FEATURES

Fear and loathing in the wilderness

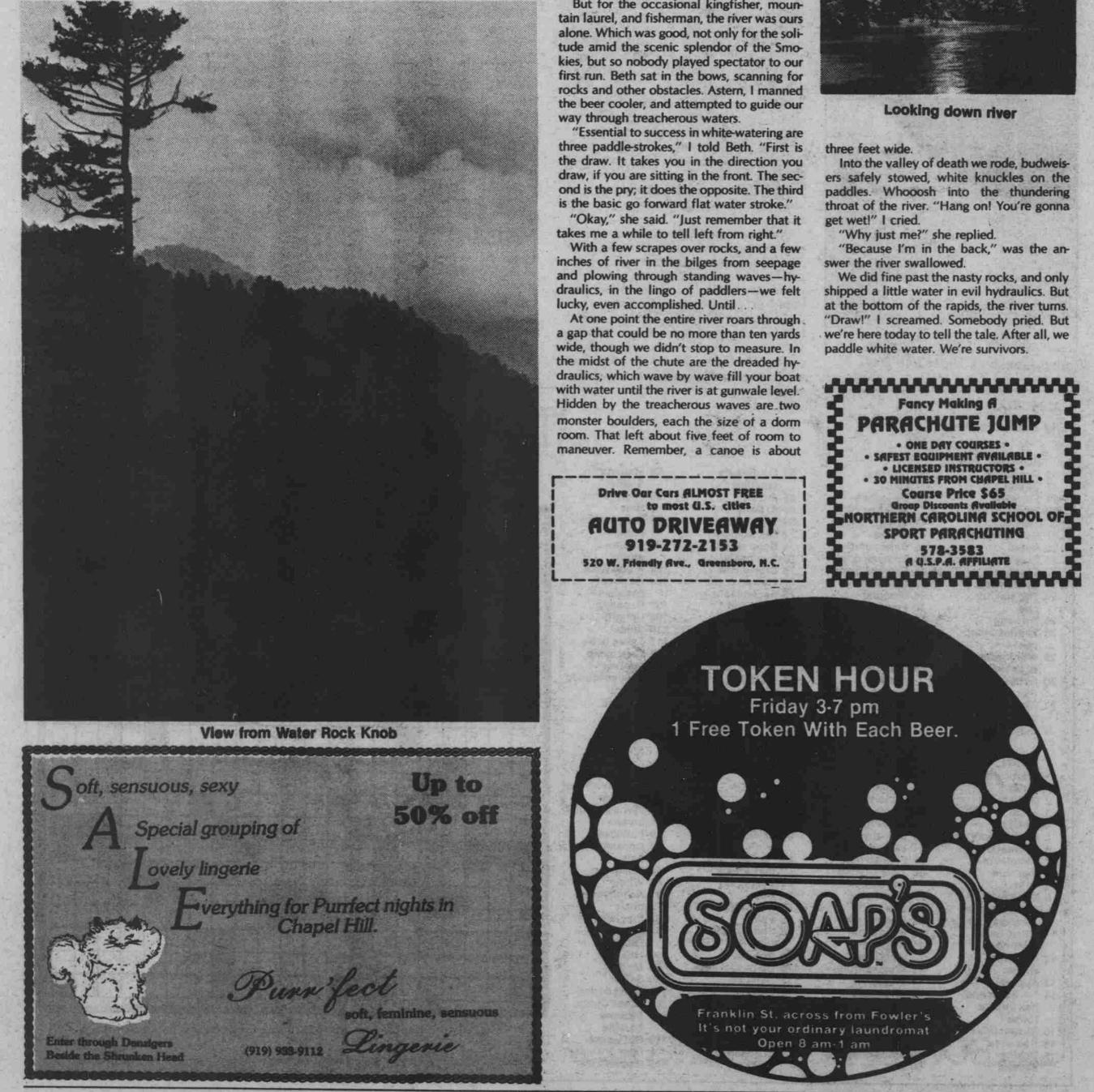
By ALLEN JERNIGAN Special to the Tar Heel pg. 6

Lightning sizzled in the valley. Looking from Water Rock Knob into the darkness of Haywood County, we passed a bottle of Bolla Valpolicella-Waynesville's best-and watched the thunderstorm roll across the Great Smokies. If there ever was a dark and stormy night, this was it.

They could have been twin fireflies, swirling knee-high out of the rhododendron, or luminous eyes swinging this way and that, claws crunching on the ground. Claws! Another flash gave a glimpse of a dark, furry shape. But another warm slash of the dry, red Italian wine lent courage enough to ignore things that scurry in the night.

