

1. It's just awful heavy to carry around
2. There are certain problems involved with contributing the last few uses
3. When it gets packed in like that, it doesn't come out per plan.

I went to the local KOA and presented my KOA Value Card. Bruce, one of the helpful, friendly KOA people at the desk, was happy to give me a little discount on the use of the RV dump station.

I started with Groover #4. It was kind of a "warm up" just to get the hang of the new dumping setup I had devised. I hooked everything up. The lever on the water hydrant was touchy, but produced 80 pounds of cleansing pressure (normal is 40) that is needed to rinse out those RV tanks. It was either all on or all off and you had to get the lever rotated just right with your mouth cocked just the right way or it just didn't work. While the hydrant seemed hit and miss, when the lever was turned just right, the water ran like it was coming out of the bypass tubes of Glen Canyon Dam. The setup worked great and only took a few seconds. Four pounds came out easily. Everything squirted out of my PVC pipe into the not so bright brass receptacle of the septic tank. This was going to be a snap.

Groover #1 was next. The 74 pounds made it a little awkward to handle, but once I had it upside down with the PVC pipe in the receptacle, got the water valve turned to just the right spot and started vigorous shaking, well, things went well, really well, well, almost too well. Once it started flowing out, it came out a bit faster than the receptacle could handle it. No problem though. Keep your feet spread wide, then do a little hose work (when I could convince the hydrant to work) and the concrete pad cleaned right up, everything washing down into the receptacle. OK, a little did get out onto the rock driveway, but I hosed it down until everything melted down into the rocks. Incidentally, sandals were not a good choice of footwear.

Groover #2. Basically the same as Groover #1 but up to 86 pounds. It took a bit longer before things started to happen as the hole was plugged a bit more with the extra volume and weight. I had to shake a bit harder. Finally, when I resorted to banging on the box with a groover lid, the first

plug came out. After that all I need was a few good shakes and gravity to help things along. (It turns out that it's very important to keep the pipe in the receptacle when you shake.) A little extra cleanup required. Had to hose down my ankles this time. Maybe my river boots would have worked well here.

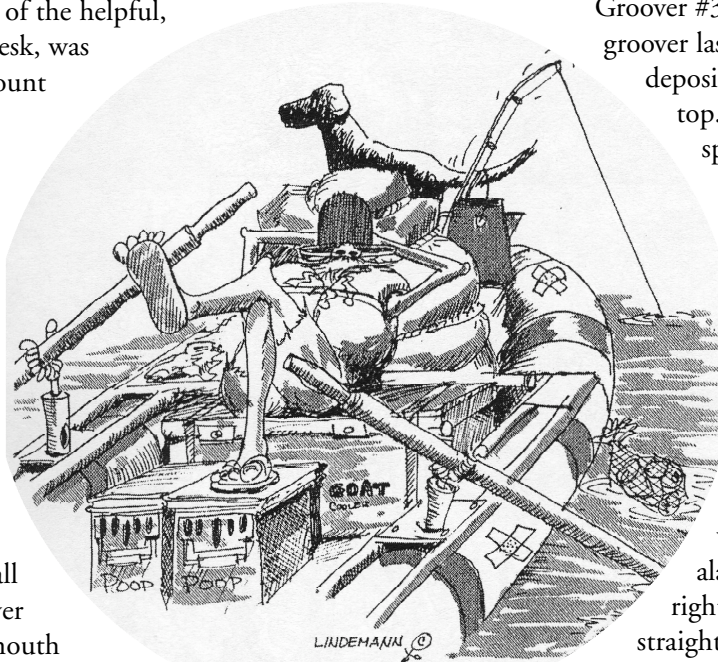


Illustration: Dan Lindemann

Groover #3. A hex on whoever used this groover last. It was 97 pounds of dried up deposits packed hard and right to the top. There was not any unused space inside the box, thus nobody topped it off with river water for the ride home. But back to work.

I hooked up the hose, the PVC drain pipe and flipped the lever on the hydrant. Nothing happened. I kept playing with the lever and had it just where I thought it should be to produce water with that fire hose pressure, but alas, nothing. I flipped the box right side up. The PVC pipe sticking straight up looked like a mortar tube waiting for someone to drop a shell in. I took a look down the pipe. There was nothing but, well, you know.

About this time Bruce from the office walks out and says "How's it going. 'Bout done?" I explained that I didn't think the hydrant was pumping water. He says he can't imagine it's not running. So, he kicks the lever, bends over and starts to take a look down the PVC pipe. As he is bending over I notice the aluminum sides of the groover swelling outward. As I'm trying to decide whether to step back or voice a warning, the sides suddenly suck in and "PLUMPF!!!" Something (guess what) shoots up out of the PVC pipe and blows Bruce's head upwards. He flips back onto the gravel. His face is covered with icky goo. He opens his mouth (a major mistake) and screams, "Oh shoot," (I'm pretty sure it was "shoot.") and starts yelling for me to hose him off. It would have been easier if he hadn't been jumping around and sputtering like a cannibal who just got a big bite of rancid British explorer. And he would have been much better off keeping his mouth shut while I was hosing his face.

