

CONNAYAK



CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

January 1999

Rolling in a kayak is often explained as a very simple operation which requires little or no physical strength and is often learned by the beginner in one easy lesson. You are told that you either get it or you don't get it. You can watch helplessly on the sidelines as others actually get it. They are now possessors of the great mystical secret of rolling. You ask yourself. "What happened? How did they get it? Did the blue-water elf tap them on the shoulder and let them into the club

The Precursor to Rolling

or was it that new \$2500 boat and \$500 paddle? Well, it is my thesis that neither of these events occurred. What actually occurred was that unknown to you, they had first experienced the precursor to rolling. Other activities of their life had prepared them for rolling. Sailing, diving, running, aerobics, yoga, swimming, weight lifting, reading of sport books and magazines all gave them an advantage. It is the purpose of this article to provide a similar advantage to you by describing a rolling precursor.

You had walked into your first kayak lesson at the pool and waited patiently until someone had positioned your class kayak next to the edge of the pool. Your dry boating clothes moved with the breeze coming from the pool doors which opened into the outside air. You then very carefully clung to the edge of the pool and lowered your quivering limbs into the bottom of that unstable hull of a boat. The main thought on your mind was not to fall into the water as you climbed into the kayak.. The spray skirt was then snugged around your waist and you and the boat were one. And once in the kayak, the main thought was not to capsize.

At this point in your paddling career, both capsizing and rolling are the last activities which you would like to consider. The vision of disaster now runs through your wild imagination: I have fallen into the cold water and I am trapped in my boat and losing my glasses. I can't see nor

breathe or know which way is up. You watch the water people nearby as they spend their time half suspended between the air and water surface and wonder if they do really have normal lungs; or did you detect a slight gill structure towards the rear of their heads.

A few questions to them will reveal that indeed they did come from

a different place than you. One was a scuba diver in the Navy. Another was on the school swim team for four years. Another lived on a high surf beach as a youth. It is no wonder that you tremble as the boat quietly rocks on the surface of the indoor pool, you did not prepare yourself prior to class.

The reality is that you should know that you will be warm when you enter the water of the pool. A bathing suit is only warm after you are in the pool for a period of time. Wear an inexpensive wet suit and swim in the pool before your class starts to ensure that the first dunking will not feel too cold.

Very few mammals can see clearly both above and below the surface of the water. Man cannot. Purchase a pair of prescription (-1.5 to -8.0

diopter same for both eyes) swimming goggles for about \$28.95 plus \$4.50 shipping from Speedo at (800) 526-8788(nationwide) or (908) 647-8121 (Metro Swim Shop in NJ) and wear them during your pool lesson. A

By Clay Luce

blurry shape at the bottom of the pool is now seen clearly as the school symbol rather than some sinister predator. A face mask or standard swim goggles work well for

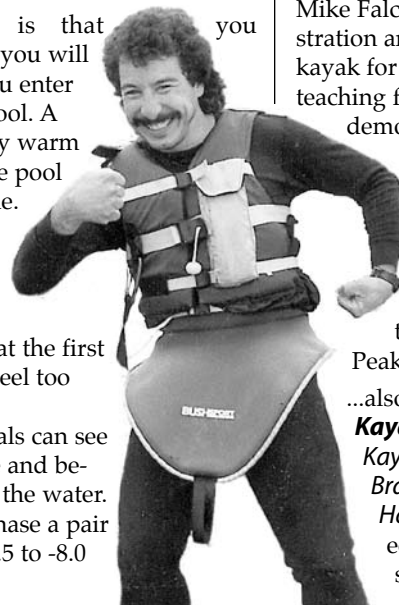
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At the next meeting: Wed.- Jan. 20

Packing the Kayak

Mike Falconeri will be giving his demonstration and discussion on packing the kayak for trips and safety. Mike has been teaching for 12 years and has given this demonstration at many symposiums and kayak demonstration days. Mike's experience comes from training and education as well as practical knowledge and experiences including a solo trip from Branford CT through the Cape Cod Canal to Peaks Island in Maine.

...also Video - "Performance Kayaking" which includes Sea Kayaking Skills, Paddle Strokes, Braces, Rescues, Rolling and the Handling of Surf. An excellent video for beginners as well as seasoned paddlers.



Mike with his Kayak and gear on display at one of his demonstrations.

those with good vision.

