

# CONNAYAK



C O N N E C T I C U T S E A K A Y A K E R S

May 2002

## ROLLING REALITIES

By Jay Babina



There should probably be a monument somewhere for the inventor of the first Eskimo Roll, at least for all the frustration they incited; however nobody really knows when that occurred or who's responsible. It is known that the Eskimo Roll was perfected by the Greenlanders and used for the obvious reason of survival. Since the water temperature was often in the 20's, wet exits were not an option since there were no dry suits - only clothing that protected their head and upper torso and formed a spray skirt (tuilig). They often hunted alone with kayaks that had no hatches, bulkheads or flotation and wore no personal flotation since survival in those waters was minutes. They never removed the spray skirt once in the boat and their hunting items and kill were carried on the deck. The kayaks were low volume because there was no reason to have them larger - they needed a design that was small so they could approach game with stealth and one that would have low windage.

Like any culture, competitiveness developed and villagers often competed or showed off their rolling ability just like horse cultures did stunts on horses. They were excellent kayakers and rollers simply because it was a way of life and something they learned from their elders and practiced continually.

Although low volume, their kayaks were slightly larger than the new era of ultra-rolling kayaks made strictly to perform and compete in rolling competitions. However they were rolling with many variations and total masters of their craft long before the popularity of those competitions.

When the manufacturing of sea kayaks became profitable which started in Europe, one of the main prerequisites was the ability to carry camping gear and the idea of hunting and rolling was put to the wayside. The Anas Acuta, the first Valley Canoe Products boat is a

copy of a Greenland kayak but shortly after that kayak, everything got larger with more and more cargo capacity. Early British kayak designers like Frank Goodman from Valley Canoe and Derek Hutchinson designed kayaks with one major goal in mind - their own expeditions. When the American manufacturers got a hold of sea kayaking, not only did the cargo capacity get even larger, but the need for greater initial stability was catered to as well. Americans wanted to kayak now and learn later when they got the time whereas in Europe, you learned to kayak. England doesn't have the lakes, estuaries and intercoastal waterways that we enjoy but has a ragged rough coast which demands good skills to partake in the sport right from the start.

American manufacturers have now strayed toward the British designs for a segment of the market and some European manufacturers have strayed toward the American designs. Basically there's something out there for everyone. The only shortage in manufactured boats is in the super low volume types that Greenland style paddlers like because of it's easy rolling ability.

All of this is a reflection of where the size and shape of kayaks is today. There's now is a small pocket of paddlers who want the low volume boats that Brooks Martyn described in his article "Cheater Kayaks". The overall skill level in the sport is much higher than it was years ago and manufacturers like Betsey Bay are on constant back order due to the demand for low volume Greenland recreations. In some ways it's a reflection of the fun the paddlers are having as well as the increase of skilled paddlers who like to roll their kayaks and practice the Greenland traditions. Boats like the P & H Serius, Borel Ellsmere, Anas Acuta and Betsey Bays and others always resell quick and get their price which also reflects this desire for lower volume boats.

It isn't long before, most beginner paddlers discover that they're carrying a lot of unneeded volume for no reason especially under the deck. Many paddlers now have a low volume play boat and the larger camping kayak as well, which in many cases is their first large, high-stability kayak.

Once you learn to roll, you'll be able to easily roll any kayak as long as it has thigh braces and fits you. The difference is that you may not be able to do the same trick rolls or roll with the ease that you can in a low volume model. More important than the volume of the kayak is whether or not your thighs are locked in securely. When many people try a friends low volume kayak and experience an easy ability to roll, it's because the owners usually have put in really good thigh bracing for themselves whereas many paddlers who paddle stock, off-the-shelf kayaks are using them with the minimal bracing the manufacturer has put in (if any). If you're lucky, you have a kayak that fits you well with no customization needed.

If it's trick rolls you want to do, you should get a kayak that does it well the same way as pilots get specific airplanes that do trick rolls. But as far as being able to roll easily in your own boat, make sure you have good solid contact with your thighs and with practice you will learn to do it effortlessly like everyone else. There's really no reason that a kayak shouldn't have the ability to carry your necessary supplies for a day trip, handle the water, fit you like glove and roll easily as well. They're out there it just takes a little looking and trial to hone in on what you like. Unfortunately, it also takes paddling experience to know what you want.

All rollers struggled in the beginning but kept practicing, however, the good rollers are still practicing and have been at it for years and many have low volume easy-rolling kayaks as well.

