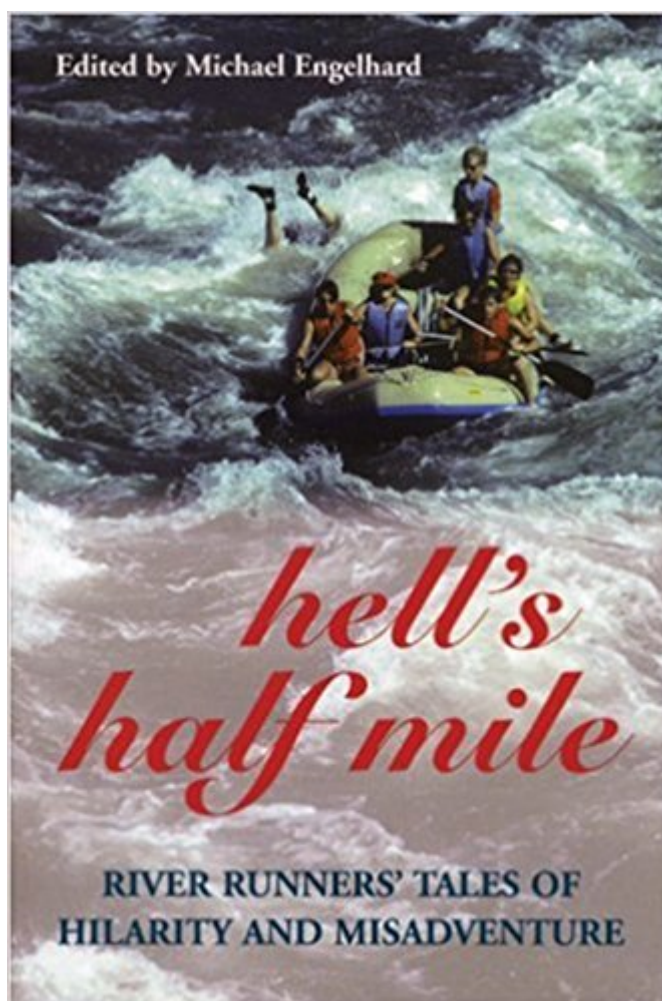


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# Hell's Half Mile: River Runners' Tales Of Hilarity And Misadventure



## Synopsis

A collection of 27 tales from river runners and outdoors writers about rafting trips gone wrong. These stories range from the hilarious to the horrifying: men overboard, capsized boats, bear attacks, whirlpools and waves that whiten the hair, and tourist encounters that are even worse. Includes excellent writing from Pete Fromm, John Nichols, Edward Abbey, R.M. Patterson, Craig Childs, Brad Dimock and other well-known outdoors writers. The collection is one-third previously published pieces and two-thirds new material. Michael Engelhard is an anthropologist and an outdoors instructor. He writes natural history and travel pieces for Northern Lights, Plateau Journal, Wild Earth and other publications. He lives in Moab, Utah.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

White-water rafting on a wild river: it's a dream adventure for many, but one that few ever experience. This collection of 30 river experiences will please those who have, but it will be especially welcome to the armchair rafter. Some tales are merely "tall," others outrageously outsized, such as the one about the canoe-riding bear, but most recount the real adventures of those who maneuvered the rapids and portaged the gear. And while the title, Hell's Half Mile, is generally used to describe a stretch of the Grand Canyon's portion of the Colorado River, readers also visit Idaho's Selway, Alaska's Kongakut, the Missouri, and others. Each piece is accompanied by a biography of the river guide who wrote it, many of whom have second careers as writers, and all, it's obvious, loved their time spent mostly wet and half-frozen. An interesting and inspiring collection, suitable for libraries where there is an interest in the outdoors. Danise Hoover

"A high-water mark in river running humor from the guides and the misguided." -- &#x97;Tim Cahill, author of *Pass the Butterworms and Pecked to Death by Ducks*"Full of great tales, funny stories, and river lore." -- &#x97;Peter Stark, author of *Last Breath and Driving to Greenland*"Hell&#x92;s Half Mile represents the best in humorous outdoors writing and the lowest in guide culture." -- &#x97;John Weisheit, co-founder of Colorado River Guides, co-author of *Cataract Canyon*, and Conservation Director of Living Rivers"Lets you live your fantasy: you-are-on a wild river with a gang of cynical, wide-eyed, honest, and mordantly hilarious companions." -- &#x97;Mary Sojourner, author of *Solace and Bonelight*

