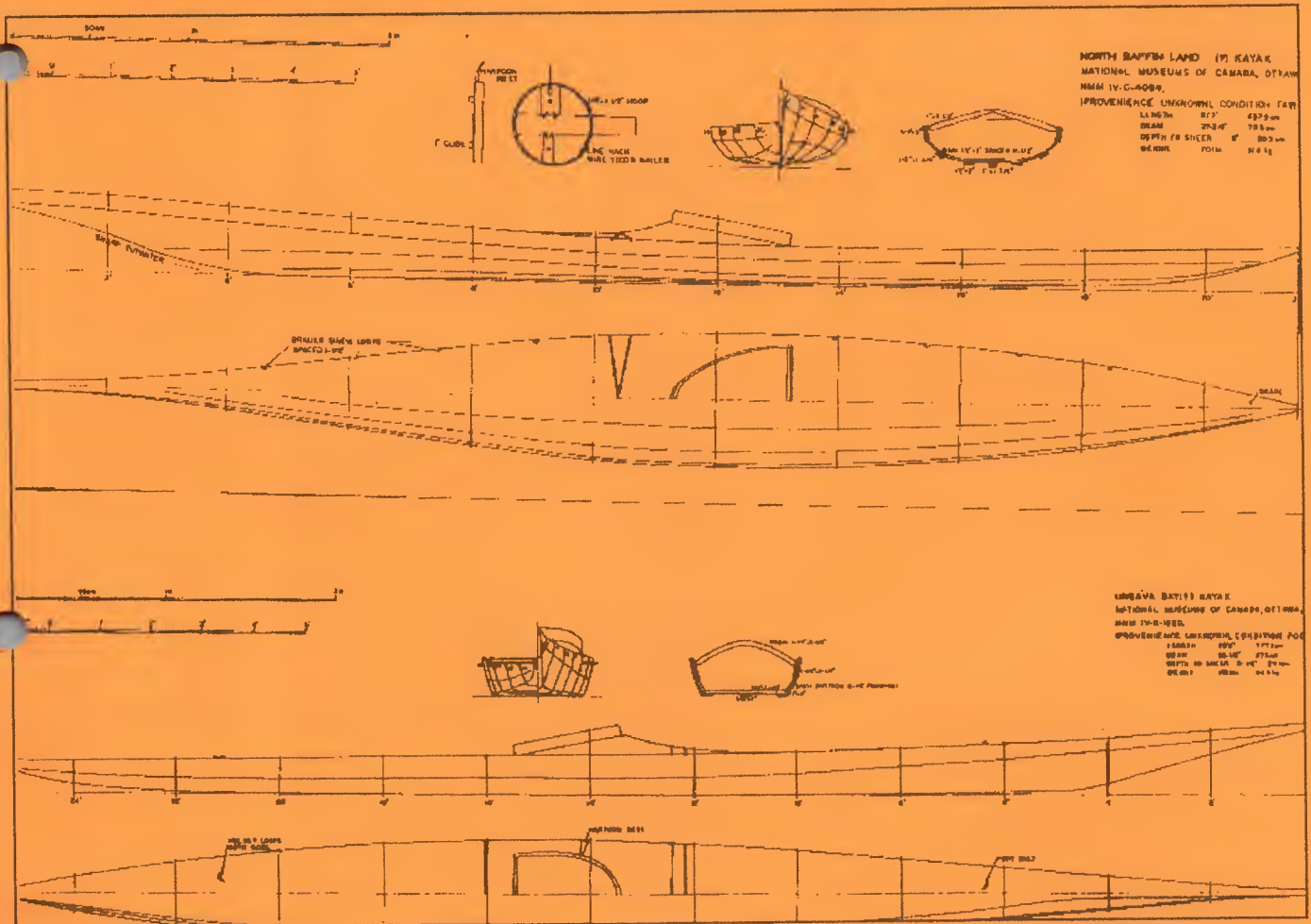


OCEAN KAYAKER



NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SEA KAYAKING ASSOCIATION,
THE NORDKAPP TRUST & PADDLERS INTERNATIONAL



An international & independant sea
canoeing association open to all
interested in this aspect of canoeing
with the objective of promoting safe
sea kayaking for everyone



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Ocean Kayaker

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*Whether you sea kayak
regularly or hardly ever I
know you can write. I also
guess you have something to
say. A point of view, an
experience, a piece of gear
that you like (or hate). SO
LET ME HAVE
SOMETHING FOR
YOUR NEWSLETTER*

WANTED

I am interested in
obtaining my first Sea
Kayak. Ideally I would
like a safe, stable and
large capacity
Kayak—speed not
essential. Please con-
tact: **Mike Walker**
Tel: 0527 528 382
or 07720 275 774

editorial
by John Ramwell

hi!

I was hesitant about raising the subscription to £10 but it seems my concerns were not justified in that the renewal rate has been excellent. In fact I have had several letters of encouragement. Many thanks for these and to remind you that all monies sent as subscription does go only into running the Association. Finally, on this issue.....if there is a renewal form enclosed with this copy of 'Ocean Kayaker', then you have NOT yet renewed.

Over 35 years ago I started a simple news sheet in order to pull together a number of disparate paddlers to form up the BCU Sea Touring Committee. This news sheet was popular enough to keep going and so with help from the then extant ADVANCED SEA KAYAK CLUB I broadened it out to a magazine style newsletter and invited membership from anyone who had an interest in this aspect of canoeing.

It's still a newsletter style publication and it remains cheap, keeps us all in touch and has done its' best to be a voice for the sea kayaker world wide. I am thinking in particular of the involvement we have had over the issue of BCU coaching awards beyond the shores of Britain (see issue of 'Ocean Kayaker' # 42). ISKA is an organisation to communicate to an between members. This allows us to keep a watching brief over the whole sea kayaking scene to ensure our interests are protected. The governing bodies of canoe sport around the world already undertake this function. I know the BCU Sea Touring Committee - of which I am a member - does an excellent job. So we can work together to support each other. There is very little that is contentious about sea kayaking. Having said this, there are always differences of opinion about how, why and what within the sport and here is your opportunity to voice these. This is where your letters are important. Keep them coming be they critical, informative, short, long, what ever. They are always appreciated by readers of 'Ocean Kayaker'. As for general material for the news letter.....always welcome, particularly with pictures/diagrams. Just to remind you that, though I will publish 'FOR SALE' items, because we only go out every two months, items are often sold before our readers get to hear about them through this news letter.

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Keep Australia on your left

**Reviewed
by**
RITA
ROMEU

By Eric Stiller

I am always a little lukewarm toward "trip reports". Here I was looking at a hefty 400 page plus "trip report." I started this book one evening, and after 30 pages was engrossed. I blazed through it and was talking about it with everyone I know, paddlers and non-paddlers. This is an amazing story and effectively well written.

Guys from New York

This is the story of two guys from New York who decide to circumnavigate Australia in a kayak. The author is Eric Stiller of The Klepper Shop on Union Square fame. His father owned the store for many years, and it was a premier spot in the New York kayak scene. His partner for the trip was a native Australian, Tony Brown, who was living in New York pursuing a modeling career.

Tony had the original idea to circumnavigate his homeland. Eric started out in the role of trainer and outfitter for Tony and a bevy of friends planning to accompany him. Tony's friends backed out and Eric is asked to replace them. The reader is involved with his decision making process of whether to agree - he does end up going, despite his reluctance right up until launch time.

"The movie *Apocalypse Now* was respooling in my mind. I was going to try to circumnavigate Australia in a kayak with a person I barely

knew who believed you did not need nautical charts for such an undertaking. Tony was insane. I was paddling up river in search of my Aussie Kurtz. We were going to try to paddle over 10,000 miles in a 17 foot long wood and canvas kayak designed for holidays in Europe. The Australian coastline is a surfers paradise but a paddlers nightmare. We would have to maintain a daily average comparable to a paddle around Manhattan plus a side trip to the Statue of Liberty. The more I thought about it the more I expected an - air sickness bag to drop from ' - the overhead bin."

They used a Klepper MK 13 a tandem folding boat) which was equipped with a sail. When fully loaded with all their gear, it weighed 650 pounds. They launched from Bondi, a suburb of Sydney, and began what they expected to be a year plus journey. Even though they knew they would stop at towns along the way, they had to be prepared for days and sometimes weeks of isolated areas, and over-night crossings.

Crashing in

During the first part of the trip, they encountered the backlash of a hurricane (or cyclone, as the Aussies call them), which made their landings and launches much worse than normal. Under regular conditions, the coastline in many

places is no picnic. Waves come crashing in starting from miles out to sea. Several evenings they barely made their landings, and one night had to stay on the water unexpectedly until the next morning.

