



I hesitated to write this article, feeling I am not the most qualified person to pass on information concerning cold water rescues. Buckling under the pressure of my fellow paddling companions to relay a recent experience ...here it is.

During the last week of February, I received a call from my brother, Dale, a novice paddler (3 to 4 times in the ocean), asking me to take him out paddling on the following Saturday morning. I agreed, and when Saturday rolled around we met at my house to load all the gear. I was aware of the marine forecast, which cited SE winds of 20 to 25 knots and waves in the sound of 3 to 5 feet, and made this information available to my brother before departing.

We arrived by 8:00 a.m., and upon launching, discussed our proposed route. I felt we should have hugged the coast considering his limited experience, but he said "I feel good, lets head around that island and if its too bad we'll head back in." I agreed, and with those words he sealed his fate.

THE INCIDENT

Paddling into a 6" to 9" chop was fairly easy and confidence was oozing out of my brother's kayak (actually a Piccolo on loan from my son). We reached the island in about 15 minutes, and turned the corner to assess conditions. Here I could see the effects of the wind and fetch banging against the outgoing tide — 2 to 3 foot waves, some of them breaking. I suggested we turn downwind and head back — an agreed upon idea except for the fact that Dale could not turn his boat. We decided to head straight over to another island, a 3/8 mile crossing, with the waves on our right beam. At about the half way point, with my brother paddling very tentatively in front of me, I heard that ever so familiar two part thud. He was in!

THE YARD SALE

After a flawless wet exit, Dale had all the normal reactions of someone plunged into 40 degree water — bewilderment, panic and an overwhelming sense of pure survival. He would revisit these feelings seven more times in the next 90 minutes.

As I raced toward him, I noticed various colors and familiar objects floating every-

EIGHT IS ENOUGH!



BY DEAN BERTOLDI

where. He had let go of his paddle and the kayak and other items just detached themselves from the deck or fell out of the cockpit. The wind was really blowing and everything including my brother was surfing down the channel. I grabbed his kayak and paddle, while saying farewell to other minor gear. He was able to swim to my kayak and hang on. With him tugging on one side of my kayak, waves breaking on the other, one hand holding his boat and the other trying to brace, I was wishing my nose plugs were on.

I managed to empty some water out of his kayak, but found it almost impossible to pick the swamped boat up far enough over my deck to be 100% effective. The lack of bulkheads in sea kayaks has always been a concern of mine and this incident reinforces my dislike of sea kayaks without them.

THE MITTS CAME OFF

Complicating matters was a lack of dexterity due to my paddling mittens. A great product for cold weather paddling. I wholly endorse their use, but found serious limitations when trying to grab and lift another kayak. The grip is very slippery, especially when emptying a swamped boat. Trying to secure a spray skirt also proved to be a challenging and time consuming process. I decided to shed the mittens during the rescue. One

note; these mittens are very difficult to get back on when your hands are wet. I always wear a pair of polypropylene liners under them to facilitate this task. Even wet, the liners make it possible to slip the mittens back on easily.

Once in his boat, Dale completed only a couple of forward strokes before he capsized again. This time I realized he was in no condition to get back in or paddle. Since we were now only one hundred feet or less from shore, we decided to head in and regroup. With my brother and his kayak in tow, I managed to reach the safety of the island. Once ashore, Dale put on a wool hat and some dry gloves I had stowed away in a dry bag. He indicated that the drysuit I had lent him was working, but I couldn't help noticing his uncontrollable shivering and slurred speech. This was a product of 20 to 30 minutes of cold water immersion.

BETWEEN A ROCK AND A ...

We emptied the boats, collected the paddles and readied for another launch. The wind was stronger, the waves a little steeper, and all that initial confidence oozed out during the first and second wet exit, but he was determined to make that short crossing to the safety of sheltered water.

About 2 minutes and 17 seconds into our heroic attempt, I glanced over to see my brother fearful to touch the water with his paddle, heading at warp speed into an exposed pile of rocks. By the time I swung around to try and divert him, he was laying on his right side in a sculling position firmly attached to the pile of stones.

Waves were washing over his boat constantly putting his head underwater. He grabbed the bow of my boat, and I was able to free him from this peril only to watch him blow sideways again, this time into a 4 foot breakwater.

As he slammed into the wall and was rocked back and forth by reflecting waves, I tried desperately to pull him back to open water. Much easier said than done. Both boats were at the mercy of the wind and water, and within a few seconds he was over again, upside down being pummeled into the stone wall. Waves were crashing over his boat when I noticed he

had clawed his way up the wall and to the surface. I worked my boat around him and he took the bow again. In this one area he would eventually take four bow rescues and one "scoop" type rescue before moving 50 feet to the safety of another island.

