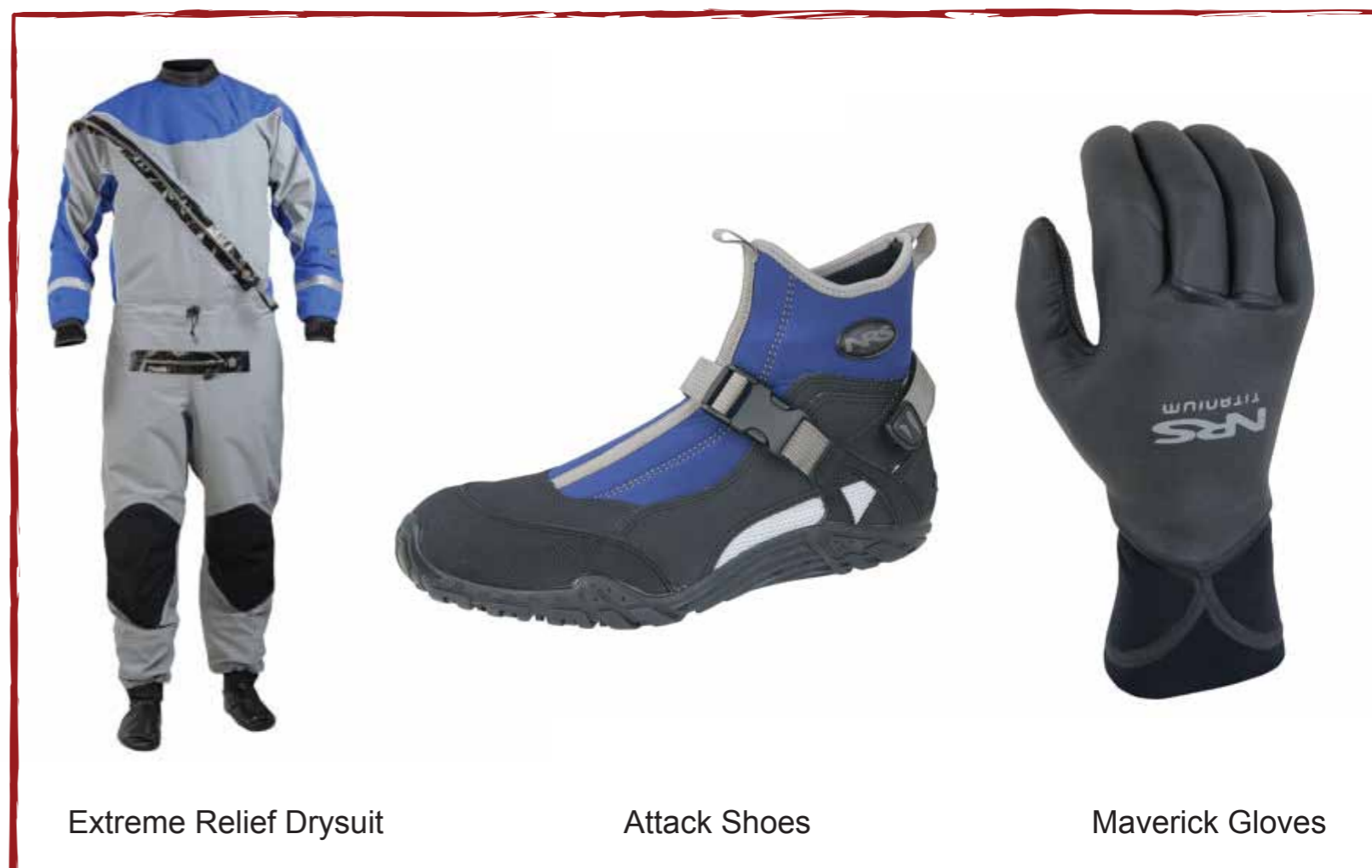


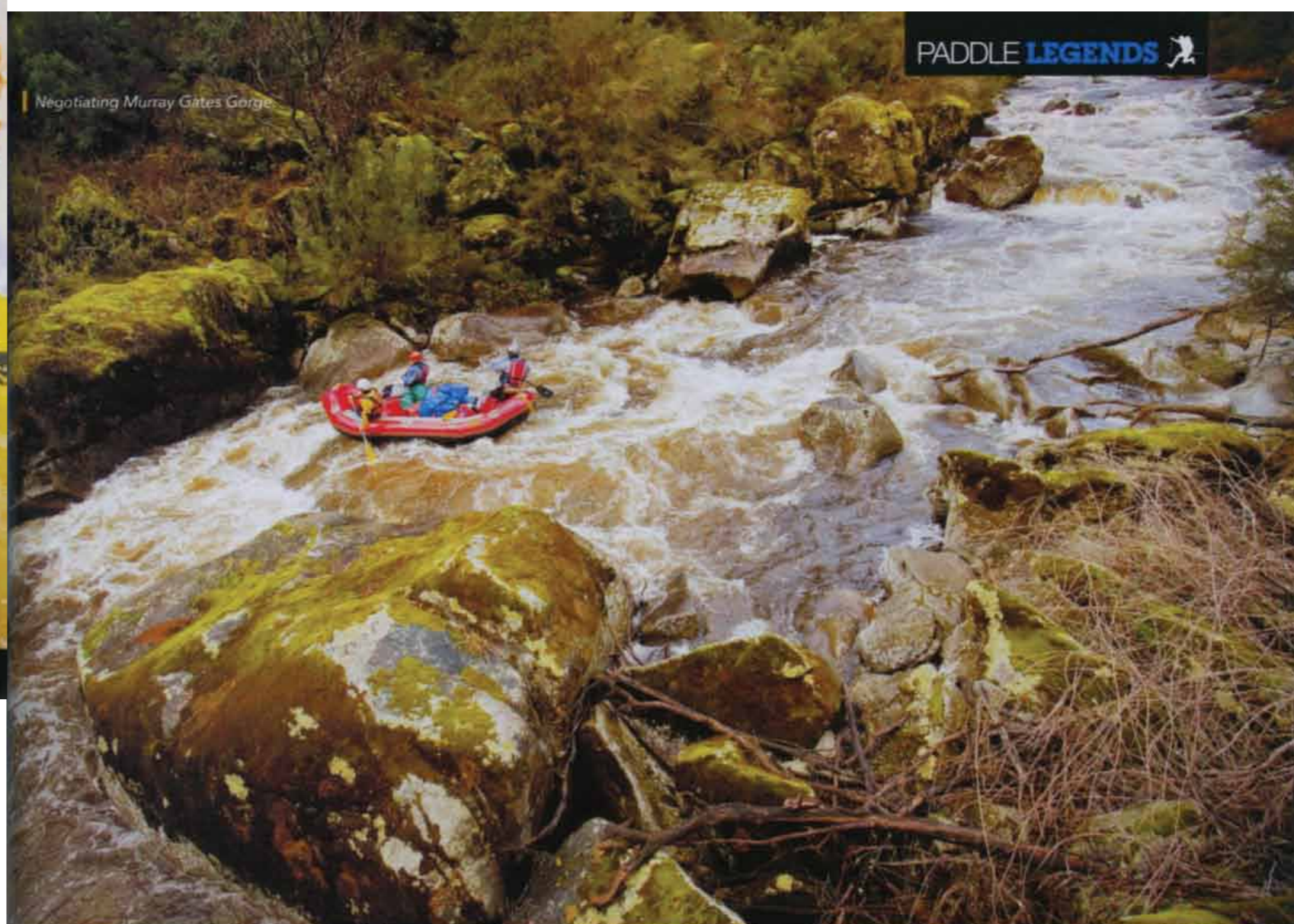
Aug-Sept 2010 Australia's *Outer Edge* Magazine Featuring NRS Extreme Relief Drysuit, Attack Shoes & Maverick Gloves.



Extreme Relief Drysuit

Attack Shoes

Maverick Gloves



Geared Up

If it's too cold to get wet, only a drysuit is going to keep you happy - the **NRS Extreme Relief Drysuit (RRP \$900)** is durable, waterproof and breathable. Basically, it's a paddler's best winter friend.