Anxious

"Is this Catherine Hill Bay? ... This must be it. Conditions are getting bad. Let's take it in. ... I was anxious to get out of the storm. I optimistically announced "I think we can sail her right in." ... One wave swept under us, but only as a set-up for the next one. The boat was lifted higher and higher while all the water on the beach was sucked up into the belly of our levitator with a loud hiss. Her bow dropped forward over the newly formed one story high wave cliff. We were suddenly vertical and I felt weightless. In the next instant Tony and I were catapulted straight out of the boat toward the beach. Southern Cross continued to pitchpole end over end. "

After the cyclone, they have many good days where they are able to sail and make very good time, but they also faced many other challenges like crocodiles in the spots where they wanted to camp and wear and tear on their equipment, including the mast of the sail breaking.

During the six months they are out, Eric's journal, on which the

book is based, keeps an incredible account of the daily conditions and accomplishments of their trip. He also describes the people they meet and become close to; his and Tony's personal and spiritual reflections; the sights they see.— kangaroos, and dolphins swimming along side the kayak.

Digressions

Eric also does brief digressions which are educational to the reader—he talks about Captain Cook's voyage and route when he initially explored Australia; when they are facing various navigational challenges, he gives the reader short lessons in aspects of kayak navigation. He discusses political issues concerning the Aborigines. All this makes every part of their trip very real for the reader.

4000 miles

They ended up going about 4,000 miles - from Sydney to Darwin. They kind of reach a mutual consensus to end the journey, which seems to be a logical conclusion after a culmination of events and soul-searching for both men. However they don't end the trip until after they cross the Gulf of Carpentaria. To me, (as I am sure it was to them) this was a particularly intense part of the story. They knew this would be a five or six day crossing. They originally thought they could take turns sleeping in the boat while the other steered. It ended up that when they tried to sleep, the boat was completely knocked off balance so the other could not steer. They stayed up for six days, ended up landing in a place called

Nhulunbuy; They were half delirious, had bloody hands, Eric was running a high fever, but they did it. Several days later they even got back in the kayak and went on to Darwin.

For me, this book was addicting. All their experiences are brought to life by Eric's writing. This is a "trip report" like no other. I give these two guys all my respect for what they accomplished, and for being so willing to share all of it with their readers. I think most people who give this a read will be glad they did.

The book is *Keep Australia on Your Left (A True Story of an Attempt to Circumnavigate Australia by Kayak)*.

Author: Eric Stiller

Publisher: Tom Doherty Associates, New York

Family Radio Service (FRS) Radios

A new class of personal two-way radios has been recognized by the FCC. Called Family Radio Service, or FRS, radios, they are intended for personal, non-commercial use in much the same way that CB radios are used. However, they have substantial advantages over CBs since they use much higher frequencies and frequency modulation, just like marine VHF radios. This ensures clear, quiet communications.

Of particular interest to boaters is that you can use FRS radios where it has been illegal, albeit handy, to use conventional VHF portable radios. Examples include ship-to-shore use (what do you do when you take the dinghy to shore?), bow-to-stern use, and relaxed conversations from boat-to-boat. The use of FRS radios will

undoubtedly free up some of the congestion on VHF channels, since they provide an additional 14 channels for this type of communication.

But they are not limited to marine use. FRS radios are the ideal way to keep tabs on hikers, mountain bikers or hunters. Clip one to your kid's belt, and use it to page him/her for dinner. Give one to a travelling companion in a nearby car, and keep in touch while on the road. They're great for most short-range communications, since no license is required and there are no per-minute charges as with cellular phones.

As with VHF marine radios, communications are sharp and clear, with no aggravating static. The ingenious squelch design of

FRS radios allows you to set your radios to one of 14 channels, then select a squelch code from 38 subaudible tones. This practically guarantees that the only conversations you'll hear are intended for you alone. (Note: not all FRS radios work on all frequencies, or include all codes.) FRS radios transmit at 1/2 watt, and operate in the 460 MHz UHF band, which is between marine VHF-FM radios and cellular telephones. The range varies due to land masses and buildings, but distances of 1-2 miles are common, with much greater distances possible if there are no intervening land masses. As with VHF radios, range is largely line-of-sight, although the signals tend to bounce off objects, which increases their range.

Flares

BY CHUCK GAGLIARDI

The tag line for a recent sci-movie reads "In space, no one hears your scream." The boating world equivalent would be, "On the ocean, no one sees your flare."

In early November, more than two dozen kayakers attended a flare signaling class offered by Flotilla 72, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, at their headquarters in Norwalk, Connecticut. The session was conducted for Paddlers Network under the guidance of Chief Rodney Randall, USCG, Executive Petty Officer, Station Eatons Neck. According to Chief Randall, the best signaling device available to a kayaker is a VHP radio tuned to channel 16. A portable VHP unit has a range of several miles and is monitored by both the Coast Guard and all radio-equipped private boats. Often, your nearest rescuer will be one of these private boats. A radio can communicate vessel type, the number of people, and your location. If you don't know your location, Coast Guard radio facilities can automatically triangulate any spot in Long Island Sound to within one square mile! At under a mile, you can spot a kayak from another kayak. Someone will find you. OK, you're not in Long Island Sound. Maybe your trip is to the middle of Maine, or the arctic tundra, or perhaps the upper Amazon. Guys, we need a PLARE GUN. Plares come in different types, levels of brightness, and duration. What kind should we have?

Brightness

First off, a flare will not light up Yankee stadium nor shine like the noon sun in the Sahara. This is reality, not a John Wayne war movie. A standard red flare is

extremely bright, especially when viewed from several feet away. At the range of 10 miles, a typical flare will look like a giant red firefly, assuming anyone sees it at all. To be noticed, your flare should be SOLAS (Safety Of Life At Sea) grade. Yes, they are several times more expensive, but one bright flare beats half a dozen fireflies.

Duration

A standard flare pen (self-contained) or flare gun (cartridge-loaded) fires a meteor flare. The flare climbs to a few hundred feet, ignites, then arcs back to earth. Drop time is several seconds. Usually it burns out before this lands. Sometimes it hit the water and continues to burn. Flares will burn underwater. Surprised? Most of us in the class were, too. Flares don't require air and continue to burn until fuel runs out. This can be really fast when it drops from the sky. It can be really slow if it lands in your boat. Parachute flares, which float back to earth, last from 30 seconds to over a minute. Time depends on the height to which they were fired. A 25mm gun with extension tube fires a flare to almost 1000 feet. Parachute flares cost more initially, but the price per second of burn time is much lower. Besides, one long lasting flare is more likely to gain attention than three short pops. Hand held flares last one to two minutes. During this time they also drip hot ash. Fine if you have a stable platform, but not good in a very small boat that can melt at high temperature. Carry hand held flares in your kayak, but light them AFTER you get to shore. Besides, you'll need two hands - one to hold

the flare and one for the striker, which ignites the tip. They should work when wet, but we tested these when they were damp and we were on land. We don't know how they handle in breakers.

Types

Flare pens usually come in an easy to carry 3-pack. Of the three, two will probably work. (You want reliability? Carry a radio.) The 12mm orange gun uses cartridges. Unfortunately, some only made noise and did not ignite. We fired the gun at least 20 times and approximately four out of five worked as expected. For safety, you should carry at least 6 shells. The 25mm gun had no failures. However, since shells cost several dollars each, we only fired it a few times and our success rate might not be typical. With an extension tube and a parachute shell SOLAS flare, it was most impressive. Carry at least two. A self-contained SOLAS rocket with parachute flare (at \$30 a pop) was the best. We fired three and they all worked. The hand-launched rocket has a slight kick. Aim carefully or it might go in an unintended direction. My personal favorite was the canister marker. Pop the lid and the can puts out a cloud of orange smoke for several minutes. Cans float and are self-righting. Orange is unique to signals. (Natural fires don't make orange smoke.) Also, this is the only type of flare that can be seen from a plane. It's not a dramatic as a launch, but it gets noticed. That is the purpose of a flare. To be seen and get you help. I plan to get a canister for my kayak. That and a hand-held marine flare, just in case I get stuck in the Maine woods and need to start a campfire.

The Hudson River Incident

by

PAUL
HOLLERBACH

(Taken from the Journal of the North Atlantic Kayakers)

I write this in the hopes that it may prevent a similar experience, or worse, for somebody who reads it and thinks a casual outing is, well, casual. For AnorAK. readers, who generally may be of a certain level of experience, bear with my cautionary tale- this was 1997 when I was less than cautious all of the time. I knew better, yet foolishly let myself get into this situation.

