

CONN YAK

CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

April 2003

GREENLAND OR EURO



by Jay Babina

I used the word "who's" because so much of our attachment to things comes from an identity to the object.

I never understood the emotional attachment to things that we have no responsibility for. In this case, the paddle, which was designed by people we don't even know. The Greenland paddle, most likely designed by the Greenlanders and the Euro paddle, maybe the American Indians or some other canoe paddling culture from who knows where. How the Euro's assumed responsibility for this has never been proven. Perhaps it's because they put the blade on both ends and claimed it theirs? Whatever happened, I don't think anybody knows the real story. One thing we do know - we didn't invent it and to get possessive and attached to it's identity only gives us another useless emotion to carry around.

Who's faster? If we were to use identical boats and exact clones of the paddlers who all paddled at the same

rate, the one with the larger blade surface would win. That's a pretty cut and dry, non emotional, easy to understand fact. And since it's machines doing the paddling, we can also call the larger surface paddle - more efficient. However since we're humans and have to deal with fatigue and stress, efficiency has to be also analyzed from that standpoint as well. We have to evaluate how much can be done with the paddle as well as for how long. A tool that can only be used for a short period of time - shorter than is needed to complete the job is inefficient. Thus... a paddle that has enormous blades and tires you out in minutes would be totally inefficient for the paddler using it.

In propelling our craft forward, we make an evaluation as to how much thrust we can provide and for how long. Our blade size determines our rate of paddle stroke and longevity is based on our strength and endurance. And, the greater part of this choice is determined

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T-shirts and Euro-paddles - Joy and Dennis McNeil Photo - Tom Maziarz

Can't have too many

by Don Milnes

The devil made me do it,' or I really needed another one, or it keeps me from... Anyway, I am now the very proud owner of a 29-pound "skin" boat. By my count this is my 3rd boat, although my wife somehow comes up with 5. I have been interested in this process since I first saw a skin on frame canoe in the mid-90's. I wasn't even kayaking at the time, but was totally captured by the beauty of the bent wooden ribs covered by the tightly stretched, translucent, white skin. It's a feeling I just don't get from plastic.

Don't make the mistake of thinking I have any talent, or a workshop for that matter. This boat came about by way of Mystic Seaport and Mark Starr's Greenland Kayak Building Course through the John Gardner Boat Shop. This is the second time I have used one of their courses as a substitute for any skill or knowledge on my part and I cannot recommend them enough.

This course will allow anyone, woodworking skills or not, to produce a Greenland kayak. You have the flexibility to change the width and alter the fit to match your personal dimensions and paddling skill. I know there are many in ConnYak comfortable and skilled enough to tackle this project on their own. For those people I recommend reading through "Building a Greenland Kayak" by Mark Starr. Jay Babina reviewed this previously in the ConnYak Newsletter. But if you are visually challenged like myself, taking a class with Mark and crew is a fun, comfortable way to learn to build a kayak. Mine weighed 29.5 pounds before urethaning. At 17.5 feet and 22 inches this is fairly close in size to my fiberglass Romany, but what a difference in my attitude when I have to lift it unto my truck.

By now you may have noticed I have not talked about how this boat is IN the water (or hopefully ON the water.) Well it's February and I have been unable to urethane it - the one necessary step that

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by the manufacturer who made the paddle. In Greenland, you make your paddle. It's a no choice event. Even if the "Euro" paddle was understandably magical, to use one there would be one of the worse crimes known to a Greenlander.

Can a paddler with a Greenland paddle totally smoke a paddler with a Euro paddle - absolutely. And can a Euro-paddler smoke a Greenland paddler... absolutely. Our fitness, and boat are really the determining factors, not the paddle (and in that order). Many official western kayak racers use the Euro paddle because, just like my clone example, they want to push as much water as possible and usually train to be able to achieve this. The well trained kayaker/athlete can push a lot more water than the untrained paddler with any kind of paddle and thus go faster and hopefully longer. The real testing of stroke rate v.s. the blade size has never been done simply because, once again... we're humans and are subject to stress and fatigue and, our bodies are all different. I personally think that kayak racers pick high-end, off the shelf paddles that seem to feel right with them and test their times which is more often based on their fitness and stroke refinement.

