



Appalachian Footnotes

**Delaware Valley Chapter • Appalachian Mountain Club
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Learning opportunity

Leadership Workshop: March 29-30 at French Creek State Park

Step up and lead outdoor activities or boost your leadership confidence and skills at the Delaware Valley Chapter Leadership Workshop, March 29-30.

This session will take place at French Creek State Park, in Pennsylvania, accessible by route 422, route 100 and the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

Everyone is welcome to attend: new leaders, new members, experienced leaders, members who want to lead AMC activities or just want to learn what leadership is all about.

Training utilizes an experiential model where you get outdoors and participate in mock scenarios. Not only is this method a more effective approach to learning—it's also fun!

During the training you will have ample opportunities to network with current leaders through camaraderie and informative programs. You will instantly feel part of our DV family.

Topics covered are the elements of outdoor leadership common to all AMC outdoor activities:

- Activity planning
- Leading safe and enjoyable activities
- Leadership Approaches
- Risk Prevention
- Liability issues
- Accident scene management
- Immersion in numerous role play scenarios
- Conservation and minimum impact issues
- AMC leadership requirements and guidelines
- Basic First Aid for outdoor leaders (Not a WFA course)
- Instructors: Experienced AMC volunteers

The cost for the course is \$35 for AMC members, \$50 for non-members, \$20 for AMC members who have completed one co-lead by March 20, 2025.

If you'd like to stay overnight at the park, please mention at registration for more details.

If you are not an AMC member but are interested in becoming one, go to our website, amcdv.org and select the join

button on the home page or go to the ☰ menu on a mobile device and select **join** from the drop down.

To register, contact Jeff Fritzinger, jfritzamcdv@gmail.com for additional information and registration. This popular training fills up fast. Please register soon to ensure your spot.



Joe Nanfara was one the nine riders to complete the 2024 Bicycling Challenge. —Terry Berntsen photo

Nine riders complete the 2024 multi-state bicycling challenge

Congratulations to those who successfully completed our Chapter's 2024 Bicycling Challenge which was offered to our members. It was our first program and was met with interest and participation.

It involved biking a total of six rides led by AMC. Two of the rides had to be in Pennsylvania and two in New Jersey with the option of a ride in Delaware as a substitute for rides in either state. The fun part was to bike a totally new ride to encourage exploration and expand our outdoor adventures.

This year's recipients in alphabetical order are Terry Berntsen, Roger Brown, Tammy Brown, Bob Hileman, Marty Keck, Peni MacMeekin, Gale Maleskey, Joe Nanfara and Susan Weida.

Keep your eyes peeled for the details of Delaware Valley's AMC 2025 Bike Challenge to be announced in February.

Appalachian Footnotes

news from the
Delaware Valley Chapter
Appalachian Mountain Club
published using recycled electrons.

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Footnotes: a new editor next issue

Beginning with the spring issue, *Footnotes* will have a new editor: Joanie Schultz. She is an excellent writer with newspaper experience, and has an editor's eye for detail.

Please support her by sending articles of general interest and quality photos with descriptions of who is in the picture, where and when it was taken and the name of the photographer.

Email stories and photos to newsletter@amcdv.org no later than the first of March for the spring issue. I will stay on as an advisor and helper to Joanie. Email sent to the above address goes to both of us. — Eric Pavlak

Cover photo: Bob Krisak took this photo of Eric Pavlak running High Falls on the Neversink River, New York, April 1, 1994



Appie of the year Dave Hoke

Dave has been a leader for only a few years, but he has already led more hikes than many of us have led in decades! He is always offering something new, leading in a variety of places and on different days of the week and at different times of day. He does this thoughtfully, as a way to reach everyone who would like to hike, whether they are working or retired, an early riser or a night owl. This has allowed a large number of people to enjoy the great outdoors and to be introduced to the AMC. Hikers describe Dave as a well-prepared leader who is welcoming and innovative. He has been a very valuable, and highly valued, member of our leader community.

