourself on the water and/or photos of a cool / interesting / fun / unique scene from a place you've boated? (see page 7)

Eddy Line: Thank you so much for participating in this project! Your time and efforts are very much appreciated by the members.

Photos of Diane Windham, GCA Vice-President

Upper Hooch



Main Salmon (also paddled in a kayak)



Entrance to sea cave - Apostle Islands, Wisconsin

Keeping In Touch

To contact the GCA, write Georgia Canoeing Association, Inc., P.O. Box 611, Winston, GA 30187.

Groupmail: GCA maintains a group email list to help members share information of general interest. To signup, send an e-mail to gcalist-subscribe@groups.io.

Website: Information about GCA, forms (including membership application and GCA waiver form), a link to the GCA Store and links to *Eddy Line* advertisers are all at <http://www.gapaddle.com>.

Facebook: Visit the GCA Facebook page for photos, video, trip reports, or to join an upcoming impromptu trip.

TRIP AND EVENT SCHEDULE

- June 6: Skills and Conditioning for Overnight Paddling Trips—Session #2—Charles Geis -cagott5@gmail.com
- June 10: Chattooga section 3.5—William Powell, wcp70@hotmail.com
- June 13: Skills and Conditioning for Overnight Paddling Trips—Session #3—Charles Geis—cagott5@gmail.com
- June 24: Chattooga River Clean-up—Roger Nott—678-316- 4935, rogernott@att.net
- July 1: Hiwassee River, Powerhouse to Reliance—Carol Proctor, crproctor11@gmail.com or 404.597.2128
- July 2: Hiwassee River, Powerhouse to Reliance—Carol Proctor, crproctor11@gmail.com or 404.597.2128
- July 15: Tuckasegee River—Marvine Cole, marvinequilts@hotmail.com

Please see the GCA Calendar for details, updates, and to sign up at www.gapaddle.com. For any questions or class suggestions, e-mail eddylineeditor@gmail.com.

Thinking of joining a paddling trip?

When deciding to join a GCA trip, whether an “official” trip posted on the website, or a pop-up trip posted on the Facebook page, please keep the following bit of river etiquette in mind: **Always** check with the trip coordinator before inviting a guest to come along on the trip with you, especially if your guest is an inexperienced paddler. This is to insure the skill level of your guest matches the targeted skill level of the group. Many pop-up trips will not have safety boaters, and it’s considered rude to expect the other paddlers in the group to be responsible for an unexpected paddler. Please don’t put the trip coordinator in the uncomfortable position of having to turn someone away because their experience level doesn’t match that of the group.

To volunteer to coordinate trips email Allyson Davis at lessthaneggplant@gmail.com.

As usual, we need trip coordinators for all types of trips, from flatwater to Class 5 white-water. Our excellent trip schedule depends on the efforts of volunteers, so get involved and sign up to coordinate a trip on your favorite river today! The GCA needs YOU!

KEY TO GCA SKILL LEVELS

Flat Water - no current will be encountered; safe for new paddlers.

Beginner - mild current, occasional Class 1 riffles; new paddlers can learn basic river techniques.

Trained Beginner - moving water with Class 1-2 rapids; basic strokes and bracing skills needed.

Intermediate - rapids up to Class 3; eddying and ferrying skills needed; kayakers need solid roll.

Advanced - rapids up to Class 4; excellent boat control and self-rescue skills required.

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GCA welcomes paddlers from all races, genders, and sexual orientations. We will continue to strive to promote diversity among the paddling community and work to create a safe space for all to enjoy our paddling adventures.



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GEORGIA CANOEING ASSOCIATION, INC.

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[WE'RE ON THE WEB:]
www.gapaddle.com

The purpose of the GCA is to have fun and promote safety while paddling.

GCA is a member-operated paddling club with over 500 family and corporate memberships comprising more than 1500 Individuals. Canoeists and Kayakers of all ages and paddling abilities are equally welcome. Some of our mutual interests include whitewater river running, creeking and playboating, river and lake touring, sea kayaking, paddle camp outs and competition and racing activities. We espouse conservation, environmental and river access issues as well as boating safety and skills development. Group paddling, training and social activities of all kinds are conducted throughout the year thanks to the volunteer efforts of our many members and friends. Membership is NOT limited to Georgia residents.