

SPRING IS HERE!

Women's paddling clinic with Karen Knight Sat & Sun July 8 & 9

American Canoe Association (ACA) Kayak and Canoe Instructor Trainer, certified yoga teacher, Maine Guide, and therapeutic recreation specialist, Karen's passion for the outdoors, especially paddling, is fueled by her love of teaching and sharing it with others. With over twenty years of experience in teaching and guiding,

Karen Knight has been described as a "ballerina on the water." The National

Continued on next page



Karen Knight

ConnYak Paddle Schedule

Over the years, mostly due to the immediate access of the internet, our paddles are posted on our web site and a large majority are posted on the BB (bulletin board) by those who wish to share their paddle.

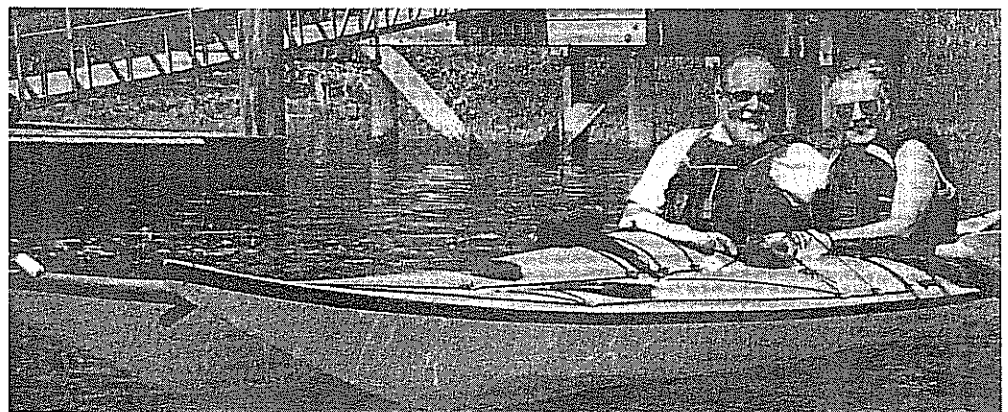
REALITY CHECK by Peter Smith

That January day on the Connecticut River was bitterly cold, and a stiff breeze had generated choppy waves and plenty of whitecaps. The wind made my eyes tear and my cheeks sting as we prepared to set out on our paddle. The idea that we might enjoy a paddle on a day like this had been initiated by a forecast that included a clear sunny sky, and our denial of other aspects such as wind and the cold. My friend Michael asked if he could borrow my sunglasses since I wasn't wearing them, and immediately dropped them in the water and lost them. Several years later I retaliated by losing several padlocks of his over the side of his sailboat so I think we are even now. I'd really like to know the total value of every item I've ever owned that is now deep underwater somewhere. Or maybe I wouldn't.

I was keeping an eye on Michael since he was in an unfamiliar kayak, but he appeared to be comfortable with the boat. Our goal was about 8 miles up the river, and we had to work hard to make headway against the wind. We didn't go very far before we began having trouble with ice buildup on our kayaks. The fresh water splash and spray was freezing to our decks, and becoming progressively thicker. Before long the weight began to noticeably affect the handling of the kayaks, so we rafted up and pounded the ice off of our decks with our hands. This worked pretty well, but needed to be repeated several times as we progressed. Still, it was just great to be out. We had been cooped up by bad weather for too long – we weren't going to let a little ice turn us back.

After about an hour of bashing through the waves, I noticed that one of my fingers had gone completely numb from the cold. Since I have so many fingers a mere 10% loss wasn't debilitating, but it did seem to be significant. When I mentioned it to Michael, he indicated that important parts of his body were getting very cold too. Enough was enough. We agreed to shorten our trip, but first we would stop and take a break at a nearby island where we could get out of the wind for a bit. As we approached the island our course converged with an aluminum canoe with three people in it, the only other craft of any kind that we saw out that day. Two men were paddling, and a subdued woman was huddled down low in the center. There were no life preservers in sight, and they all wore jeans and canvas jackets. I was particularly impressed with the bow paddler's special holster that was designed to

Continued on next page



Pete and Claudine Smith. Pete and Claudine met on a ConnYak paddle several years ago which led to their getting married. Claudine is the ConnYak Librarian.