Golden Appies of the year Tammy & Roger Brown

Tammy and Roger have led numerous local activities as well as activities on out-of-state Chapter trips. Tammy has served on the Executive Committee, helped with Outdoor Leader Training, and assisted leaders in learning to post activities in the Activities Database when it was new. Although Roger has not been volunteering for the AMC for as long as Tammy, he has been by her side for many years, first volunteering in an unofficial capacity and then as an official leader. They have both also served as mentors for leaders-in-training. As volunteers, they are conscientious, responsible, organized, and kind. During a difficult situation on a hike they led in the White Mountains during the Chapter's 2023 trip, they remained patient, with smart decisions and actions that were well thought out and that resulted in a safe hike finish for all participants. Those of us who know Tammy and Roger appreciate the warmth and generosity of spirit they bring to all of the Chapter events they lead or attend.



Paul Schulke earns 2024 Trailworker of the Year Award

Paul Schulke is the Trailworker of the Year for 2024. Paul has been a consistent volunteer for more than three years for our chapter.

He first started in April, 2021, with the New Jersey Highlands Trail Crew. He fell in love with trail work that day and showed up the next month with the Pennsylvania Highlands Trail Stewards as we finished our trail at Ringing Rocks County Park. A month later, as we started building the new trail at Nockamixon State Park, he was a consistent volunteer on that trail over the next three years until we finished it. It opened in June, 2024.

He has recently continued his work with the Pennsylvania Highlands Trail Stewards on our new trail in Bridgeton Township. In addition, he has also joined our Appalachian Trail crew on occasion.

Since I also work with the New York New Jersey Trail Conference as a Trail Supervisor, Paul Schulke has been a wonderful addition for me. I had two trail maintainers in Jenny Jump State Park, New Jersey, that were not pulling their weight. Paul volunteered not just for one trail, as is normally the case, but for both of them to replace the slackers!

I told Paul that I needed to inform them before he could officially register as the Maintainer of Record with the Trail Conference, which we eventually did. In the meantime, Paul took it upon himself to go to Jenny Jump not only to do maintenance but also make improvements on those trails even before he was official! He lives in South Jersey and is willing

Greg Berne photo



to take the long drives to volunteer. That is dedication. Few in our chapter may recognize him, even though he does occasional hikes with the club, but his trail work attendance is very consistent. I do hope more people get to meet this dedicated volunteer, who is also a nice guy.

— Greg Bernet, Trails Chair

A Banner Year: new trail, new privy, new award



AMC-DV volunteers for our various trail crews put in a total of more than 1,500 hours of work on the trail in 2024, more than ever before! In addition, three major developments occurred this year.

First, the Highlands Trail connector trail in Nockamixon State Park which we had been working on for more than three years finally opened! An opening ceremony which included breakfast, speeches and a ribbon cutting was held on June 1, National Trails Day. It was attended by representatives of the Pennsylvania state government, state park officials, AMC representatives and others. Trails Chair Greg Bernet and Conservation Chair Adrian Noble both led hikes on the new trail that day.

Also in June, our work was completed on the new privy (outhouse) on the Appalachian Trail (AT) near the Kirkridge Shelter. We had worked on framing the structure off-site over the winter, then worked on the on-site construction and painting starting in May. We also demolished the old privy and installed a heavy duty bear box for the shelter.

In October 2024, the DV Chapter was selected by the Keystone Trails Association as the Club of the Year for 2024!

In November, a formal recognition ceremony was held for the 50th Anniversary of the Leroy Smith shelter on the Appalachian Trail which was built by chapter volunteers. An inscribed plaque commemorating the event was installed in the shelter.

It has been a banner year for trails. Our work will continue in 2025 and we hope that we will see some new volunteers, maybe you. We welcome anyone who wants to help us.

Be or nominate a Magnificent Member of the Quarter

By Peni MacMeekin, Chapter Vice Chair

If you participated in an AMC activity and thought, "Wow, that leader is awesome because..." or "wow, that member went above and beyond because..." now you can do something to acknowledge that special service.

You will love the Magnificent Member of the Quarter program being rolled out by the AMC Delaware Valley Chapter. The new program recognizes folks that impress you, for whatever reason.