PLAN B

At this point I was beginning to think we had a problem. Only 3/4 mile from shore, and he can't launch into the prevailing conditions or paddle once he's on the water. How are we going to get back?

The symptoms of hypothermia were becoming very evident and I knew he had to be back on the mainland quickly. I decided to portage both kayaks over to the sheltered side of the island, a hike of about 130 feet. Here we could launch in relatively calm conditions and approach the shore in a quartering wind. My brother was game, we made the trek, put the boats back in and headed home.

I constantly tried to boost his spirits while monitoring his condition. He was paddling slowly and cautiously, but making steady progress. The sea had a one foot chop and the winds were diminished considerably.

As we moved from the security of sheltered waters to the full fetch of the wind, things got interesting. I could see the apprehension creep right up the loom of his paddle, and within 5 minutes he would capsize again for the eighth and final time. Tenacity prevailed, and he dog paddled to the surface and remained there long enough for me to give yet another bow rescue.

At this point I decided to tow him in. I always carry a towing rig in my PFD, primarily for towing a tired 11 year old paddler, my son James. This was the first real test of this home-made piece of equipment. Again the mittens were a hindrance in opening the velcro pockets on the PFD, and in securing the rig around my waist. I finally hooked the rope to his bow, explained the mechanics of a low brace on the windward side and towed him back to our original launch area where we were

met by Jay Babina and Dick Gamble. My brother's tenacity was commendable but he was physically and mentally battered, and suffering from mild hypothermia. At the car I learned that he had, for some unknown reason, pulled the neck seal back on the drysuit while he was in the water. This let in enough water to soak all the underwear on his upper body, accelerating the hypothermia.

He felt ill for a couple of days but was soon back to normal. The greatest damage incurred was mental; his confidence to paddle a kayak in any conditions was greatly reduced, and it will take some recovery time before he paddles in the ocean again, if at all.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Beginners are beginners — regardless of their willingness to venture out. As a leader or guide, your own common sense should always prevail.
2. Do not underestimate how confused and panicked someone is after they go in — especially in the middle of the winter.
3. Remember that kayaks without bulkheads are more difficult to pick up and empty, and make sure there is adequate flotation.
4. Once rescued, most paddlers will be incapacitated to varying degrees. We were lucky to be close to shore. What if this happened 5 or 6 miles out in open water?
5. The towing rig most of us use is really useless in this situation. A modified version that keeps both kayaks rafted is the best way to deal with someone who cannot paddle. (see "The Rafted Tow")
6. Although necessary, neoprene gloves and mittens make all aspects of a cold water rescue more cumbersome and time consuming.
7. Shout out clear instructions to the victim in the water, they expect to hear them. This includes hanging on to the paddle and/or kayak.
8. Be prepared for situations not practiced; i.e. pulling a kayak with paddler off rocks or away from walls.
9. Practice turning your kayak in winds and waves. This rescue involved a fair amount of maneuvering in wind, waves

10 Having the proper equipment at your disposal (not in a hatch), and dressing for immersion, were key elements in eliminating the disastrous ending this story might have had.

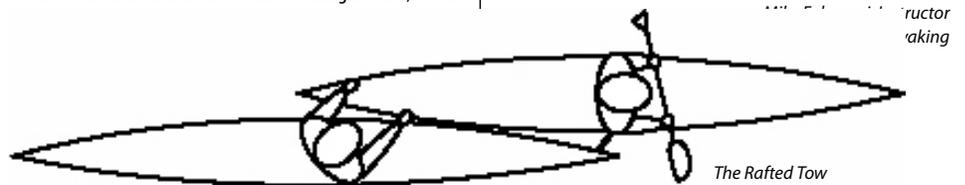
11 A second experienced paddler would have made this incident much easier to handle.

- Dean Bertoldi

THE RAFTED TOW

We want to talk about the paddler who is unable to stay upright as in Dean's situation. When an incident like this arises, the affected paddler is going to need something to keep him upright. The rafted tow uses one or more kayaks to form a stabilized raft by either holding on to each others' kayaks and using the paddles to bridge them together or by having the victim hold on to the rear or front of the rescuer's kayak. The sea conditions do not have to be extreme to need this tow. A paddler may become seasick or injure a shoulder and not be able to keep from going over.

Use the wind and currents to your advantage if you can, rather than spend a lot of energy fighting them. It's also a good idea to have a short tow line so that you could strap the front of his/her kayak to your tow belt ...or tie a short length of your tow line. A quick release system is totally necessary on the towers belt. With the short tow line in place, the victim can hold on to the rescuer's kayak for support if needed. You may have to tie to the victim's deck lines if the kayak is too long.



