

# River Runners

## A Weekly TV Series Outline

By Bob Meseke

### Time Period:

Takes place in the late 1960's (no specific date would be stated just implied). The river journey begins in the Spring and ends in the late Summer.

### Logline:

In the late 60's three ambitious young adults: an ex-Marine, a hippie and a tomboy embark on a Summer river venture to harvest and sell marijuana along the river from Wyoming's North Platte River to the Missouri River to the Mississippi River down to Baton Rouge, LA to make their fortune. Along the way they learn about life, meet many interesting people and experience the Midwest like no one else.

### Music, Fashion & Nostalgia:

Music is a very important part of the presentation using the sound of classic '60's Rock, Country Western and even some Jazz and Blues. About 9 to 11 song clips per episode from that era can be played between scenes, commercial lead-ins and in the background of bars, in cars or on transistor radios.

In order to display the programs authenticity, the actors and extras would be required to wear the clothes of choice for that time like bell-bottom jeans, big collared shirts, T-shirts as well as flannel shirts, boot cut jeans, vests, tank tops and cutoff jeans and short shorts.

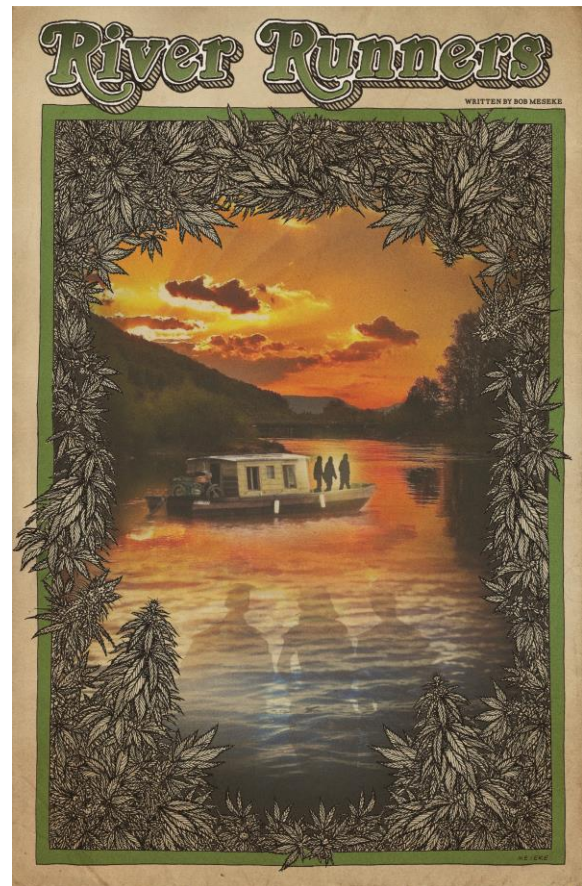
In addition, the small town locations that are visited weekly would display many of the classic cars of that time (locals would love this and most likely provide these cars for free). Nostalgic business signs and a 60's look would always be in the forefront of each location many of which are still part of the Midwestern small towns today.

### Audience:

The music, the styles and the time period should attract Boomers to this series for nostalgic reasons and the topic of marijuana will be interesting to the Millennials with its recent legalization. Furthermore, the series' goal is to be a drama with a touch of humor that will attract all age groups.

### Filming:

River scenes & town scenes can be filmed on location as much as possible, hopefully using the actual area that the stories describe. Scenes on board the river boat or in bars or stores can be filmed either in a studio or on location.



**Main Characters:**

There are 3 main characters - 2 guys and 1 girl, all of which grew up in a small Kansas town and went to the same Catholic school but are different ages ranging from 20 to 23. All 3 actors must have a rugged, attractive and outdoorsy natural look whether they are cleaned up or after weeks without a shower.

The characters all show strong self-discipline and street smart toughness, a sense of team, strong ethical or religious upbringing, a drive to see things through and are not afraid to say what they think.

**Doug Inkstrum "Inky":** An ex-Marine just back from a Vietnam tour where he patrolled the rivers in a navy gun boat for a year. Then returned to "the world" and took a boat trip by himself from Wyoming to Louisiana. He's very tough but fair, loves the outdoors, loves the river but somewhat rough around the edges, yet has a heart of gold. - The Brawn

**Bob Owen "Fr. Bob":** Spent 2 years in the seminary to be a priest, has a conscientious objector draft status with a philosophy major but yearns to make lots of money through a get rich quick scheme. A hippie of sorts he's sensitive, has a big imagination, big on fairness and knows business. Likes to plan and organize. - The Brains

**Katie Church "KC":** Grew up riding horses, raising cattle and farming. Tough but feminine has extensive knowledge of botany and animals - loves the outdoors. Raised with 3 older brothers and is much the tomboy but with a very attractive and compassionate side. - The Beauty

**The River Craft:**

Simple flat bottom boat with small enclosed living space for 3-5 people.





