

CONN YAK

CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

July 2001

Feeling Unloved

by Jay Babina

I recently had a conversation with a few ConnYak members who experienced a disheartening reaction to their presence at Stoney Creek in Branford. Apparently they parked in an area opposite the Marine Repair which is unmarked yet off limits to all but the repair facility or their friends etc. To make a long story short, they were told they couldn't park there and someone accused them (kayakers) of creating litter, landing on private islands and generally making the world a miserable place for everyone.

Stoney Creek is not alone in its accusation of kayakers suddenly invading their oasis and turning their pristine paradise into a ghetto. The sad truth about Stoney Creek is that there's parking for about 60 cars and there's over 60 island homes whose inhabitants and guests have to park somewhere. There's the market/restaurant, the bait shop/food service, marine repair, antiques dealer and a few stores who are all dependant on bringing in customers from everywhere. People arrive from all over Branford to use the beach, park their cars and stay there all day! The three tour boats go out every hour, each with a capacity of 30 or so who's passengers, mostly arrive in automobiles. The Tour boats advertise their services many times all over the state. Trailer boaters arrive to launch their boats. The trash pails seem to get dumped long after there's trash over filling the cans and on the ground. And then there's "those kayakers" who arrive to assault the peace and tranquility of the quiet, little village of Stoney Creek and take a parking space. (It is interesting all the kayaks you now see parked on the islands.)

As a Branford resident, I often have lunch at Stoney Creek during the week. On most summer days, every parking spot is taken with not one kayak rack in sight.

As kayakers, we're very visible with our car racks and long colorful boats and present an easy target for anyone wishing the world was like it used to be years ago. I have a sense of sympathy for residents of towns like this who's exclusivity has suddenly vanished. However, I'm not going to take the blame for the mass amount of visitors that's generated by the very revenue seeking ma-

chine that places blame and hides under the cloak of "tourism". Progress and world population are just not a good thing for the environment or Stoney Creek.

Another great example of this is Mystic. With all kayaks wiped off the face of the earth, Mystic will still be an absolute nightmare to the residents of that town who remember how it used to be many years ago. Every summer you crawl through the traffic as the seaport, restaurants and tourism businesses flourish and advertise for more. Mystic even has cable TV ads advertising their community as the place to visit. As a few kayaks arrive to use the Isham Street launch, the residents are suddenly reminded of the discontent they have for the mass tourism population that governs their lives each summer and the focus is suddenly on "those kayakers".

As a group, I think we are very conscientious about preserving the environment and would go out of our way to advance that cause. We don't have smoke and noise polluting engines, and I know we don't litter. As a sport in general, I think we're pretty considerate about private property and infringing on anyone's privacy, however sometimes innocent mistakes are probably made. I truly think we can be considered an environmentally friendly sport.

However, the fact remains that we are very distinguishable and visible. We have to be aware of our behavior since there's always going to be people ready to blame kayakers for destroying the peace and tranquility that their town and lives had years ago.

This general sentiment is often reflected in Atlantic Coastal Kayaker magazine which

seems to carry a regular theme this year about preserving the environmental purity of the places we visit. We also have to remember there is such a thing as visual pollution. Since so many kayakers see our sport as a vehicle to carry camping gear, islands that were formally out of reach are now invaded by boats that are not only sea worthy but a capable landing craft as well. Islanders who occasionally saw a romantic lobster boat working the traps are now invaded by armies of kayak campers. Guide and instructional services are sprouting up everywhere ready to cash in on the trend and create more of us.

If your next door neighbor buys a motorcycle you may disapprove but have a sense of acceptance in your heart. If every Saturday 48 of them arrive to take off together it suddenly becomes a major nuisance. Even the whitewater paddlers are feeling this concern. Rivers all over the country are beginning to feel the mass influx of kayakers. The guy who for years enjoyed the solitude of fly fishing the river suddenly has kayaks doing enders in his favorite hole.

As a club we have to be aware of our groups and its visual impact. Fortunately we paddle out of launch sites where our presence is easily accepted and it's not a regular event. You'll notice that we only paddle from the smaller launch areas in the late fall and winter when our attendance diminishes. There are many ConnYak members who fortunately do not want to paddle in large groups and only occasionally join the ConnYak trips, and I think every one of us can relate to that sentiment.