PADDLING WITH CHILDREN

We often paddle with our son and would like to contact other families who paddle with kids aged 5-10. Perhaps to plan a trip together, perhaps to share experiences or ideas. Sometimes its just nice to have company. Please contact Jeff or Pat Dionne-Dickson at 860/693-8793.

GREENLAND PADDLING WKSHP

June 7 - in Connecticut thru the AMC

Paddling strokes, braces, various rolls, rescues and demonstrations. Reservation and fee is required. BCU Instructor Fern S. Usen INUKSHUK Kayakers -(860)-529-4612 or email: inukshuk@mindspring.com

SKILLS & RESCUE WORKSHOP

June 14 - in Connecticut thru the AMC

Instruction includes Paddling strokes, braces, rolls, rescues and demonstrations. Reservation and fee required. BCU Instructor Fern S. Usen INUKSHUK Sea Kayakers at (860)-529-4612 or email: inukshuk@mindspring.com.

REDUCED CONNYAK CLUB DUES NEW ACA PROCEDURES!

At our March club meeting, there were many excellent questions asked regarding the coverage of the ACA liability insurance policy and on another important topic, Phil Warner asked if ConnYak members could possibly send in their ACA dues directly to the ACA, which would greatly simplify our lives. I had a lengthy and very constructive discussion with ACA Headquarters on these matters and came away with a much improved picture for continuing ConnYak's relationship with the ACA. Yes, we may send our annual dues directly to the ACA, in fact that is their preferred method. The dues would continue to be \$15 for individuals and \$20 for a family and periodically, upon request, they would send us a print-out of ConnYak members who have also joined the ACA if we wish.

A more thorough investigation of the language of their liability insurance policy has made it very clear that it would be a good idea for everyone in our club to continue to take advantage of the coverage by the direct membership approach. We have been assured that the insurance covers members, trip leaders and officers for any occurrence during a club sanctioned event up to \$1 million per individual. The maximum cumulative coverage for any single occurrence is \$5 million. They have been very pleased with the actual performance of the insurance company when it has been "put to the test". In order to avoid a \$1,000 deductible, it will be necessary to have all club members sign an ACA waiver each year, but not at each event. This appears to be an excellent solution to our administrative problem. Those members who have paid \$30 (\$45 for family) so far this year can preferably let the \$15 (\$20 for family) be a credit against next year's dues, or we can arrange to rebate it to you sooner.

ConnYak dues are now reduced to \$15 for individuals and \$25 for families. Your renewal date will continue to be shown on your address label on your newsletter.

ACA membership dues (\$15 for individuals and \$20 for families) should be sent directly to: American Canoe Association 7432 Alban Station Blvd., Suite B-226 Springfield, VA 22150-2311 Tel. # (703) 451-0141, FAX # (703) 451-2245, e-mail: acadirect@aol.com - Dick Gamble

MY FAVORITE RIVER LAUNCH

It started with a used book store and a book from the Connecticut River Watershed Council called "The Complete Boating Guide to the Connecticut River". I glanced through it and saw public launching sites marked, so I bought it. A week later I was headed for the Smith Neck Road State Ramp at Old Lyme but was advised by a local kayaker that there was a launch on the Lieutenant River just north of the Smith Neck ramp. Getting off Rt. 95 on RT. 156, you head south and keep an eye out to the right- about 3/4 mile from 95 there is a dirt parking area/ramp easily visible. I launched there and paddled down through the marshes- the scenery is varied- the first part is through channels with steep sides and high grasses, then further down the marshes are flatter and you can see much further. It is a couple of miles to the Smith Neck launch opposite Great Island, then a bit less than a mile to Griswold Point, which forms a barrier between the Sound and the marsh area. I saw many kayakers and canoeists launch at Smith Neck and paddle to the inner beach at Griswold Pt. And beach there to relax and picnic. I continued out the very wide river mouth toward the breakwaters off Lynde Pt (Saybrook Outer Bar Channel) but be aware that many boats do not have to use the channel and cut between Griswold Pt. and the breakwaters so keep your eyes open! The waters here tend to be choppy so evaluate the conditions carefully when you poke out from the sheltered area behind Griswold Pt.

You can also take the River route back up to the Lieutenant River if you want variety going back to the launch ramp, or explore the Duck River, which I did not have time to do on that trip. The Lieutenant River goes inland a ways from the launch ramp, too, and these little protected rivers would be good to paddle on days when the big bodies of water are too rough.

-Lenny Lipton

CONNYAK T-SHIRTS ARE "ALMOST" IN

Hopefully, T-shirts will arrive any week now. They will be at all the meetings, and trips. Price to club members \$6.



April-4, Saturday

Great Island - Old Lyme - 10:00

April-18, Saturday

Barn Island Ramp - Stonington - 10:00

April-25, Saturday

Bluff Point - Groton - 10 am

Times are "in the water" launch time.