Under this program, any AMC member may nominate a Delaware Valley Chapter member for ongoing excellence as a leader or above-and-beyond behavior as a member at an AMC event or gathering. If you see something good, say something!

Submitting your nomination is easy. Just follow the guidelines here and on the chapter website. If your nominee is chosen—and there can be more than one recipient per quarter—she or he will receive a gift card as our thank you for modeling AMC values.

A Magnificent Member is an AMC-DV member who demonstrates ongoing excellence as a leader or above-and-beyond behavior as a member at an AMC event or gathering.

Award recipients will be recognized on chapter social media and our newsletter, and will receive a retail gift card.

Guidelines for the program include:

- Nominator must be an AMC member, but does not have to be a DV Chapter member.
- Nominee must be an active, current AMC-DV member.
- Nominee cannot have been a Magnificent Member recipient within the past 12 months.
- Magnificent Member nominees and recipients can also be eligible for annual chapter-wide awards, such as Appie or Golden Appie.
- Nominations will be vetted by the Executive Committee.
- Executive Committee members cannot be nominated while they serve.
- Nominations deadlines are March 1, June 1, September 1 and December 1.

To nominate a Magnificent Member, submit an email to **both** vicechair@amcdv.org and secretary@amcdv.org and include the following information:

1. Name and email address of nominator.
2. Name and email address of nominee.
3. Date and location of activity or event where behavior occurred.
4. At least three sentences that describe the award winning behavior, including where and when.

► Checklist for winter activities

Clothing

Dress in non-cotton layers: When climbing, you are going to become a lot warmer than you might imagine, but you might also become chilled at that nice, but windy overlook. Be ready to take off and put back on as needed. Cotton is dangerous in winter, so leave the jeans at home!

Socks: An insulated sock with liner sock works well. Merino wool medium or heavy weight are good. Your toes should not feel constricted in your boots

Boots: Insulated and waterproof winter boots, of which there are many new lightweight models on the market. Be sure to size big enough for good circulation. Take socks you'll wear along when fitting. Uninsulated fabric hiking boots can result in cold wet feet if the trail is snowy, muddy or soggy wet.

Long synthetic underwear, light or medium weight. Wear tops in moderate weather, tops and bottoms in colder weather, or windy conditions.

Light or medium weight fleece or other synthetic over shirt

Synthetic mountaineering or hiking pants

Gaiters for additional warmth, to protect pants from crampons, and to keep snow out when snowshoeing or skiing on deep snow or unbroken trail

Hat: Synthetic or wool hat. Your outer shell jacket should have a hood for wind protection.

Shell jacket for cold and wind protection, such as soft shell or other synthetic outer wind layer.

Wool or polar fleece mittens: It is wise to have a variety of mittens, gloves and head gear for different conditions. Consider the addition of lightweight glove liners.

Carry in your pack: More insulating clothing, such as synthetic

or down sweater, vest or jacket. Rain gear, both a parka and pants that can be put on over boots. **Extra** mittens, gloves and hats.

Food & Beverage

Bring a minimum of one to two liters of liquid per person per day in water bottles insulated with socks or in your parka. Hydration systems can freeze, and are not recommended.

Lightweight thermos (recommended but not necessary) for hot Jello, hot chocolate or other beverage.

Food items high in carbohydrates that can be eaten while moving such as trail mix, energy gels, granola bars, small candy bars.

Equipment

Pack of sufficient size to carry all your gear. Use a pack cover or liner for wet conditions, or a trash bag inside your pack.

If **snowshoes** may be needed, shorter models work for most non-overnight trips. Bottom claws are absolutely necessary for steep ascents and descents

Microspikes or similar product for moderately icy conditions, **crampons** for steep ice.

Hiking poles for additional stability and points of contact.

Head lamp or flashlight, a personal first aid kit, lighter or matches, medications, sunglasses, sunscreen, etc.

For cold emergencies, consider a light bivy sack, light sleeping bag, thin foam pad and parka as part of your group gear.