After a wonderful day in midtown Manhattan on a Tuesday in July, it took two hours to get upriver to Ossining due to a series of screaming thunderstorms and several accidents, twice the time it normally takes. The Saw Mill Parkway was closed for a few miles for flooding. I might have taken this an omen, but didn't.

The water was flat, barely rippled, the tide just beginning to flood, in I floated peacefully.

In between these terrific and short-lived storms it was sunny, as it was when I reached my friend's studio. He was waiting for a client to come at 6 for an appointment, so while I was editing my film at his lightbox he ran up to Peekskill and brought down our kayaks. I was there to bring mine home.. as the week before Alan and I sailed from the Battery in lower Manhattan upriver to Havestraw on a mini-OpSail, then paddled about the docked tallships the next day shooting for the maritime historical society that put the event on.

He had suggested we go out on the river

for an hour or so of casual drifting just to relax, and I did so at 6 setting off alone thinking he'd be along soon. I kept paddling out and turning around to look for him at the boat club, but he didn't show because his client was an hour late. I thought little of it, or anything else, and just drifted out to the center of the Hudson, enjoying the solitude, the view and the gentleness of the moment.

Right above my head was the dividing line, distinct as could be. Looking at the Tappan Zee bridge to the south and east it was sunny, deep blue skies and cumulonimbus clouds like whipped cream, whereas just to the north it was pitch black, like a charcoal sketch from Hell. Watching the lowest level of little individual black clouds, I thought I was safe, the front was moving north and east by the look of them, the dividing line was staying right above my head.

Fooled me . . .

I reached Teller's Point, about 2 miles out of Ossining, with 10 swans for company, nobody else. The water was flat, barely rippled, the tide just beginning to flood in. I floated peacefully, barely paddling. When rounding the point, this is Croton Point Park which separates Croton Bay from Havestraw Bay, the widest part of the Hudson, I saw the storm getting worse just north of me.

Lightning streaks appeared north and east in what I'm guessing were 30-some miles

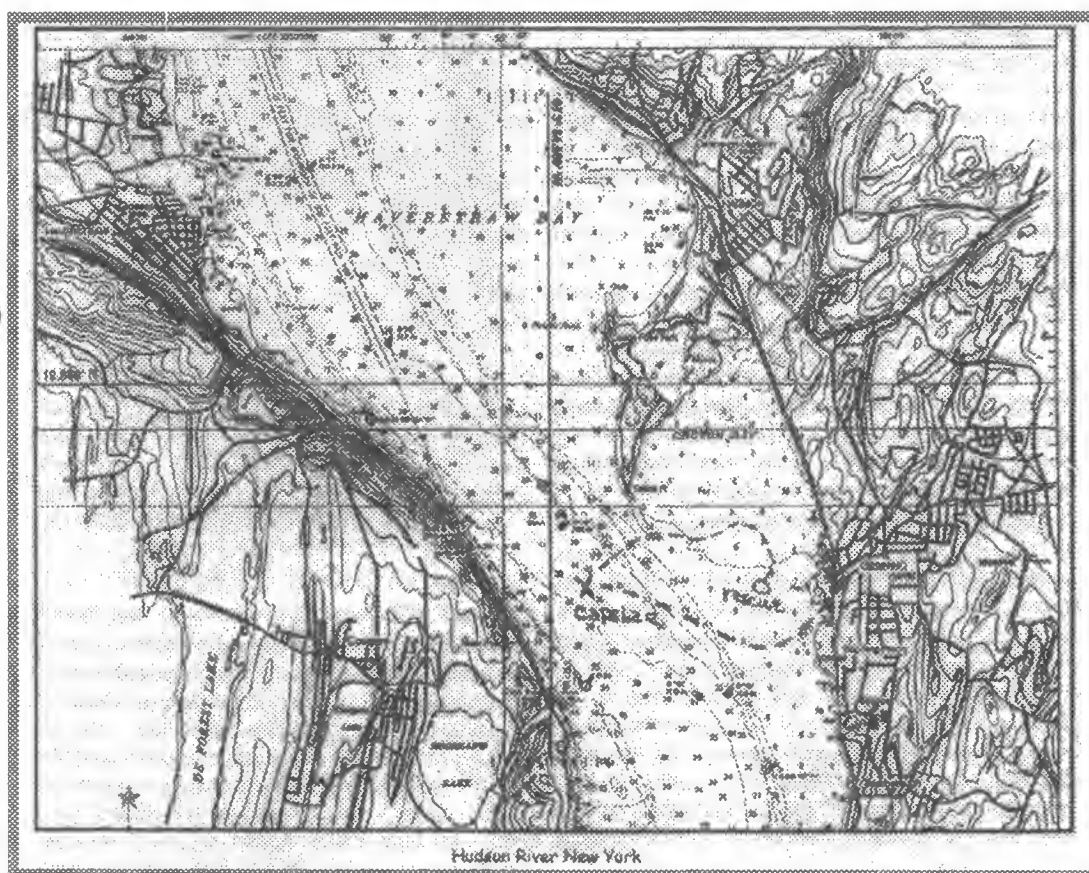
long stretches, over West Point and across to Peekskill. I still thought I was safe, that it was moving north and east. It wasn't.

Giant blanket of darkness

From the other side of the point I could barely see the town of Haverstraw across the bay, it was nearly totally obscured. The

without capsizing, the wind-driven waves beating him in. grabbing a town policeman they sped up to Croton Point and slid all over the mud and rocks looking for me in the height of the violence, but could see no sign in the lightning flashes.

Meanwhile, the storm had come in like a freight train and I was praying loud and



sky was a giant blanket of darkness, the dividing line that was above my head a minute ago was now far to my south. Looking directly West I had no view of the horizon, but instead of the 100-some' high cliffs that form this part of the Hudson Valley (it's really a fjord, I was later informed) and the sky just directly above them.

I cannot adequately describe the fury or the speed with which things changed. It was 7:30, suddenly dark and the wind furious from the west. Alan was just putting in at the ramp, looking desperately for me, the boat club members stood at the dock screaming at him not to go out. He did anyway, shouting back at them, "I've got to! My buddy's out there!" He only made it 100 yards and barely got back

hard for God to see me through this safely and get me back alive. I doubted if I'd survive what was so rapidly enveloping me. A bright yellow motorboat screamed past me at full throttle running for the marina, he wasn't going to stop and see if I needed help in open water two miles from either shore with all Hell breaking loose, although I clearly saw him turn and look directly at me, as I was bracing as fast as I could. (That's a clear violation of law, I was later told.)

I was alone

The flock of swans had vanished, I was alone. I had turned tail to the wind, bow towards Ossining, but had only gone a few hundred yards when it descended on

The storm had come in like a freight train and I was praying loud and hard for God to see me through . . .

me. The skies were like a blender filled with oil, the water ran swirling in every direction, black and senseless.

Then went over

I knew I was in deep trouble, I knew it was only a matter of seconds before I got thrown out of the boat. The storm came in, I was to find out, at 53 m.p.h. The wind turned me perpendicular to it and I braced as long as I could, mere seconds that seemed like minutes, then went over. I cleared out all right, surfaced and found myself in 6' breaking waves with the kayak slamming me in the head as it kept on rolling over at about one revolution per second. I knew I had to get to the windward side of the boat, but I was unable to move as the paddle leash was wrapping around my right leg while the boat continued to spin, making it tighter. I gasped for air, the boat continued to roll with each wave and my leg started to raise up, sending my head below.

I got clear of the leash, reached the stern and put myself at it, quickly wrapped the stern painter around my left wrist as I knew if I let go of the boat I was dead. Those 6' waves were breaking over my head, I was barely able to gulp breaths of air in on the crests, it was black in the troughs.

I righted the boat and managed to stay at the stern, pushing myself up a little bit in the rising crests to ride them and breathe, kicking for my life. The rain came next a minute or so later, cold as ice, but the Hudson itself was warm, thankfully. If it weren't I wouldn't be here to tell you about it. I prayed and kicked, the wind howled, the lightning streaked all around me, sometimes striking the water nearby, the only relief from a darkness that had come like the turning of a switch. It was 7:40 p.m.

Towards Ossining

Fortunately, the weather was pushing me back towards Ossining, and I could barely make out the lights of Sing Sing prison on the shore. Alan was by this time

scrambling around Croton Point Park with the local policeman, he tells me that he felt that I was alive, probably clinging to a beach someplace, but as the hour went by and things worsened he could only think of how to make the call to my parents, what to say to tell them I was lost.