As the sport of kayaking becomes more and more populated as occurred in bicycling, we'll have to adjust are mode of operation. Could you imagine 60 or 70 kayakers pad-

continued



Charlene D'Avanzo sporting her new Serious off of Rocky Neck in Lyme.

Photo: Tom Maizarz

dling together? It would not only be wrong but foolish and obnoxious. Our club is not founded on the idea of everyone paddling together all the time and I guess we'll have to face it sooner than we think. If anyone has any suggestions about our large groups, please let us know.

I think there's three major things going on with the apprehensive acceptance of kayakers by certain communities. 1. We take a parking space. 2. We're growing in numbers. 3. We're a capable landing craft. Unlike regular boats, we can travel in inches of water and yet we can carry camping gear and land in surf conditions. In the eyes of boaters, access to the sea has become readily available and affordable to people who would otherwise not be on the water. The boating community now has new, uninvited members! However, our sport is founded on some pretty good principals. It's inexpensive, it's exercise and it doesn't hurt the environment as long as we don't over use it.

So who loves us? You tell me. The kayaking stores? Maybe!

I think as the sport proliferates, we'll have to carry a sense of awareness and respect for all that surrounds us and do our best to blend into the environment. We'll have to show understanding and respect for the things that were there before our arrival. We have to be aware of boating channels and boating traffic. And most of all, we'll have to accept the fact of occasional unacceptance whether it's unfair, unjust or undeserving!

Aug. Rescue clinic

Sat. Aug. 18th - Great Island, Old Lyme

In August we'll have our second annual rescue clinic. Last year it turned out to be a well appreciated event. We'll take a short paddle and land to start the event at 11. which will give us plenty of time for practice.

The intent of the gathering is to share ideas about rescues as well as introduce those who have never tried it to some basic rescue fundamentals. Experienced paddlers can exchange ideas and experiences which is always enlightening and volunteers can demo and help beginners with their trials. Last year we did the basic T-rescue with the paddler entering between two kayaks and the paddle float self-rescue.

It's not a structured event, so anybody can demonstrate anything (the more the merrier) and anybody who wants to try it will have plenty of helpers. Experienced can add personal comments during demonstrations etc

Lets face it, there's always going to be plenty of paddlers who will never take a paid lesson - period! Here, as a club, we're passing along knowledge and safety in a non-intimidating environment, and in the long run, we all benefit and have a good time as well!

the lost art of bracing

by Jay Babina

It's interesting all the request we have for the rescue day as we had last year. We thought about combining it into some rolling instruction as well or as least offer help for those who have problems with their beginning roll. If rolling is on your agenda please see my video which is in the ConnYak library or take a lesson before you decide to give it a try on your own. It's just going to make life easier for everyone.

Performing rescues and rolls seems to get a lot of attention from the paddling community, however, one of the most important and fundamental skills that most people put to the wayside is bracing. In other words, the skill that prevents you from having to resort to a roll or a self-rescue in the first place. I can honestly say, I have never seen a paddler practice bracing other than a few close friends... and, that's in 15 years!

It's usually one of the first things that 's taught in classes, however I think once people try it, it's assumed that it's a remembered skill or one that doesn't need practice. Actually, it's probably more important to practice it if you use a feathered paddle, simply because many capsizes are caused by beginners assuming the paddle is in the power face position rather than the side or slicing position. They go to use the paddle and surprise... your first capsize and wet exit.

Learning to lean from one side to the other and bracing back up is a good way to start. How far over you go is not as important as how easily you use the paddle. Eventually you'll be able to easily go down to the water quite far. With the feathered paddle you get a rhythm going in using the flip-flop blades. Practice this in a foot of water so you have some confidence about leaning a bit. It also teaches you how to use your body and rotate the kayak with your hips and not just with your arms.

Sometimes beginner kayakers paddle by balance and equilibrium and if they go a little to far one way or another, it's all over. In many cases, I don't think the concept of a brace exists.

