

White Water Playground

'Tupperware' kayaks are extending boundaries.

The idea seems an alien one. Squeezing your hips and legs inside an 11-foot long piece of plastic. Holding onto a double-bladed paddle and propelling yourself downstream through tumbling white water.

If flipped upside down — with one's head exposed to the rocks — a boater can simply pull with the paddle, twist his or her hips and return upright, breathing air. Gliding downstream the kayak acts as an extension of one's body, and as the ripples reflect off the kayak, the boater, in a sense, becomes part of the river.

Freedom of movement and independence is complete. It is these sensations and characteristics that make kayaking a unique and appealing white-water sport.

Kayaking is, and has been, a means of transportation and hunting for the Eskimos of Alaska, Greenland and the Arctic. Kayaking was further developed as a sport in Great Britain and Germany during the 18th century. In the 1950s and '60s, the sport gained some popularity in the United States, but it wasn't until the availability of prefabricated boats that the sport really came into its own.

In the last decade kayaking has found a small yet strong following in Oregon, according to local enthusiasts.

Oregon has more white water per square mile than anywhere else in the United States, says Cheryl Linder of Rivers West, a local white-water outfitter. The Rogue, the Illinois, the Snake and the Deschutes are just a few of the fine white-water rivers in Oregon. The rivers here also are runnable year round, which is not the case of most white-water rivers in the United States.

Eugene is in an exceptional

location to take advantage of this white water, Linder says. "We've got beginner, intermediate, and advanced water within an hour to two hours of here (Eugene)."

For Eugene kayakers, the McKenzie River is the river of choice. Martin's Rapid, Brown's Hole, Red Sides and Bellinger are just a few of the favorite sites where boaters find their "play waves." Near Vida there is one wave aptly coined "Cape Canaveral" for its reputation of launching boaters out of the water.

The University may be one of the only campuses in the nation to have its own set of rapids. Under the footbridge leading to Autzen Stadium exists a small rapid where one might find a kayaker hard at work catching a wave.

Not only does Oregon have fine white-water rivers for kayakers, but it also has the ocean. In the last couple of years, Eugene kayakers have begun to take on the surf at the south jetty in Florence. Here boaters have found legitimate six-foot waves to ride.

Those interested in joining

cost between \$800 to \$1,200. However, used and rental equipment can be a viable alternative. "It has a fairly high front end commitment to get good" at kayaking, he says.

University student Brian Tooley, 22, says he has seen the changes in the sport of kayaking since he first began 13 years ago. "The first time I ran the Rogue, it was a huge deal, and I had been boating for years," he says. Since that time, first-week kayakers are running it and looking good, he says. Tooley attributes this growth to better techniques in instruction and further developments in kayak technology.

Mason agrees. "The advent of plastic kayaks has revolutionized the entire sport of kayaking." Boaters no longer have to avoid difficult water for fear of breaking their kayaks and spending days repairing them. Now virtually indestructible "tupperware" boats allow for more adventurous and aggressive play.

As a result, Tooley and other kayakers are seeing rapids formerly thought inaccessible being shot by increasing

numbers of white-water adventurers.

Although kayaking's popularity is growing slightly, Linder says, "You don't see the dramatic numbers (of people) in it, and you never will."

And that's just as well, Tooley says. "Kayaking in a lot of ways is still a real low-key sport, and I like it that way."

Many people don't realize most recreational kayakers are satisfied with running relatively mellow rivers such as the McKenzie or the Rogue, he adds.

Tooley, who just recently returned from a kayak tour of Chile, finds the concentration



this local sport will find it comes only with some commitment, both financially and personally, says Bruce Mason, the University Outdoor Program coordinator and a long-time kayaker. Outfitting a beginning boater might



Photos by John Giustina

Bruce Mason braces against a wave under the Autzen Stadium footbridge (above). University student Annemarie Hirsch strokes herself through the cold waters of the Willamette River (left).

involved in kayaking fascinating. When he is shooting a difficult rapid his focus is so intense, even the sound of the crashing water is nonexistent, he says.

Mason, on the other hand, loves its combination of opposite qualities.

"When you're on the right

kind of wave doing the right kinds of things, it combines speed, size and power with grace."

— JOHN GIUSTINA



formerly of
London
Hair
Studio II

now at Henry's Hair Studio
\$5.00 off
Haircut & Style

w/ this coupon
reg. \$20.00

340 E. 11th
(next to the Attic Dresser)

484-0088
(phone number unlisted)

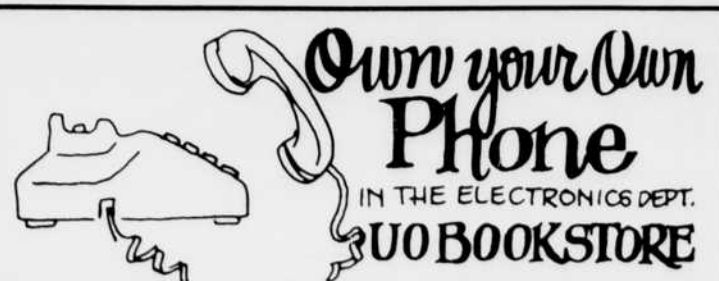
Backstage DANCEWEAR



Capezio's
been dancing
since 1887.

- ★ Dance Shoes
- ★ Leotards
- ★ Tights
- ★ Warm-ups

41 W. Broadway - Downtown Mall
686-2671 • Sundays 12-4



Year-Round
BUYBACK
UPSTAIRS-UO BOOKSTORE

BRING IN YOUR USED TEXTBOOKS ANYTIME