Sitting on the hood of the car, we spoke of the white water on the Tuckaseegee River, and of the subtle ways of the Cherokee with Floridian tourists. A star or two glimmered behind the clouds, then branches crunched and snapped not twenty-five feet away. Beth sat still and silent as the mountains; I jumped off the car, but never lost my grip on the bottle.

"Let's get out of here!" was enough to



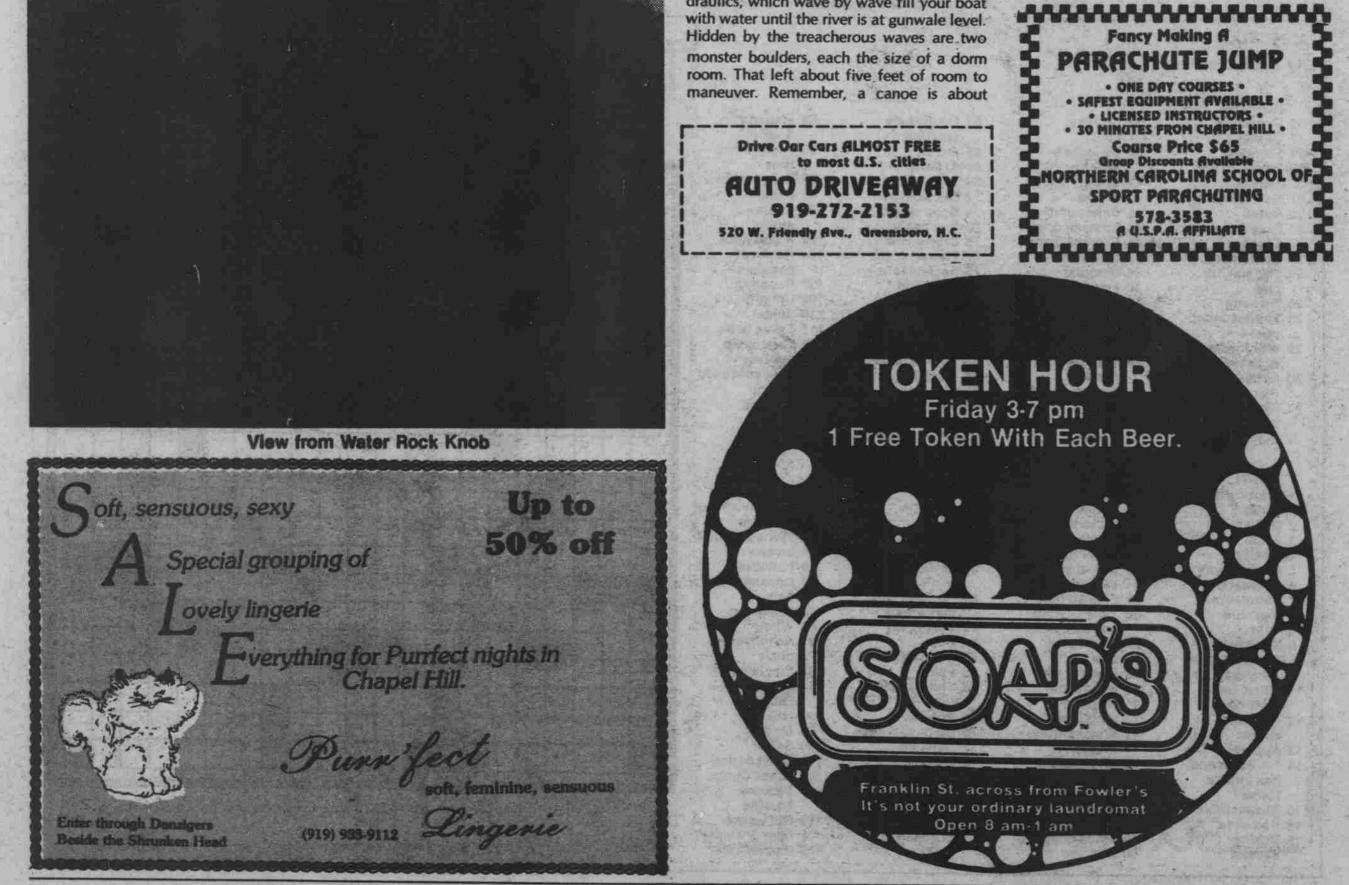
send us both scrambling for door handles. Secure behind locked doors and rolled up windows, we laughed about city folk scared of noises in the night. But we turned on the headlights in time to see Mama Bear rendezyous with Baby Bear, who growled indignantly at the bright intrusion on their tender scene. Mama Bear rose on her hind legs and advanced, pointy teeth gleaming.

Beth's Japanese sewing machine fired up, and we fled the wilderness that is known as the Blue Ridge Parkway. We were no fools. We were deranged white water fanatics. And we were survivors.

But for the occasional kingfisher, moun-







Thursday, July 15, 1982 / The Tar Heel / 7