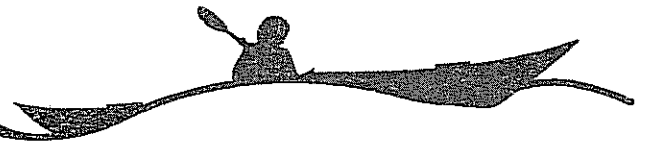


CONN YAK



CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

October 2004

The Greenland National Championships 2004

By Cheri Perry

I tried really hard to not have any expectations. Since I never ventured far from the US, I wasn't really sure what to expect. However, I did know that I was going to a competition that was a national event with a lot of good kayakers. It's the Greenland National Championships, which is a week long event held this year in Qaqortoq at the southern tip of Greenland. The competition consists of the following events: short distance racing, long distance racing, relay team racing, a portage race, rope gymnastics, rolling, team rolling, and harpoon throwing.

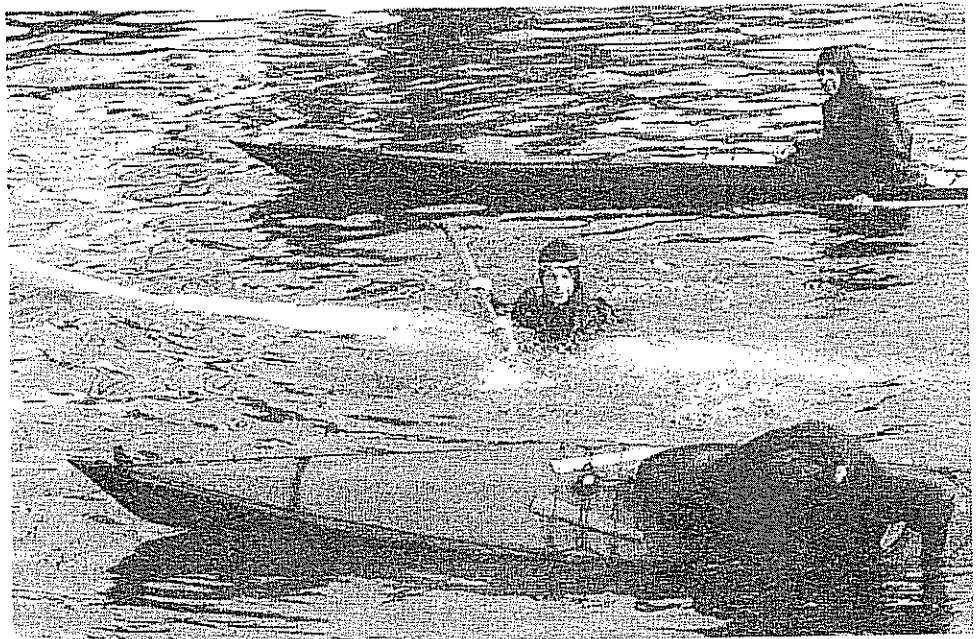
I'm really a roller, so when I participate in a race I feel out of my element. I went to a couple of races in Connecticut to prepare, and found these to be pretty straight forward. Racers arrive at 9 A.M., pay the entrance fee, get a number, eat a power bar, stand around, drink some Gatorade, on the water by 9:40, and the whistle blows at 10:00 for a 10 o'clock race. Everyone then paddles around for a couple of hours, followed by awards, then we all go home. At these races there were no real spectators, with the exception of a few devoted significant others. This is what I would have expected in Greenland.

After a few planes and many hours, I finally arrive in Greenland. For simplicity's sake, picture Greenland in your mind as one big iceberg with a bit of soil and rock around the southern and western edges. The villages are built on this soil and rock and are spaced quite far apart. The villages are also small; Qaqortoq has a population of only 3000. There are no roads between villages in Greenland, so at this time of year travelers choices are a ferry, powerboat, or helicopter. We arrived in Narsarsauq by airplane, then took a four hour ferry

ride to Qaqortoq at a cost of fifty U.S. dollars. If we wanted to get there quicker by helicopter, it would have cost \$250. On our ferry, we passed only one town. The Championship is an event that draws not only the competitors from all over Greenland; but it's also a huge social event. Some Greenlanders are on the ferry for a week, others for 3 days. Everyone is on holiday. Most travelers are families looking forward to seeing other family members or friends that they have not seen since last year's competition. This is an expensive trip and their only summer holiday. While some of the more mature athletic folks have been training, half of the competitors are children. Some adults have joined the festivities recently so their children will learn about kayaking, but they are new to the sport as well. The feel of the event is more like a huge family picnic/reunion than national sporting competition. I'm not saying

that this event is not competitive; it is, but only after the children race, who were being encouraged by the raucous cheers of the adults. The atmosphere starts to become more serious with the mix of older (34 and up) and younger women (15 - 19). The Qajaq Woman of the Year class in the 20-34 year group is fairly serious, with some exceptional athletes. Next in the line up is the same mix of older and younger men, followed by the Qajaq Man of the Year class of 20 - 34 year old men - again a serious group with a lot of athletes. More than once the final class would finish in twilight, which translates to midnight in Greenland. Most of the men competing in the final class are also the mentors/teachers for the children and women who competed earlier in the day and have been on the water for many hours helping out - forget about carbing up!

