

HEALTH AND LEISURE

Tennessee River Blueway Adventure

-by Lark McMillan, staff writer-

In recent years, many cities have created "Greenways," easy trails through beautiful wooded areas or parks. These Greenways are a positive addition to urban life, providing an escape for all people after a hard day at work. Tennessee has taken this idea one step further, inventing one of the nation's first "Blueways." The Blueway is a designated section of the Tennessee River, flowing sixty miles from the Chickamauga Dam to the Nickajack Dam. The Blueway is a diverse section of the river, traversing through Chattanooga and the Tennessee River Gorge, past factories and fields, by urban areas and wild lands.

The Blueway encourages people to get out and enjoy nature via rivers in canoes, kayaks, or motorboats. There are primitive campsites along the river, providing well needed rest spots for weary travelers.

This past October I had the opportunity to paddle this section of river with a good friend of mine, Rachel. On a break from school, we were seeking adventure and fun, as well as an experience none of our peers have had. Due to time constraints, we did not put in at the Chickamauga Dam. Instead, we put in at Coolidge Park, under the walking bridge in downtown Chattanooga. Our plan was to paddle for three days, spending two nights on the river's edge.

We acquired two Cape Horn 17 sea kayaks and outfitted them with our camping gear, stoves, water, and food.



Rachel Brown and Lark McMillan, sea kayaking trip
-photo provided by Lark McMillan-

We would be self-sufficient for a few days out of "civilization." Rachel and I had done several multi-day kayaking trips, so we knew what to expect. We had emergency equipment, should we need it, and the knowledge to do self rescues and to administer first aid in the wilderness. We read up on the Blueway and made reservations at our first primitive campsite. After a few days of preparation, we were ready to go.

Since we had 18 miles to paddle and weren't sure of our rate of travel, our morning started early. Rachel and her dad shuttled our vehicle to the take-out at Nickajack Dam. I packed our boats and guarded them from thieves. It was a cold morning and the sun was still not up as I loaded all of our gear into the green plastic boats. Finally, around 7:30, just after sunrise, Rachel and her dad arrived. We launched off

the shore for our journey. Rachel's dad photographed our start, and I could see he was proud of his adventurous daughter.

The first thing I noticed about the Tennessee River was the smell. I used to swim in the river as a kid and I do not remember the odor being quite so pungent. Time, however, has taken years off the life of the river, and all of the pollution has mounted, creating quite a putrid smell. The water lost part of its beauty with each breath I took.

We tried to ignore the stench as we paddled under the interstate and past the Chattanooga Lookouts baseball stadium. We listened as someone belted the National Anthem at an American Heart Association event at the field. We paddled past factories and barges and once again past the interstate. We paddled by neigh-

borhoods, houses, docks, roads, and restaurants.

I began to wonder what exactly we were hoping to find on this domesticated river. There was no wilderness, not even the slightest hint of it. Fearing for our lives, we hugged the shore, avoiding speedboats and riverboats. We became animals in a zoo. Every passer by pointed like we were an anomaly. Curious people took pictures and filmed us, as their gas powered boat left us behind, wary of the wake and coughing up exhaust fumes.

As we entered the Tennessee River Gorge, the buildings became fewer, until it seemed Rachel and I were the only signs of life, except for the occasional rising fish. *This is why we are here*, I thought to myself, as we paddled down the river in silence. We sought an escape from the hustle of everyday life. We sought refuge in the quiet of nature. The stink of the river subsided, or I became used to it, and I really started enjoying myself. The paddling was easy, and we reached our campsite by two in the afternoon.

The rest of our first day was spent dreaming, either through naps or through our imaginations and an *Outside* magazine. We listened as barges plowed through the water, disrupting the calm and upsetting my nerves. We watched motor boats speed by and blue herons float through the air. At nightfall, we cooked dinner on our camp stove and took a walk down the riverbank. When it got dark, we laid down for bed. *This is the simple life, the*

-Tennessee continued page 13-

Health Corner

Milk 'Em

-by Katie Goetz, staff writer-

- * You need 1000 to 15000 milligrams a day of Calcium (3-4 servings of milk)
- * Women who consumed 3 or more servings of low-fat dairy lost 70% more body fat than those who consumed less than one serving.
- * Calcium is essential because you build bone until around age 30.

MILK MYTH: Milk is hard for the body to digest.

MILK FACT: Unless you are lactose intolerant, dairy products are known as comfort food and digest easily.

Try a Banana Frosty

- 1 Banana
- 1 cup Milk

-Blend together for a delicious, healthy treat!

Illness Awareness

-by Cortney Chatman, section editor-

- * Take care of yourself, it is your body. Make sure to get plenty of rest, drink lots of fluids (not alcoholic), and eat even when you do not want to. Bronchitis should be taken seriously because it can lead to many types of Pneumonia.
- * Many students get Pneumonia. It scars the lungs and most students should not get this. It can result in missed classes and lowered grades.
- * Consider getting vaccines for Meningitis and the flu shot.
- * Spring is the time for allergies. Western North Carolina contains more allergens than most other places in the U.S.
- * At first signs of illness, contact the school nurse, Susan Martin, at 884-8244 or visit the clinic.