Your paddle is a tool and bracing is as important as paddling. Just ask anyone who has capsized. It's so easy to practice these things especially when the water in Long Island Sound gets so warm in the summer.

You can go along just fine in kayaking with no skills what-so-ever until the one day an unexpected boat wake slams you from the side or the water kicks up a bit and you go surfing whether you want to or not. Ultimately, we want to learn these things because we're

in thin vessels on a changing sea with many times unpredictable conditions.

If you have no idea about bracing and don't intend to take lessons, we have loads of books and videos showing bracing and basic paddle technique in our library. Practicing these things can be an enjoyable event in themselves and the payoff is yours alone.

ConnYak President A W O L

Fellow ConnYakers, before my face turns up on a milk carton I figured I should share my plight with you:

On May 11th, I had a motorcycle accident on a back road near my home. A patch of gravel and sand lurking near the edge of the travel portion of the road snared my back tire causing me to dump the bike on the road. While I'm not sure of my rate of speed it was definitely faster than I paddle! Not only did the bike suffer significant damage, so did I. After a brief ambulance trip, X-Rays and a CAT scan or two, it was decided that I had broken my collar bone in 3 places my shoulder blade and cracked a couple of ribs for good measure, (not to mention about 4 feet of "road rash"). I am now sporting an "After Market" collar bone - a metal plate and 7 screws.

Although I am healing well, my surgeon has admonished me that if I don't take it easy and allow the healing to proceed with out additional stress I will undo his handy work and we will both have to start all over again. As you can well imagine, I would prefer that this doesn't happen. Unfortunately this means that not only am I out of work, but I also can't paddle or do much else with my left arm. While I think paddling would be an excellent form of therapy, I must bow to his expertise and do as he says, for now.....

For those of you who have already heard of my misfortune and have sent me cards and well wishes or called to check on me and offer assistance, I express my sincerest gratitude. I miss all of my ConnYak friends and the camaraderie of our paddles together. I hope to be back in the saddle or cockpit as it were, by late August or September. Until then Paddle safely, ... Ed.

Edwin Milnes
edmilnes@earthlink.net



REQUIRED WELL... ALMOST REQUIRED READING

by Don Milnes

OK, tell (yourself) the truth! When was the last time you reentered your boat on the water? Did it take less than a minute? Would it work in windy weather and rough water?

Most of us paddle for pleasure and making fools out of ourselves trying to climb into a boat full of water is not a favorite leisure time activity. However, each time any of us paddles with unpracticed skills we are placing not only ourselves, but also others who may be involved in a rescue, at risk. With summer weather and warmer water temperatures coming, it is a great time to start practicing and sharing reentry and rescue skills.

A great way to get started either learning new skills, or trying some variations on old familiar ones, may be found in a new book recently donated to the ConnYak library. "Sea Kayak Rescue: The Definitive Guide To Modern Reentry And Recovery Techniques" by Roger Schumann and Jan Shriner. It's a GREAT guide for learning and refining skills. This book, just published by The Globe Pequot Press, is a wonderful addition to the club library. It would be even better in your library of skills, available each time you paddle.

"Sea Kayak Rescue" has gathered many techniques into one place. This allows the reader to pick and choose a method that appeals or applies to them. Chapters contain descriptions of techniques, step-by-step instruction, practice tips and often, a description of a real life incident. Not limited to getting back into your boat, you will find nicely detailed information on bracing and rolling (after all, its better to stay in your boat) and towing, to help yourself or others out of trouble.

I think this book would be a nice guide to structuring a method to teach yourself rescue techniques. More than once, (OK I'm a slow learner) I have shown up at a nice calm lake to practice and found myself bored in ten minutes because I didn't have an idea of what to work on. Once my personal copy of "Sea Kayak Rescue" arrives, I will be marking several techniques to try out in practice. I've always liked the reentry and roll, but I want to spend some time with the paddlefloat-self rescue, securing the paddle only by hand without relying

on the deck rigging.