## Dressing for the occasion

Dressing for the water on a 85 degree day in May as the water approaches 55 is a tough call. During the mid-April heat spell, I carried my kayak down the beach in Branford and launched near two young children in bathing suits playing in the water. I was cautious to wear only one layer and other than the nuisance of having to put the dry suit on, I wasn't too uncomfortable. The breathable dry suit was OK whereas a Farmer John would have been unbearable. The scenario brings up some interesting "dressing for the water" points of view.

I know deep in my heart that I could be trounced on a rough surf day or make a bracing mistake and capsize. However, I also feel that I will never come out of my boat. Because I've been rolling for so long, in so many conditions and in different styles, it's highly unlikely that I can't recover from any capsize. If I did come out of the boat, it would be followed by a 30 second reentry an roll to get out of the water and back in the boat. This is not a statement of ego, but one that has significant bearing on the "dressing for the water" dilemma.

It's often ironic that paddlers with the least skills or beginners are the ones who throw caution to the wind when it comes to dressing down in the early spring. The thought of having to actually swim in the cold water and re-enter their kayak is not even in their realm of possibilities ...yet. But if you attend one of the kayaking demo days in the spring, you'll see many over-enthusiastic paddlers learning the cold water lessons the hard way.

In Sea Kayaker, Atlantic Coastal Kayaker, Paddler and other magazines, you'll find that the greatest reality that capsized paddlers face is Hypothermia. This is prevalent in about 99.9% of all the paddling mishaps!

However, on group paddles in ConnYak, I think dressing down for the air temperature is fine as long as the water is not going to bring on cold shock. If you can honestly float around for 5 minutes without being in agony, loosing your breath or bringing on hypothermia, you're fairly safe wearing less cold water protection. We all have our own tolerance for the cold and our own individual feelings about security. I think this includes your feelings about your skills, your ability to roll and brace and an assessment of the weather fore-

cast for that day. If the wind picks up and it clouds over and gets rough, the air /water temp ratio consideration changes dramatically. The ability to warm up in the sun is entirely different than being further chilled by the wind. This is where a Dry Top coupled with rolling skills comes in quite handy.

During one of our usual along-shore type of trips with a cluster of paddlers, your chance of being quickly rescued on a capsized boarders on dangerous as the boats come charging in fighting for the rescue privileges. If it's an off shore trip in rough conditions, you may float around for a while and not be able to change into dry clothes for quite a while. Quite a different situation and one that puts dressing for the water into a different perspective.

Paddling alone also changes the dressing outlook quite a bit. The lack of rescuers and companionship usually makes most paddlers think a little more about what their doing a far as apparel. I know I put the dry top on during solo paddles unless the water has warmed up quite a bit whereas in a group I'm more care free and might wear a T-shirt.

In Maine, the water is absolutely frigid almost all year. I know that I can't even swim in it until early September and even then it's a challenge. Being in cold water on hot days is when you'll truly appreciate your ability to roll - not only for safety but for cool-downs as well.

I don't think there's a paddler alive who can't wait for the T-shirt and shorts weather and we all tend to rush into the summer apparel a little earlier than we probably should. However, none of us are capsizing and getting into trouble and our normal trips are usually very safe.

So, what should I wear?

Go for a swim and see how it feels to float around for a while. Could you handle floating in that water and actually do a paddle float reentry? Then evaluate your skills. Can you roll? Where are you paddling and who are you paddling with? What's the wind going to do that day? Think about your skills in relationship to your own feelings of personal security and comfort. Then remember this one very important fact: No paddler who has capsized, thought they were going to! Simple. - JB

PS - You can keep the dry suit or dry top in the hatch.

## June 22, 23 overnight CT river campout

Put in at Vernon Dam in lower VT at 8:00 Sat morning. Paddle down stream 10 miles to Munn's Ferry campground and stay overnight. Continue on down stream 12 miles to Barton's Cove campground on Sunday. This section of the river is sparsely populated except around Barton's cove. A beautiful scenic paddle! The paddle will be limited to 10 persons.

Arrive at Vernon Dam in lower VT at 8:00 Sat morning (RT 142). We need to get there early so that the drivers can unload and take their cars down to Barton's cove campground to catch the 10:30 shuttle back up to Vernon Dam. We will depart verson dam at approx 11:15 Shuttle service from Barton's cove is \$10 per person and \$4 a night for camping.

Contact David Cornell at 860-875-4981 if you are interested in attending.



### Fundraiser Sea Kayak Paddle Sat - May 18

On Saturday, May 18, 2002 there will be a fundraiser paddle at Hole in the Wall Beach in East Lyme, CT. Money raised from this event will go to the Tommy Fund, an organization based out of Yale New Haven Children's Hospital to benefit children with cancer. Experienced paddlers will be launching at 10:00am; beginning paddlers are encouraged to launch at 10:30am and wear appropriate cold water clothing.