We have heard of people capable of rolling almost without moving any part of their body. Most of us do not fit into this category. We will need to bend, rotate, move, lift, push, and pull ourselves through the rolling cycle. We are in trouble, if we have not bent, rotated, moved, lifted, pushed or pulled our body since gym class in high school. A good stretching class or a three-month membership at the local health club will do wonders to re-educate our bodies to our new kayak lifestyle.

The most intimidating feature of rolling is the requirement to hold your breath while your head is under water. A good swimmer's nose clamp will keep the water out of your sinuses and generate a lot of confidence for your survival. Chlorinated water does not feel very good in your nose and eyes. If you have an ear problem, add ear plugs for your comfort. When was the last time that you put your head under water and held your breath? Was it a year ago or twenty years ago? Don't wait for your kayak class to experience life under the surface of the water. Make arrangements with a local pool for an adult swim time to provide you with ample time to become relaxed with your head under the water.

The situation which we have not discussed is that of the non-swimmer. There may be a large population of kayakers who have not yet learned how to swim. If you are one of them and this bothers you, then take swimming lessons prior to your kayak pool sessions. A person who is confident and relaxed under the water is a quick rolling student.

My cousin could swim round trip in a pool underwater before he started to kayak. He was hand rolling within two months. I had a great fear of being under the water in a kayak. Several months of lap swimming with prescrip-

tion swim goggles allowed me to be relaxed swimming at the bottom of the pool. My first underwater re-entry and roll (with a paddle float) this summer was a personal accomplishment which I never thought would happen. The main point of this is that dry fearful people take a very long time to learn how to roll.

There are implications to the teaching of kayaking in this review. The first kayak class should begin with a pool swim. One would enter the kayak for the first time from the water. This is a wet sport. Part of the gear needed for class would be placed at the bottom of the pool in the shallow end. Each student would retrieve this piece of gear, be it a weighted paddle or spray skirt before getting into their boat. Many wet activities during the class would reduce the fear of the most timid student towards capsizing.

The precursor to rolling is a great deal of time spent in the water either before class or during class. Those persons taking such a class would know ahead of time what was in store for them. They would be spared the experience of the dual kayak class gone wild. The first session is perfectly dry and warm and then comes the wet part.

I hope that these precursor musings are a benefit to those of you who are coming to kayaking with a weak underwater background. I have used them to my benefit and have actually pool and lake rolled. I look forward to being able to roll under real sea conditions. In the meantime, I swim on a regular basis.

The ability to run through the waves with one eye cocked to the heavens and the other enjoying the life below the water is only shared with those mammals, the porpoise and the whales. The ability to roll and scull and lean into turns is not a life saving technique but a life enriching technique for the kayaker. May we all get just a little bit better at it during the coming year.

- Clay Luce

"WHERE ARE YOU?"

ConnYak club members are doing an excellent job in using the newsletter to bring safety information to other members. This is something I wanted from the club and am glad to see. Dean's and Fern's articles were very helpful.

I would like to add a couple of things to the lists. Dean mentions a mini-mag flashlight. I also carry one, but if there is any chance at all that I could be out after dark I also carry a more powerful light for collision avoidance and pathfinding. Another item that I always have is a signal mirror. It can't run out of battery power and can be seen for a long distance when it is usable.

Flares are important- one only has to read accounts of rescues to see how often flares save lives. (recommended reading for beginning kayakers- 'Deep Trouble' from Sea Kayaker Magazine).

Additionally, you should be aware that hand held flares are as important as aerial flares - once someone sees that you are in trouble you still need to be found, and flares that shoot up into the air do not serve to locate you exactly. You can't have too many- flares are notorious for occasionally being duds, so if you have three, chances are you have only two. This may not be enough! Many people try to carry the small Skyblazers in their PFD in case of separation from the boat.

Also on communications - it is true that most handheld VHF's will go for many hours on a battery, however the more you use it the less time it will run. Also, cold affects batteries adversely (polar explorers keep batteries inside their jackets), so I usually leave my radio off. In addition, I have spare, fully charged batteries for both the VHF and the cell phone, but whether I could change them in an emergency is debatable (ie: in the water or cold and wet on a beach).