Back when the Greenland or native paddle was developed, there were no trophies for anything. Their paddle usage was survival. It meant the ability to hunt for food and move around through the waters to other ice and land masses. The paddle was crafted from found wood and over time evolved into the one we commonly see. They learned to roll back up from a capsize and had to have a no-thinking positive rolling tool that left no room for error. Errors in kayaking meant death in those frigid waters. Because you hold the blade, the indexing of blade angle is done for you guaranteeing that your blades are doing what you expect. I think this is the number 1 main advantage of the native paddle. (for me) The Euro's or developers of the paddle-shaft and blade paddles never considered rolling into the design of the paddle. These skills were learned and adapted to the paddle after explorers saw Eskimos doing these things. (the Pawlata or extended paddle roll)

A Greenland paddler user will average about 1 1/2 strokes to 1 stroke of the Euro-paddle to keep the same speed. This is something I noticed from years of paddling in mixed groups. Which is better? You'll have to tell me. I like the faster rate and have adapted to it in my

own personal paddling style. The few times I have sprinted (raced) other kayakers, there has never been any clear cut winners. If I was feeling exceptionally strong that day, I would pull ahead or... sometimes another paddler with the Euro-paddle might do the same. These are simple 200 yard sprints just for kicks. The longevity of a racer has to do with endurance and fitness and not the paddle. The one major point I want to stress is that the narrower blades of the native paddle are totally capable of sprinting from a standing position as well as any large blade paddle. My favorite analogy is the bicycle racer who starts in a low gear when sprinting off the line. Once they get going, they will switch to higher gears according to their strength and fitness.

Most of what I have stated so far is hard, cold fact. My opinion about the two paddle types is actually more equal than most of you would suspect. In my own paddling style, I use a lot of bow rudders for correcting. I find the larger blade paddle way more efficient for this technique as well as with the use of stern rudders. The stern rudder is very useful in surf. The Greenland paddle does the job, but not as strongly as the larger blade.

Bracing is a double edge sword. The larger blade will give you more support, however any mistake made will be hard to recover from. And, if you use a feathered paddle, you have something additional to worry about. I think more beginners capsize due to mistakes made with blade orientation than anything else. One thing I learned well in my years of Euro-paddling is bracing and slicing the blade out of the water front and back. I think many paddlers go to the Greenland paddle at a point when their basic skills are in place and bracing becomes an act of finesse and the thinner blade is more than efficient for the job. The much used practice of extending the paddle is also easy and accepted with the native paddle and can also be executed quickly.

There are good paddlers who can roll well and do tricks with the Euro-paddle although they are rare. The Greenland paddle is just way easier to roll with mostly because of it's being non-feathered and indexed to the user's hands which also makes it easier to maneuver around under water. I think the frustration of rolling with the feathered Euro paddle has converted many people to the Greenland paddle. I know how hard I worked to perfect my

roll with the feathered Euro-paddle. It was quite a chore to get to the point where I knew I could roll up from any capsize. You can see the look on a beginners face when they successfully roll with the Greenland paddle. They look at it as if contained a magical property and they want one - now!

I personally enjoy the pure and simple act of paddling with the Greenland paddle. I like how it feels in my hands and the smooth easy way it cuts through the water. I'm usually amazed of how fast the boat is going for the little effort put in. I also like the fact that the Greenland paddle never seems to be affected by harsh winds whereas the Euro has scared me a few times when I felt like it was being pulled from my hands as it fluttered in the wind.

Most stores carry very few Greenland paddles if any. The beginning kayaker is automatically handed a Euro paddle (usually too long) and this is the accepted norm until she or he tries few different things and begins to make some decisions based on their own opinions. With the big teaching agencies, (ACA, BCU) the Euro is what is used. They seem to now accept other things but for the most part it's Euro all the way. This also propagates the immediate acceptance of the Euro paddle as the normal paddle for kayaking. However what was once revolutionary is gradually becoming extremely popular and the big teaching agencies have been forced to address it's existence. I personally really don't know if this is from awareness or just monetary opportunities. Never-the-less, the Greenland paddle is appearing more and more.

My friend Dave Snow always ribs me about my paddle. "Its good to have some wood along in case we have to build a fire" I usually reply "those big white blades make a good signaling device, as long as it's not too windy".

There's really no wrong or rights in this choice. We're not hunting for survival or racing for a living. If what you're doing is bringing you pleasure and satisfaction, you have achieved all that you can do. Just always remember that the other paddler is probably achieving the exact same thing with the paddle they are using!



