JOE THE INTERN / WORDS BY JOE JACKSON PHOTOGRAPHY BY ABE HERRERA

FLIPPIN' AIN'T EASY

INTERN REQUEST

There is a wonderful myth on the rivers these days—the possibility of a dry-flip. That is—what is the possibility of a river guide climbing over the tube of a flipping raft and getting herself on the bottom of the boat before she falls out?

—Mandela van Eeden, Montana river guide

THE PROS SOUND LIKE SASQUATCH WITNESSES

Bio Bio Expeditions' Lars Alvarez-Roos told me he saw a dry-flip on the Zambezi and possibly another on Cherry Creek–but that was halfway between a flip and a wrap. So it may not count. Wave Trek Rescue's Chris Jonason said she has seen only one, but, she adds, you have to be very catlike to pull it off.

JOE THE INTERN: NOT CATLIKE ENOUGH

Picture No. 1: The Weir–Third and closest attempt. The woman in the baby blue drysuit is Jane Herrera, an Ecuadorian whose English is *mas o menos*. "What happens if there is very much water?" she asked me at the top of the first consequential rapid. It took me awhile to understand she was asking if we were going to flip. The leg belongs to Greg. My premature dry-jump put weight on the raft's high side. No flip.

Picture No. 2: Lunch Hole–Fourth attempt, has a stretcher on the bank next to it–good sign. It treated me like a Rottweiler's tuggie toy. Unfortunately, I'm almost certain Abe was shooting photos of his Pops blowing a whistle as I paddled into it. That is why you are looking at an image of your intern dragging a 105-pound raft 50 yards up river rather than one of Lunch Hole serving me a violent helping of humility. Missed the meat on my second shot. No flip.

Picture No. 3: Split Rock–Seventh and last attempt. Jonason, my safety coordinator, said the only possibility of flipping at this gentle wave was to yank the raft over myself. To cheat. But as Abe shot this photo, I realized the dry-flip legend was bigger than me. Even if I would've dry-flipped on this attempt, haters would have disputed it. I quit.

HER STORY

SHE CREATED A ONE-ARMED PADDLE

Ever since that Outward Bound summer some 30 years ago, Cindy Dillenschneider, 50, has explored portals to make the outdoors more accessible to those with disabilities. Last summer, the Northland College (Wisconsin) outdoor education professor produced a prototype of a paddle designed for arm-amputees

Outward Bound: For me it was one of those life-changing experiences that allowed me to see self-worth. A lot of people who are told they can't do something are excluded from those opportunities. As a result, they often have the same kind of self-esteem issues.

The research: I started thinking about the paddle a dozen or so years ago … believing if we wanted to achieve, something we needed to look at the routes not the barriers. I started sketching it out in earnest in September 2006, while on a yearlong sabbatical. I was able to go to Shriners Hospital in Tampa Bay. I spent nine months in a prosthetics lab, learning about materials manipulation, carbon fiber, composites, how to thermoform plastics. I put in about 1,100 hours of volunteer time.

The patent: I probably invested $10,000 in drawings, application, and patent fees. That does not include the cost of materials. I don't see any way that that's going to come back to me. To me the big payoff is if it gets out on the market and if it's accessible. Some of this adaptive stuff is incredibly expensive. I met with Ed Vater, the president of Bending Branches, and Ed said the company is willing to put the paddle in its product line and forego any profit.

The paddle: I think it feels great. But I'm probably quite biased. But I switched to a saddle system with thermoformed plastic that fits over the shoulder. The paddle itself is adjustable. The shaft is adjustable. The paddle's length is adjustable. Because it uses torso rotation for energy transfer, it should be as efficient as any technical stroke.