



# KWA Kansas Whitewater Association



Dave Irvin on Upper Ocoee

## Welcome to the Kansas Whitewater Association By Nicoya Helm

Welcome to the first newsletter of the Kansas Whitewater Association, the only organization in the state of Kansas dedicated to the sport of freestyle kayaking. Despite less than a year under our belt as an organization, we've already packed in lots of activities on and off the water:

- Weekly pool sessions at the Olathe YMCA this winter provided experienced boaters the opportunity for off-season practice. Several "newbies" also tried out kayaking in a safe and comfortable environment.
- Spring boating on the Wakarusa Wave (see article below) and on the Kansas River near Bowersock dam.
- Participation in National River Cleanup Week, co-sponsored by Bowersock Mills &
- Power Co of Lawrence, Kansas. On May 22, KWA members and Lawrence residents removed 5 bags of trash and 10 bags of recyclables from the banks of the Kansas River.
- Female KWA members celebrated Memorial Day by participating in the Girls at Play clinic with Worlds Medalists Anna Levesque in Buena Vista, Colorado.
- Several KWA members attended breakthrough and advanced playboating clinics in June with Summit Kayak School in Colorado
- Weekly flatwater practice sessions at Shawnee Mission Lake during the summer (when the Waka wave wasn't running).
- More local boating on the Wakarusa in July

So what's next? More boating and more fun, whenever and wherever we can find it. Thanks to all of you who became full-fledged members early on, the KWA was able to become an American Whitewater affiliate group this month. We are the first AWA affiliate club in the state of Kansas. Besides the historical significance, AWA affiliate membership provides KWA members a \$10 discount on AWA membership. Our club information will also be available on the AWA website and in their bi-monthly newsletter, so look for us there soon!

See you on the river!



Kevin Burke at the Wakarusa Wave

## Wakarusa Wave & Corps Releases

By Shawn Tolivar

This year has been a great year for the Wakarusa Wave. The Wakarusa Wave has not had sufficient flow for kayaking for two years, creating quite the anticipation for area kayakers. Early spring rains brought the Clinton Lake level up to 875msl. The KWA worked with the Army Corps of Engineers to get a scheduled release for March 13th & 14th. The Lawrence Journal World documented the event in the following day's paper. Dozens of spectators come to check us out. The KWA was again able to coordinate a release of 1000cfs on June 25th, and boaters of all skill level came out to play in the wave. The luck didn't end there. On July 5th, the Corps notified us that they would be releasing 1000cfs for the next week or so. Throughout the week anywhere from 3 to 12 boaters of all skill levels were at the wave to practice, surf, and learn. The KWA has also been in contact with the Lawrence & Douglas County Rescue squad to discuss possible joint swift water rescue activities at the Wakarusa Wave.

### KWA Board of Directors

President: Shawn Tolivar  
shawn@kansaswhitewater.org

Vice-Pres: Rod Snyder  
Kansas-surfer@kc.rr.com

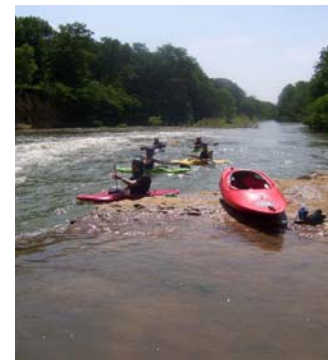
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KWA boaters at the Wakarusa

## Para Paddling

# After becoming paralyzed from the hips down, James trades his BMX for Kayaks

by James Smith

On a hot afternoon in August of 1996 I was doing a BMX freestyle show with some of my friends. This was just one of many we did that summer in a series of custom car shows. I was comfortable riding in front of large crowds. Today's crowd was not one of the largest I'd seen that summer. As our show neared its end, I went for one last big trick, a back flip. This is something I had done many times successfully, however between heat exhaustion and poor judgment, I was unsuccessful. That day I just wanted to go really big. Well, I overshot my landing and over rotated, and as I hit the pavement I felt the worst pain of my life. I had shattered the 12th vertebra in my back. I was soon going to learn that I was paralyzed from my hips down and would never ride my bike again.

As I came to accept this life-changing event, I never quite accepted the life style change that seemed inevitable. I didn't want to lose the activities and hobbies that made me feel alive. As time passed I tried several new things to replace the passion and thrill I got from riding my bike. Rock climbing and mono skiing are two things I saw in a video from Mark Wellman. Mark Wellman is a paraplegic known for climbing Half Dome in Yosemite. I also viewed a video featuring an amputee running a stretch of water in a kayak that looked more like a roller coaster than a river. At that moment I decided I was not going to change who I was, I would find a way to do the things I desired. That winter I took a class with Breckenridge Outdoor

Education center to learn to mono ski. The following summer I started climbing at lbex rock gym. As I got better at skiing and stronger at climbing I



*James Smith  
Squirting it up at Bowersock*

wanted to try kayaking. I decided that if a guy with one leg could do it, I could too.

The next summer I started looking for schools that were open to teaching basic kayaking to someone in my situation. As I

started calling places, they all seemed friendly until I mentioned that I was in a wheelchair. I don't know if it was a liability issue, or their perception of someone disabled, but they seemed to lose interest after I told them about my wheelchair. Then, I remembered a flyer a friend had given me. It was an advertisement for a place called Colorado Kayak. I called them and told them the situation, and to my surprise they said, "What weekend can you come out?" With that I found a free weekend to start paddling.