Made from NRS's proprietary canvas-like 'Triton' waterproof-breathable fabric, the Extreme Relief is so named for the feeling enjoyed by the male of the species (and by crafty females with cut Coke bottles...) when the call of nature can be answered with a quick tear-open of the horizontal crotch zipper. You get into the suit via the diagonal zipper that runs down from the right shoulder. Once you're in, thick Latex wrist cuffs, and a latex neck collar (technically called 'gaskets'), in conjunction with some nifty built-in Latex booties, keep the water out. The suit's sleeves, legs and neck extend well past the Latex, and do up snugly with Velcro-fasteners, and rubberised wrist and ankle cuffs.

My Extreme Relief proved breathable enough (layered with next-to-skin merino and then a thin moisture wicking fleece), and even withstood hellish river bank blackberries without so much as a slow leak. In the foot department, with a thick pair of merino socks inside the booties, a pair of **NRS Hydrosocks (RRP \$58)** on the outside, all stuffed into a pair of tacky, hard-wearing **NRS Attack boots (RRP \$78)**, everything stayed warm and dry.

Finally, the cold-handed shouldn't miss a pair of **NRS Maverick gloves (RRP \$78)**. Heavy-duty Neoprene with a grippy textured palm insulated with flecks of heat reflecting titanium, they actually proved a little too toasty during my paddle through the Murray Gates.

Geared Up

NRS EXTREME RELIEF DRYSUIT
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For more information, visit nrsweb.com. For local outlets, call Velocity Watersports on (03) 8339 0631, or visit velocitywatersports.com.au

in the early 1970s, and that's when the hermit story really began.

Access at that time was extremely difficult. It's 44km from Corryong and you won't find it on Google Maps even now. Back then, a very rough logging road passed a kilometre or so from the farm, and it was a hike in from there. Pop set up a simple shelter, and negotiated with the landowner to buy a few acres from the ridge to the river, including a creek, where he arranged for a micro-scale hydro-electricity plant to be built - from a paddlewheel and bits of an old washing machine, wired to an array of lead-acid batteries.

The old plant is still there, but the paddlewheel has since been replaced. Solar panels provide supplementary power and the driveway leads out onto a long, winding dirt track to the highway.

Ian doesn't know what year he was born, but he reckons he's about 75. Pop died in 2000, when he was in his early 90s.

"Still a grumpy old bastard," granddaughter Julie says. The property was passed down to Ian and it's now an extended-family holiday spot. No one lives there permanently anymore but there's still Pop Thompson memorabilia all through the three-room hut where he lived.

Pop came to Australia from England with his family when he was nine, Diane tells me. They arrived in Perth and travelled overland to Melbourne, eventually ending up in and around Wodonga.

"He had a pretty hard life," she says. Before he divorced his wife Susanne May and entered his hermitage, Frank had another son, Colin (who died not long ago), and three daughters, one of whom, Francis, a year older than Ian, lives in Wodonga.

Ian clears up one myth: Pop never went to war. He worked on the railroads and wasn't called up because his efforts ended up being vital to the war effort. But he confirms that his dad was indeed a champion rifleman.

"He had a couple of Shetland ponies, and dogs, and he just loved living here alone," says Diane.

He also knew how to tickle fish, she says. "In the dark areas, you creep up to them, and you reach under them, and you tickle them underneath, and you're able to pick them up."

It's not entirely clear why Pop Thompson became a hermit. If the family knows, they're not saying. They do tell me that his marriage broke up and he came here to get away. Julie reckons it was to repent for his sins.

When I bring up the gold, Ian's story aligns with that of Trevor Davis from Tom Groggin, but no one knows anything about the theft. The family agree, though, that if it had happened, he wouldn't necessarily have told them.

"It's probably buried in the garden," Julie titters.

Whatever his reasons, before he embroidered himself into the fabric of local lore, it seems Pop came out to the Murray simply to plug into the wilderness. It's the same for anyone who likes to get out into the bush - including us four happy paddlers, who've made it through the first run of the season, leaving the Murray Gates swinging on their hinges.

Rafting Australia can take you through the Murray Gates, but you'll need to do a less-intense paddle or two first. Give Linton a call on (02) 6077 1164, or visit raftingaustralia.com