Skin boat cont.

is not included in the 6 day (two - three day weekends) class. However, and I can't say enough about how helpful and accommodating Mark and his co-instructors have been; the four of us from my class have been invited back to the Seaport to use the heated and ventilated paint shop this weekend. So hopefully by the time you read this article I will have had more of the 'skin on frame' boat experience. Stop me on the water and ask me about it - I'll be the one with the big grin.

Spring...

The most dangerous time of year

Every year we address the same problem that comes with Spring - warm air and frigid water. No breathable drysuit breathes well enough to make us feel good on a 65 degree day when people are laying on the beach in a bathing suit. However, they are laying on the beach and not swimming - that's the big difference.

Experienced paddlers know how to dress for the water. That doesn't mean knowing about drysuits, but more so, knowing how to dress under the suit to keep cool yet have enough protection from the water. I think if you have the kind of body that can jump in to 50 degree water and not go into convulsions for 5 minutes, you could possibly dress down quite a bit. But for most of us, we would be seriously affected by a submersion in that temperature water.

I know that I change to my dry top and wind breaker pants once I know that I could take a cold swim. I also evaluate the day as far as wind, how far off shore and who's going along. If a strong wind is predicted, the drysuit goes on. Not because I'm worried about capsizing, but for the overall warm comfort it supplies. It also gives me mental security knowing I have it on. If it's a dead calm, warm day and I'm along on a ConnYak paddle, I will often switch over to a dry top quite early in the season. My choice here is mostly because of the ease of putting it on and the less fabric resistance it gives me. My light weight Kokatat dry top also breathes a lot more freely than the dry suit and also doesn't capture as much total body heat. These are also days when I know I can handle a cold

swim if that was ever the case.

Through experience, you learn about your body. You learn how much or little you can wear under a dry suit and still paddle comfortably yet maintain that edge of safety.

I remember the "Meet on the Beach" gathering that was in June of last year. Many paddlers had their dry suits on since it was overcast, with a 15-20 mph wind and a bit chilly. Granted, many of them were planning to roll, but a lot of them weren't.

I think a lot more people would use the dry suit if they owned one. It's an option only available to those who have one. Many times the beginner paddler uses what they have or can afford and would gladly dress more for the water if they had the apparel. Nobody buys a dry suit at first unless they have a lot of money. Ironically this is the one group who needs it the most. The unfortunate thing is that many beginners are drawn into the false sense of security of warm air temperatures and have really never experienced a cold swim, plus the fact that spring can be a windy time of year.

Two things you can do to maintain your drysuit comfort on the abnormally warm Spring days.

1. Start your paddles out slowly. Most people can't wait to go paddling and charge right out. Your body needs a good 15-20 minutes to warm up (body chemistry changes). If you don't give it time, you'll feel your temperature rising very quickly in the first 10 minutes of a paddle and get uncomfortably hot in the drysuit.

2. Use your hat as your temp control. By removing your hat, you can cool down quite quickly if you feel the heat coming on. Or.. you can wet your suit a bit or just slow down the activity.

Once your chemistry catches up with the changes associated with aerobic activity, you will level off and maintain a comfort zone for quite some time. As the calories burn up you will not only get hungry, but you will start getting cooler.

From here on it's up to you. You get to know your own body and what it likes and doesn't like. The most important thing is to be careful warming up slowly especially when you have some layering on under the suit.

As paddlers, spring is the yearly rebirth of our sport. We just have to be patient and let it happen at it's own pace.

- JB

EVENTS



CONNYPAK TALK / MEETING

Registration issues

with

Eleanor Mariani - DEP
Al Johnson - US Coast Guard

(ajohnson@d1.uscg.mil)

Friday, April 11, Essex Town Hall

With the work of Nick Shade, we were able to initiate a meeting with Al Johnson and Eleanor Mariani.

Eleanor Mariani is in charge of Boating laws for the CT State Environmental Protection Agency. Al Johnson is First District (New England) Recreational Boating Safety officer, U. S. Coast Guard.

This meeting affords us the great chance to discuss and address safety/ registration issues and hear the direct comments from these people. It 's also a chance to ask questions about these issues and voice our concerns.