I stayed at the stern, pushing it into my chest and PFD, riding it like a log on the crests, kicking all the while. After about half an hour the waves lessened to 3'. the rain slowed to a halt. I secured the paddle under the forward deck lines, bilged most of the water out, which took a lot of energy, but without a paddlefloat the possibility of re-entry was slight. All I could do was get my stomach up on the aft deck and one foot in the cockpit. Without a float and support for the other leg, when I tried to get it into the boat it rolled again. I tried three times anyway, eventually gave up on it and just swam - towing the boat, or when I got tired, raised up a few inches on the stern and pushed it ahead of me.

Shiver uncontrollably

It rained again, I started to feel colder, but the wind had diminished so the waves were less. I kept kicking and soon saw that I was indeed closer to shore, but the light was failing now as it was well after 8:30. I hauled myself up on the aft deck and rested, though still kicked. I had begun to shiver uncontrollably, but as soon as I got up on deck I was warmer, only my knees on down were wet. The shivering continued, but didn't worsen or lessen. I tried the whistle a number of times, but nobody was around to hear it. I felt better, I knew I'd make it out eventually, or felt that I would, so just stayed as I was and kicked for the next hour.

Meanwhile, the employees at the water treatment plant in front of Sing Sing had called in to the Fire & E.P., I guess they saw me go out and not return, and after an hour and a half in the water, now close enough to shore to make out buildings, I saw a flashing light moving in an arc to my north about half a mile, well inside of Croton Bay. It headed back to the

I was unable to move as the paddle leash was wrapping around my right leg while the boat continued to spin.

boathouse but then turned south and then towards me on instruction, I was later told, from somebody at the water plant who had spotted me, how, I don't know as I had no lights.

They got me in their searchlight, called to me over the P.A. to raise a hand if I could hear them, which I happily did, and in a minute was getting a life ring tossed at me as I shouted to the crew that I was unhurt, just cold and tired.

They lifted me aboard, lashed in the kayak and brought me back to the boat club dock. The E.M.S. crew arrived a minute later, as I was shakily setting foot on those wet planks. Walking was not what I'd remembered it to be. They retrieved my dry bag from the aft hatch, I changed clothes in the ambulance and answered questions, signed a waiver and was released.

Alan was white as a sheet. We loaded the boats onto our cars, went into the club for a cup of tea for me. It turned out the guys who pulled me out were waiting for me as they're members, and they're all firemen or policemen in there.

Mr Lucky

Call me Mr. Lucky, my guardian angel has waterwings, my prayers were answered. It changed me, I can tell you, in ways I don't yet know of.

Lessons learned:

- 1) I didn't listen to the weather forecast, which predicted exactly what came (including the tornado in Pawling), if I had I wouldn't have gone out at all
- 2) No paddle float, which prevented re-entry once it was calm enough to do so, no practiced re-entry-and-roll either
- 3) No learned and practiced roll, which I couldn't have done anyway in those conditions, but besides I...
- 4) Had no spray skirt
- 5) No strobe on my vest, it was in the closet, safe at home
- 6) No flares or even a flashlight
- 7) No knife (to cut free my entangled leg)
- 8) I was in street clothes, the drysuit and wet-suit were also safely home in the closet. If the water were cold. I'd almost certainly have perished.
- 9) Tether the hand pump in. I nearly lost it three times.
- 10) I was out alone.
- 11) No VHF radio or cell phone, both of which I now carry.

I'm still shaken. When I got home the next night I watched a Trailside episode that had taped while I was gone to try to relax. It was one of sea kayaking at Gross Morn in Atlantic Canada. Looking at the shapes of the boats, even on calm seas, just scared me. I had to turn it off.

The kayak in this incident is a 16' Baltic Mari 4, made in Estonia, high-volume and in fiberglass/composite. The paddle is theirs, too, a carbon-fiber one. All I lost was my hat, a water bottle and my dignity.

My PFD worked well, but only because the waist strap was cinched as tightly as I could stand it. A mistake I think some make if they are novices who haven't actually ever been in the water in their vests is to buckle up and leave the waist straps loose, if tied at all. This will never do as the vest will ride up around your head like a chef's hat while your chin is at the surface of the water, if you're in rough seas you'll be swallowing a lot of them.

If anybody wants to write me to talk about this, please do.

Grateful beyond all words.

Paul H.

(paulhollerbach@juno.com)

They lifted me aboard, lashed in the kayak and brought me to the boat club dock.

Destinations . . .

To Newfoundland with Folding Kayak

byJOHN
KERNICK

There is nothing new in the use of folding canoes, or 'kayaks' as they should more properly be called when they have a covered deck. The concept was pioneered for military use in Germany during the 1920s and found favour on submarines which were too cramped to hold a conventional boat. A folding kayak using a simple wooden frame covered with water proofed canvas could be stowed below and assembled on deck, with enough capacity for two crew to reconnoitre some foreign shore using paddles or a simple sailing rig for propulsion.

The 18 foot long Klepper which caught John Kernick's eye in a Manhattan sports' store was a direct descendent of those early pioneers, using much the same design and materials, although beefed up with a layer of rubber to protect the bottom. John had learnt to paddle a kayak as a child in Hong Kong, and two decades later having moved to New York to work as a photographer found himself surrounded by water once again.

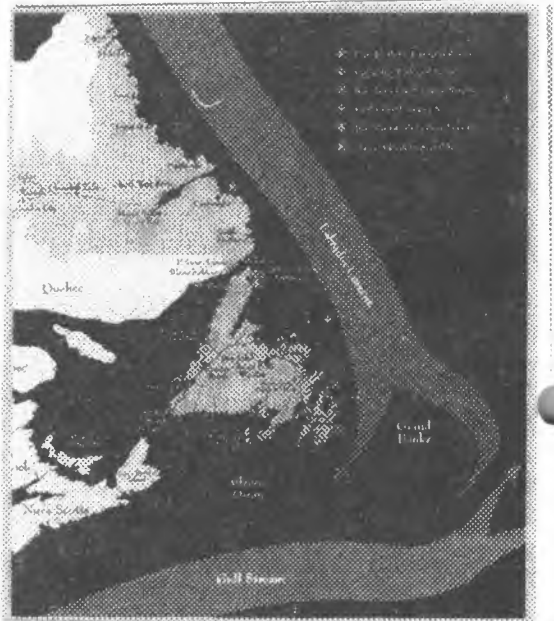
A direct descendent of those early pioneers, using the same design and materials.

Wow! Brilliant

John's immediate thought on seeing the Klepper was 'Wow! What a brilliant idea - got to have it...', particularly when it could be stored in his tiny apartment and taken as hand luggage on a plane with no risk of excess baggage'.

In fact, for most of us the concept of a folding kayak would seem hard to beat. It can be stored away in the smallest of places

and left folded and packed; can be lugged over difficult terrain more easily than a rigid hull equivalent. Also, with its ability to travel in the back of the car, you can avoid the bother of roof racks. Anyone who has used these will know that apart from reducing



your miles per gallon, there is also the risk of dinging your paint work as you strain to lift things on and off.

Expeditions

After a few exploratory tours of the waters around Manhattan, John's first expedition was in Maine, where he joined two other kayak enthusiasts who had done the planning. It went well enough, but John soon realised that he was actually more experienced in the art of the kayak than they were and he would be better off organising

and even undertaking such trips on his own. This philosophy has led John and his folding kayaks - the Klepper has since been joined by a more modern and faster Canadian built Feathercraft - on expeditions through the Everglades, along the Barrier Reef of Australia and the world's second longest reef in Mexico, island hopping across Fiji and the Virgin Islands and to the cold north where Iceland, Newfoundland and Labrador have



all felt the touch of his paddle.

30 miles a day

A recent tour of Iceland gives a good idea of what John considers '...perfect use of the kayak.' With little more than a couple of weeks to spare, he bought charts, prepared his own dehydrated food, packed his bags, shouldered his kayak and caught a plane to Reykjavik. From there he flew to a small airfield in the north, so small that he was able to assemble his kayak at the end of the runway and launch straight into the sea. For the next two weeks he was totally self-sufficient, paddling up to 30 miles a day when the weather was fine and sheltering in his tent when gale-bound, with his trusty short-wave radio providing the only contact with the outside world.

Such a solitary existence would not appeal to all of us, but John admits to going out of his way to find places '...where there aren't going to be any other people'. During his trip to Newfoundland, John reckoned there were just four other people in a wilderness area the size of Britain, but he relished the solitude and the opportunity to get life into perspective after the extremes of living in New York City.