After a brief introduction with Chad and the CKS crew, we picked out a boat to fit to my small lower half. With some tape and foam, I fit nicely into a Wave Sport Y. The next morning they taught me some flat water skills and the fundamentals needed to be safe, like a wet exit, a bow rescue, and a variety of paddle strokes. Then, I was on my way to the upper Colorado River. After some work on eddy skills and boat tilt we headed down Little Gore Canyon. After a few rapids and a few swims, I was hooked on the sport. I cannot say enough good

things about the guys at CKS. I would have never gotten started without them.

I returned to Kansas with a taste of whitewater and no boat to continue building on my skills. The next step was to locate a local group to paddle with. After a brush with a few that were less than helpful, I started to paddle with Kevin Gilbert, a guy I worked with. I borrowed his RPM and started working on a roll. I had some success but nothing solid. Without a roll, I didn't feel comfortable on moving water. Kevin moved away the following summer and I was left without a boat and someone to paddle with.

On the way back from a late season ski trip this year, I stopped in Denver at a place called Confluence Park. There I saw some people running the Platte River and thought about giving it another try. Daisy, my girlfriend said she was willing to give it a try also; I had some skills, but she had none. I called CKS about taking a follow up class and we signed up for a two day workshop trip on the Colorado River. First, I needed a boat that would fit; a boat of my own that I could use to practice as much as I wanted. I found a used Centrifuge and outfitted it to fit and be as responsive as my monoski.

The Centrifuge is a flat bottom boat that took a lot of practice to learn to roll. With the help of my friend Shawn Tolivar, and a lot tinkering, my roll came together. I needed to make some changes to a normal roll to get it solid. One of the best things I did was change to a Seven Two paddle. It added a little more spring to my roll and really helped with my consistency.

With a solid roll and a good woman that was open to paddling with me I took a second trip with CKS. This time

## Para Paddling –Continued

I found myself doing less swimming and more paddling. My girlfriend was then hooked too. She soon got her roll and is a solid class III boater as am I. We paddle together as much as we can.

I usually do a seal launch to put in, and I just do a lot of eddy hopping to scout rapids. I have recently started learning some play boating basics including Stern Squirts and Bow Enders. I'd love to be good enough to enter a rodeo someday but I've got a

lot of practice to do before then. I have recently been inspired by a video I saw that featured Eric Jackson. I am extremely motivated to pick up some of these techniques and begin increasing my play boating skills. The only thing I regret about my boating experiences so far is that I didn't start paddling sooner. When I'm in my boat, no one knows I use a wheelchair. This is one of the hobbies that have helped me replace the thrill I used to get when riding my bike.

*The KWA newsletter welcomes your feedback, article, or picture submissions.*

*Contact us by email at [info@kansaswhitewater.org](mailto:info@kansaswhitewater.org), or by mail at Kansas Whitewater Association  
P.O. Box 9005  
Shawnee Mission, KS 66201*

## Random Pictures



## Membership Benefits

- ⇒ Kansas Whitewater Website and Message Board
- ⇒ Indoor Winter Pool Sessions
- ⇒ Information on Kansas Rivers & Maps
- ⇒ Whitewater Trips
- ⇒ Discounted membership to American Whitewater Association
- ⇒ Safety/Rescue Events
- ⇒ Membership Roster
- ⇒ Conservation/River Access Events with Friends of the Kaw
- ⇒ Access to Training Classes via Partnership with the Kansas Canoe Association

***Support your local boater—  
become a member today!***



## Kansas Whitewater Association Membership Application and Activity Waiver

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Family Members' Names: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

### CHECK ONE TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP

\_\_\_\_\_ \$20.00 Single Membership

\_\_\_\_\_ \$25.00 Family Membership

\_\_\_\_\_ \$45.00 Associate/Business Membership

\_\_\_\_\_ \$200.00 Lifetime Membership

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ **TOTAL FEES**

Are you willing to get the KWA newsletter by email

I, THE UNDERSIGNED, HEREBY ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I AM AWARE THAT THERE ARE CERTAIN ELEMENTS OF DANGER IN BOATING ACTIVITIES WHICH ARE BEYOND THE CONTROL OF KANSAS WHITewater ASSOCIATION (KWA), ITS TRIP COORDINATORS, CLUB MEMBERS, CLUB OFFICERS, THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, AND THAT PARTICIPATION IN THESE EVENTS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES SUCH AS CAMP OUTINGS, ENTAILS UNAVOIDABLE RISK AND POSSIBLE LOSS OF LIFE AND OR PROPERTY.

IN CONSIDERATION OF THE KWA, TRIP COORDINATORS, OFFICERS, BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND MEMBERS OF KWA, I DO HERBY FOR MYSELF AND FOR ALL WHO MAY HEREAFTER CLAIM THROUGH OR FOR ME, WAIVE AND RELEASE ALL FUTURE CLASSES, RIGHTS AND CAUSES OF ACTION ACCORDED IN MY FAVOR AS A RESULT OR PERSONAL INJURIES, LOSS OF LIFE OR LOSS OF PROPERTY WHICH I MAY SUFFER WHILE PARTICIPATING IN CLUB EVENTS, AGAINST THE PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE KWA AS DESCRIBED ABOVE AND I FUTHER HEREBY COVENANT AND AGREE, THAT NO SUIT OR ACTION AT LAW SHALL BE INSTITUTED FOR THE ABOVE REASONS BY ME OR OTHERS IN MY BEHALF OR IN MY RIGHT. HAVING READ AND UNDERSTANDING THE ABOVE, I FREELY SIGN THIS WAIVER AGREEMENT.

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Whom to Notify in Emergency \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact Address & Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Please fill out form completely, even if you are a renewing member. Send form and your check to:

**Kansas Whitewater Association; P.O. Box 9005 Shawnee Mission, KS 66201**