### The River Trail:

The trail of the trip will begin in the North Platte River in Caspar, WY which flows into the Platte River in Nebraska which flows into the Missouri River which flows into the Mississippi and on south to Baton Rouge, LA.



### Synopsis:

Doug comes back from Vietnam after being on a gunboat in the Mekong Delta in Vietnam for most of a year. He uses the money he saved from military service and his knowledge of the river and takes a trip on a small flat bottom motor boat from Caspar, WY down the North Platte River into the Missouri River and on to St. Louis where he floats down the Mississippi to a small town outside New Orleans. This trip will be used later in the series for flashbacks as well as his experiences in Vietnam.

In his travels down the river he visits small towns along the way, occasionally using his stops to get

cleaned up at cheap motels and to grab a good home cooked meal at local diners in river towns. He also meets some people along this trip but most important he notices many areas along the river where marijuana is growing wild. He harvests some along the way for personal use and realizes it's actually pretty good.

Just as the service trained him, he keeps a log of his trip and marks locations of nearby towns, fields of marijuana and other places of interest.

He gets back home after his adventure and this is where Episode #1 begins....

### **Episode #1 "THE IDEA" (SCREENPLAY COMPLETED)**

Doug is left with no ambition but to hang out with the friends he grew up with around his home town, playing basketball and in the local bars shooting pool. He slowly recovers from his Vietnam memories (keep in mind great music playing throughout scene changes or in the background from jukeboxes and car radios). He meets up with one of his best friends "Bob" from high school who spent 2 years in a seminary and has just graduated college with a major in philosophy and is working 2 jobs and getting nowhere. He didn't serve in Vietnam because of deep religious beliefs but Doug understands. They have always been loyal friends. Politics aside they have a trusting relationship.

One night while they were hanging out at the local bar "Champs" playing pool and having a few beers, the story was told about Doug's river trip - they also talked about making money and discussed maybe a trip to Mexico to smuggle some Marijuana back into the US but realized how dangerous it could be crossing the southern border.

Marijuana was slowly becoming popular with the youth of America. It was introduced to the soldiers in Vietnam and there was a huge supply being smuggled across the Mexican border and back with the GI's. The weed was spreading throughout the US like never before.

With so much weed growing wild along the rivers in the US, like Doug says, why couldn't it be harvested and sold locally. One of their mutual friends, a local farm girl named KC, who was listening to the conversation jokingly gave them the idea about cutting wild plants, drying it and selling it in towns along the river. They would never get caught since they would not have a car and would be out of sight after it was sold and far down the river in case anyone looked for them. She knew a lot about botany since she grew up on her folk's farm and was sure they could come up with a method to dry it out in 6 to 10 hours with sunlight and heat from a small wood stove.

The plan was to harvest marijuana, put it in some sort of drying process under Plexiglas sheets used for the roof of the boat in order to get heat to dry it out as they floated down river. Then after it was compressed and wrapped up they could take it into town and sell it to the locals along the way. Cut it, dry it, clean it, bag it and sell it as you travel down the river. The estimated time floating between the towns would be 8 to 15 hours so they figured they could hit a town or two a day, spend time to find the place with potential buyers and make the sales and be back aboard in a couple hours. KC came up with a process to dry the buds within a 4 to 9-hour process and it could be weighed and bagged in the time it took to float to the next town.



A small motorcycle would also be used to get into town quickly and get back to the boat fast after the sale. Doug had a 250cc Yamaha dirt bike, which was very popular at the time and could be easily parked on the river boat. Then when the boat was docked by the shoreline - a 2x12 plank could be pushed out onto the shore and the bike could easily be driven off and then quickly back onto the boat when they returned. KC ran fences at her farm with the same kind of dirt bike so she thought it was a great idea. But Bob had never learned to ride a motor bike and he would have to learn which ended up being a hilarious disaster.

Now they had to work out the final details of the plan. The 3 held daily meetings and came up with a serious set of guidelines to turn this idea into a reality.