52 years ago, Leroy Smith and friends built this shelter

The morning of November 24 was cool and overcast, still a group was forming in State Game lands parking area #168 at the Katellen Trail head. Vice Chair Peni Mac-Meekin noted the area had been spared the big snow storm that dumped a foot or more of snow just east of this spot below the AT. The group was forming to hike up the steep rocky Katellen trail to the Leroy Smith shelter on the AT.

The shelter was completed and dedicated on November 26, 1972. This group was headed to the shelter along with another group hiking in from the AT Wind Gap trail head, led by veteran DV leader Curtis Moeckel to commemorate that dedication event. Among the 20 attendees were members of the Executive Committee and members from the Mid-Atlantic Regional Partnership, an AT support organization. Also esteemed DV members Bill and Lennie Steinmetz who were just recognized at the Annual Meeting for their 50 year membership and contributions to AMC, our chapter and the Lehigh Valley Group, plus DV 2024 Trailworker of the Year Paul Schulke.

There were many good people there, yet they were all in awe of the special guest Bob Pritchett, who, at 86 was the only surviving member of the group that built the Leroy Smith shelter beginning in September 1971. Bob is still strong enough to hike up the Katellen trail at a leisurely pace, which gave us time to ask him questions about the building of the shelter and to tell us stories of the incredible outdoor activities he and other members of the club once participated in with youthful exuberance. He told how he skied down the Katellen trail, managing the steep slope, curves and trees that came rapidly toward him.

Once we all arrived at the shelter, Bob Pritchett entertained the group with stories of the people who built the shelter, especially Leroy Smith and his strong Dutch accent. He used his engineering skills to design the shelter, along with his ability to get construction materials for little or no cost from vendors.

Much of the material was used, and was re-purposed by Leroy Smith in the true spirit of conservation. The work crews consisted of very strong individuals who hauled up the trail 14 foot long timbers and 80 pound bags of cement. A very detailed and emotional story of the building of the shelter can be found in the Summer 2017 Appalachian Footnotes.

Bob amazed the commemorative group as he spoke of the construction challenges of the shelter such as the hardness of the wood that made it extremely difficult to drive nails into it, and Leroy's unique design of the angled corner support blocks that were all hand-cut on site. As the group dined on snacks and soda, Bob pointed out a narrow trail leading into the brush away from the shelter. He explained this was the trail for the pit toilet that served the shelter's hikers before the current privy was built.

Over the years Bob and others would have to come up and clean out and re-dig the hole. This was done in the hard frozen ground in the winter, because doing such work in the warm humid summer was a chore to be avoided.

After Bob spoke, the DV Trails Chair Greg Bernet unveiled a plaque to be mounted on the shelter with language commemorating the spirit and dedication of those who built the shelter. The group then toasted the shelter and the builders with champagne as was done 52 years ago when the builders completed the shelter.

Being well-fed and full of wonderful tales, the group headed back down the trail, walking in the footsteps of those dedicated early Delaware Valley Chapter members who built a solid resting place for AT trekkers.

— George Cagle and Greg Bernet



Left and middle: Trails Chair Greg Bernet, Bob Pritchett sole surviving member of the original team that built the shelter.



Jim Catozzi fondly remembered; memorial dedicated

By Terry Berntsen

Too often we underestimate the power of a simple act of kindness, a thoughtful gesture or perhaps even the dedication of a volunteer. It's interesting how someone can plant a seed and the awesome possibilities that can flourish.

I was new to the AMC; I joined to get reduced lodging at the White Mountain huts. Back then *Footnotes* was a printed newsletter that listed all the chapter trips. There were no online listings.

After a while, I went on a hike. It was on the Paulinskill Rail Trail, many years ago. I met Bob Savron on that hike and learned of a campout on the Appalachian Trail in Connecticut he was co-leading. I had heard about the AT and did hike some of it in New Jersey, but had no idea of the vastness it would deliver, both physically and emotionally.

