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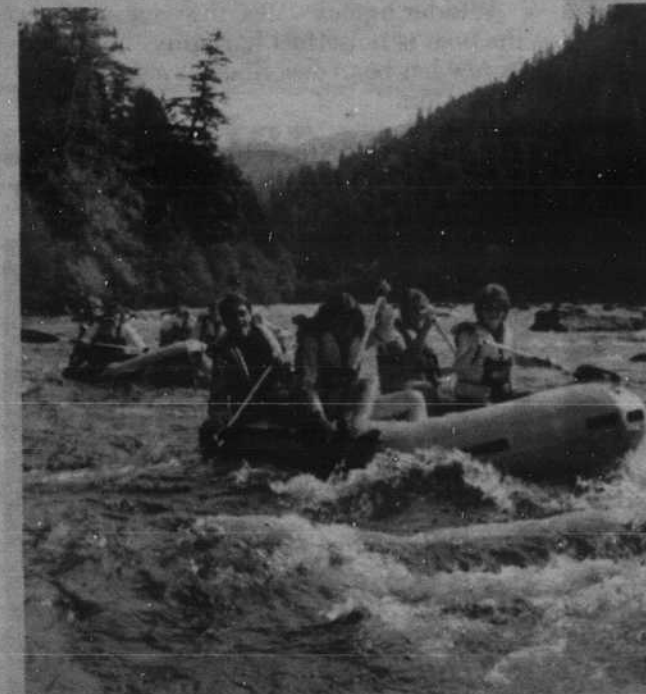


860 E. 13th OPEN 7 DAYS 344-7894

Challenging the foaming McKenzie River



A lunch and sun break affords white water rafters a brief respite from their Outdoor Program-sponsored mission: Tackling the wild McKenzie River.



The river is calm enough at this point, but Brown's Hole — one of the most challenging portions of the McKenzie for rafters — looms dead ahead.

Hidden among the many rooms of the EMU, down the stairs, through the video room, and at the end of a narrow hallway, you will find a door leading to the outdoors. This, Room 23, is the home of the Outdoor Program.

The program is designed to be a campus and community resource center for those interested in wilderness pursuits.

The room is filled with books, maps, catalogs, magazines, files, and information about trails, routes and tours. All are geared to prepare the wilderness enthusiast.

One of the program's highlights is a trip board. Anyone is welcome to initiate a trip, be it biking, hiking, skiing, canoeing, rock climbing, camping, or, like last weekend, rafting. Just about any idea is honored.

Once an idea is posted, participants sign a sheet to go on the trip. The program provides some vehicles and other facilities to help make the trips feasible. The costs of the trips, which are generally minimal, are shared by the participants.

On Saturday, the Outdoor Program conducted one of its marvelous trips. Beneath sunny skies and temperatures soaring into the 80s, a group of sixteen persons loaded four rafts and a kayak onto a trailer and headed for the McKenzie River.

Once there, the group packed lunches in the inflated rafts and dressed in wet suits or wool to survive the sharp chill of the whitewater river.

Bruce Mason, Outdoor Program coordinator, gave a brief demonstration on actions to take if capsized or thrown overboard.

The rafts were soon off, beginning a day's journey through the beautiful Oregon wilderness.

A few exciting rapids (later considered minor) prepared the group for what lay ahead. Everyone learned to help guide the raft away from hazards and practiced increasing speeds and drifting.

It wasn't long before the groups docked on an island and munched on sack lunches while basking in the hot sun. This luxury didn't last for long, however. Soon a warm breeze carried a murmur warning us that the notorious Brown's Hole, one of the river's fiercest sections, was eagerly awaiting our approach. Once again, the rafts set afloat.

The water quickened and the screams from the lead rafters were our only warning. The hole approached too quickly, immersing three of the four rafts and leaving many freezing rafters gasping for air in the cold McKenzie waters.

After all were rescued, Mason motioned the group to a bank. By this time, two oars had been broken and a paddle was lost. But the trip was fail-proof. There were just enough spare paddles for each person to guide their rafts through the last few rapids of the day.

When the trip was over and the rafts dried, the group returned to Eugene, bubbling with stories of the adventure.

Rachel Kirby, a sophomore exchange student from Illinois State University, said, "We weren't even ready for that first hole (Brown's) but we deserved it, and it made the day a lot more exciting." Kirby's crew of four were all immersed in the river during the event.

The trip introduced many Easterners to Oregon. Most of the participants were exchange students taking advantage of the opportunity to experience the new state.

Suzy Stauffer, a junior from West Chester University, said, "I feel like I'm on vacation, but I'm in school. There's nothing like the Outdoor Program in New Jersey."

One of the best features of the trip was making friends with others who share the love for adventures in the outside world. "You get so close because everyone is going through the same thing," said University of Massachusetts junior Janet Burnett. "When we were going through the rocks, everyone was screaming."

Persons who are interested in outdoor pursuits, and would appreciate the cooperative, sharing format endorsed by the Outdoor Program, can stop by the program office and pick up literature or sign up for any upcoming trips.

Mason said that rafting season is ending with the beginning of October, but many other trips will be planned throughout the fall.

So, as the weather cools, button up and enjoy the great outdoors.

Story by Linda Coombs
Photos by Bruce Mason



White water rafters have minimal control over their craft. The boiling river points the raft any direction it pleases — often toward the sky.

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The McKenzie River has an average year-round temperature of 54 degrees, as these rafters discover when Brown's Hole flows into their craft. Despite the wet and cold, rafters feel that the excitement of their perilous journey by far outweighs their inconveniences.

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