*\*\*\*\*The first couple episodes will develop the characters and get the audience to identify with them and to pull for them to succeed. Also, the development of rapport between the 3 characters and the bonding that takes place.*

## **Episode #2 "THE PLAN" (SCREENPLAY COMPLETED)**

This episode deals with designing the wooden house boat to be very non-conspicuous and to handle 3 to 5 individual's and their daily needs for sleeping and eating etc. It also needed to store a small motorcycle, a gas supply for both the bike and the boat motor, the weed dryer, tools, food & beverage compartments, precise maps of the areas, and list of supplies needed to be self-sufficient for days at a time. Doug had previously met a guy named Oscar Minton in Caspar, WY while he was buying his flat bottom boat for his earlier trip. The guy had 25 years' experience in making mobile homes and with a phone call, \$3,000 advance and a rough description he agreed to put together their custom wooden river house boat.

Special needs for the boat include:

- ✓ An isolated area to separate KC for privacy issues.
- ✓ The drying roof which was 2 layers of Plexiglas to hold trays on both sides to dry the buds with sun and warm moving air. It would be hinged so that they were accessible from the sides to remove the trays. Plus, the cooking heat would be filtered through the drying area to add to the drying process.
- ✓ A machine to weigh 1lb. increments of the weed and to compress it into bricks. Also a special storage area for finished blocks of marijuana that could expel the contents from under the boat in case of some unexpected search by authorities.
- ✓ The motorbike land ramp which could also be used to walk onto the shoreline from the craft.
- ✓ A drag system attached to the back of the boat to allow it to float straight and near the deepest part of the river to avoid running aground in shallow areas with minimal navigation.
- ✓ A basic kitchen area and battery powered electricity source for emergencies and boat lights.
- ✓ A system to move into shore sideways for easy docking.
- ✓ Tanks to hold gas for the boat and the motorbike and huge containers to hold water.

Also discussed was the growing season at the Wyoming river areas and trip start dates. Discussions also included scheduled towns and marijuana crop stops along the way. Also problems that may arise as well as basic needs like food, clothing and personal issues. Mr. Minton, the builder, assured them the houseboat would be ready for launch when they arrived.

While the boat was being put together, every couple of days the 3 would meet to set up ground rules. They were serious about this and they wanted this adventure to succeed with no chance for arrests or injury. The common goal was that they needed this to be a foolproof scheme. This would be their big break on their future financially and for the 5 or 6 months needed to accomplish this goal - they each knew it would take a huge personal commitment.

Bob set up the 5 "Keep It Simple Rules" called S-T-A-S-H that would have to be agreed to in order for this to work: **Always remember and live the rules of S-T-A-S-H**

1. **Silence:** Most important - NEVER speak about this idea in any way to anybody.
2. **Team:** We are a Family Team - to absolutely respect each other and get along as a team. There will be NO relationships established during this adventure among each other or with any locals we meet. You can always come back and do that when the trip is over.
3. **All Equal:** We are ALL equal and should work equally using each other's talents for the good of

the group. Never complain or hold a grudge, ever. Resolve issues.

4. **Share:** Everyone has their duties that were agreed to when we started - do them without being asked and do them well. One of your duties is to help each other with their duties.
5. **Happy:** This will be life changing so have fun BUT NEVER put the safety or the well-being of this crew in jeopardy!

The primary focus will be making money, lots of money. Bob estimated that with the sale of 6 lbs. of Marijuana at \$125 per pound a day for 6 days a week (one less day figured for rain or problem along the way) for the 5 month growing season they could split, after expenses, between \$70K-\$100K. They could get and send money orders back home to a local bank account for deposit with the money received from the sales along the way. Back then there was no cash limits on deposits like today.

Time was drawing near, so on a specific day in Spring they agreed that they would all meet in Caspar, WY with the items they were assigned to bring and \$500 in cash to complete the purchase of the house boat and purchase initial supplies. They had to get there without leaving anything behind in Casper, especially a car. Doug took off on his Yamaha dirt bike, KC travelled by Greyhound bus and Bob hitchhiked.

### **Episode #3 "CASPER, WY" (SCREENPLAY COMPLETED)**

They are each shown traveling to Casper. Doug loaded down on his dirt bike, Katie crunched up on a nasty bus with babies crying and the normal squeaks that buses make and Bob coming in on a make shift VW bus with a group of hippies.