It was in September of 2002, the first time I met Jim Catozzi. It was a weekend trip and Jim prepared huge, delicious breakfasts and dinners. He took out his black cast iron Dutch oven and made a cake for dessert. He showed me how he put stones under the cake pan so the heat would surround the pan. He took great pride in preparing the camp meals.

The group talked about hiking additional AT sections and the thought of ever completing all those miles was improbable and captivating at the same time. Jim emailed me his Excel spreadsheet of all the AT sections.

It was then that I caved and began an amazing 10-year adventure. A remarkable journey hiking through 13 states, meeting so many new and different people, seeing and learning so much about our country. Backpacking and experiencing the bond you develop with your group: the blisters, rainy days, mosquito bites and the unbelievable ecstasy of the first shower after a long backpack; all because that seed had been planted.

Jim led many campouts in Connecticut, Virginia, North and South Carolina, Tennessee and Georgia. He was the driving force to get the sections done. He planned all the logistics for the trips, meals, lodging (campgrounds), sections, trail head locations, car shuttles and we never had a bad camp meal. A tremendous job well done!



Jim Catozzi and fellow camper cut a cake he made for her birthday as Bob Savron watches and waits for a slice. This was on a Memorial Day weekend hiking trip in 2005 in Virginia.

Catozzi family members from as far away as Texas gathered at the Mohican Outdoor Center during Fall Fest on September 28 for the dedication a memorial bench in honor of Jim.

He was not only a popular hike leader and cook, he also served as chapter chair in 2009.





Mountains & Sea

AMC's August Camp 2025

Olympic National Park

Enjoy both snow-capped mountains and ocean at magnificent Olympic National Park. Hike, bike, paddle and more, visiting many stunning waterfalls and scenic vistas on dozens of activities for all ability levels led by trained AMC volunteers.

This million-acre park protects a vast wilderness, thousands of years of human history and several distinctly different ecosystems. These include glacier-capped mountains, old-growth temperate rain forests and more than 70 miles of wild coastline.

Camp just outside the park near Port Townsend, WA. Arrive and enjoy the activities and camaraderie. Everything's provided: tents, and cots. Hearty, delicious meals including trail lunches prepared by our staff. We provide local transportation and a free shuttle from and to Seattle-Tacoma International Airport.

August Camp runs from July 19 through August 16. Apply to

attend for one of the four weeks. Detailed information, pricing and registration are available at augustcamp.org. The last time August Camp was held on the Olympic Peninsula, it was filled by mid-January!

Online registration opens January 2, 2025 at 9 AM. All applications received between then and midnight on January 12 will be treated equally by random selection.

Week 1: July 19 — July 26
Week 2: July 26 — Aug. 2
Week 3: Aug. 2 — Aug. 9
Week 4: Aug. 9 — Aug. 16

Each week: \$1700 for members, \$2040 for non-members, plus Washington state tax

Questions: Please visit augustcamp.org.



augustcamp.org

Wasn't that a time!

A personal look back at my 40 years of whitewater paddling, mostly with AMC

By Eric Pavlak

The temperature was in the low 30s, it was raining steadily, and there was snow on the banks as a group of paddlers gathered in an eddy at the top of a major rapid.

"If we had to do this at work," one of them said, "we'd quit our jobs."

Hard-core whitewater paddles are definitely a different breed. We will travel for hours to get to a prized river that's running. We'll sit on the snow-bank while prying off our wetsuit booties and talk about the great weather we're having.

It's a physically demanding sport that requires lots of practice and lots of dedication. It's also a small enough sport that an ordinary paddler will likely get to meet, learn from and paddle with championship-level boaters.

Far and wide

We paddled local streams like the Nescopeck, the Tohickon and the Lehigh Gorge. We ran week-end trips to the Adirondacks, and did the Hudson Gorge and the Moose. Likewise, we went for a weekend to the West in Vermont and the Deerfield in the Berkshires. We drove west for Stoneycreek River and the Shades near Johnstown, or two hours further to the Cheat or the Tygart in West Virginia. A three day weekend could allow us to do both the Youghiogheny and the Cheat. And these were all-day paddling trips.

