

## ***Scott Imsland - Whatever It Takes to Kayak the Stanislaus River!!!***

Scott Imsland guided for ARTA from the mid 1960's in California, then Idaho, and ending in Grand Canyon from 1972-1987 for AZRA. Scott writes: "With one last run on the Stan in 1981 with my friend Paul Begovac, I felt it necessary to bring my sax on that run as a Memorial tribute. I played Amazing Grace and some melodies from my heart and soul. In that moment, I blew the Stan up to the heavens where others could enjoy the good times she provided us."

After Scott did his Sax Memorial, excited for the adventure ahead, he and Paul pushed their kayaks into the Stanislaus River for Day 1. Paul paddled down to Suspension Bridge and pulled over river right to film Scott.

Scott finished Suspension Bridge Rapid and pulled into this little eddy on river left. It was only a couple of feet deep but Scott went over after hitting a hidden rock crossing the eddy line and drifted against a shore ledge where his upside-down kayak got pinned. Across the river, Paul watched Scott in this dangerous position thrashing underneath the little ledge trying to get out. Paul scrambled down to his kayak to go help Scott and then Scott finally broke out of the kayak and surfaced, without his paddle - or his right shoe!

Once we regained our wits, making a paddle was absolutely necessary, as Scott had no way to finish the trip without a one. So, he made a paddle out of a sapling cut down with a Swiss Army knife and knocked out the Holloform kayak foam support cutting a block out for the blade, using his remaining shoestring to attach it all. River guide ingenuity!



Scott had to carefully navigate Bailey Falls, Widowmaker, and other rapids with the foam paddle to keep water away from an already-loose spray skirt so the cockpit wouldn't fill with water. This was even trickier due to all the gear we had stuffed into our kayaks, making them awkward and heavy. Luckily, a little bit downriver, Scott found a raft paddle to make his rescue paddle complete. Later that day we ran into some rafters who had found Scott's real paddle but were reluctant to return it. Scott sweet-talked them and they returned his paddle so we could carry on with our trip. We made it to Razorback for camp on the first night, celebrating Scott's near drowning survival, the beauty of the rapids we had just run, consuming most of our beer for the trip that night. One-of-a-kind experience, only with Scott.

We started Day 3 knowing we were going to observe a different Stanislaus River, with the New Melones Dam filling to reach the upper Stan that Spring. As we drifted downstream, the river current gave way to a meandering flow. The water began swallowing the base of trees and the riverbanks were rising higher. Soon, trees became completely drowned with the rising water, standing there like flowers in a vase. The meandering current started to give out and we began to have to paddle the now newly forming lake waters. As we approached Parrott's Ferry Bridge, floating debris was evident, growing to the point that we had to paddle through a solid debris field just to reach the shore. Scott writes, "We joined Gar Dubois on the Parrott's Ferry Bridge at take out and said our goodbyes and shared our good times together, cave exploring and rafting and all the good friends we made."

What a trip, what a river, what a memory we have to this day!

Scott Imsland and Paul Begovac, October 2023 [See more about this trip on StanislausRiver.org](http://StanislausRiver.org)