Polar bear paw prints

There are of course dangers in such an adventure, although John dismisses the

polar bear paw prints which were found outside his tent as insignificant when compared to being blown out to sea while attempting to cross a fjord. That was as close as he has come to disaster. After five hours of battling with the wind, he eventually made it to the safety of a group of islands some 10 miles offshore which he had fortunately explored a few days earlier. Without that knowledge he would certainly have been lost in a cold and watery wilderness.

Experience is the key to John's survival on these solitary trips. Precise understanding of how the boat handles and how much weight can be carried is vital, but so is the technical ability to cope if the stove breaks three days from civilisation. Local knowledge also comes high up the scale of priorities, with fishermen often providing information on the tidal and weather peculiarities which can make or break an expedition.

Five-star potential

Don't think that you have to venture hundreds of miles to enjoy adventure kayaking. John reckons England has five star potential with its islands, inlets and rivers providing enjoyable trips close to civilisation. Scotland also has a supply of fantastic locations spread further afield, of which his personal favourite is the Summer Isles.

The British Canoe Union has a wealth of advice - for details its web site is at www.bcu.org.uk

FOR SALE

Skerrey Fibre glass kayak, complete with full expedition deck, Silva 70P Compass, tow cleat, Compac 50 deck pump, retractable skeg, 3 hatches and bulkheads. HJ tubes, extra Keela strip, neoprene spraydeck, neoprene cockpit cover, trolley, sea paddle, two piece Lendal paddle. £900.00. Injury forces sale.

I.R.Cammish, 2, Scarborough Rd., Filey, N. Yorks. YO14 9EF
Tel; 01723 514569

An issue of Leadership— who is really in charge

by
MARY
McCLINTOCK

This article was taken from the December 2000 issue of SEA-KAYAKER

Stars still shone in the sky early Saturday morning as we walked out to the point to squint at the water. Was the three-mile crossing from the island to the main and paddleable? Our trip had been scheduled to end the day before, but Friday the water had seemed too rough for us to make the crossing to where the car was parked.

Becca, Sean, Pat, Elise, CJ and I, some of us long-time buddies, some newer friends, were out for a week of kayaking in early June on the eastern shore of Nova Scotia. Pat, CJ, and I had done extensive kayaking for 15 years, Elise had more recent multi-week trip experiences, and Becca and Sean had several years of day and weekend trip experience. None of us, however, had ever paddled this stretch of coast.

Pat had initiated the idea for the trip, but no one had been designated or assumed the role of "leader." Some kind of collective process for making decisions had emerged during the trip, with Pat generally taking the "bold" role and CJ the more "cautious," but it wasn't conscious or defined. Pat, Elise, CJ and I were all currently working or had previously worked as outdoor leaders, and we wanted a break from the demands of being the leader. We backed off from anything that smacked of leadership. The whole group had made decisions about the goals for the trip and the paddling route by talking about the possibilities until everyone agreed. The trip had gone smoothly until Friday and the questionable crossing. By Friday evening, sea conditions had worsened, and tension was mounting in the group. The forecast for Saturday was for

even stronger winds; however, the forecast indicated less wind overnight, opening a possible window of opportunity early Saturday morning.

After listening to the weather forecast Friday evening, Pat and CJ got into a heated argument. Pat said we should have paddled out first thing Friday morning to see if we could make it. CJ said that the conditions were too risky, we had plenty of food and water, we could radio in that we were okay, and we should just wait out the weather. This argument pushed them deeper into their respective roles of boldness and caution.

Someone had finally suggested that they stop arguing about what already happened and focus on what we were going to do now. We discussed the possibilities and decided to get up early to check the conditions. If things had improved, we agreed we'd get in the boats and paddle in the lee of the island to where we could see if a crossing was possible. CJ was dubious, but willing to look in the morning. Pat said, "we'll make the decision by consensus, with everyone having veto power." Everyone agreed.

At 3 am Saturday morning, we found that the seas had calmed some, but they were still rough. It seemed worth packing up and evaluating the conditions when we were actually on the water and ready to go. By 5 a.m. it was light, the wind had picked up, and we bobbed in the swell wrapping around the island and discussed whether to do the crossing.

Everyone was feeling the pressure of being

*We'll make
the decision
by
consensus,
with
everyone
having veto
power . . .*

overdue. Although we had plenty of food and water and had radioed the local Coast Guard station to say we were all right, Elise and Sean had commitments waiting for them at home. As with all of the decisions our group had made, we made the decision with everyone present, rather than in subgroups or off privately. Pat and Elise offered why they thought the crossing was possible, and why the group should go for it. CJ remained dubious, saying it wasn't safe with the combination of cold water, fetch, forecast of more wind, and opposing tidal current. Becca, Sean and I didn't say anything.

Pat and CJ started arguing again, each in their "bold" or "cautious" roles. After a while with no one but the two of them speaking, CJ finally agreed to paddling up the shore of the island for a while, still in the lee, rather than heading straight out into the rougher crossing. He thought that farther up the shore we'd have a better view of what the conditions would be out in the middle of the crossing. After five minutes of paddling, the group stopped, and CJ and Pat continued trying to persuade each other. At some point, Becca, who hadn't been speaking, said, "the wind is building—we just have to decide one way or the other." CJ said, "All right, then, I say no. I'm vetoing, I don't think it is worth the risk." Pat fumed, but joined the group as we turned and paddled back to the campsite.

Leadership

Deciding whether to paddle in rough conditions, especially when overdue at the end of a trip, is one of the toughest decisions a group of paddlers can make. With no one the "designated leader" on this trip, how did decisions get made?

What would have helped this group make decisions? If you're an experienced paddler, you've probably been in this type of situation: heading out on a trip with a group of friends who range from eager novices to your paddling peers. How does leadership happen when no one person is the designated leader? What roles and functions does a leader perform in a group? How do those functions get taken care of when a

group of "common adventurers" decides to do a trip together?

There is a variety of ways to manage the leadership functions in a group of common adventurers, depending on the goals and relative skills of the group. I use the phrase "common adventurers" to describe the paddlers on a trip in which no one is the paid or volunteer leader, and everyone has equal responsibility for the outcome of the trip. Often such trips are made up of paddlers who possess different kayaking skill levels, similar to the group in the story above.

Many people think of leadership as traits that a particular person does or doesn't have. Others define leadership as a particular set of roles and functions within a group. One person can perform those roles and functions, or a whole group can share them. They include functions that help accomplish tasks, as well as functions that help the group maintain itself. Motivation, risk management, logistics coordination and managing interpersonal dynamics are examples of leadership functions on a kayak trip. Two of the key functions that are considered part of leadership are decision making and group facilitation.

Decisions

Decision-making happens continually in groups of common adventurers on a kayak trip. Having someone in the role of a facilitator is key to effective group decisions. Although facilitation is an important part of leadership, a facilitator is different from a leader. A facilitator in a common adventurer group is someone who supports everyone to do their best thinking in decision-making situations.

What needs to be decided on a kayak trip? Who decides?

How are decisions made?

How can a facilitator help the group make effective decisions?

What gets decided?

Paddlers make a wide range of decisions on a successful kayak trip. In part, the decisions depend on the scope of the trip, but some things are true regardless of whether it's a

Having someone in the role of facilitator is key to effective group decisions

day trip in local waters or a month-long expedition on a never-before-paddled section of coast.

Common decisions that need to be made before and during kayak trips include: overall trip goals (What does each participant want from the experience and each other?); safety/risk management (How can the group members be safe on water and on land? How can they be both emotionally safe and physically safe?); route/navigation (Where is the group going? How are they going to get there?); pace/schedule (How fast will they paddle? What is the schedule for the day and/or trip?); camping (When and where will they camp?); environment/other people (How will the group interact with the environment and other people?); and gear/food (How will gear and food planning be done? Who brings what? Who cooks? Who decides?).

In groups of common adventurers who operate without any formal leadership, the group assumes all of the roles and functions a leader might normally have, including decision making. There is a great deal of variability possible in who makes decisions. There is a continuum that ranges from the group's choosing a single leader who has absolute power and responsibility to a group that shares all decision-making, big and small. Let's assume that the group has decided to make decisions as a group, rather than designating a leader. Many paddlers, myself included, travel in this way, with groups of friends.

Decision-Making Styles

There are a number of decision-making styles possible for common adventurer groups, as well as means to facilitate these styles. Majority Rule and Consensus are two common decision-making styles.

Majority Rule: This is the common one person, one vote, whichever option gets the majority of votes wins type of decision making.

