

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As 2008 draws to a close, I find that I'm already looking forward to 2009 and the adventures that await. This year was a particularly memorable one for me personally because I was fortunate enough to have been invited on a private trip on the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon. That trip was actually the subject of a previous 'President's Message' and the thoughts expressed then still apply.



In considering the progression of my development as a paddler, I realize that the Carolina Canoe Club played a huge role in that development. The Club provided the opportunity for me to get instruction in all aspects of paddling through the excellent clinic programs for which the Club is known and I credit the first Week of Rivers I attended with jump-starting my paddling career. It was back when WOR was held at Appletree Group Camp above the Nantahala put-in. I remember we had rain every day for the entire week to ten days I was there. EVERYTHING was running all week; the Upper Nantahala ran every day! I got ten years of experience in ten days! And it was thanks to the Club and the volunteers who organized WOR and to those who were willing to coordinate trips throughout the week that I got on the Little River in the Smokies, the Upper Nantahala, Chattooga III and IV, the Chauga Gorge and the Tellico. I think we even got some really hard-to-catch rivers like the Santeelah and the Citico way up in Joyce Kilmer. All this during my very first year as a kayaker! It was off to the races after that; I had the confidence, at least, to continue to explore more difficult challenges. Some days I realized I was a bit out of my league, but that's all part of it. I learned a lot along the way, about myself, my skills and temperament. I was lucky: the people I met through the Club were willing to take me under their wing a share the sport they loved with me and I benefitted greatly by it.

That was about 16 years ago. Last weekend, I found myself at the Mason's Branch (Panther Creek) take-out for the Upper Gauley after another spectacular run and I happened to see an old running buddy of mine from way back when. He was one of the group of regulars we used to run with and I was really happy to see that he was still going strong. We talked for a bit about some of our other buds, but very few of them are still paddling. Lives and priorities change, the need to constantly push to conquer harder and harder challenges eases a bit. But I realized that paddlers share a special bond, one forged in adrenalin, adventure and shared experiences. It's amazing to me that even though I hadn't seen this person in more than a decade, it was just like I had last seen him yesterday.

Even more than the personal challenge paddling represents, it is this human connection that amazes me. People from every walk of life brought together by a shared interest.

The CCC continues to provide the opportunity for us long-time paddlers, and for those new to the sport, to plug into this network of shared interests. Membership in the CCC enables paddlers of all skill levels to take advantage of instructional programs and events like WOR. Every member also has the opportunity to volunteer to run for one of the CCC Officer positions. I don't know of a better way to continue the spirit of shared adventure than to take an active part in shaping the future of the CCC, its programs and the resource it represents to the sport.

It is for these reasons as well as the desire to continue to look for ways to improve programs and member benefits that I will be seeking a second term as CCC President. There are initiatives that were begun in 2008 (online membership sign-up and renewal and the online trip posting list, for instance) that added value to a CCC membership. To be sure, there is still a lot of work remaining to be done: seeing the USFS river use permit issue through to a successful conclusion and continuing the process of identifying areas of continuing program improvement, to name just a few.

2008 was memorable for a lot of reasons. You can help the Officers of the CCC make 2009 even more memorable by increasing your involvement in Club activities and taking a proactive stance in the future of the Carolina Canoe Club. One place to start is to vote for the Officer candidates you feel would best represent your Club in the coming year. I ask for your vote to allow me the opportunity to help keep the CCC moving forward through 2009 and beyond.

Thanks, and I'll see you on the river...

John Zadrozny  
President – Carolina Canoe Club