They all meet at 10:00am in downtown Casper, WY at the "Cracked Egg Restaurant" as planned. After breakfast and a quick review of the plan they take off down the street with backpacks in tow to meet the builder and their "home to be" for the next 5 - 6 months.

As they walked down the street to Oscar Minton's home they all were as excited as little kids to see this house boat that would carry them thousands of miles through 9 states in an adventure they would never forget. The boat comes into view sitting on a trailer – it looked awesome!

They stocked supplies and set up the boat to take on any emergencies that might occur. This episode shows them working together really wanting to make this work. Bob works on his motorcycle skills but is still having issues, KC on her swimming and cooking and Doug learns from his friend Oscar about the boat motor and some tricks to navigating the river.

With the help of Oscar, they launch the boat into a narrow North Platte River and begin floating slowly down river. It is here where they take it all in and enjoy the sound of the river and the lush green surroundings. But there is a sense of drifting into the unknown and the worry if this is going to work.

#### **Episode #4 "DOUGLAS, WY" (SCREENPLAY COMPLETED)**

Morning came early at 5:30am but it was no problem for the 3 to get up and be moving around. They untied the boat and into the sun and down the river they went. They were excited, very excited to be floating effortlessly with the sound of the river.

After a few hours, around Tank Farm Road Bridge, Doug let out a "whoop" and pointed to the bank on the left - Bob steered the craft softly up to a clearing on the shoreline and tossed a line while Doug sent the ramp out the side and onto the bank where he tied up the boat and took off into a field of some of the darkest green marijuana he'd ever seen. He hollered to Bob to bring the machete and sickle and rope ties to cut and bundle the harvest. The buds were small but, hey, they were buds and that's all that mattered.

The process of landing, tying up the boat, cutting and bundling, loading up and getting back on the river was only 12 minutes. They impressed themselves by their efficiency and high fives were given all around. KC stayed in the boat since one of the rules that Oscar had told them was to ALWAYS have someone in the boat at all times, ALWAYS.

It was a hot day and as KC stayed the course steering and combing the banks for the green hemp, Bob and Doug snipped the buds onto trays and dumped the stalks overboard along the way. Within an hour the top tier of trays on the roof were filled and soaking up the sun rays under a sheet of Plexiglas. This process acted as a way to dry out the excess moisture for packing later.

KC estimated by the bends in the map that they would be near Douglas, WY by around 5:00pm and consequently, Bob announced that the first batch of marijuana would be ready by around 4:00 pm and be pressed in bricks just in time for their first attempt to sell. The Yamaha was designed to hold 4 lbs. in the hollowed out seat and another 4 lbs. could be stashed under the custom gas tank that when raised actually had more room for storage than gas. The custom tank could now only hold a gallon (the motorbike could get 35 miles a gallon) so that was all that was needed to get into town and back.

Doug takes off at 5:00pm as Bob and KC wait not knowing what's going on in Douglas, WY. It gets darker and darker but the moon is putting out a little light as they look for motorbike headlights. Bob decides to go into town but KC talks him into staying 30 more minutes.

A light and a faint sound of "wing bing bing" and Doug is headed for the dock site. Where he leaves the road and into the field Doug picks up the reflector that marks his turn. As he arrives he is disgusted and in a foul mood but that was his little joke - he sold all 8 lbs. and they all celebrated.

The separation of scenes will be common throughout, the one or sometimes two selling or making contacts and the other scene at the boat.



## **A Sample List of Episodes along the River Route (10 Episodes are completed):**

Episode #5 "Torrington, WY" **(SCREENPLAY COMPLETED)** They come across a couple big finds and after a few incidents along the way they enter a much larger town as both Bob and Doug make a very big sale but not without problems.

Episode #6 "Mitchell, NE" **(SCREENPLAY COMPLETED)** Early morning Bob & Doug meet a couple of moonshiners in the woods and swap products. They dock for the night by a Drive In theatre. Bob stays behind while Doug goes into town to make a sale and KC gets supplies. Bob discovers a speaker set up by the water and they later trade popcorn and weed for beer and some whiskey to strangers on the river. Movie Night showing double feature "Bonnie and Clyde" and "Hang'em High".

Episode #7 "Scottsbluff, NE" **(SCREENPLAY COMPLETED)** Bob meets up with a group of war protesters and makes a scene at a rally. Doug and KC team up at a college fraternity party that goes wrong and ends in a bike chase.