Anyway, once we got that little problem cleaned up, Bruce headed back to the store muttering something about a shower. I inverted the groover, put the PVC pipe in the receptacle and with a little shaking, everything came out just fine. (Some clean up required, I'm *(continued on next page)*)

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thinking about getting a pair of those muluks that go above the calf) Those KOA people are really helpful and friendly.

I'm not sure if I can empty the groovers at KOA again. I stopped on the way out to check on Bruce. The nice lady at the desk said he couldn't talk to me as he wasn't feeling very good. I, however, was feeling pretty fine as my groover duty was finished.

R.J. Stephenson

R. J. would have benefited from the experience of Scott Phair. Are groover men born or molded?

WHY GROOVERS ARE IMPORTANT TO ME

While far from an expert, I have produced a calendar titled "Grooving in Grand Canyon." I have participated in Groover Olympics (full bag toss-46 ft.) in a Seligman disposal site. I have more than a passing interest in the subject. I discovered on my first trip in 1986 that many folks have an aversion to taking care of their own crap, literally.

Not having many river talents in my budding whitewater career, I quickly saw my chance to significantly improve my chances for the highly coveted INVITATION. Almost shyly at first, then with ever increasing enthusiasm, I would ask to either set up, take down or carry the groover. I soon became aware of the underlying complexities of this key position's part in the forming of 16 individuals into a team. Oh sure, there are the easy parts like location (easy but key) and the amount of paper needed (one roll per person for every 5 days). But what about the agonizing decisions regarding the best granular bleach to use for aroma (my personal favorite is Clorox Blue) or buying either the Star or the National Inquirer as reading materials to expedite the quick release mechanism for those early morning visitors to the groove (buy both). Not to mention the health and safety issues that can change the dynamics of a trip in a hurry. So I became a "student of the game" and confess I may be the only person on the planet who goes straight to the Camp Toilets section of the NRS catalog when it comes to my house (any new systems?).

In three subsequent GC trips, I was the "groover man." My boat was the only one to get heavier as the days progressed. I like that at Lava. I rarely have to entertain my fellow boatmen on my boat and love to visit them for boat drinks. I am the one who shows up at the first campfire holding a trash bag with some sand in it and exclaims, "Who pissed in the groover?#@%!" This is always a good segue to hand washing, use of paper products and the basics of groover etiquette.

Over the years I have treasured memories of many multi day trips in all kinds of environments. The groover system is always the crown jewel of that treasury, from the most primitive (the dreaded "E-Tool with the TP on the handle) to a space-age plastic bucket and attached breathing

apparatus (the apparatus was for the poop, not the people). The human waste disposal system isn't sexy (to most people anyway), but, it is required by law on most rivers. It is working best when noticed least. Being from Maine, I live in an outhouse culture and have found the true value of wood over plastic for seating purposes in cold weather. We also know that freezing is an acceptable, if short term, groover technique.

I now have a few more whitewater skills after guiding commercially for 20+ years. Some folks are still freaked by doing their business outdoors. I am still getting invited on trips to cool places and do unusual things. I have my eye out for groovy items and funky places to drop a load. Trains and planes have a scary guillotine thing and those appliances take a lot of the fun out of it so I use them as little as possible. Grooving is a way of life and one of the things that every human has in common, no matter what! Surprisingly, I don't find that many people share the depth of my interest in this fascinating subject. It's even tough to bring it up. I've tried "Hey, what do you know about grooving?" but it doesn't work.

Are groover men born? Can just the right set of circumstances conspire to create the forge in which the groover man is molded? Or, are they born to it? I can't answer that for sure, but I think it's a long slow process to become a groover man, a process that simply can't be hurried.

Scott Phair

Scott Phair's questions become a bit philosophical about groover men. But in our next story, Scott Knies theorizes about the question that many inquiring minds ask and want to know ...

"THE THEORY OF GAPERTIVITY"

Right before a March 1999 private trip, I had been skiing at Lake Tahoe in California where I shared a chairlift with some young Tahoe-area locals who were calling all the non-locals "gapers" — you can picture them mucking up a beautiful snowboard run by standing still in the middle of a chute with their mouths wide open (typically in an oval), a far away look in their eyes, oblivious to everything else. Needless to say, this fresh and useful slang word was quickly adopted for our Grand Canyon spring trip, as we had several first timers along who were gaping from the put-in. We all went with it: the person who misread the river guide was the navi-gaper; the one breaking into the beer bag early in the afternoon was the insti-gaper . . . you get the picture.