May-

Selden Island Camping

June-

June-6 -Ct River-

Clinton Beach

July-

July 5, Cobscook Bay

Mystic River

DIRECTIONS - BLUFF POINT -

GROTON

I-95 to exit 88 in Groton. Head towards water (south) thru two lights to the junction of Rt. 1. Right on Rt. 1. Left at first light (Depot Road). Continue on to Bluff Point State Park.

There are large pond and protected bay as well as two islands right off shore in the

DIRECTIONS - BARN ISLAND

I-95 to exit 91 in Stonington. Right at the end of the ramp - proceed to Stop sign. Take a Rt. and first left heading toward downtown Stonington. At first junction go left on Rt 1. Approx 2 miles is a light with the sign for the Barn Island Launch. Take a right and another immediate right to the launch ramp.

Explore marshes and bays heading toward the Pawcatuc River into Watch Hill Harbor stopping to have lunch on the beach. Itinerary subject to conditions. Arriving back approx. 2:30

DIRECTIONS - GREAT ISLAND

I-95 to exit 70. go south on rt. 156 (Shore Road) approx. 2 miles to Smith's Neck Road (boat launch sign on the Rt.) Follow it to the end - to the launch ramp.

Explore marshes - Inland waterways of the new CT River Estuary Paddle Trail.

Note: All paddlers on ConnYak trips must wear the appropriate CG approved Personal Flotation Device and wear a spray skirt. The boat and equipment must meet CG requirements, including an appropriate signaling device. All paddlers are responsible for their own safety, including dressing for immersion. Beginners must have taken a basic course and be proficient in performing a wet exit. (always carry extra dry clothes)

CLASSIFIED

Thule Rack System: Racks, adapter kit, & mounts - \$90.00 (new: \$220.00) Acces. \$45.00 each: Kayak saddles etc. (203) 486-5934 during the day or email: inukshuk@mindspring.com

Dagger Apostle for sale. 17' X 24" with rudder. Used half a season. \$850. 203-256-1913

Necky Tesla, Kevlar. 17 ft X 24", 45 lb. Teal Deck, white hull. \$1650 or BO. 860-693-8205

Kokatat Drysuit, men's large, Swift entry, new in 12-97 - \$225, Cricket Greenland paddle, new cond. - \$150 - 401-596-4482

Swift North Sea, 17'X 23", glass, 45 lbs, 2 years old. \$1100. 203-421-4476 or e-mail: Jgass@snet.net.

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

Wanted: Betsey Bay Recluse - 203-269-0569

Wanted: Yakima saddles & 2 person sit-on-top 203-239-5041

Wanted: Wilderness Systems Tchaika in good condition. 860-658-2746

Wanted: Inexpensive used sea kayak for adolescent - 860-693-0211

ConnYak classifieds are free.

PADDLING NORWAY SLIDE SHOW - FRI. APRIL 17

Essex Town Hall, Essex CT 7:30 PM

Ann and Townsend Barker will give a slide show on a sea kayaking trip they took last summer in Norway's Lofoten Islands, which are just above the arctic circle.

Ann is on the Maine Island Trail Association's board of directors and Townsend is president of the Boston Sea Kayak Club. They live in Newton, MA

Directions: Route 9 to Essex. Exit 3. (from the south) at the of the end of the ramp turn left and take a rt. at the 1st light. (from the north) at the of the end of the ramp go left, under Rt 9 bridge - left at first light.

Head into Essex Center on West Avenue. The Town Hall is a third mile up the hill on the left, at the corner or West Avenue and Grove Street. Parking in the rear.

Send newsletter articles or classifieds to:

Jay Babina E-mail Jbabina@snet.net
7 Jeffrey Lane, N. Branford, CT 06471
203-481-3221 Fax 203-481-1136

KAYAK SKILLS & ROLLING

Urban Eskimo Kayaking - Mike Falconeri

Skills Workshop, Sat., May 9, 11 - 3

Eskimo Rolling, Sun., May 10, 10 - ?

Classes held at Sheehan High School Pool in Wallingford. Call Wallingford Park & Rec 203-294-2120 or Mike at 203-284-9212.

TO JOIN CONNYAK...

ConnYak is a non profit club that is open to all paddlers interested in sea kayaking from any location. ConnYak annual membership fee is \$15. Members can join the ACA through the club for \$15 which entitles you to full insurance coverage on trips as well as a full subscription to PADDLER Magazine. (a \$15 subscription) Send inquiries to: Stan Kegeles P.O. Box 2006, Branford, CT 06405 e-mail Connyak@mindspring.com

Many thanks for the response of needed articles. They will all be published - ConnYak



ConnYak
CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

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