Consensus: Consensus decision-making is a process by which all group members consent to a decision. The decision must be acceptable enough that all will agree to

support the group in choosing it. If the decision is not acceptable, any group member can veto it.

Regardless of which style is used to make most decisions, some groups also agree to a third style for on-the-water situations: Rule by Most Conservative Voice: With this type of decision-making, the group agrees to follow the decision of whoever is the most "conservative" in a given situation.

Facilitating Decisions

All group decision-making styles work best when someone facilitates the process. A facilitator's functions include encouraging full participation and promoting mutual understanding. A facilitator identifies the need to make a decision, coordinates the process, and helps the group follow the steps of the decision-making style they've chosen to arrive at a decision. Since there isn't a "leader" to do the facilitating, the group needs to figure out how facilitation is going to occur.

Rotating facilitation is a common way for groups to share the role of facilitator. With rotating facilitation, the group agrees that there will be a "facilitator of the day" or for a given time period, with each group member taking a turn.

There are some overall conditions necessary for a group to be successful at sharing these leadership functions. To work well, these decision-making and facilitation systems require the members of the group to have a common set of goals and expectations, good communication skills, and a willingness to participate. It is important to make sure that everyone's goals and expectations for the trip are compatible. Along with discussing gear and food, I believe that a pre-trip discussion about goals is essential. It's the time to do some negotiating or creative problem solving about how many miles you're going to travel and how fast. If the group's goals are incompatible, this could be the time for some to realize that this may not be their kind of trip. For example, this is the best time to find out that one of you thinks an "average" paddling day is twenty miles at a pace of three miles an hour, but that someone else thinks g ^ Srage" means

All group decision making styles work best when someone facilitates the process.

ten miles at two miles an hour.

Over the years, I've learned the hard way about unspoken, incompatible goals and expectations. Now I won't go out for even a half-day trip without some kind of "goals and trip style" discussion. Recently, I spent an afternoon kayaking near Kittery, Maine with a long-time friend. When we discussed the trip beforehand, I told her I was recovering from a shoulder injury and wanted a leisurely, low-mileage afternoon to explore an area new to me. She's quite the athlete, so I wanted to make sure she wasn't looking for a "workout" paddle. She said she was getting plenty of workouts in other settings, and a low-key paddle sounded like great fun.

Communication

What are the "good communication skills" needed for effective group decision-making? I consider the following list to be essential:

1) Self knowledge of one's strengths, weaknesses and desires; 2) the willingness to be honest; 3) the ability to explain one's thoughts to someone else; 4) being able to speak up in a group; 5) being willing to listen carefully, to understand the other group members; and 6) the willingness to ask questions to clarify statements that are unclear. I believe that self knowledge and the ability and willingness to communicate are as essential for group kayaking trips as technical paddling or navigation skills.

Are the group members willing to participate in decision making? In a common adventurer trip, there's more to being a group member than just showing up with your gear and safely paddling a certain number of miles. Group members need to spend time and energy making decisions and working together as a group. If someone in the group is not able to agree on the group's goals and expectations, is not able to communicate well, or is not willing to put energy into group discussions, then it is important to consider whether this is the right trip and group for that person.

What can happen to a group that doesn't meet these basic overall conditions for a trip without a designated leader? The consequences can range from an

unpleasant trip where group members don't get along well or don't have much fun, to trips where friendships are lost, to more extreme situations in which the decision to paddle leads to injuries or loss of life.

Choosing a Decision-making Style and Making it Work

For each group decision-making and facilitation style, what are the conditions necessary to make it work well? How does it work? How does it deal with disagreements? What are the pros and cons to that style? What are the actual steps for doing it?

Consensus Decision-making

Consensus decision-making is like most skills related to paddling: To do it well, you need the right attitude, skills, and lots of practice. To be effective at making decisions, a group must have common goals, group members must have equal access to power, and there must be enough time available to carry out the process. It is also important for group members to be aware of their own attitudes, willing to pay attention to the process, and willing to learn and practice decision-making skills.

My friend, Martha McPheeters, used consensus decision making on a long wilderness whitewater canoeing expedition. She and a group of other Outward Bound instructors spent three months paddling the Back River in Canada's Northwest Territories. All of them had used consensus decision-making on trips, and were committed to making it work on this trip. They knew that if they were going to be able to come to consensus about difficult decisions or emergencies, they were going to need lots of practice with smaller, less crucial decisions. They started practicing early in the trip, and came to consensus about what they were going to cook for supper, how many minutes they were going to take from getting done with breakfast to getting on the water, and how they were going to run a particular set of rapids. Practice paid off. When they got to a point where they needed to make a major decision in an emergency, they were able to make good decisions, fast.

Consensus decision making—to do it well, you need the right attitude, skills and lots of practice.

Consensus is not competitive, because people enter in with the spirit of cooperation

How it works:

Consensus decision-making follows these basic steps: 1) An issue to be decided is presented; 2) clarifying questions are asked; 3) discussion is held about possible decisions; and 4) a test for consensus is conducted.

A test for consensus or to gauge the general feelings on a proposed decision can be a simple "show of thumbs," where each person shows thumbs up, thumbs down, or thumbs middle, signaling agree, disagree, or neutral.

Along with this test for consensus, there can be a call for major objections or strong concerns. A major objection blocks the proposed decision. A strong concern does not block the decision, but is a public statement of why the decision isn't liked. When does the proposed decision pass? If there are generally positive feelings and no major objections, it passes. If there is a major objection, it doesn't pass. The process continues until a decision can be made, or the group agrees to not make the decision now, but try again later. If the group's feelings are mixed, discussion continues or the decision gets tabled. (Information about this model can be found on the Web site: www.msu.edu/~corcora5/org/consensus.html.)

Here's how a kayaking group using the consensus model would approach a route decision. Someone gathers the group around the charts and raises the question of which route they'll paddle that day. Several people offer possible route choices. Questions about weather forecast, tide and current conditions, everyone's energy levels and goals for the day would be asked and answered. Everyone would share their opinion about the routes that had been presented and discuss other possible variations. Someone would say, "It sounds like the group is leaning toward Route B, which I hear is from here to Point A for lunch, then on to Point B to set up camp in the late afternoon. Let's do a thumbs up, middle or down to see if that would work." Several people had thumbs middle, so discussion continued to find out what would work better for them. After more discussion, consensus would be tested again, with a show of

thumbs for Route B, which is now modified to include several short snack breaks, a brief lunch break, and arriving at Point B earlier to set up camp. Everyone shows thumbs up for this decision: It's a go.

How this model deals with disagreements: If the group cannot agree, sometimes they need more information or more time to consider the options, or have more discussion in order to make a good decision. The process is continued until everyone agrees with or at least agrees to live with a decision. There is room for blocking or voicing strong concerns. Because it is not competitive, no one is going to "lose," and members can trust that their concerns will be heard and considered, making them more likely to compromise. What keeps it noncompetitive? By its very nature, consensus is not competitive, because people enter in with the spirit of cooperation, in the belief that the collaborative decision will be stronger than one made with competing viewpoints. In fact, minority viewpoints are not only solicited, but actively advocated by other group members who don't necessarily hold that opinion. That's what keeps it noncompetitive.

Pros: Decisions made are ones everyone can live with; it builds collaboration, rather than competition; and there is lots of room for considering creative solutions.

Con: Consensus can take more time than other decision-making styles, especially if the group is not skilled at the process.

Democratic/Majority Rules

Democratic or majority rules decision making works best if the group has a defined process and practices using it. Everyone in the group needs to be willing to participate and express opinions. Group members also have to be willing to go along with the decisions they make, even ones in which they are on the "losing" side. It is important that everyone in the group has equal power, that each person really has a vote.

How it works: There is no need for full parliamentary procedure on kayak trips. Basically, an individual or the group identifies a decision to be made, such as the

route decision discussed above. The members then discuss the two route choices that were presented, with individuals or subgroups trying to convince others to vote for their position. When the group decides enough discussion has taken place, a vote is taken, with each person having one vote. The decision with the majority of the votes wins; the minority loses.

How it addresses conflict/disagreement:

With majority rules, everyone has the opportunity to sway others to their position. Once discussion has ended, there is a clear-cut method for making decisions. However, disagreement can continue after the decision has been made. This can mean that losers who don't accept the decision may struggle against it in one way or another.

Pros: This is probably the most familiar method of decision making in North America and other "democratic" countries; most people have the skills and attitudes for it; and it can be done fairly quickly.

Cons: It can lead to polarization, in which people are stuck in their positions and not able to consider creative solutions; resentment for the decision can build among the "losers," who could even sabotage decisions; and it can lead to the formation of subgroups.