Hole in the Wall Beach has a protected launch, open beach, and ample parking. A \$5.00 donation to the Tommy Fund is requested the day of the event.

**Directions:** I-95 to exit 72 (Rocky Neck State Park in East Lyme). Left at light on route 156 East. Travel 2.7 miles and take a right on Baptist Lane (McDonalds across the street). Large dirt parking lot with kayak launch on the other side of the very obvious hole in the wall.

### PADDLESPORTS RALLY WEEKEND

MAY 5th & 6th 10am - 5pm

Cedar Lake in Chester, CT

Sponsored by N. Cove Outfitters

For more information, please contact  
Karen Lipeika at North Cove Outfitters at  
(860) 388-6585

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## **+** A SIMPLE FIRST AID KIT - Jay Babina

I know for a fact that there's very few First Aid Kits in ConnYak boats except for the campers. The few times I pulled out an aspirin for a needy paddler, it has more than paid for the little effort it cost me to put it together just from the smile of appreciation.

My kit is a screw-on-top Tupperware type food container that's about 5" in diameter by 4" deep. That will cost you less than \$3. at the supermarket. Almost everything else came from the medicine chest in the bathroom.

A half used roll of duck tape is the most useful item of all. Although this doesn't fit in the container, it's always in the dry bag with the first aid kit. With duct tape, you can repair a kayak or a paddler as well as a ripped Dry Suit Seal. For a large knife or broken glass wound you can't beat wide fat tape over a piece of sterile plastic. I also have an assortment of bandages, gauze and surgical tape in my kit.

I carry a finger nail clipper and tweezers that's good for fish hooks or slivers and a small clean pocket knife.

I save all those sample medications you get in the mail (individually packed) - like aspirin, ibuprofen, antihistamine, cold meds, diarrhea, Pepto-bismol etc. One of the only items I purchased was antihistamine cream which is for jellyfish stings (a reality in LI Sound). I also have a small bottle of antiseptic and a tiny bottle filled with alcohol. There's also a rolled-up elastic bandage which I don't know what I'll do with, but it's there since I had it.

Very important - money - I carry \$5 and a bunch of quarters. My brother and I once paddled up the Mystic River as far as it goes and came across a deli. We split a sandwich with the quarters he had. We're now well-prepared for that.

Matches and a Bic lighter - just in case I get trapped in the Thimbles for several days. And, there's some miscellaneous things like string, thread and a sewing needle that round it out.

This kit is small, light and cost me just about nothing to put together and would seem almost foolish not to have along.

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## ***THE STORY OF THE (REC) WRECKED BOAT***

Back when I sailed and rowed, I always thought paddling would be really cool. When I finally got a basement workshop of my own the first thing I did was build a Platt Montfort Geodesic Aerolite 9' peapod for double paddle. I carried it on my sailboat and had a great time with it. It even withstood a hurricane lashed to the deck (we were anchored, not at sea).

I had such a good time with that I then built a Chesapeake Light Craft Cape Charles 18 (my red boat) which I had a lot of fun with. Of course, meeting and paddling with Jay Babina was my downfall because seeing that beautiful Outer Island made me want one. So- you guessed it- I built an Outer Island as well.

These two boats are great cartoppers but tough to tow behind the sailboat. So two summers ago just before leaving on vacation, I went and bought a 9' red plastic kayak (Swiftly 3.1). I had a great time with it and there are 6 other similar small yaks in our sailing fleet so we had kayak expeditions in the ponds of Block Island that lead off the harbor. It was great. The convenience of having a boat with me all the time can't be underestimated. The Outer Island still goes cartopping (it's longest trip last summer was to the Adirondacks) but the little boat gets lots of use, too.

The other thing I noticed was that virtually every guest that comes sailing with us tries out (and loves) the little plastic boat. This has the distinct potential of getting others involved in the sport of kayaking.

So this season the little plastic boat will again be out sailing and being paddled and having a great time.

- Lenny Lipton

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## EVENTS



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### **BARN ISLAND - STONNINGTON**

*Barn Island boat Launch Stonnington*  
SAT MAY 11 - (N,I)  
10 AM IN THE WATER - LUNCH

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***Barn Island to Watch Hill trip --- outside or inside or Stonnington depending on the weather conditions.***

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### **SELDON ISLAND CAMP / PADDLE MAY 18-19**

Contact Dave Hiscocks to get on the list, so we don't overpower this campsite. 10 or 12 tents is about all it can accommodate. Day paddlers are welcome to paddle on May 18, launching for the Goodspeed Opera House launch 10 am for a lunch paddle.

e-mail: [dhhiscox@aol.com](mailto:dhhiscox@aol.com)

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**Fundraiser**  
**Sea Kayak Paddle**  
**Sat - May 18**  
*(see article)*

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### **NORWALK ISLANDS - SAT, MAY 25**

*Launch at Westport - Saugatuck River*  
10 AM IN THE WATER - PACK LUNCH

**Group Trips Needed** - If you want to list a paddle for the season contact the club or newsletter. We need more paddles to alleviate our overcrowding. To list it does not mean you're responsible or even the leader (unless you want to).