Reality check...cont.

hold a can of beer on each hip. Although the wind was bitter and the action of the canoe was lively in the waves, the men were in good spirits and were quite friendly. We stopped on the same beach and chatted with them for a bit while we ate some snacks and warmed up. As the canoeists were setting out again, I noticed that they were wearing cloth gloves. Based on the experience I'd had with my own finger becoming numb while wearing neoprene gloves I imagine that if they capsized they would probably have lost the ability to use their hands within a few minutes. The next day the news held no reports of lives lost on the river, so apparently they all made it back OK.

When we were just about back to our launching site, Michael said, "Can you roll a kayak in water this cold?"

Well, isn't that the silliest question you've ever heard? Of course I could! A quick dip in the cold water would be refreshing. I proceeded to snap off a quick roll to prove the point.

The roll worked just fine, but the neoprene hood that I was wearing wasn't quite snug enough, so the cold water rushed unimpeded over the top of my head as well as flooding my sinuses and ears. I was up, but I felt like someone had hit me in the head with a giant ice hammer. Ouch! Suddenly I didn't feel like pretending I was a tough guy anymore. Time to pack up and head for the great indoors.

Meet at the Beach

Gathering of kayak builders.

Sat. June 17

Bluff Point St. Park - Groton

10 AM - on

If you build, have built or are just interested, this is a casual social and info sharing gathering of paddlers interested in home built kayaks or any small craft. Bring your boat(s) (store bought too) since there is paddling there as well.

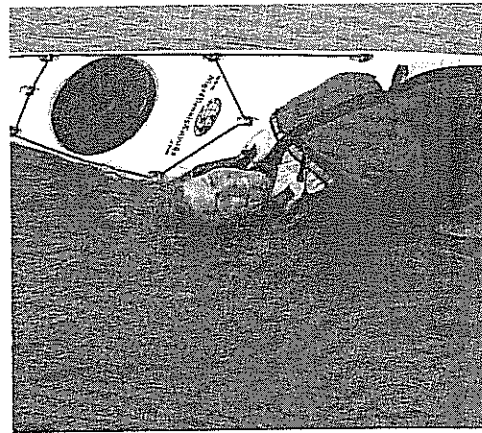
Directions - I-95 to exit 88 in Groton. Head towards water (south on Rt. 117) to 2nd. light at the junction of Rt. 1. Right on Rt. 1. Left at first light (Depot Road). Continue on to Bluff Point State Park.

Karen Knight Clinic...cont.

Champion in Interpretive Freestyle Canoeing, from 1996 until her retirement from competition in 2000, A versatile and innovative instructor, Karen is recognized for her ability to teach and motivate students of all ages, levels and abilities. With a meticulous eye for detail and stroke nuances, students can't help but leave her class a better paddler than when they came in. She's an American Canoe Association Instructor Trainer Educator in Open Coastal kayaking, and Freestyle Canoeing, a Whitewater Canoe Instructor, and has ACA endorsements in Traditional Kayaking (Greenland) and Adaptive paddling. Karen will do a demo for the club before the first class.

On July 8th we'll hold a workshop called Strokes and Skills-Development & Refinement: To be a skillful paddler, you don't need to be a certain height or build, nor do you have to have a lot of muscle mass or upper body strength. Kayaking is about technique, good judgment, and knowledge of your environment and abilities. During this class we'll start by looking at the strokes we use most of the time—forward, back, sweeps, draws, etc. We'll fine-tune them so person, boat, and blade move as one—with grace fluidity, and power. Then later on in the day we'll start to develop and incorporate boat tilt(heel) into paddling. Heeling helps you to develop greater balance and confidence, plus allows your kayak to do what you want it to do in less time and, in many cases, in less space. If time allows we'll also introduce the support and recovery strokes—high and low braces.

On July 9th we'll have Kayaking—Dance on Water: Karen Knight, who's been described as a "ballerina on the water," is known for her paddling grace, precision, and balance. In this class, students will work on fine blade control, creative variations and blending of strokes and maneuvers, balance drills and boat tilt, so that body, boat, and paddle move as one and are dancing on the water. Who knows....maybe we'll even put on some music. This is an intermediate level class.



Karen Knight

The first class will be held at Bluff Point. The first half of class will be held inside Bluff Point. If the class wants to, the second half can be held outside of Bluff Point in the sound. Class size is limited to 10 people for each class. If we have the full amount of 10 the class cost will be 50 dollars. The second class will be held either at Messerschmidt Pond or Bluff Point (we need to be out of the wind for this one). So email me if you're interested (these classes will fill up fast). If taking the first class let me know what your experience in kayaking is. Sorry guys—this workshop's for women only.