But even more important is something that Fern mentions- "chart of area". The importance of the chart and your ability to know where you are cannot be stressed enough. If you tell the Coast Guard that you are between Pt. Judith and Block Island you could be waiting a long time for them to comb all that water to find you! I favor two things; navigational skills, which are fun to use once you learn and practice them, and to back that up a portable GPS, which with a waterproof bag will run under \$300 for the best ones and half that or less for very inexpensive ones. Why the waterproof bag when many are touted as waterproof? "Waterproof" and "Submersible" are two terms manufacturers use for equipment. "Submersible" means it can go under the



Clay Luce practices swimming in the surf.

surface (although not recommended). "Waterproof" just means it can get wet. Additionally, as Dean pointed out, during capsizes, rescues, etc, things are often knocked from your deck bungees. The waterproof bag enables you to tie the unit to the boat, protects it and also floats it.

I am a relatively new kayaker, but have long experience in sailing. Many years ago I participated in a rescue that illustrates how important it is to know where you are. I had friends on my 26' sailboat and we were sailing from Greenwich to Norwalk. Offshore I spotted something that appeared to be a capsized boat with life jackets scattered on the water. There were a couple of boats in the vicinity. I changed course and proceeded under sail at least as fast or faster than I could have gone under power. As we approached I saw two sailboats in the 30 -33' range powering in the area but not doing anything. I could now see a man clinging to the bow of a capsized boat and life jackets scattered around. Closer, I finally saw a little girl's head in one of the life jackets. I set up for my rescue. While I made my approach under sail a Coast Guard Auxiliary Patrol boat, a 39' sailboat, came in at full speed under power and two fully dressed auxiliaries, a man and a woman, jumped overboard as the boat sped along. As I approached the little girl one of the original sailboats backed up into my path. However, no one does a rescue backwards because of propeller danger, and I figured if he'd been there all that time and not done anything he wasn't about to now. At the last second he gave way and I stopped next to the little girl and picked her up. At the same time my crew and I now saw the the girl's mother was floating just under the surface.

Fortunately, at that time the police boats arrived, and coordinated with the "Star of Life", an ambulance boat, got the lady out of the water and directly across our boat onto the "Star". Sadly, it was too late for her and 4 others who had been on the powerboat.

At that time I had been teaching advanced sailing and safety for years, but I learned a few things. The accident was typical- an overloaded boat (7 people on an 18' runabout)- they all went aft when the motor stalled to see what was wrong. There were no life jackets on the boat. The two sailboats that were there first threw theirs into the water, and the mother's last act was to get the little girl sort of secured into one life jacket. The amazing thing was that these two modern sailboats were about 2 miles off of Stamford, an easy landmark, and didn't know where they

were. Therefore, the Police and Coast Guard boats were roaring out to the rescue- but they didn't know where they were headed! I rarely keep my VHF on, since channel 16 is nonstop chatter. Since then, when I think something is not right the radio goes right on and the Coast Guard is contacted if the situation merits it.

The moral of this is PLEASE- know where you are - be able to give someone a good position if you are in trouble - a chart is invaluable in this regard, as you can tell what major marks or islands you are near. You can also use your compass and distance estimating skills, dead reckoning skills, or, lo, the GPS. In cold weather, or even in the summer, time can be critical! While it is true that there are radio direction finders that work with VHF's, using them is time consuming and not every potential rescuer has them.

- Lenny Lipton

WINTER POOL SESSIONS

SUNDAYS: JAN. 17, 24, 31 & FEB. 7

ConnYak pool sessions run for four hours - 9 am to 1 pm at Sheehan High School pool in Wallingford. This is open pool time for practice. The fee is \$10 for each session payable at the door by cash or check made to ConnYak. You may pay for one or more sessions with one check if you want. Please bring cash in an envelope with your name on it.

Directions: Exit 15 Rt. 91. Rt 68 W. past intersections of Rt 15 & Rt 150. Take fourth left on to Hope Hill Road which is at the light. Sheehan High School is 1/4 mile on the Rt.

COMING IN FEBRUARY

The February meeting will be at:
The Essex Town Hall- February 5.



Joel Helander of Guilford - chairman of the Faulkner's Light Brigade will present a slide lecture on Faulkners Island. Joel will discuss the history, preservation, it's wildlife, along with their political and physical efforts to save the lighthouse and preserve this landmark island.

PREZ (for life) STEPS DOWN

Nearly six years ago ten brave paddling souls met to explore the possibility of forming a Sea Kayaking Club for the purposes of meeting other paddlers and networking paddling sites. At the time none of us expected the sport to grow exponentially and there was not an easy way for paddlers to meet in Connecticut to paddle and share their experiences. ConnYak in its infancy was a club with major growing pains. Where to meet; how often; what to do at meetings; where to go on trips; what to do about liability insurance. These challenges were met by an able group of club officers, and ConnYak has grown stronger as a result.