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**Check the bulletin board for other impromptu trips listed by members - [www.connyak.org](http://www.connyak.org)**

**Note: Spring trips are always Novice/Intermediate due to winds that could arrive in March and April - plus the water is still very cold.**

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# CLASSIFIED

Derek Hutchinson Toksook paddle new 230 . New \$330 now \$275 or best offer. 860-561-4415 work 860-635-1979 email: bobyak2@aol.com

Prijon Sea Gull 16' 6" x 24" Glass kayak, compass deck bilge pump, Rudder.\$1,350.00 / OBO. 860.767.1728. Email: Kayaker@KayakForFun.com

Dry-tops. Stohlquist. One new, one used.\$100 & \$65. Both mens medium. Tom 413-593-6167.

Old Town Castine Kayak 14' beginners kayak. red, 2 hatches, paddle and skirt. \$600. 860-985-6893

Valley Skerray, Fiberglass, Blue over White, with skeg and Chimp Pump. Great condition! \$1700 203-854-9713 brianenichols@aol.com

Wilderness Systems Sealution, Fiberglass with rudder, 16'8,aqua / white. \$1500, (860) 873-1884

Aquaterra Double - Gemini, poly, tandem,wide beam, great for the kids or lake.Asking\$600.00 or best offer. Call 860-388-2464 Sharon.

BRAND NEW Surf/whitewater kayak. Selling for 1/2 retail. Riot Dominatrix 44. Blue composite. \$600 contact Don at donwhite@aol.com

Perception Captiva 16' X 25" poly. Rudder, two bulk heads, spray skirt, cockpit cover. Candlewood lake area. \$700 Keith 203-312-0110

Walden V-Racks for sale, will fit Thule or Yakima racks new \$60.00. Best offer. 203-481-1881 ckayaker01@attbi.com

Please contact the Newsletter when items are sold.

**Nova Scotia Trip** - May 18 - Registration deadline. The trip will occur in July or August, depending on the preferences of participants. It's a good deal- \$500 for 5 days, 2 guides, kayaks, and food. Still a few openings left.

martybnw@aol.com or (860)653-5899.

## Rough Water Training - May 11 - 13

with Ken Fink

Class of six - Tidal streams, rock gardens, and surf in Maine. Ken's goal is not comfort in rough water, but enjoyment of rough water. \$200, drysuit required. One opening remaining. Please call or email: Oldphoto@rcn.com / (203) 281-0066.

'93 Wilderness Systems Tchaika with float bags, fiberglass, no rudder, no hatches, purple over white. \$750.00. 860-444-6950 orriley@uconnect.net.

Paddling partner wanted M/F, intermediate skills - CT shoreline or rivers - Phil Goodsell 860-436-4507

Perception Sea Lion, 16' 7", fiberglass, 1997, yellow/white, new \$2180, \$1800.Paddle, aquabound, fbgls \$100. Skirt \$50. Paddlefloat \$40. Kayak cart \$100.Yakama, hully rollers (4) \$100. 860-572-7461 after May 1, e-mail vicsitty@aol.com

Walden V-Racks for sale. Will fit Yakima, or Thule or many others. \$25. Call 203-481-1881

Wanted. Sparrow Hawk - Wilderness Systems call: 413-593-6167

Necky Looksha IV for sale, red, poly, with rudder and 2 good sized hatches. Stored indoors, in excellentcondition. \$1000 includes skirt and compass. Email kmack2@earthlink.net

Two Werner paddles for sale; one left hand control San Juan and one right hand control Camano . Both in

Fiberglass . \$175.00 each . Call 203 226 9674 days or 203 454 2278 eves .

## INSTRUCTION

Urban Eskimo Kayaking Classes  
Mike Falconeri 203-284-9212  
www.uekayaking.com

## GREENLAND STYLE INSTRUCTION

Instructors: Fern Usen, *BCU Coach and ACA Certified* and Donald White.  
Call 860-643-8303 email: 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:

**ConnYak, P.O. Box 197, Ellington, CT 06029**  
**E-MAIL: CONNYAK@CONNYAK.ORG**

**WEBSITE / BULLETIN BOARD: WWW.CONNYAK.ORG**

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



**ConnYak**  
CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

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