Continued on next page



Cheri Perry (top), Harvey Golden and Dubsid demonstrating techniques at the Arctic Boat Weekend held at Mystic Seaport. Harvey was having fun in his flooded boat.

Greenland Nationals continued...

I was originally a bit disappointed in my classification for the competition. I had hoped to be in the Greenlandic class and compete for Qajaq Woman of the Year. I was able to waive my age (I'm 42 but raced in the 20 - 34 age group) but I was placed in the International Class. I was the only one in this class, therefore I won all of the medals. Still, I yearned to be with the Greenlandic Class and receive the awards I earned. I placed 3rd in short distance, 4th in long distance, 1st in portage, 1st in rolling, 1st in team rolling, and 1st in the relay race. I did not participate in the harpoon throwing. If I had competed in the Greenlandic Class instead of the International Class, I would have tied for second place for Qajaq Woman of the Year. Although I would have loved to compete in the Greenlandic Class, I am happy that my participation in their event did not take away honors from the Greenlandic women.

We have so many advantages here: proper equipment, wet suits, dry suits, booties, the use of pools in the winter, water year round, paddling buddies close by. I think we assume that they have the advantage of being taught at a young age by a wise elder and that the whole community revolves around kayaking, and that Greenland must be the Mecca for all kayaking. I also assumed that this amazing island would be full of wonderful paddlers like Maligiaq. (There I go with my expectations again!) If I had put any thought into it I would have realized that these people, like us, have jobs, families, and many other obligations. Most Greenland kayakers don't learn from an elder or local guru, their local clubs are not that active. There are not that many people to kayak with, since the clubs are so far apart, and going alone is quite dangerous in 38 degree water with jeans on. The local club in Qaqortoq has only 20 active members. I was shocked to find out that not every Greenland kayaker, and most actually cringe at the thought of it. Many people in town had no idea that the event was even happening.

Even though my expectations, which I tried not to have, were completely wrong, I thoroughly enjoyed myself. I

felt challenged but relaxed and there was no tight schedule that had to be adhered to. The sportsmanship showed by the athletes was something to be admired. The real heart of the competition was not focused on the many talented adult athletes. Instead, the real stars are the children who are being taught the nearly lost skill of kayaking. The Greenlandic folks are a wonderful people who were quick to laugh and had a great sense of humor. It's refreshing to be with people who are so non-judgemental, and unpretentious. They fully understand that it's all about people and their relationships not about winning medals.

It was a wonderful experience for me to not only travel to Greenland but to participate in this cultural event. I hope I can return some time in the future.

Arctic Boats at Mystic

The Arctic boat weekend at Mystic drew a large contingent of tulieks and skin boats as well as the would-be Greenlanders in fiberglass kayaks. Mystic did a great job in accommodating every possibility by including something for everyone. There were lectures, skin boat building demonstrations, paddle making demonstrations, Cheri's photo exhibit from her trip to Greenland along with a list of other events too numerous to mention. There were boats to try and an overall sharing of knowledge of various techniques by everyone.

In the morning there was a paddle stroke clinic and in the afternoon there were rolling clinics that were divided into groups: the beginners and those who could roll and wanted to try more challenging variations. Meanwhile the building and launching of a Umiak was being done and you could participate in that. The Umiak is a large rowboat type of skin boat.

Late in the afternoon, Cheri, Dubside and Harvey Golden demonstrated rolling techniques. All three of them have competed in Greenland. Dubside later demonstrated the rope gymnastics which is also part of the Greenland national competition.

The event is growing and becoming a note-worthy gathering for most paddlers on the East Coast whether you use a Greenland paddle or not.

Fundraiser Paddle

Sat., October 2, 2004

On Saturday Oct. 2nd there will be a fundraiser paddle at four Mile River, Lyme, CT. Experienced paddlers will be launching at 10:00 am; beginning paddlers are encouraged to launch at 10:30am. Money raised from this event will go to the Tommy Fund, an organization based out of Yale New Haven Children's Hospital to benefit children with cancer. Hole in the Wall Beach has a protected launch, open beach, and ample parking.