Hopefully we can:

Get a better handle on what the DEP is really trying to accomplish. Since their own data shows there is not a safety problem with kayakers, we are curious why they seem so intent on doing something.

Find out what the Coast Guard's take on this whole issue is: are they really pushing this?

The USCG has worked with kayakers in Maine to improve safety short of registration and required classes. I would like to hear more about these efforts and see if there is anything we can do along similar lines.

Open the lines of communication with the people that develop policy so our voice is heard before a new piece of legislation is proposed.

This is our chance to hear and discuss these issues with the people who advocate and make policy.

DIRECTIONS TO THE ESSEX TOWN HALL

Exit 3 off of Rt. 9. Head into town on West Ave. The Town Hall is about a third of a mile up the hill on the left at the corner of West Avenue and Grove Street. Turn left on Grove Street - parking is in the back of the building.

CLASSIFIED

Valley Skerray XL, Fiberglass, Turquoise over white, with skeg, two hatches, chimp pump, and compass. \$1795. Contact (203) 840-0156.

NORDKAPP HM good condition. Day hatch, rear oval hatch, canvas storage bag, compass. Orang / white \$1600 860-633 7254

16' x 22" Yellow/White Dagger 'Meridian SK' f/g kayak with skeg, 2 hatches, Nexus Type 85 Compass, spray skirt, f/g paddle, Milford, CT \$1850 203.877.8493 'clayluce@hotmail.com'

FOR SALE - Janautica "ANADYR" Sea Kayak 17.5' X 21.25" Adjustable seat and footpegs, 2 hatches, bulkheads, rigging etc. Designed for speed and rough water. See Mfg. webpage for complete specs. www.splashdance.com NEW - \$1699 free delivery in CT. E-mail ritey@lycos.com or call 917 567 9430

Necky Tormae 15' Kevlar w/rudder, carbon paddle, spray skirt, Yakama rack and saddles \$1300. all. Must sell - Moving 203-458-2362

Wilderness Systems Pungo. 12' rec boat. Cockpit cover & spray skirt. \$325. Perception Pirouette w/w or surf. Cockpit cover, spray skirt, paddle. VG condition. \$300. Call (860) 653-5899.

Old Town Nantucket - used 1 season. Yellow, poly, rudder, thigh braces, adjustable hip pads. Great first boat. \$500 obo. Pete (860)749-0471

Skin on Frame - Baidarka- brand new- (back problems) Willow Kayaks, only 29 pounds, 18' x 21", 8" depth to shear, skeg, very fast, Rye NY, \$1950 or best offer. 914 698 8354 or sd.a@att.net

Group Trips Needed - If you want to list a paddle for the season contact the club or newsletter. We need more paddles to alleviate our overcrowding. To list it does not mean you're responsible or even the leader (unless you want to). We need paddlers who want to share a paddle with friends at a favorite location. You don't even have to arrive is something comes up. This year we will be leaving weeks open for individuals.

Registration update - Rep. Panaroni has dropped his bills due to lack of support. It is still unclear as to the fate of the Daily bill. Info on our site!

ConnYak Policy Statement

We do not take ads, list sales, items or services other than member classifieds. We do list opportunities, such as demonstrations, symposiums, free classes, demo-days and will post the phone and email or website for those opportunities. Our goal is to stay free of endorsements and maintain a total friendship with all businesses, clubs and instructors having to do with our sport.

We can't post your event if we don't know about it. Please stay in touch!

TO JOIN CONNYAK...

ConnYak is a non profit club that is open to all paddlers interested in sea kayaking from any location. ConnYak annual membership fee is \$15.

Membership includes monthly newsletter, paddles, functions, etc.

Send inquiries to:

ConnYak, P.O. Box 197, Ellington, CT 06029

E-MAIL: CONNYAK@CONNYAK.ORG

WEBSITE / BULLETIN BOARD: WWW.CONNYAK.ORG

T-shirts for Articles

Authors of articles for the newsletter get a free T-shirt. If you have written an article and haven't received your T-shirt, please speak up at one of the paddles. The club officers usually have them at the paddles.

Check the bulletin board for impromptu trips listed by members - www.connyak.org

Send newsletter articles or classifieds to:

Jay Babina e-mail: jbabina@snet.net

7 Jeffrey Lane, Branford, CT 06405

203-481-3221 Fax 203-481-1136



Please contact the Newsletter when items are sold.



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