

ConnYak

CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

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The Triangle

A Trip Report by Sheldon Penn

What is it? Where is it? Why go there? Well, I will try to answer all these questions and more. We started planning for this trip just after Christmas hoping to pull everything together by mid April. The hardest part of the trip was getting



Sheldon in his custom version of an Outer Island

which helped us cruise through the worst traffic areas with little problems. Our destination was Sea Kayak GA's Outdoor Inn. The staff at Sea Kayak GA. are wonderful, helpful people who gave us much information on where to launch, places to paddle, great restaurants and more.

The Triangle is only a short distance from Tybee Island, in the mouth of Tybee Creek. It's a bunch of sand bars that are covered and uncovered at various stages of the tide. This makes an ever-changing microcosm of waves and disturbed water to play in. Surfing waves seem to run for incredibly long distances because of the gradually shoaling waters. High tide was the best time to play there because waves come from many directions and refract off the different sand bars, providing excellent fun. There is a line of colaptis waves that forms near high tide on the backside of one of the sand bars. The locals call it the Zipper. Paddle down

enough people interested in going, which I did not expect. We ended up with a group of five with varying degrees of skill and experience.

Where is the Triangle? It's near Tybee Island, Georgia, which is about 20 miles east of Savannah. It took us 15 hours to drive down from Norwalk, CT. We left Norwalk at 3:00 am Saturday morning,

This Issue:

The Triangle 1-2
Tybee Island area trip report
by Sheldon Penn

Quiet Times At Outer Island 3
By Brian Cooper, a Friend of Outer Island

Historical Insights 4-5
By Peter Smith

A Salute to Valley Canoe 6-7
by Jay Babina

EVENTS 7

it, and you have breaking waves coming at you from both sides crashing together under your boat. The first time through this will make the hair on top of your head stand on end, and I don't have hair there anymore.

Sunday was our first day kayaking. We got a late start because of long trip the previous day. The first order of business was to obtain a parking permit for Tybee Island, which cost about \$72 for the week. What a racket. We launched and headed out to the Triangle to have a look. Oliver and I jumped into the surf and caught some rides. Kristine, the third member of our crew, watched from a safe distance for a while, but by the end of the day she had taken her first surf rides and her first combat roll. Later that day the last two members of our crew, Leanora and Mary, arrived and paddled with us.



Monday was a trip into the backwaters behind Little Tybee Island, returning on the ocean side. Little Tybee Island is an undeveloped and protected island that is very beautiful. We saw lots of birds and wild life on the paddle up Lazaretto Creek. The Creek is a narrow, twisty backwater that is only passable at half tide or higher. We then paddled down some larger creeks to the south side of Little Tybee, then outside for a sleigh ride back. The wind was 15 kts. and waves were behind us on this part of the trip. We snuck in behind the Triangle and calmer water to call it a day.

The rest of the week passed in a similar fashion. We took trips further down the coast, into the Triangle and trips through other creeks. We had dolphins visit us every day and even surf with us on our last day in the Triangle. I'm not a bird person but I was truly impressed by the number and variety in that area. By night we adjusted our boats, adding foam here and there for a better fit. We watched paddling videos and videos from kayak trips in Greenland and Vietnam. We looked at pictures from the Nova Scotia trip. It was all kayaking, all the time (except when we were eating). That reminds me to mention that the local shrimp is out of this world and not to be missed.

A little more about the Outdoor Inn run by Sea Kayak GA. It has clean rooms, comfortable beds and a kitchen you can cook in. I think they have the cheapest prices on the island also. However the best part was sitting on the back deck overlooking the marshes watching birds and the sun during breakfast and again in the evening.

Would I go back? That is a sure bet. I am already thinking about next year's trip. You want to go? Let me know. The more people the more fun we will have.



Kristine at play

Quiet Times at Outer Island

By Brian Cooper

The air is still in the early morning as I unload my kayak from the roof of my car. There are only a few people passing by on their morning walk – some with dogs in tow, some with dogs in pull, some dogs alone. The natives.

The smell of breakfast emerges from Creekers as I unload the car and pack my essentials into the hatches, my PFD and sprayskirt into the cockpit, paddles under the bungees. Ready to go. I move my car to a nearby parking spot, leaving the spot next to the dock open. Someone else will appreciate that spot later this morning.