The description on the front cover "River runners' tales of misadventure and hilarity" made me buy this book. Frankly, I have never read anything so banal and mundane as the "tales" told within. Waste of time to read. I worked as a river guide for only 7 years, and can remember many misadventures and tales of hilarity that would easily surpass the drivel contained in these pages. I like the concept, but was very disappointed in the content. Nothing like "Pecked to Death by Ducks", which if you haven't read, I would highly recommend.

If you've ever been a river guide you'll love this collection. The author knows his water.

entertaining fun to read would buy again

Haven't read yet but looks to be a good read. Mike

This was a gift for someone so I will just review what they said. They said the book was interesting but really slow paced at times. It would be really interesting in some parts and really boring in others.

Whitewater rafting is one of the most popular sports in the United States. Every year hundreds of thousands of tourists and avid "river rats" float every type of river in the country. Challenging rivers like the Colorado through the Grand Canyon to the Middle Fork of the Salmon in Idaho, from the Tuolumne in California to the Gauley in West Virginia, are routinely rafted by adventurers seeking the challenge and thrill of facing these liquid locomotives. It is not uncommon to wait up to 15 years

for a private permit and up to 3 years for a seat on a commercial raft trip through the Grand Canyon. Predictably, there are numerous books about individual whitewater rafting experiences and a respectable number that explain how to participate in the sport with or without the benefit of a guide. In addition, a few former guides have written books about their experiences but remarkably there are few anthologies written by river guides that purport to tell the truth about river running on western rivers. This book seeks to remedy that oversight by providing stories from 30 former and current "river rats" that will provide as good a description as one is likely to get of the less than scientific method of river running as practiced by a bunch of "...misfits and misanthropes, dreamers and daredevils, weekend warriors and professional guides, nataphobes and bibliophiles, "established voices" and undiscovered gems." In short, these are stories purported to be factual from a group that's primary claim to fame is storytelling regardless of the truth. It is that and much more. The stories of kayakers, dory men, canoeists, rafters and assorted others are humorous, thoughtful, questionable, and a reminder of the river lore that has lured rafters to water since Huckelberry Finn. There are stories about nude canoeists, games and pranks favored by river guides, lost tourists on the river and a host of others that provide a hard-to-put down account of both adventures and misadventures on western rivers. Not to be missed is Jessica Maxwell's account of forcing herself to face the "grim river reaper" that is probably more true for a number of rafters than they would, or will, admit. While some of the essays appear to be designed to glorify the writer they are more than offset by the works of such legends as Bruce Berger, John Nichols, Scott Thybony, Brand Dimock and Edward Abbey. To read these eclectic accounts of river experiences is to be introduced to wilderness writings of the first order. Highly recommended.

They always have names like Satan's Gut, Graveyard, Skull, Widowmaker and Disaster Falls, but would be better named I Want My Mommy, Get Me Outta' Here or I Need A Hug. For some, rapids make life on the river worth living, but if you've ever had a "fish-eye" view of your raft as it charges downstream (without you) you know there's more to rivers than staying in the boat. In this anthology of river stories, appropriately named "Hells' Half Mile: River Runners' Tales of Hilarity and Misadventure," author Michael Engelhard gathers thirty of the best, funniest and most poignant river stories to savor. You'll be introduced to the river gods that must be placated with dances, rituals and not an insignificant amount of alcohol. Here too is where frozen Butterball turkeys make their debut in Gore Canyon. These yarns and more, from river legends and luminaries such as Edward Abbey, John Nichols, Brad Dimock, Katie Lee, Scott Thybony and Richard Bangs should "wet" your appetite for some cruises (in your hammock). They recount the inglorious, meditative, stupendous,

ridiculous moments that occur on, in, near or leaving the force that compels us to ride the seam between absolute bliss and bowel-flushing fright.

Love passing time reading these tales. It really helps you to know your not the only one who has experienced calamity on the water.

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