For further information contact
Kate Powers: seayakky@comcast.net

Feeling Cold - take a leak

In March we had paramedic Brad Fowler give a talk on Hypothermia. Brad's presentation was a very thorough one with lots of enlightening information on the condition and dealing with victims. One interesting point was: a hypothermic victim should be encouraged to empty their bladder of cold fluid which will only make the rewarming process go slower.

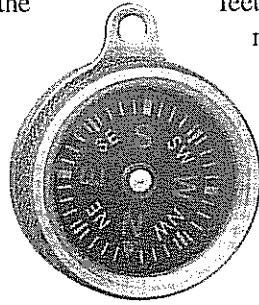
Many people who have a bout with hypothermia end up with a lung infection afterwards because water gets drawn into the lungs. This is do to reverse in pressure in the capalaries and not because they swallowed any water. Like most imbalances that can occur in the body, it's quite complex and not always a simple matter of warming a person up to get them back to total balance. Sometimes it takes a few days.

Dead Wreckoning...by Pete Smith

I don't know how unusual my experiences are with regards to meeting other boaters who fail to carry either a compass or a GPS. It has been three times now that I have encountered soles out on the water who disdain the use of such mundane devices. The most impressive meeting happened when I was paddling down the Connecticut River one night in a thick fog. Before anyone goes berserk about the fact that I was paddling at night in a fog, let me explain that this was a warm summer night with a full moon, no wind, and I was paddling parallel to and so close to the bank that I could have tossed my hat on it. I happened to be in very shallow water, and the navigation channel was on the far side of the river. In these circumstances I felt relatively safe against being run down by any wayward boats that might be out – or so I had theorized. At some point, something made me turn and look behind me. An enormous gleaming white motor yacht, at least a 50-footer, had quietly emerged from the fog bank and was suddenly looming behind me, not twenty feet away.

A hail came, "Do you know where the channel is?"

"NOT WHERE YOU ARE! STOP YOUR ENGINES!!" I responded vigorously. They obligingly stopped; doubtlessly the sudden appearance of rocks just a few feet past me effectively reinforced my suggestion.



A short discussion followed, where I learned the following facts: they had no compass, GPS, Loran, or anything of the sort aboard the yacht, and they were heading for Old Saybrook, about 20 miles down the river. The visibility with the fog was about 30 feet, tops. They asked for a bearing to the next channel marker. I knew from memory that it was just about due west from where we were just then, but it was at a wide portion of the river and trying to hit it on a blind run would be tough. If they did manage that, they would need to make a 90 degree left turn and then stay on that course until they spotted the next marker, all without any reference.

It would take a long string of miracles to see them safely to their destination that night. I was skeptical and suggested that they anchor for the night, but they rejected that notion and they motored off in the direction I had indicated toward whatever fate held in store for them.

Now, it may have been wrong of me, but I had three compasses on or in my little kayak that night, and I didn't offer to give them one. It goes against my grain to donate good compasses to people that can afford 50-foot yachts, but it did bother me. Perhaps I should buy some cheap give-away compasses so I won't be faced with any further moral dilemmas.

Spring is a great time for Daffodils and Hypothermia

I love spring. The warmth of spring brings out the flowers and the onslaught of pfd-less paddlers as well as the other colorful varieties that wear street clothes with the PFD strapped to the boat.

Every Spring, the death toll in small craft goes up a bit. The conditions are just right: warm air and frigid water. In the past few years, there has always been a canoe capsized somewhere in New England and the paddlers never survive. Is it ignorance? Of course not. They know the water is frigid. Somehow, like many paddlers they assume a capsized will never happen to them. All the education in the world is not going to change this casual attitude that exists in some people. Part of this is also the lack of protective clothing or just not wanting to acquire or wear it. But how about the \$20 pfd that could have saved their lives? Maybe they felt childish wearing a PFD? Ironically, many of these canoe capsizes occur in quiet conditions when the paddlers are changing seating positions or fishing

gear and is not caused by rough water conditions.

Generally, we are raised to believe that everything in life is going to be OK. If that weren't the case we would all be neurotics. The "don't worry" attitude is just a part of an ingrained behavior that allows us to deal with the daily stress that life brings. However, there's a very fine line between worry and caution and a little experience makes us intelligently cautious when we need to be. Unfortunately some paddlers never get that far. Maybe they're just not that smart or the ego is running the ship.

