

Long on Family Values

A STRONG NUCLEAR MANAGERIAL STAFF
ALLOWS CASCADE RAFT AND KAYAK TO
DIVERSIFY COMFORTABLY



Four generations of Longs, off the water and color coordinated into immediate families. The Longs' South American kayak school base (below) in Pucon, Chile.

By Joe Jackson

WHEN CHAD LONG REFERS TO HIS FATHER AND SEMI-BOSS, HE rarely uses formalities. The kayak school coordinator for Cascade Raft and Kayak on Idaho's Payette River usually doesn't weigh you down with his father's given name or say "my father" when he tells you stories of how the man, Tom Long, started the company's kayak school in 1991—ish. He simply refers to him as, "Dad." Cascade Raft and Kayak is a family company in the oldest-fashioned sense of the term.

Tom and Debbi Long and their three sons—Kenneth, Chad, and Tren along with their wives Anne, Krista, and Linzie—run all aspects of the outfitter and its (numerous) offshoots. While many look at doing business with family as a curse, Chad sees it as an opportunity to diversify their company by maintaining a trustworthy managerial core.

"We [brothers] have all been in and around the company since we were younger," says Chad. "We then developed more in our own interests." Chad's interest is teaching people how to kayak. He started helping at the kayak school when he was 13. Making his clients feel safe and comfortable is of the utmost importance to him.

"For me it [kayaking] has never been about an elitism thing," he says. "I want to soften the experience for beginners, not make it harder for others just because I took my licks in the head."



In this vein, the kayak school has a three-to-one (maximum) student-teacher ratio. Long also has a uniform and dress code for his guides, something that can seem like making punk rock mainstream—cheapening the soul of it. But Chad's logic for doing this makes sense.

"When people come off of a bus [to raft or kayak for the first time] they are probably out of their comfort zone," explains Chad. "The uniform is a T-Shirt. The shirt says [to the client] 'I am an employee, come talk to me.' We want to put them at ease."

Chad's older brother Kenneth is in charge of operations and the com-

Photography Courtesy of Linzie Long

Chad has adopted the kayak school, which his father, Tom, started circa 1991.



A diversified business calls for versatile vehicles.

mercial rafting portion of Cascade Raft and Kayak, which has roughly 35 rafts and can comfortably accommodate groups of 250 clients. Youngest brother Tren and his wife, Linzie, run the photography as well as website maintenance and IT. Mother Debbi and Linzie do a majority of the marketing. Chad's wife, Krista, is in charge of catering, an on-site café, and retail. And finally the patriarch of this whitewater clan, father Tom, is in charge of childcare as well as being the family's utility player.

"Dad's our all around guy," says Chad.

Chad says this familial specialization, as well as his father's degree in hotel management, has helped the Longs offer even more than whitewater rafting, photos and a kayak school. It enabled them to pursue a catering company, just another addition to their repertoire born from filling a need.

"We get big groups who are on vacation and they are hungry," says Chad. "It seemed like a no-brainer."

Another need the Long family fills is travel. Cascade Raft and Kayak is further diversified in that it runs a kayak school out of property they

own in Pucon, Chile.

"We [the entire family] all travel en mass to Chile," Chad says. They then take similar roles in running the kayak school there, just with an almost entirely Long staff and considerably fewer clients.

The Long family is also consulting real-estate developers, who are planning the construction of beginner-friendly whitewater parks.

These parks would significantly soften a paddler's first experiences with the sport by making water features less forceful and funelling swimmers into calm waters.

"We have elite whitewater in Idaho. Instead of trying to create something that is already there, we are trying to augment something that isn't there," Chad says.

Chad looks at the Long's family-focused business strategy as one of the major reasons they have spread out.

"A unique thing is the depth we have in managerial strength. For many, family business is difficult, but for us it is a source of great strength.

"Plus we have a ton of mouths to feed."

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!



www.paddlermagazine.com
or call 1.888.774.7554



THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE ACA



20% BELOW WHOLESALE

STORAGE RACK SALE



- MPG317 JDOCK™ HYBRID
- . Wall Mount Hardware
 - . Two 15' Load Straps
 - . Two 30" Gear Loops
 - . Lifetime Warranty
 - . Retail Price \$64.95

March 1st - May 31st
Call For Details

800-295-0042

www.maloneautoracks.com