This is a book I really enjoyed reading sitting on the couch on rainy evenings. Now I am looking forward to receiving my own copy, where I will be marking pages and undoubtedly dripping on it more than once. This book contains no special techniques for those of us using Greenland paddles, however I believe everything contained in the 100+ pages will be easily adapted. My recommendation is that you borrow this book from the club library, or better yet, order one from your favorite bookstore so you will have your own.

connyak picnic

The date we are requesting for the picnic is Sunday, September 9. It's up for approval with the parks commission, however it's a fairly good bet that the 9th is the date, so you can pencil it in on the calendar. Final details will be announced in the next newsletter.

tuesday Night paddlers

contact bill 860-535-4473
or.. russ 860-621-0796

Mystic Area evening paddles - calm conditions.

CONNYAK TRIP RATINGS

Any trip can change dramatically due to conditions - as in all sea kayaking. (I) is generally longer and more off shore with greater chance of rough conditions.

(N) Novice: Novice paddlers are expected to be able to keep up with the leisurely group pace or will be turned back.

(I) Intermediate: Fully capable of self rescue, confident paddling stroke and braces.

(A) Advanced: A dependable roll, able to rescue others, strong, experienced paddler.

CONNYAK MESSAGE SYSTEM (203) 603-4615

Information regarding events, trip schedule updates, cancellations, changes etc. will be heard at this number.

Note: All paddlers are responsible for their own safety, including dressing for immersion. You must wear a CG approved PFD and a spray skirt. The boat and equipment must meet CG requirements, including an appropriate signaling device. Beginners must have taken a basic course and be proficient in performing a wet exit, paddle float re-entry and carry a pump. Kayaks without bulkheads should have floatation installed. (always carry extra dry clothes, food and water) Paddlers are expected to show a sense of awareness as far as staying with the group during paddles.



PADDLES

GUILFORD-BRANFORD (N)

SATURDAY, JULY 14

GUILFORD/BRANFORD - E. RIVER LAUNCH

Paddle from Guilford over toward Thimbles - lunch at Island Bay

DIRECTIONS -

Rt. 95 - Exit 59 Goose Lane-Guilford

End of exit head south (towards water) 50 yards to light.

Take a left on Rt. 1 - proceed 1/4 mile under RR bridge. Continue until you go over a small bridge (Neck river) take your 1st right on Neck Rd. (bear right) Follow Neck rd. to the end and you'll be forced left on to Ridgewood Ave. Continue on to the Madison Boat Launch.

Launch time 10:30 a.m. (In the water)

SAUGATUCK RIVER-NORWALK IS.

SATURDAY, JULY 21 - WESTPORT (N)

In the water by 10:00. Out the Saugatuck and lunch on Cocknoe Island. Lunch

DIRECTIONS -

From North I 95 EX. 17. At end of ramp Right onto Saugatuck Ave. Take first Left onto Charles St. At Stop, strait onto Park St. follow to end. Left onto Riverside Ave. At second light, Right onto Bridge St. and follow .5 mile.

Right at light onto Compo Rd. Immediately after I 95 bridge Right at boat launch site and follow to launch.

From South I 95 Ex. 17. At end of ramp Strait onto Park St. continue as above.

ANTIQUE BOAT PARADE

SUNDAY JULY 29 - MYSTIC (N)

In the water by 10:00. We visit the old boats and paddle the loop out the Mystic river and have lunch at the mouth of the river. We watch the parade from along the river on the return trip.

DIRECTIONS -

Go past Mystic Seaport on the right. Take your first right on Isham Street. Launch is at the end of the street. Street parking is available. Worst case: Drop off the boat and gear and park in the Mystic Lot which is free.