I think as kayakers, we start our basic education with a wet exit. This little ritual that may occur through education or by accident, immediately describes a reality scenario that we don't easily forget. Maybe if canoeists and recreational kayakers had to capsize their craft upon purchasing one, it would change the cavalier attitude that many of them have.

As far as the recreational pfd-less paddlers in general, I think we are going to have to accept the fact that in this imperfect world, there's going to be fatalities. Paddle sports

demand paddling skills and this is the main difference between us and the boating world. Unfortunately, paddling skills are gained with experience and we really don't plunge ourselves into frigid water just to find out how it feels. Paddlers who roll their boats or play in surf are well aware of how cold the water is. But for many spring paddlers, the disconnect with the water temperature coupled with the "don't worry attitude" is the false sense of security that allows them to act foolishly with their thermal protection. Their only acknowledgement of the water temperature is what they feel on their hands. They can't imagine wearing a wet suit or anything less than a T-shirt on a 75 degree day and we can all certainly relate to that.

Unfortunately, shortly after the writing of this article, (early April) we had a recreational kayak death in CT. A 53-year-old Ellington man died after an apparent kayaking capsized on the Fenton River in Mansfield. He did not have his PFD on or adequate cold water apparel. His PFD was found later.

- Jay Babina

Paddler's commitment anxiety disorder

It's amazing how fast we can move to make decisions, get speakers, buy things or schedule a picnic. But when it comes to a yearly paddling schedule, a deep seated psychological problem exists because as usual, we don't have it. It's commitment anxiety. I know many paddlers have it since it's the same few people who post paddles in almost all clubs. It's important to remember that nobody expects anything of you if you post a paddle. You certainly don't have to commit to pay the bills and raise the kids!

Our on-going schedule is (... or will be) on our web site under events and many paddles are posted on our bulletin board.

If want company and people to paddle with just post it on the bulletin board. There's plenty of people who will paddle with you no matter what type of paddling you do or what your skill level is.



All open water paddles are (N/I) Novice/ Intermediate because the sea conditions can drastically change in an hour. Novice paddles are inter-coastal and river paddles. Advanced paddles will always be marked on the listing and encompass offshore crossings, and usually rougher conditions and longer distances.

Any paddle can change dramatically which is the nature of our sport and something we should always be aware of. Although paddlers will always help one another, ultimately, you are always responsible for your own safety when paddling on any trip.

If you're a new kayaker, please try paddling for a few hours before attempting a ConnYak trip even on a novice paddle. You should know that you can paddle for a few hours without dying .

Always carry food, water and extra dry clothes. Pfd & sprayskirt mandatory.

To Join ConnYak or continue membership:

You can fill out the membership application that ou can download from our website at: www.connyak.org.

We are a non-profit club and the \$15 dues allows us to provide the paddling opportunities / website / library and other benefits that ConnYak members use.

Note: If you paid dues or joined in 05 from May on, you are a current member of the club.



Thank You

If you have been a member and continue to support us, we sincerely appreciate your involvement.



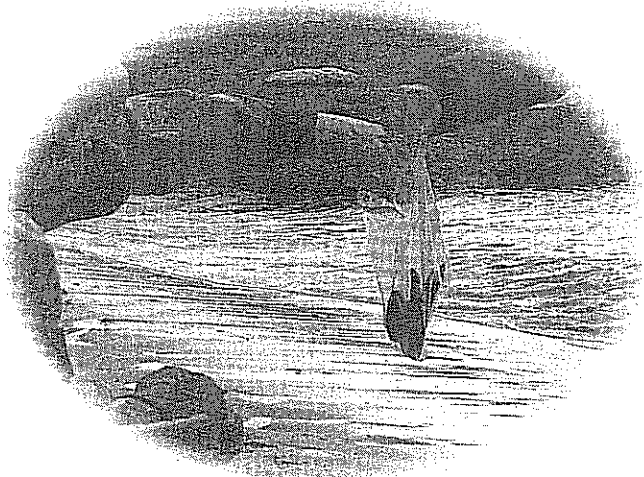
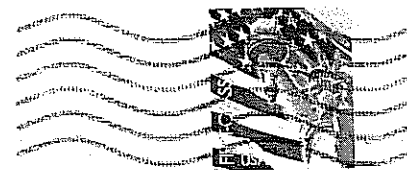
ConnYak

CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

PO BOX 571, Plantsville, CT 06479

SOUTHERN CT 064

08 MAY 2006 PM 5 T



01/01/2007
Russell Norton
PO Box 1070
New Haven, CT 06504

06504+1070

