

DICK MUNSON (special photographer)

Dick Munson leads a group of white-water rafting enthusiasts on the mighty Colorado.

## Rafters challenge white water of roaring Colorado River

By Mike Brudenell  
staff writer

Setting: the bottom of the Grand Canyon, the Colorado River hissing a warning to strangers challenging its churning waters.

Action: a group of men and women tossed about in a foaming current of water, screaming at every lurch, soaked to the skin.

Objective: run the rapids — and survive.

THIS SCENE might be part of a day's shooting of a Hollywood adventure epic, say, "Cannibal Canyon." Or maybe "The Cruel Colorado."

The ingredients are all there: danger, power, the unpredictable. And the players are certainly caught up in the moment, hanging on to the sides of their raft for dear life.

The only thing missing is the director, because this action is real — no stuntmen or special effects to rely on.

This big splash is the work of Redford science teacher Dick Munson, who is about to lead, for the fourth time, an assault on the Grand Canyon, the mighty Colorado River and its razor-sharp sets of rapids.

Munson, 51, a veteran staff member at Thurston High School and active in the Michigan Earth Science Teachers Association, is scheduled to be in Flagstaff, Ariz., on July 15 with his "cast" to begin a six-day, five-night raft trip down the Grand Canyon.

So far 22 persons have signed up for the excursion, open to anyone at least 5 years old and in reasonably good health. There still are eight openings.

"People better get in quick," said Munson, who coaches girls' softball. "Deadline for applications is June 15, or thereabouts."

THE TRIP COSTS \$700 or "just a little more," which includes part of the air fare, all meals, the 200-mile raft expedition and the rental of horses to make the climb out of the Canyon.

The group will run every major rapids in the Grand Canyon, and will make several detours up tributary canyons.

The action, so to speak, will not be all at sea. "We'll be doing some secondary canyon hikes, too,"

explained Munson, who admits to being "a little overweight" and a heavy smoker.

"We climb 400-600 feet in 110-120 degree heat; it can get pretty tough. But I've made it before, so anyone can," he recalled from previous trips in 1974, '76 and '78.

"Each day you come out of it physically tired but mentally refreshed. But after a good night's sleep, you're ready again."

Munson says he trusts people when they say they are in shape to make the trip. "There are no medical examinations necessary," he says. "We leave it up to the individual to have the good sense to know if he or she is capable of a raft trip and camping out."

And the trip itself?

"The scenery is fantastic — a photographer's delight," says Munson. "At night the sky is gorgeous, just full of stars."

"During the day there is plenty of wildlife in the canyon. I've seen one or two Rocky Mountain sheep, several ring-tailed cats, deer, lizards, hawks and eagles. And you're likely to come across snakes, scorpions and velvet ants."

But it's the wild ride down the canyon, through the rapids, which Munson is waiting for.

"The rafts are 30 feet long by 15 feet wide and are powered by a 20-horse power outboard motor. They seat 15 people. There is nothing like the exhilaration, the water spraying over the top of you, the rapids rushing by."

"I haven't seen one flip, but I suppose it's possible. But we have experts with us, and I've got full confidence in them."

"There are no TVs, radios or newspapers where we are," he says. "You have a great meal and sit around discussing the day's events. Just relax and enjoy the surroundings."

What about the meals?

"For breakfast, there are eggs, sausages, hash browns, toast and coffee; for lunch, fresh sandwiches brought in daily; and for dinner... well, in the past I've had steak, pork chops, baked ham, stew, potatoes, vegetables. We even cater for people who are vegetarians."

If you're interested in tackling the Colorado River, contact Munson at Thurston High School, 5525 Schoolcraft, Redford 48239. You can call him there at 535-4000 or at home after 7:30 p.m. at 937-2579. Good rafting!

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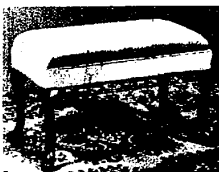
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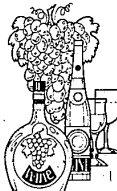
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