AMC rules allow chapters to run trips within 500 miles of any AMC chapter. We had week-long trips that went south to the Carolinas into Georgia, into Tennessee and Kentucky; north into Maine, Quebec and Ontario. We paddled the Obed and its many tributaries, the Big South Fork of the Cumberland, the Nolichucky, the French Broad and the Ocoee. The Gauley, the New, and Cherry and the Cranberry, plus a hundred more rivers and creeks,

Many, many trips

Our chapter alone ran 60 to 80 trips (paddling days) a year. For a few years we ran Memorial Day Weekend trips to Harper's Ferry that include easier whitewater on the



That's me running Corkscrew Rapid, the second of the Five Falls on the Chattooga River, the border between Georgia and South Carolina. Here the river drops 75 feet in a quarter mile. —Gary Leander photo

Shenandoah and Potomac, plus hiking and bicycling. With three kinds of activities and a convenient campground, we had as many as 75 participants. Then the National Park Service stopped us from taking our boats out of the river at the point parking lot at Harper's Ferry. There was no good alternative.

We did run some flatwater trips in the summer, mostly in the Jersey Pinelands and the Delaware River. We also had canoe camping trips. Rich Pace led some in Maine, and I led on the upper Delaware.

What is paddling whitewater like?

Whitewater paddling is mostly a series of moves: eddy turns, peel-outs and ferries, moves that allow the paddler and the group to move downriver in a controlled manner. It is taking time to rest, snack, drink water, empty your boat, if needed—and sometimes get out and scout or set up safety. It is rarely quickly blasting down the river.

The force of the water can be immense, and unless you have actually paddled your own boat in it, it is hard to appreciate. Paddlers must learn to work with the river.

And then there is play. Unlike ocean waves, waves on a river are standing waves: they don't move. But just like ocean waves, they can be surfed. Plus there are holes in the river flow that can be surfed sideways or any way you care or dare to. Many rivers have surfing waves and holes that are almost mandatory stops for play.

Some DV Chapter history

The Delaware Valley Chapter was begun primarily by paddlers, and then hiking added.

In the '80s and '90s, our chapter paddled almost exclusively on whitewater and had a group of about 30 to 40 regulars. About half of these were skilled enough to paddle



John Chalikian in Cucumber Rapid, Lower Youghiogheny.

really tough rivers. But no matter what the skill level, we were all safe and competent paddlers.

It was during that time that there was a big trend toward paddling solo open canoes on whitewater, and away from the long, pointy kayaks of the period. The higher volume of open canoes allowed paddlers to span or punch through holes that could stop a kayak. Actually, both canoes and kayaks did well in big water, but their paddlers often chose somewhat different routes through rapids.

The difference between a canoe and a kayak is this: a kayak paddler sits in the boat and paddles with a double bladed paddle, a canoe paddler kneels and paddles with a single bladed paddle. Modern canoes and kayaks are descended from the craft of the indigenous peoples of North America. Seats in a canoe are a recent development. The birch bark clad craft of the native peoples and the European explorers and Voyageurs were all paddled kneeling. Kneeling is far more stable, and all whitewater canoes are paddled that way.

DV Chapter firsts

We introduced a liability release form and sign-in sheet in 1987. I believe this was the first in AMC. It was only a few sentences long and in plain English.

In 2003 we launched a paddlers' website and began listing all our trips on line, a decade before ActDB.

We were the first club unit in AMC to have a comprehensive activities policy. Introduced in 2004, it is still in use with a few minor updates.

My whitewater roots

I began my whitewater career in the early 1980s, paddling my tandem open canoe, a Mad River Explorer and a cheap well-used kayak. I was paddling and learning with a few friends, and making some progress.

A breakthrough came when I first encountered and regularly began to paddle with AMC. Our chapter had a long established group of skilled paddlers, and I learned a lot from them. Progress came quickly. I was now paddling my new used solo canoe. By dint of lots of paddling and some serious instruction, I became a skilled paddler and whitewater leader. I became an ACA (American Canoe Association) certified instructor.