Conservative Voice

The "rule by most conservative voice" method of making decisions requires attitudes of trust and acceptance of all group members, a willingness to speak up and be the "conservative voice," and a willingness to follow the conservative voice.

How it works: This model is useful for on-the-water decisions or when considering getting on the water. For example, if someone says clearly, "I don't feel safe doing the crossing," or "I don't think we're strong enough as a group to do the crossing safely," the others listen and agree to not do the crossing. While there may be discussion to clarify what is or isn't okay, there is no debate or attempt to convince the member to change his or her opinion. Later, the decision may be discussed to better understand the situation, but the decision is not questioned.

How it addresses disagreement: By agreeing to this form of decision making, everyone agrees to defer to the conservative voice, even if they disagree. Anyone who disagrees basically has agreed ahead of time to step aside and defer to the "conservative" voice.

Pros: It tends toward safe decisions and it's quick.

Cons: It can be hard to be the conservative voice in a larger group. That person can feel as though she is "holding everyone else back." It can be a problem if there is a disparity of skills or confidence in the group and one person is regularly the "conservative" one.

Facilitation

Once a group has chosen a decision-making process, to use it effectively, it helps to have someone facilitate the process. Regardless of how the group shares facilitation or who is in the role, the facilitator has several key functions. His or her overall purpose is to help the group with the process of decision-making and to do their best thinking. The facilitator's job is not to make the decisions or to be the "expert" on content.

The facilitator encourages everyone in the group to participate. Especially when working under difficult conditions such as time pressure or when facing tough decisions, many people censor themselves and don't really say what they are thinking. The facilitator asks for input from members who haven't spoken, and encourages the group to brainstorm a whole range of possibilities before evaluating them. The facilitator also promotes understanding among the group.

Often, some group members are better at expressing themselves than others, and misunderstandings arise. Until the individual feels as though he or she is being understood, that person will have a hard time speaking up or listening to anyone else's opinion. The facilitator helps the group ask clarifying questions to make sure everyone's viewpoint is understood.

With Rotating Facilitation, it is important that everyone in the group is willing to take his

The facilitator encourages everyone in the group to participate.

How about your next trip? How will the group make decisions? Will there be a facilitator?

or her turn as facilitator. It also helps if everyone has basic facilitation skills. All group members need to be willing to participate in the facilitated process. Clarity about who is facilitating when is important. The Rotating Facilitation system works better when the trip is long enough to give each person time to take a reasonable length term. It wouldn't work well to rotate facilitation on a day trip with six people. Who wants to pay attention to whether this is their hour for facilitation? For short trips, it is best if someone volunteers to facilitate for the trip.

How it works: Before the trip, or at the beginning, when a decision-making style is agreed upon, the group decides to rotate facilitation. For rotating facilitation, a schedule for who is "on" at what time is developed, dividing up the time of the trip. When a decision such as which route to follow needs to be made, the person who is "on" at that time pulls the group together and leads the group through the steps of the decision-making process. If the group strays from the process, the facilitator points that out, and asks the group to return to the next step.

Pros: No one person has all of the facilitating responsibility. Decisions are facilitated, rather than left to whether the group can complete the process on their own. The facilitator encourages full participation and understanding.

Cons: Uneven skills in the group can mean that the facilitation may not always be as effective.

What happened on my trip with Becca, Sean, Pat, Elise and CJ? After accepting the decision not to attempt the crossing, we paddled back to our campsite to wait out the wind.

Not long after, the winds picked up very quickly, and everyone agreed that waiting had been the right decision. The next day, the seas had calmed enough so we could all agree to paddle out. In talking more about how we had made the decision on Saturday morning and what led up to it, several problems became clear.

Several of the group members were highly experienced and skilled at using consensus

decision-making, while others in the group had very little experience with it. Everyone assumed that we could just decide to do it, and somehow it would work. What we didn't understand is that we did not have a common understanding of what we meant by consensus, what process to use or what attitude we needed to have to do it well. We also had not practiced before we were in a really tough decision-making situation.

For some of the members in the group, it felt as though CJ did not enter the consensus process with an attitude of willingness to really consider all of the possible options and work for a good solution. For some, it felt like CJ already had made a decision. CJ had focused on the "everyone had veto power" part of the description of how the decision was going to be made, and had a hard time trusting that others were listening to everyone's concerns. We realized that what had really happened was "rule by most conservative voice."

While the decision that was made was safe, hard feelings came from it. It didn't work well because, by that point in the trip, CJ had become stuck in the "conservative" role and Pat in the "bold" role. Also, we hadn't discussed and agreed to that form of decision-making ahead of time, so those who thought we were using a consensus process were angry. Elise pointed out that if this had been a group that she was leading, she would have stepped in as facilitator. She had been reluctant to take on that role because she was on vacation, and didn't want to get stuck being the "leader." She also said that she didn't know if the others in the group would accept her in that role since we hadn't agreed to it ahead of time.

How about your next trip? How will the group make decisions? Will there be a facilitator? Learn decision-making and facilitating skills. Just as with learning about tides and navigation, there's more to a successful kayak trip than how you put your blade in the water. BS

Kayak Electronics

by
ADAM
BOLONSKY

The Standard HX 150S Hand-Held VHF

For me one of seakayaking's great pleasures is the extended solo trip offshore, the seven or so day meander here and there with food, chart, and compass, schedule no lighter than setting up the tent before dark. I love that.

Come winter, I'll drive down to one of the towns along the Mid-Atlantic coast and hole up on a barrier beach island for a week. Come April, it's the Maine coast before all the other roof-rackers start barreling in. There's never a soul around. The fishing is fantastic, and motels charge less on the road trip, it being off-season.

Yet for every trip offshore there's always someone back home worried about my return. Better they know I'm hunkered down in my tent somewhere with a book waiting out a powder than have them worry whether I'm adrift somewhere on the ocean. Cell phone? Forget it. Too expensive. And besides, were I to 9 11-it, the local dispatcher may not have a patch into the harbor master or Coast Guard station.

Hand-held VHF

The best piece of gear to have on hand at times like this is a hand-held VHF, even the cheesiest of which a kayaker can expect to have at least three circuits tuned to NOAA weather stations, two to emergency stations.

Standard's HX 150S 88-Channel Handheld-VHF is a great option in

that direction, but without the cheesiness. Moderately priced (around \$170 U.S.), the radio offers two broadcast ranges (5 and 2.5 watts), one-button access to NOAA weather stations, a night-light, multiple channel memory, programmable channel scanning, and one-touch emergency-channel access.

No Dials

Most importantly, for cold-water kayakers wearing gloves or those who wrap the radio in a waterproof sack, the 150S facilitates gloved-finger push-button-operation, which makes changing channels, adjusting broadcast range, or adjusting volume and squelch a cinch. No dials. Just push.

Standard is generous with its water damage warranty and nicad rechargeable batteries: like the recharger, both are included. Slide out the tray and use alkalines to replace the spent nicads, a valuable option on extended trips.

The radio's only drawback is that "on" is its nightlight's default position, which means you have to turn the nightlight off every time you turn the radio on if you want to maximize power conservation. I've "had to" use my Standard twice. Once to request assistance from the coastal National Park Service, the other to notify a dockmaster, who had my float plan, that I'd be back a few days later than Planned. In both

cases, bad weather was on the way and I had a long paddle ahead. Our conversations headed off overdue kayaker calls to the Coast Guard.

Other times my Standard has been just a plain ol' gas to have on hand. a reliable workhorse though unglamorous. Close to home, as kayak-fishing buddies have monitored the Red Sox on their AM's, it's been entertaining to use my Standard to eavesdrop on local coastal pilots coaxing container ships in on channel 13 bridge-to-bridge. In larger groups, it's helped me and other trip leaders coordinate head counts, account for stray paddlers, reign in faster halves of the pack, and plan to raft up later at the local clamshack for beers. As for long trips down big tidal rivers: extended on-the-water b.s. sessions.

Listen in

The 150S's ability to channel-scan is particularly useful. Say it's time to monitor channel 17 to track trawler traffic and channel 72 to listen in for a pre-arranged radio contact with another paddler. Program the 150S to scan both channels and it stops on either once one channel turns active.

The 150S's access to all NOAA weather forecast channels and offshore buoy reports is also valuable (rare is the day you'll go without weather forecasts), as is the radio's ability to get you on channel 16 in an instant, a definite plus should you be



Letters . . .

Write to us about all things paddling and any bee in your bonnet you want to air. Ask other readers about trips you plan or kit you might buy—ed

Letters to be addressed to: 5, Osprey Ave., Westhoughton, Bolton, Lancs, BL5 2SL and I can be reached on 01942 842204.