T-SHIRTS FOR ARTICLES

T-shirts for articles is still valid and if we owe you one for a past article please speak up. Someone always has T's at the paddles. \$5- members. JB



CLASSIFIED

Kayook plus with rudder. 8 months old, like new, \$900.00. 860-526-1410, 860-663-2069

Ocean Kayak Frenzy with backrest-1 year old \$325 and Ocean Kayak Yak-Board \$250. 203-235-6721 after 6

Diriego, 17.5' Sea Kayak, Kevlar/Fiberglass w/wood trim & rudder. \$1,200.00 203-734-4452 kck@ashcreek.net

Nautraid One Expedition (foldable) 15'3" red & black \$1800. or best offer. 860-521-6070

Touring/Surfing Sea Kayak: Sun Maximum Velocity 13' x, 25" in Xytec \$675. SurfKayakers@aol.com

Wilderness Systems Pamilco double-2 person \$500. Jim 203-345-0090

DRYTOP - BomberGear breathable drytop (S)-(New) \$150. 860-643-8303 - fernusen@aol.com

2 Walden Vista Expedition 12.5' kayaks (lime, grape) with bulkheads and spray skirts. 42lbs. Used 4 days. \$600 ea. (203)389-1230 email en-sign@southernct.edu

Like new Romany 16, tan over tan, with skeg, neospray skirt, aqua bound paddle. \$2100. 203-281-1529

For sale: 13' Mad River Compatriot; light green with wood trim, 42 lbs., mint condition., includes simple roof racks. \$500, Clark 203/271-2484

Werner Kauai 1 pc. paddle 220cm. Feathered maybe 10X; \$150. 203 457-9772 or andyb@asan.com

Kokatat, Gore-Tex, front entry, dry suit, never used. Size-Medium. \$500. Call 860 767-0696.

Please contact the Newsletter when items are sold.

Wilderness Systems Tchaika, fiberglass w/rudder, neoprene sprayskirt yellow/white used 4 times. \$1,500 (203)483-7705.

Current design - Caribou, fiberglass. Ye./yel. 45 lbs. hard chine hull, good stability \$1895 203-985-9288 areimann@snet.net.

Necky Looksha kayak-poly. 17 ft. two neoprene hatches, bulkheads, rudder, skirt. \$700. 914-967-3164

Necky Tesla-MM, Used Once. 17', Kevlar, Mango / white, blue trim, large cockpit, rudder, Ckpt. cover. Two Werner paddles. \$2,500. 1-860-526-3344

Wilderness Systems Pamilco double-2 person \$500. Jim 203-345-0090

Current Designs Caribou "S" Kevlar. Yel/white, Compass New \$3110 in 3-01 sale \$2700. 860-563-3391

Heritage Nomad 16' fiberglass open-deck kayak. 42 lbs., Ex cond:\$1350. Mens 3 mm farmer-john wetsuit, small \$20. Jeff 860-267-9563 - jbrooks@wesleyan.edu.

Panache wood stripper, 18'4"x22'1/2", unused. Large volume boat, big cockpit, \$2600. Stripper canoe, 18', Light fast, excellent condition. \$650. (860) 653-5899.

Ocean Kayak-17'9"—Valley Aquila - Blue and white 1800 - 203 226-6926 —pascale@earthlink.net



INSTRUCTION

Urban Eskimo Kayaking Classes
Mike Falconeri Nancy Lovelace
203-284-9212 860-228-0105
www.uekayaking.com

Wallingford Com. Pool 8:00 a.m. - 11:00
Safety & Rescue Workshop July 7, August 4
Rolling Workshops July 21, August 18
To register call Wallingford Parks & Rec.
1-203-294-2120

Skills Workshop - classes 10:00 a.m.- 2:00 p.m.
Barn Island (Stonington) June 16, June 23
Norwalk Islands July 14 - Call Nancy for info.

Greenland style paddling and rolling. BCU
Coach and ACA Certified. fernusen@aol.com

TO JOIN CONNYAK...

ConnYak is a non profit club that is open to all paddlers interested in sea kayaking from any location. ConnYak annual membership fee is \$15. Membership includes monthly newsletter, paddles, functions, etc.

Send inquiries to: Ed Milnes
35 Hampton Park, Branford, CT 06405

E-MAIL: CONNYAK@CONNYAK.ORG

WEBSITE / BULLETIN BOARD: WWW.CONNYAK.

Send newsletter articles or classifieds to:
Jay Babina e-mail: jbabina@snet.net
7 Jeffrey Lane, Branford, CT 06405
203-481-3221 Fax 203-481-1136



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c/o Ed Milnes 35 Hampton Park
Branford, CT 06405