Childhood cancer is the second leading cause of childhood death. Only accidents take more young lives. The Tommy Fund has no administrative fees - all monies go directly to research and to provide support for children and families. In conjunction with the paddle's fund raising activities, the "Wipe Out" Walkathon will be held at East Lyme High School that day to support the Tommy Fund. A \$5.00 donation to the Tommy Fund is requested the day of the event.

For last minute updates, check the CONNYAK message board at www.connyak.org

Directions: Four Mile River, Lyme, CT:
Directions - I-95 to exit 71, go south on Four Mile River Road (about 0.7 mile) to Rt. 156, turn right, short distance to the sign for boat launch (Oakridge Drive) to the left, take next right to the launch area.

Slide Show/Talk

2004 Greenland National
Kayaking competition
with Cheri Perry

Thursday, November 4

at North Cove Outfitters 6:30-8:00
Tickets are \$5.00. Proceeds go to Cheri.

LIMITED SEATING

Call 388-6585 for advance ticket sales
and to reserve your seat.

Tickets available at N. Cove Outfitters



Practical Kayaking

Review by Rusty Norton

Publisher -Dolphins Eye
PO Bx 97, Andover, NH 03216
(603) 724-2206

DVD \$24.45 postpaid (1 hr, 45 min)

Practical Kayaking is a new DVD now available in the ConnYak library. It is meant primarily as an introduction to sea kayaking for the beginner, but it has segments that any paddler might enjoy.

Early on there is a brilliant segment interviewing kayakers asking whether they have ever done a solo reentry and how long they think it would take. Everyone seems to agree it wouldn't take long. This is followed by a lifeguard who has paddled for five years but never done a solo reentry trying to get back in his boat. It's sort of painful to watch. His actual elapsed time: 32 minutes. If he had only dropped his butt into the seat he would have had it the first time. They missed a sure bet by not interviewing paddlers carrying their PFDs instead of wearing them. It would have been fun to watch swimmers trying to put on PFDs in the water. The paddlefloat reentry is taught with the paddler vaulting onto the coaming in front of the paddle. Many beginners and others will find this much more difficult than doing a bellyflop on the back deck behind the paddle and float. You can see in the video how awkward the first approach is when they have to scoot onto the back deck to get their feet into the cockpit. If you start on the back deck you just have to swivel into position to get the feet in, and with a small cockpit boat, there is no choice. There is a pretty good discussion of Euro paddle length with 5'4" Shelly and 6'4" Vaugh who both use 215 cm. which is pretty close to what many of us are using. I can't agree that beginners should use a longer paddle because they have a more horizontal stroke, nor can I agree that 230-240 would be appropriate for a tandem.

I paddled tandems last summer for three weeks with Outward Bound with my paddle length set at 216 as usual. I never felt the need for anything longer and, yes, I had both blades in the water, thank you. The forward stroke is taught

with torso rotation. This sounds good but I couldn't see any torso rotation demonstrated; it looked like all arms to me. The dangers of hypothermia, fog, and rough water created by tides and currents in an estuary are explained well although the video demonstrations could be more graphic. There's a lot of difference between having a lobsterman talk about being in cold water and filming someone in cold water.

The danger of big boat traffic is another wonderful moment in the video as they show a 42,000 ton 660' cargo ship with a 96' beam leaving port. The view from the navigation deck is very sobering; they have a blind spot for half a mile in front of their bow and it takes them between half a mile and a mile to stop. They say they can't stop for everything anyway or they would never get anywhere!!

The worst moment in the video is when a kayaking lawyer explains the right of way is paddle craft, then sail, then power. This is Wrong with a capital 'W'. PADDLE CRAFT ARE NOT ANYWHERE ON THE COAST GUARD RIGHT OF WAY PECKING ORDER. The myth of paddle craft right of way is such received wisdom that has been repeated so many times paddlers have actually come to believe it. Coast Guard Commander Al Johnson from the Recreational Boating Safety office who appears in another segment of the DVD would not approve. I would have to say they missed the opportunity to interview kayakers with the question 'do paddle craft and kayaks have the right of way?' Ken Fink's navigation presentation is polished from years of delivery and an excellent introduction to the basics of what beginners need to know. This portion of the video alone would be worthwhile. The plastic bag navigation tool is simple and elegant. It would be great if the rest of the presenters were anywhere nearly as smooth.