Several days into the trip, we camped at Lava Canyon and the groover was strategically placed in the front porch of the Morning Star mine. It was here, in this very moment as one of the kayakers descended the trail after "last call for the groover" while the rafts were being rigged, that the Theory of Gapertivity was discovered for all

of humanity when he posed the immortal question: "If you can see people from the groover does than mean they can also see you?"
Scott Knies

So much for philosophy. But here's a GC story with a TP twist that poses one of life's most important decisions.

DISASTER AT DUBENDORF

I launched a motorized private trip in early May, 1988. To set the scene; After scouting Dubendorf we had a huge disaster in the lower 'dragon's teeth'. The 30' S-rig came to a sudden halt, firmly stuck on the rocks and threatening to flip from the huge pressure wave created behind the boat. First I ordered all the personal gear off the raft and as the chambers were popping and the boat was sinking I then ordered 9 of 14 people off the raft into the raging tail waves... I watched as my wife, my young daughter, my sister and my friends leaped into the rapid.

With myself and three of my most capable men still on the wreck, we began releasing valves to get the boat to come loose. With a bang, the motor broke off the transom and went to the bottom, and the boat came free. We managed to drift to the left bank where we were able to tie up on a small spit of sand... Once we got everyone together on the same side of the river the reality began to set in. They looked at the wreck and then to me and said. "What are we going to do now?" I said firmly; "We're going to fix it." That's all it took to mobilize the team into repair frenzy. We spent two days sewing the torn rubber, cutting and bolting broken and bent frames and solving dozens of problems to put something together that would float us out of the canyon... With no personal gear and much of our food and supplies washed down the river, we slept on our life jackets and lived in the clothes we were wearing.

During the repair time, with the beach strewn with the remnants of our trip, a commercial rowing trip stopped by to offer help. While I talked with the boatman, all the commercial passengers were walking through the wreckage 'pointing' and 'ooing' as if they were on a movie set... One of my guys yelled out "hey Shirl, you put on a great simulated ship wreck." As they were loading up to go, the boatman asked us if there was anything else we needed. An almost unanimous call went up from my people, "TOILET PAPER." The boatman smiled and asked, "Pink or Blue?"

Shirl Dickey

Perhaps, before we go further, we could use a bit of groover advise from a couple of experienced GC boaters. Unfortunately,

even with their expertise, things can still go to pot.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Locations ... North Canyon and Pumpkin Springs have stunning views; never used any system other than rocket boxes BUT I like the 25mm boxes (more stable) and ALWAYS a riser(I've used sticks in a pinch). I have never done the scat machine thing after a trip...I'd rather pay someone else to do it as I've heard it is messy and takes lots of time. On most of my trips I and my partner in crap carrying, RicardO, generally are the "groover twins." I believe it takes a seasoned veteran boatman to evaluate sites properly and I hate it when a passenger hurriedly puts up a tent in prime groover real estate..."move it or you'll be sharing this tent like an outhouse." Always remember, "location, location, location!"

Under "getting to know your neighbor" - let's not forget that the groover man develops an insight for group health as well, a lot can be told during the quick glance as he performs the daily task of closing up the box. Seems to me good groover sites seem to be mostly upstream of camp. I find stable flat ground to be an important component of any suitable site...which brings up a story....

We were camped at Cardenas and the groover was put upstream right at the brink of an eroding river bank flanked by tammies. Placement was courtesy of an inexperienced passenger who always wanted to help the poor tired boatmen. Unfortunately, to get the groover more level, he had placed two rocks under the front to compensate for the erosion. The next morning the PH, who was a rather large fellow, dislodged the rocks when he sat down to do his business and then well, many folks ran over to help but no one could do much except roar with laughter...

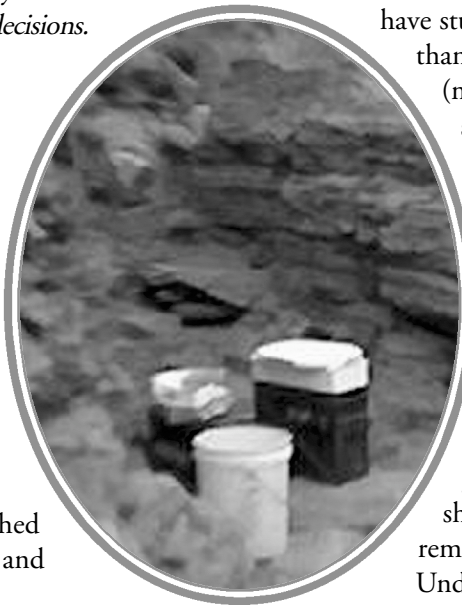
*Doc Thomas,
with a little help from Ricardo*

The advise to keep your groover on solid ground is more important that you might imagine. Here are two stories to prove just that.