By 1992 I was paddling a new 30 pound Kevlar solo canoe built by John Kazmierczyk, originally from Trenton, now living and working in New Hampshire. John would go on to win 38 national whitewater slalom championships in solo and tandem canoes, and become the premier builder of racing boats in the country. Less than a year later, I bought a tandem racing boat from him. I eventually bought seven of his boats including both of C-1 (decked canoe) racing boats that he used in the Olympic trials. They each weighed 18 pounds and were incredibly fast and maneuverable.

During the next 30 plus years I led more than 200 whitewater trips for AMC. Many were beginner trips on the Lehigh and Nescopeck, which are the most challenging kind of trip to lead. They often had 10 or more boats and involved



Above: Curt Gellerman running the top rapid on Sholola Creek. Below: Me on the final drop in a plastic C-1. The slide is easy, getting there isn't. Both are Class IV.



more swims and rescues than advanced trips. Leading difficult trips with skilled paddlers is in many ways easier since everyone knows what to do.

Sea Kayaking and Wilderness Tripping

By 2000, several of our paddlers had bought sea kayaks, took lessons and were paddling on broad open water; bays and the ocean. I organized and led some club trips, mostly on the Chesapeake and on Barnegat Bay.

Much of my sea kayak experience was not with AMC, but on personal trips that included the Chesapeake, the lower Delaware Bay tidal rivers, the Outer Banks of North Carolina, and much on the coasts of Maine and Nova Scotia. The Nova Scotia trips included camping on offshore islands that had no fresh water.

I have been on several long distance wilderness canoe trips in Canada and one in Alaska entirely north of the Arctic Circle.

Learning and teaching

Teaching is the best way to thoroughly learn a subject. Back then, our group ran a six-session introductory whitewater course, led by Phil Ritchie and Ellen Christensen. Denise Zembryki and I eventually took over that course, then she ran it for years. We would get 20 or more experienced



Phil Ritchie, bow and Bob Lindquist in what is believed to be the first successful descent of the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon by a tandem open canoe. Both had previously run the Canyon in solo canoes.

paddlers and their boats for these classes.

Walt Underhill taught solo open canoe for decades, and later tandem open canoe. He was an active whitewater slalom racer and a skilled paddler. We also brought in outside instructors. Bob Foote, the first person to run the Grand Canyon in an open canoe, taught advanced solo open canoe for years.

I taught our swiftwater safety and rescue course for 25 years. We require all paddling leaders to take this or an equivalent course. I was there at the inception of this kind of training. I learned from Charlie Walbridge, the long time safety chair of American Whitewater, and Wayne Sundmacher, the very founders of this program.

Things we once did

We held an annual potluck dinner for paddlers and anyone else interested at the Merion Friends Meeting House on the first Saturday in December.

In February we would hold the annual Canoe Rally at the Merion Friends Meeting House. All interested in paddling were invited to attend. It was promoted with flyers and free newspaper listings. (This was pre-internet.) A full year paddling schedule was distributed.

Movies of the past season were shown. They were made on super-8 movie film, later on video tape, by Phil Ritchie, who carried his camera in a waterproof box.

We would usually get 50 or more people to these events.

Safety

There were few serious accidents or injuries to our participants, especially considering the dangerous nature of the sport and the fact that we often paddled in cold weather and in remote locations.

In all the trips I led, we had only three injuries that required trips to a hospital emergency room: two for stitches and one for an X-ray that showed a bone wasn't broken,

Once we had to evacuate an injured paddler about a half mile on a stretcher of paddles and life jackets. An examination in the ER showed her leg badly bruised, but not broken. Thankfully she weighed less than 120 pounds, or the carry would have been much harder.

Our paddlers saved several people not part of our group from drowning. Dave Kutz saved the life a bicyclist who fell off the bridge over the mouth of Black Creek along the Lehigh. The victim fell about 30 feet and was unconscious, face down in the water. He was evacuated by park rangers. When the victim recovered, he sued the state park and the bike rental company. He lost.

