

2004 SOUTHERN RIVERS TRIP IMAGES

by Michael Duvall

I recently asked John Kobak, who led the Southern Rivers Trip, if anyone was writing a trip report. He said that if he wrote it he would have to report that I swam. To that my reply is "What's new!!" But I must admit that my swim left a lasting image in the mind of everyone who saw it, but I will get to that in good time. There were however some other great images that I can recall. I will try to share these images with everyone as I give the basic day by day description of the trip. We met Friday at Warrior Path State Park to run the Nolichucky. Elliott Drysdale and Rob Hammond rode with John Kobak in the RV. Lee Owens was there with KC, I haven't seen Lee since he dislocated his shoulder on the last Southern trip. Scott and his son Greg were there and Greg was looking to do some big drops. Brad Guess and Sherry came with Brad Guess's car being questionable. Chuck Singer, Judi and Kristin doing kayaking and shredding. Bob Weible came down from Akron. Ed Charlton came along to see if he could handle some new rivers.

The Nolichucky was kind of low, only 1500 cfs, so there was no carnage to report. The low levels meant that "Jaws" was a very friendly surf wave. Everyone did well through "On the Rocks" and the "Quarter Mile." The only negative thing was that the park and play boaters never yielded to the boaters coming down stream. Dam "Hole hogs!!"

After much discussion, the plan for Saturday was for some people to do the French Broad and some to go directly to the Ocoee for two days. I voted for the French Broad because it was the only other river that had water, even if it was at the minimum level, and besides I had never been there. So our group of Ed, Chuck, Judi, Kristin, Rob and Lee set off for the French Broad. Good thing Chuck led the shuttle because I would have never found it. Here is where I got the first of the memorable image. It was the look on the faces of Sherry and Ed when they ran Kayakers Ledge. I had gotten out with a rope and set safety so I could see just how big their eyes got. There were even a few cameras to record the event. I don't know about Sherry but I know it must have been the biggest drop Ed had run at that time.

Easter Sunday the group reunited at the Ocoee. Of course it is tradition to have a pancake breakfast with Becker's real maple syrup and get on the river before the hordes of rafts. I think everyone ran straight through "Hell Hole" without incident but very few got in line to play there. Even though we were early there must have been 30 park and play boaters there. If you have never been there before, it is worth it to get in line and watch the locals. They were doing cartwheels and loops and making it look easy.

Monday was the Chattooga; section IV, the river made famous by the movie Deliverance. The level was low, only about 1.5 ft but still fun. "Screaming Left Turn" was just a whisper. We wondered what "Woodall Shoals" would be like at this level but the right Sneak line was there but just a little scrapey. "Ravens Rock" is always fun to watch first timers run. The correct line is to drift into the drop very close to the left shore and ride a diagonal wave to the center of the river. Some hit the diagonal wave too hard and punched through and rode over a big rock into the hole at the bottom. Although the drop looks impressive it is easy and everyone did ok. "Seven Foot Falls" is always a hoot. "Aim for the rock on the right" is the basic instruction and as I recall everyone did well. Five falls is always challenging even at a low level. Ed had decided ahead of time that he would walk around this so he ran "Entrance" then walked to below "Sock-Em-Dog".

"Corkscrew" always has my name and this was no exception, I flipped in the middle but hung in and rolled at the bottom. Sherry ran it fine, it was nothing! Everyone ran it just fine and nobody needed the safety rope. The level was so low that when we got to "Crack in the Rock", none of the cracks were runnable so we all walked. We all had to walk "Sock-Em-Dog" also. I think Sherry was the winner in the race across Lake Tugaloo. The take out provided another memorable Image, a '90 Thunderbird was being towed out of the lake. This also provided the quote of the trip, when asked how far the car went into the water an observer answered, "Not too far, I could still see the headlights."

We got some rain so some of the creeks we skipped on way down were now running, but we had already lost a couple of paddlers. Chuck, Judi and Kristin left Sunday afternoon. Lee and KC headed to Florida after the French Broad. And now Brad and Sherry headed back after the Chattooga. The remaining paddlers headed back to the Tellico. When we got to the Tellico I went to the gauge to get a reading, 2.5 which works out to about 500 cfs which is perfect, just enough water but not pushy. This is where I provided an image for

everyone. It was just the first or second ledge of the "Ledges" section. My line was not good and I kinda stalled out going over the ledge. Then, after this drop hit some rocks and flipped. I tried a couple of roll attempts but decided to bail. I wasn't sure where I was when I bailed but I was getting worked after my wet exit. Well it seems that I exited just as I was starting over the next 8 foot ledge. Everyone could see the exit perfectly because I was coming out of my boat through the curtain of the waterfall. I have been told it was very picturesque. After that experience I decided not to provide any more lasting images so I walked Baby Falls.

It was at "Baby Falls" that I viewed another image, the facial expressions between Greg Debalski and his father Scott. Greg really wanted to run the falls because running a big drop was the main reason that he came on the trip. However, he saw the concerned look Scott's face so with a sad face of his own he walked "Baby Falls". After Greg did well on "Jared's Knee" I am sure Scott was confident that Greg would have done fine going over the falls, but there is always next year.

Tuesday night we went to the Little River near Gatlinburg in the Smokey Mountains. As we drove along side the river to the National park we could see that the Little was flowing well. We stopped at the "Sinks" to judge how much water was in the river. All I can say is that it looked pretty juicy. Wednesday we awoke to what turned out to be the final image of the trip, 3 inches of snow covering the ground, our cars, and all the gear hanging on the line. Seeing the snow and below freezing temperatures we all forgot about the Little and decided to go home.

These are the Southern Rivers Trip images.