The production values in this DVD are about what we have come to expect from the current spate of shoestring productions: no script, no rehearsal, few outtakes, and all too much bad lighting. If you are going to shoot a video it might be a good idea to get some lights. However, this is a video worth watching with some choice bits and a nice addition to the library.

EVENTS



FUNDRAISER PADDLE

SAT. OCT 2

4 MILE RIVER - 10 (N-A)

See article. Pack lunch. Lunch spot and itinerary to be determined.

INTER-CLUB PADDLE

SUN OCT. 3

NORWALK ISLANDS

Interclub Paddle with Sebago Canoe Club
(their kayakers)

Launch: 11:00 a.m. In the water, Calf
Pasture Beach, Norwalk

N-I paddle

Bring lunch, dress for conditions, water
temp. etc....and so forth.

Contact: Tony Pignatello, 718-352-8018

GREAT ISLAND

SUN OCT. 10

Destination ?? - 10 launch (N-I)

EAST RIVER (FOLIAGE?)

SAT OCT. 16

Madison State Launch - pack lunch
Launch 10:45 (N-A)

BARN ISLAND

SUN OCT. 24

Destination ? - 10- launch, lunch (N-A)

FALL PADDLES

Fall: the wind picks up, the temperature starts to drop, the water temperature drops and the waves get larger. Our paddles have difficulty designations that are a general category primarily based on the experience of the paddlers who have done them. However with the change in season, the most simple 4 mile paddle can turn into a tremendous challenge due to the wind. Evaluate the conditions and make decisions for yourself. If the conditions are too much for you, don't go or turn back. On most paddles there's areas to paddle that are calmer. Our paddle difficulty designations are only a guide and can change dramatically like the wind.



CLASSIFIED

Necky Elaho touring kayak. Kevlar-3 hatches, Smart Track rudder. Exc. 1 year old \$2100. 860-307-4212 cmontgomery3@cs.com.

Drysuit for Sale: The Barefoot Company drysuit, men's large, blue, used 3 times, cost \$400, asking \$250. Call Chris 860-989-1918.

Current Designs Solstice GT 17'7", Neo skirt medium, Ex cond. \$2400 860-875-7052

Wilderness Systems Shenai kevlarkayak red/white good condition with spray skirt weight 45# and 17' 4" long \$1475 phone 860-267-8194

Betsie Bay Aral for sale. 18 ft. long x 20", 35 lbs., rare mahogany deck, 1 yr. old, mint. Paid \$3800. Sale Price \$3000. Also, Greenland Tutlek - Med - Black - new, wrong size for me. \$250. Tom 413-593-6167

Janautica Anadyr - 17'6", Fiberglass, blue/white, day hatch, excellent condition, \$900.00. (203) 949-8647.

Old Town Tripper canoe. 17' 2', cane seats. Green Royale, 80 lbs, 1,100 lbs good capacity for white water. \$750.00. 860-442-2995 osprey@myeastern.com

ANOTHER BEST CONNYAK PICNIC

Bolton Lake turned out to be great. We had changing/bathroom facilities near by, an easy kayak drop off and ample easy parking as well as a sandy beach on crystal clear water. And... a bright warm sunny day to top it off.

About 70 people arrived for the picnic and the beach was lined with boats as usual. The lake was plenty large to have a nice paddle and it's quite scenic as well.

I think we have really have found a nice home for our picnics. We certainly are sensitive about accomodating paddlers from all areas of the state, but it's not easy finding a facility that offers so much and one that we can lock up for our gathering.

Thanks to all those who contributed in any way to make the picnic happen.

Current Designs Caribou S - Kevlar, yellow/white, compass, skeg. Used one season. \$2,400. (860) 436 - 4507.

Wilderness Poquito - Glass - 12'4" x 19" VCP day hatch new condition \$700 860-651-4520 or wwpratt@earthlink.net

Necky Arluk III - Glass, white,w/maroon trim. \$1200 or best offer. 203-426-9957

Please contact the Newsletter when classified items are sold. Also check the classified section on our web site.

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 check to:

ConnYak c/o Wayne Smith
85 School St, Coventry, CT 06236

WEBSITE / BULLETIN BOARD: WWW.CONNYAK.ORG

Watch the bulletin board for impromptu paddles posted by members.

T-shirts for Articles

Authors of articles for the newsletter get a free T-shirt. (just try to collect it)

ConnYak Over-Dues

On the newsletter you receive, your due-date is on your label. If you fall behind with your dues, you get two months of newsletters which are labeled "over due" and then get cut off the list of active members.

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



New Haven CT 06504-1070
PO Box 1070
Russell Norton
T3 P1



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