It is a short paddle to Outer Island so I'm free to indulge in breakfast and coffee. Today an omelet strikes my fancy.

I push off from the launch just after 8:00 am. The water is like glass. A few boats are being prepared for the day ahead. The water taxi and ferry boat are being tended to. Alone, I paddle past the anchored boats and head south.

Outer Island soon appears in the distance as I pass by Governor Island. This morning I decide to go clockwise around the island before landing. The water has a little bit of wave action on the western side. The island is deserted except for a few gulls and cormorants.

After landing I haul my supplies up to the cabin and move my kayak up to the top of the beach. Now the beach is about thirty feet wide. Later it will be less than five feet when the tide comes in.

I open the cabin and call the Refuge Office. I raise the American flag to signal the island is officially open. There are signs and brochures to put out, and some housekeeping chores. Then, I head out for a walk around the island for a security check. I also use the walk to pick up any garbage that has washed up on the beach.

Soon the day of duty begins as kayaks approach and landings are made. Some have been here before and know the routine. Others are new and they get the full story of the island and a brochure about the Friends of Outer Island. Most come by kayak but a few will come by ferry to enjoy the island solitude.

The other docent arrives and we share the duties. He doesn't have a kayak. He will walk around the island – I will stand guard. I will paddle around the island – he will stand guard. Sometimes there many visitors, sometimes only a few. Quiet ones, talkative ones. And so the day progresses.

At 4:00 PM we close up the island. My partner heads back to Stony Creek. I will enjoy the sunset tonight before I paddle back for dinner.

Its after 9:00 PM when I climb back into my kayak to begin my trip back to the island. Now the water is calm. The moonlight and stars fill the sky. Only an occasional sailboat cruises into the island chain.

Tonight I enjoy the stars from the cabin porch. I know the stars must be moving around the North Star but I can't be sure.

The only noise is the quite splash of the waves. Bed.

I awake early in morning. I see that the Big Dipper has changed its position and moved almost halfway around the North Star. I pack what little is needed for the journey back to Creekers. As the day begins I venture out into the water to view the sunrise before heading in for breakfast.

Then back to Outer Island for another day.

This last year I joined the Friends of Outer Island and volunteered to become a docent. I spent two weekends at Outer Island, sleeping on the island Saturday night each time. The work as a docent was enjoyable. The time spent on the island by myself was refreshing. And to think people spend money for such times.

By Brian Cooper



Recently I had an amazing experience that I would like to share with fellow kayakers – in particular those who are interested in building traditional craft. It came about during my sessions with a therapist who I was seeing about my kayaking obsession. Since I obviously don't have time to actually go to any appointments during the period of good paddling weather that occurs every year from February to December, Dr. Finetune selected a day in January to initiate a hypnotherapy session. Interestingly, it is now known that occasionally, under deep hypnotic regression, a person may reach a state where he or she will accurately describe events that occurred during a previous life. This has been well documented in several distinguished papers that I found on the Internet. Well, believe it or not, this is exactly what happened to me. And as extraordinary as this phenomenon is, perhaps it will be even more amazing for you to learn that I was actually a traditional Inuit kayak builder in a past life. In my own (present) life I paddle fiberglass kayaks, and although I have friends who have built skin on frame kayaks, I have never built one myself. Yet, as you will see, the details that I described during my regression unquestionably come from a true expert.

I have related the circumstances of the source of my information in this prelude so that you will realize that the following account, obtained from my tape-recorded monologue while deep in a hypnotic trance, is absolutely authentic. Since there is currently a large amount of interest in historical Inuit skills, these insights from a master builder of an earlier age will unquestionably be of incalculable value.

The session started off poorly, in my estimation. I was late, and Dr. Finetune accused me of being drunk. I indignantly explained that I had just finished gluing some foam pads into the cockpit of my kayak and had forgotten to wear my respirator. Naturally I was slightly dizzy from the fumes, but that would go away eventually – I hoped.

Dr. Finetune looked displeased, but he brought me into a dimly lit room with a comfortable lounge chair, and an array of recording equipment. I settled into the chair, and Dr. Finetune began talking to me about going down a series of escalators – down, down, down...