SAVED BY THE TOILET

I was "Headman" on our late June launch 2002 private Canyon run. I set the PRO rental toilet up in the obviously standard place in that little campsite right across the river from Deer Creek Falls. Packing it up about eight o'clock the next morning — one of the last chores before leaving, of course — I set the seat

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assembly on that big, slanted chunk of rock right at river's edge to keep it out of the sand while I snapped the lid on the rocket box. A wind came along and slid the seat assembly off the rock and into the river, which is eight or ten feet below bank level at that spot. It immediately started sinking slowly out of sight because of the metal parts on it. The river was muddy at the time, and I couldn't see into the water well enough to know if it was rock-free directly below me.

Not being totally stupid, I didn't chance jump after it risking injury or worse. I quickly ran downstream to river level and back upstream as far as I could — which isn't far — trying to find it. I swam out and was feeling around with my feet, dove a couple times, but didn't feel a thing. Several of us poked around with raft oars for about a half hour. No seat. We finally pushed on, and of course I got kidded about it the whole day.

We camped at The Ledges that night, below Upset Rapids. I was up shit creek, especially with the women on the trip because there's no toilet seat. Just before dark, I was sitting next to the water carving and lashing some sticks together for a makeshift seat, when some eagle eye up a little higher shouted out, "Toilet seat, toilet seat, toilet seat!" Floating down the other side of the river was the ring from our seat assembly. All the metal parts and the plastic lid were probably on the bottom still above Deer Creek Falls, but the ring made the 15.5 mile trip in 12 hours — through holes, eddies, do-gooder trash-picker-upper boaters and whatever else. We didn't have the whole assembly, but the important part came through, and it was enough. I was saved!

Hank Hays

RATTLESNAKES AND GROOVERS

We were camped at Rattlesnake campsite on the Snake River. I always want the "groover-mon" to set us up with privacy and a view. The obvious site was a little uphill from

the camp with a great view and obvious trail. "Oh, no" Dave said, "we saw a snake up there." No amount of cajoling could get him to put it in the obvious place. He then set it up along the shore upstream. About an hour later, I looked out into the eddy to see my Johnny Partner floating away in the rising river. With haste, I dived in and returned it to shore. Fortunately, he hadn't removed the lid and being watertight, it didn't sink.

Douglas Rhodes

Seems like rattlesnakes and groovers must like the same locations. But can snakes change your attitude about groover use?

RATTLESNAKES AND GROOVERS II

On our Grand trip in '97, down somewhere past Lava, we camped on the right. I walked down a trail in search of a groover location. Found one, too, but a huge rattlesnake had gotten there first. So I set up the groover about 20 feet from camp, not particularly hidden. It was a two-person trip, and the other of us just didn't look over there at critical times.

Worked fine, and we did it that way thereafter, on that trip and trips elsewhere. I don't know why I ever worried about hiding the thing, though sometimes out of convenience I'd put it down a trail where lots of large groups had apparently put theirs. Thanks to the rattlesnake that started this new procedure.

Thomas Rampton

Chemicals. Can't groove without them. Or, maybe we could. Check out these two short stories.

PROPER USE OF LYE

I'm reminded of a trip on the Middle Fork of the Salmon in the mid-90s. There were 8 of us in 2 boats including 3 young boys (7-11?). We were using lye to keep the smell down so everyone was told to sprinkle some in after use. One morning one of the boys had gone up and

Those Big Waves In Hermit

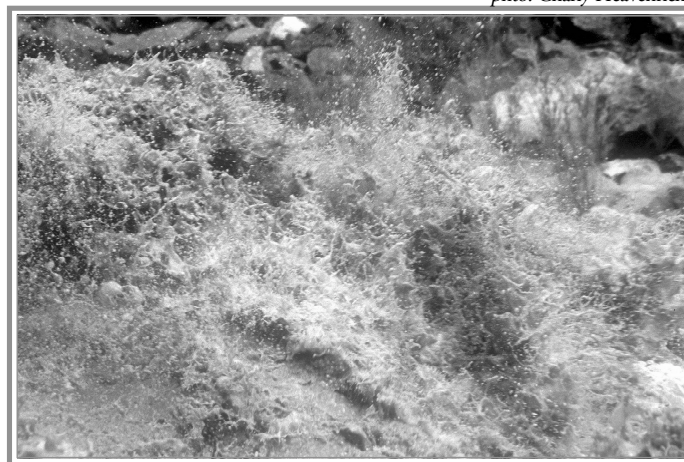


photo: Charly Heavenrich