Hello, John,

I'm Patricia Benoit, paddling in France, with a kayak-club settled on golfe du Morbihan (South of Bretagne) and I was told of ISKA by one of yours, Bernhard Hillejan (Köln), last summer.

Could you, please, send me some more informations about ISKA? Such as number of members, required paddling level, next program, inscription fees and so on.

Could you please help me, concerning the following topic:

Since two years, we have been organizing a yearly meeting between paddlers from certain bays in the world: these 30 bays are presently gathered in an association, called "the World Most Beautiful Bays' Club" which is 5 years old.

This meeting is called "Trophée des Baies" - Bays Trophy- and it yet occurred in Halong Bay in 2000 (2 bays represented) and Golfe du Morbihan in 2001 (5 bays represented) and lasted one week, each time.

We intend to organize the 3rd one in Saint Ives Bay, next June, - during the festivities of your Queen's jubile- and I'm in search of a kayak practising club settled over there, ready to welcome the Trophy as a logistic partner and as representative of Saint-Ives Bay.

I've been surprised that the tourism service of St Ives direct me to a gig club - St Ives Gig Club-. I thought paddling practise widely diffused in England...

Could you answer those questions:

- 1- name and address of such a kayak club, settled on st Ives-Bay sides.
- 2- Name and adress of correspondants of your association, members of a kayak-club settled on the others bays,(the

listing of which I present you further), for me to send them an invitation to represent there bay during the next Trophy. 2 to 5 paddlers/bay

Hoping I won't give you too much trouble with that, I thank you for your next answer, beforehand, and apologize for my probably awkward English.

Sincerely yours,

P. Benoit

Ps : 30 bays all over the world , Halong (Vietnam), Kerala (India), Valparaiso (Chilli), Lesbos (Greece), Rio de Janeiro (Brasil), Bantry (Ireland), Westerland- Sylt (Germany), Diego-Suarez (Madagascar), Laguna de Aveiro (Portugal), Mounts Bay and Saint Ives Bay (AEngland), Santander (Spain), Banderas - Puerto Vallarta (Mexico), Terre de Haut (Guadeloupe - France), Stockholm (SUEDE Sweden), Cape Cod, Boston and San Francisco Bays (USA), Georgie Bay, Vancouver, and Tadoussac Bay (Quebec Canada), Bodrum (Turkey); Venise (Italy), Fjord de Geiranger - Alesund (Norway), Baies du Mont St Michel et de Somme (France), Golfes de Porto-Girolata, et du Morbihan (France), Sousse-Agadir Bay (Marocco), Mindelo Bay (South Africa), Punta Arenas (Chile), Kotor mouths.

Hello, John,

What a great year it has been for the SESK. We are now getting established and have a regular base of paddlers joining in our trips. I'm sure that everyone who has been out with us has had as much fun as we have had ourselves.

If you or your friends have not yet joined us, remember you are always

more than welcome.

We are starting to look at next years programme, so if you have a favourite paddle or are able to run a trip we would be pleased to hear from you. (Could be a good exercise for anyone proposing to do his or her 5 Star).

Destinations already being considered are Beachy Head and Sussex cliffs, Dorset Coast, Portland Bill and Lyme Bay, Solent and Isle of Wight (possible circumnavigation), North & South Foreland, Kent and circumnavigation of Isle of Sheppey, North Devon or Cornwall and an expedition to Skye.

Calendar changes;

September 23rd 2001. Beachy Head, Sussex. Leave Seaford beach @ 10.30am, paddle past the famous lighthouse and cliffs before finishing at Eastbourne. Unfortunately, a car shuttle is needed for this trip. Please contact Nigel ASAP if interested in this trip so the shuttle can be arranged.

October 14th 2001. Bosham Quay, Chichester. A gentle paddle to finish the "official SESK season" where we started in March. Leaving Bosham Quay at 11.00am to explore the harbour and surrounding waters, returning late pm with the flood tide. Possibly finishing the day with a meal in one of the local taverns!

Review of 2001

All the trips planned for the first part of the year have gone ahead and been well attended. The only changes to our original programme have been for Sept/October and these are detailed above. All the trips have been reviewed in detail, with photos, on the website:

<http://www.sesk.btinternet.co.uk>

Hello, John

I wonder if I might put a request in the newsletter? I'm trying to get hold of a copy of Jeff Hunter's *Around Britain* by Angmasalik - I know this is a rather hopeless quest as the few copies around are jealously guarded, but if anyone has one they would consider selling (loaning, even!), I should be more than grateful! My contact details are 19 Crompton St, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 3BW, tel. 07979 917635. Many thanks, Richard Atkinson
e-mail ratkins5@ford.com

Hello, John

My main interest now as I approach my dotage is warm water sea kayaking trying to use cheap late destination flights to some Island group in Europe. However I've never actually cracked it owing to the difficulty of transportation/excess baggage weight on air carriers. Most groups I've been on are priced in US\$. very expensive.

My reason for writing is to ask you whether you know of any literature comparing performances of various models of inflatable and folding sea kayaks and how they both compare with rigid sea kayaks. The second query is whether you have any knowledge of transporting folding/inflatable kayaks by air (well over baggage allowance especially with other camping gear)--for instance do some carriers for a price allow extra weight. Also I've heard of one Dutch guy transporting his rigid sea kayak by Martinair but they are based in Holland. Have you heard of any air carriers operating from U.K. who allow transporting of rigid sea kayaks.

Joyce Frank

Hello, John

I am writing in response to Guy Ogez's letter, which you published in the November 2001 edition of "Ocean Kayaker". This concerns the law in France, regulating the length-to-width ratio of kayaks.

I am a Nordkapp owner and may,

some day, wish to paddle my boat off the coast of France. Hence my interest in Guy's letter.

If you wish to campaign for a change in the French law, then I hope the following information may be of use to you.

The "Suffren" Class destroyer, used by the French Navy, has a length-to-width ratio of 10.16:1 and should therefore be classed as a beach toy under the law that you describe.

Our own Royal Navy also uses vessels that have a length-to-width ratio greater than 10. The Type 22 Frigate has a ratio of 10.02:1. The "Vanguard" Class nuclear-powered ballistic missile-carrying submarine has a ratio of 11.71:1. Clearly neither of these vessels should ever be allowed to venture more than 300 metres from the beach. The source of all the above data is "Jane's Fighting Ships".

Are the French authorities actively enforcing this law? I thought it was only we British who insisted on obeying silly rules.

**Yours sincerely,
Alan Green**

Hello, John

Once again many thanks for the Newsletter, which as usual I immediately read straight through. I am saddened by the Editorial reference to teachers, but I well understand it.

It is, in my opinion, yet another symptom that the country has gone soft, in its attitude that everything must now be risk free, or somebody must pay. I have commented on this before and it appears that your correspondent 'John C' might have similar ideas, but I have not seen his reference!

I enclose my cheque. You have done well to keep the sub down for so long. Perhaps it should have gone higher, so that you could insure yourself against those who consider that you are encouraging the young (the older will know better) to involve themselves in inspiring but risky activities, (see Swedish habits).

**Yours,
Dick Faulder**

Hello, John

I would like to subscribe to your newsletter.

Now for a short introduction to myself and my association. I'm newly elected president of the Danish Association of Havkajakroemei (The Seakayakers), with the responsibility for our international contacts. We're some 400 members, loosely organised throughout the country. We arrange a number of various sea kayak events, ranging from long trips to education of beginners. We've also got something we call the red white ribbon, which is an award one can win, by paddling along the entire Danish coast. This challenge is also open for foreigners. For more information on our association, look at our webpage www.havkajakroerne.dk

The website is currently fully in Danish, but it's high on my list to write an English text about the ins and outs of sea kayaking in Denmark. I've included our association's two latest magazines. If you read Danish, or know someone that does, you might find them interesting.

I'm looking forward to receive your newsletters, so that I can inform the members what other seakayak events are happening in Europe. In case you have any questions about seakayaking in Denmark, feel free to relay these to me.

Kind regards, Havkajakroerne

c/o Peter Un
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8000 Aarhus C, Denmark
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email: pjunold@daimi.au.dk

Hello, John

Maybe you are interested to know, that the British "Maritime and Coastguard Agency" presents on its homepage www.mcga.gov.uk/news/releases/index.html press releases about daily problems.

For example you find at 18th August 2001: "Canoelist found dead after Portsmouth Harbour Search" 8th Sept. 2001: "Capsized canoeist calls Dubai for help"

That's all, Udo Beier (Germany)