Two of our leaders have found drowning victims on their trips. One in the Pine Barrens and one on the Esopus Creek,

Hypothermia is a constant worry. Spring is the prime season for natural flow whitewater, winter is also good, Wetsuits, drysuits and other cold weather gear can only do so much. Our paddlers were always good about carrying extra clothing both for themselves and to lend. Even summer paddling had risks. Air can be 90 degrees and the water 50 degrees.

Most of our leaders had all sorts of wilderness first aid training and experience. One, Don Pitkin, was a certified instructor who led classes for us.

Before the internet

Before the internet and the internet electronic river gauges, paddlers circulated a list of about 75 names and phone numbers. These volunteers would physically check the river levels and pass on the information. My number was for the Tohickon,

Before digital cameras, some used waterproof film cameras or kept cameras in waterproof cases. Waterproof meant submersible! Or they used what I did: Kodak submersible disposable cameras.



AMC paddler in the big rapids of the Cheat River Canyon. — John Milne photo

When we had to submit schedules long in advance for listings in print publications, most paddling trips were listed as leader's choice, plus a difficulty rating. Only rivers that were always runnable or had scheduled dam releases could be listed for trips. As soon as I created our first paddlers website, we began to post all our trips there. We were a decade ahead of the rest of the club,

Just when you think you know everything

We were getting ready to paddle Clear Creek into the Obed River in eastern Tennessee when we were welcomed by several local paddlers.

They were stuffing sleeping bags, small tents and food bundles into their cramped kayaks. We asked why, since this was a five or six hour trip.

They replied they were prepared in case anyone got injured or lost a boat, since you could not walk out of the gorge in one day.

Practice, practice, practice!

Learning to paddle whitewater is not a quick or easy process. You must learn eddy turns: turning into a eddy in swift moving water. Peel outs: moving into swift water from an eddy. The current will try to flip you while doing both, and you must lean a lot more than you initially want to.

You must master ferries: crossing swift current without washing downstream. And you have to learn how to brace using your paddle to support you even when leaning way, way over. Top racers spend much of their time practicing their forward stroke. You should, too.

Learning to Eskimo roll takes time and lots of practice. You usually first learn in a swimming pool or a summer pond. Then practice in current, where rolling is much harder.

I tell students that rolling is like learning a musical instrument. Plan on lots of practice. I tell them the first thousand rolls are the hardest. During my best years I could roll C-1s, kayaks and only two of the many open canoes I have owned,

Take out

I have mostly retired from whitewater, but still lead trips. I have stepped down as paddling chair after 22 years, but still serve on the Interchapter Paddling Committee.

Many of the friends I made in all those years on the river have moved away, moved on or departed this life. There are far too many to try to mention them all here, and I would hate to try and then miss someone.

My whitewater years were many. It was a lot of fun, a lot of work, a lot of travel. But oh what a time!

Denise Zembryki on the Tohickon. She led our training program for many years. — Eric Pavlak photo



My turn is done. But let's keep our great tradition alive and support our new editor, Joanie Schultz!

A brief bit of history of *Footnotes*

I became editor in early 1996, and turned it into a small magazine, often 20 printed pages in size. In addition to the schedule, we carried a good bit of advertising in those days, which helped offset the printing and postage cost.

From 2000 to 2008 there were three different editors. I trained and assisted the first and last of these, Buck Meyer and Dawn Britton. (Cliff Hence was in the middle.)

I returned as editor for the 2008 winter issue, adding a full color electronic version with additional pages.

The last year we mailed newsletters to all our member was 2010. Increased printing and postage cost were consuming half the chapter's budget, and things had to change. We also dropped the activities schedule. Activities listing were now available on the web.

Beginning in 2011, we no longer mailed *Footnotes*. Instead, we emailed our members a download link.

The first issue of *Footnotes* I edited included what were to become regularly recurring features: *Meandering with Mac* by Mac White and a something new, a humor column by Irene Kohl.

Mac wrote about the enduring and prolific service of our top leaders. Irene wrote about the new outdoornet, where virtual reality would replace actual outdoor experiences.

The activities schedule included 31 whitewater trips and 75 hikes and backpacks. There were only three bike rides, but they totaled 110 miles!