I am a kayak builder. My father was a kayak builder, and his father was a kayak builder. I cannot tell you where we live because the names we use here would mean nothing to you, but I am in a wonderful Inuit village near the sea. It is quite beautiful here, and our lives are good. Someday, perhaps, there will be too many people in large buildings with offices and they will have to work indoors with paper all day, and that will be horrible. It makes me want to cry to think about how awful this will be. (A period of crying follows before I can continue.)

However, it is nice here. Now I think I will build a kayak. The first thing I need is to obtain some 18-foot long battens made out of clear white pine. I have been waiting for my order to come in at Seaside Beach, so I will go there now. (Period of silence.)

Aggh! Seaside is not very reliable! It is commonly understood that white pine battens should have been here long before now. I am afraid I cannot wait any longer to start; I am going to have to use some yellow pine for battens. I do not like to use yellow pine because it is too brittle, but there is a large pile available now. Everyone says to be patient, that the white pine is coming, but it never seems to show up.

Three days later: I just went down to Seaside beach, and the white pine was in. I should have realized – I just needed to put in three days of really hard work on the yellow pine to make the white pine come in. Oh well, such is life. Now I will start over tomorrow with the white pine.

(Continued on page 5)

Next week: My friend Andy (Author's Note: It is obvious that I unconsciously converted the original authentic names of the people in this narrative to the nearest English equivalents) and I were arguing about the best way to fasten the ribs to the stringers. Andy says that they should be pegged and lashed into place because that is the way it has always been done. However I plan to use the new two-part seal blubber glue that is around. If this glue works as well as I hope, someday an entire kayak could be made out of it. But I get ahead of myself.

Next week: I hate it when I have to get more sharkskin for smoothing the wood. Fortunately I was able to get a small shark that didn't bite me too badly before I was able to club it to death. The way things are going sharkskin is going to be costing an arm and a leg.

Next week: Andy came by today. He says that the anthropomorphic proportions of my kayak are all off. That really annoyed me, and I couldn't argue with him because I didn't know what anthropomorphic meant.

Two days later: I found a wide plank and toyed with the idea of making a paddle with blades wider than my outstretched fingers. But after working with the wood for a day, the blade split. I guess it's not practical, but it seemed like a darned good idea.

Next week: My wives explained to me what anthropomorphic means. My kayak is 17 feet, 4 toes long, but it is shorter than Sheldon's even though his kayak is only 16 feet, 11 toes long. I'm still not sure I really understand it.

Next day: Something amazing happened at Seaside. A whole shipwreck came in today. I don't know about you, but I find looking at all of the hardware from a shipwreck fascinating. I could just wander around the piles of material strewn along the beach all day. Eventually I collected as much stuff as I could afford to carry, and determined to find progressive new ways to apply it. I agonized for some time over a straight flat piece of metal with evenly marked increments on it, but finally could think of nothing useful to do with it so I threw it back in the sea. Dennis and I saw a metal tool for cutting wood at the same time, and argued over it. He kept saying, "Saw it! Saw it! Eventually we agreed to share the device, and named it a "saw it."

Next month: Didn't get much done on the kayak this month, what with surviving and all. Will try to do better next month.

Next week: The frame is finally done. Andy came by and criticized some of my brilliant innovations. I'll show him. When this kayak is done I will kayak faster and further than anyone ever has in a kayak. But just in case it doesn't go faster, I secretly started another boat.

Next week: Skinning the kayak with sealskin. I really don't want to talk about it. Really.

Next month: It's done! And just in time for our annual Really Modern Boat Regatta. Boy I am going to show that Andy a thing or two about kayak design!

The narrative ends there. Unfortunately Dr. Finetune abruptly discontinued our therapy sessions, and indicated that he wants nothing further to do with me, ever. Sadly, this precludes any possibility of further scientific exploration in this area. I'm sure that everyone will appreciate this brief glimpse of history, and shares my regret that I will not be able to provide any additional authentic historical accounts.

Peter Smith is a long-time ConnYak member who had to volunteer to edit a newsletter in order to get this article published.