Episode #8 "North Platte, NE" **(SCREENPLAY COMPLETED)** Not much activity since the towns are too small - inventory is building up big time. They meet up with a Park Ranger on the water. They take turns going in and getting cleaned up and a good meal. Both Bob and Doug make sales that evening.

Episode #9 "Kearney, NE" **(SCREENPLAY COMPLETED)** Stumble across a dead body as they docked to gather weed - they have to pass on cutting and can't call from there. They will call it in later down river. Bob gets jealous of Doug being touchy with KC and an argument ensues.

Episode #10 "Omaha, NE" **(SCREENPLAY COMPLETED)** They stop at a KOA along the river to get cleaned up before going into Omaha. Bob and KC go on into the city and visit AK-SAR-BEN Race Track. Bob shows KC how to pick and bet on the horses but KC shows Bob how to win. Doug goes in at night with KC and makes a sale in the hippie sections of the Old Market but someone gets busted.

Episode #11 "Missouri River/Nebraska City" The Platte River flows into the big Missouri and now they are navigating a big river with traffic. Some of the areas where pot is growing are close to houses and manufacturing plants. One such plant is spewing sewage right into the river so they stop and KC goes in to tell the plant manager. He doesn't care but as she is leaving one of the owners strikes up a conversation with her.

Episode #12 "Rullo, NE/St. Joseph, MO " They are anticipating some large cities coming up down river so they are stockpiling and hiding the bricks everywhere on the boat. They continue to make sales in the small town of Rullo and in the bigger city of St. Joe.

Episode #13 "Atchison, KS " Doug picks out what he thinks is a good bar and it turns out to be on the black side of town. The people are very friendly, too friendly (prostitutes) and he

even makes a sale. But gets hassled by a couple of bigoted whites as he's followed to a stop light. They spend more time building up the inventory for Kansas City.

Episode #14 "Kansas City, KS/MO " They focus on only one thing – selling the 250 lbs. they have accumulated. There's the colleges and the downtown strip and some sporting events. Each of the 3 have their segment of selling as all is gone and they celebrate with some weed, whiskey and BBQ later in the evening.

Episode #15 "Lexington, MO " A time for gathering, fishing and hunting rabbit. Bob takes bike for a practice run and drives off the ramp and into the river. They just about lose the bike. Doug gets it started again.

Episode #16 "Glasgow/Boonville, MO " Back to work on building up inventory since St. Louis is one of the stops ahead. They take on a traveler on the run from the law. And drop him off in the next town.

Episode #17 "St. Louis, MO" They make huge sales in St. Charles and St. Louis but stop just outside of town and have a major problem with a farmer with a gun who takes Bob & Doug (while KC hides in the boat) back to his farm house and with his son ties them up. The farmer thinks they are the ones who is stealing his hogs and he wants to kill them.

Episode #18 "Cape Girardeau, MO " Time to replenish the supply and hit a few small towns. Bob meets a waitress and falls in love as Doug makes a move on KC but she snaps him right out of it. They need to recommit to their mission. They have had many successes and it's getting to their heads.

Episode #19 "Memphis, TN " KC has women's intuition about something bad happening. Then Doug gets busted by a policeman but KC helps him escape. Bob goes in and makes a sale.

Episode #20 "Arkansas City, AR & Greenville, MS " They float by most of Memphis but Doug insists on making a run with some weed and winds up in the middle of a black biker rally. KC walks in and gets some ribs and a 6-pack of beer against Bob's wishes – Bob goes in after her – but she's fine after all.

Episode #21 "Baton Rouge, LA " Since they have met their quota, they decide to have a selling contest. Who can leave the boat with 10 lbs. and come back with over \$1,000 in the shortest time. They all take turns with the bike except Bob who would rather walk. Here they finish up selling everything they have and argue about the sale of the house boat. One wants to sell it, one wants to tow it back home and one wants to buy it and sail out into the Gulf of Mexico.

Episode #22 "Back Home to Kansas " They arrive back home in their truck, towing the houseboat. They find a place to park the boat and meet at the diner for breakfast to settle up the funds and wrap up the trip. KC shows some pictures she took and they reminisce about the fun they had and how much work and stressful it was making the deals. Doug takes KC out for a date one night and Bob takes her out the next. And they are all OK with that.

***Full screenplays with music have been completed for the first 10 episodes!***

***Screenplays provided upon request.***

Every year that this series is produced a different river can be highlighted. For example, Season #2 could be filmed on the Ohio River. The use of rivers throughout the US would be a good way to promote the rivers and the small towns and parks along the way.

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