In the last six months a major positive change has taken place in the attitude of the general membership. A lot of pleading and begging went on in the past to get people to "volunteer" to do things for the club. Now at meetings valuable suggestions are made and volunteers do something for the club without being asked.

It has now become necessary for me to put my personal and professional interests ahead of those of ConnYak, but I do so confident that the club will survive and continue to grow. For the next few months I will continue handling memberships for the club. I'm looking for someone literate in MS Word and Excel to take over the membership duties by the end of April or May, or sooner if they wish. Our January meeting is our election of officers and there is a person interested in taking over as president. If you wish to attend the January meeting and nominate anyone (or yourself) who agrees to serve as a club officer, please do so. It's been a pleasure and a lot of fun working with all of you over the years.

- Stan Kegeles

CONNYPAK MEETING - JAN

WED. JAN. 20, 7:30 PM

WALLINGFORD PARK & REC.

Election of Officers, Mike Falconeri's - demo and talk on "Packing the Kayak" & Video - "Performance Kayaking".

DIRECTIONS - WALLINGFORD PARK & REC

Exit 15 (Rt 68) off I-91 in Wallingford. West on Rt. 68. (toward Wallingford)

Approx. 3/4 mile take a right at the Fire Station (Barnes Road). Take your first Rt. off Barnes on to Fairfield Blvd.

Wallingford Park & Rec. is the 2nd building on the left.

CLASSIFIED



Feathercraft K1 Expedition Single (foldable kayak) 15' 11" x 25", costs \$ 3850.00 sacrifice \$3000.00. Never in the water. 203-772-3174.

2 Woman's Kokatat drysuits, med & small - Bib style, boots incl. New \$275. 860-693-9625

Women's feet heaters, size 5 -\$15. Women's wet suit, sm. farmer John & Jacket \$100. 203-481-1912

Necky Sea Kayak Looksha IV. 16' like new, used one season. White and Turquoise. \$1800.00 860-228-0105

Wanted, used double Kayak Call 203-426-2414

Wilderness Systems 3yr old Sealution—Kevlar w/ rudder, blue/ white. Includes Werner 2-piece Camano paddle, Spray Skirt, Bilge pump, Paddle float, Yakima saddles. \$1500. 860-485-9173

Thule rack system, complete with 2-58" bars, 4 saddles without straps, 4 gutter feet with locks. \$150. Call 860-613-0622

Necky Arluk 1.8 18' x 22", white, glass, includes spray skirt \$1100. 860-747-1223

Betsie Bay Manitou - fiberglass 22' x 18', excellent cond. \$1400. 203-269-0569

Reiver - Derek Hutchinson design, 17' 1 1/2" x 22" - fiberglass, Day hatch, spray skirt. ex. cond. \$1600.00 (203) 457-0149.

Nigel Dennis Greenlander kayak, white over white with skeg \$1350 .860 659-1223

P&H Capella, poly, blue, \$1000 860 659-1223

Orca, Royalex 16' with rudder, demo red over white, \$1400 860 659-1223

Primex kayak cart. Paid \$119, asking \$80. Used twice. 203 426-8286

Aquaterra Chinook, 16' x 24" plastic, \$495. 203 481-1881

Toksook demo paddle, 2 piece, \$150. Ainsworth 1 piece paddle, \$50 860 659-1223

Wanted: Lightweight folding kayak in good condition: \$500 or less, please call 860-872-0812. Also looking for used Keowee or Otter.

Nordkapp HM Loaded; day hatch, foot pump, compass, knee tube, large cockpit, yellow over white. \$1600.00 Day (860)441-8416 Evening (860)535-8087

P&H Capella, yellow, new Oct.98, 17' x 22" stable, fun boat. \$1,250. 401-596-4482 anytime.



Please contact the Newsletter when items are sold.

KAYAK SKILLS & ROLLING

Urban Eskimo Kayaking - Mike Falconeri

Skills Workshops and Eskimo Rolling

On-going pool lessons by appointment.

Call Mike at 203-284-9212

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. Members can join the ACA with a club discount for \$15 which entitles you to full insurance coverage on trips as well as a full subscription to PADDLER Magazine. (a \$15 subscription)

Send inquiries to: Stan Kegeles

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Website: mindspring.com/~connyak

Send newsletter articles or classifieds to:

Jay Babina e-mail Jbabina@snet.net

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