A Salute to Valley Canoe

By Jay Babina

One day while I was paddling my brother's Pintail I got to thinking about the origins of a lot of breakthrough innovations and wanted to give credit where credit is often overlooked. I guess since I build boats, I feel not only a close relationship with these things but most certainly a full appreciation of the origins. When I first started paddling about 17 years ago, there were about 5 major brands one of which is Valley Canoe from England. Years back ConnYak had Howard Jeffs – senior coach for the BCU over from England and he did a few workshops and a slide show of his expeditions. He worked for Valley and was the designer of the Valley Aleut II double. If you have Nigel Foster's original book, Howard is in there and the inventor of the paddle float tube. It's a tube that runs through the hull behind the cockpit which you can place a paddle shaft in with a paddle float on each side that would act as a sponson for a reentry. I guess it never really flew but somebody has to try things or nothing gets done. Ironically Howard was not in love with the Valley designs and borrowed my P&H Serius at the time. He did tell me a lot of stories about Valley and their development of the various ideas that makes them what they are today.

Generally the seas in England are usually rough and they don't have the lakes, streams, rivers and protected waters that we enjoy here in the U.S. When kayaking developed as a sport, it was a much more serious thing overseas. You had to learn to kayak well or you just didn't do it. In the U.S. kayaking soared off the map because you could do it in protected waters without skills. You could kayak without an official educational process which you wouldn't do in England. This difference in geography accounts for the discrepancy in kayak design between the early U.S. manufacturers and boats that came from England. It was a much more serious sport over there and this was highly reflected in the safety aspects of the design thinking.

There are many design standards that we take for granted or expect in quality kayaks and the greater percentage of them came from Valley Canoe which was founded in 1970 by Frank Goodman who was the first to paddle the Cape of Good Horn.

1. Fiberglass (glassed in) bulkheads. This is a great attention to detail and a commitment to a unionized structure.
2. Recessed cockpit coaming. This was not done for rolling but because it was a better design to not raise the cockpit lip any higher than necessary. Another commitment to design detail and concern about reentering a kayak.
3. Recessed deck fittings. To keep anything from interfering with a paddlers trying to reenter their boat, the fittings were recessed. This is not just design but a knowledge about advanced kayaking skills and reentries.
4. Deck lines. Many kayaks during those early times only had bungees to carry things and a disregard for a paddler who might be in the water. BTW – the bungees were simple parallel lines (no criss cross) so chart reading would be easy.
5. The Day Hatch. This mandated an additional bulkhead and allows a paddler to open it up at sea without jeopardizing the integrity of the internal bulkhead design kayak.
6. Deck mounted pump. Although this is debatable or subject to personal preference, the advanced safety thinking and commitment were there. You could pump your boat out with the spray skirt on. You could not pump another boat out however, at that time in England, everyone had a Valley boat.
7. Molded in seats. Many kayaks of that early era flopped in a piece of foam and gave the seat a haphazard priority. The molded in seat also caused the birth of the seat struts that act like hip bracing. In hanging a seat off the bottom, they actually created hip stops in the process.
8. The Retractable Skeg. All manufactured fiberglass kayaks now have them.

(Continued on page 7)

9. The Compass Recess.

10. Last and far from least is the famous VCP hatch. Hatches that didn't leak. Hatches that you could open and close easily and hatch covers that float and require no additional hardware. There were a few British kayaks that had hatches like the screw on cap on a jar of tomato sauce but Valley set the standard which in my opinion has been copied but never equaled.

There is no Valley boat that I care to own but I do have to marvel at their thinking and energy. They could have easily streamlined their production with cheaper and easier manufacturing details but choose to stay true to their commitment to excellence. You can criticize them for glass work, weight or hull design but they laid down a series of standards that are still upheld today. I always felt they never got full recognition for these innovations especially by paddlers who don't know the history. Imitation is the greatest form of praise and we all have Valley Canoe innovations on our boats.

EVENTS

Sat. July 8th Karen Knight demonstration & Paddle Bluff Point St. Park, Groton

9 AM demonstration by Karen Knight who is conducting the women's paddling class.

10:30 in the water, Paddle after the demonstration. Head around the harbor islands over to Bluff Point and maybe into the next cove for lunch. Arrive for the demonstration or for just the paddle.

Wednesday practice sessions Cedar lake in Chester

Regular practice sessions have been posted on the bulletin board.

The lake is clean, free, warm and large enough to paddle around or practice anything you want. Paddlers arrive from around 4 PM on and stay until whenever.

If you're looking for a practice place or some companionship watch the bulletin board for posted practice sessions.



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