

CONNAYAK



CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

October 1998

Date: Tuesday, July 7, 1998

I've been canoeing since a kid, kayaking for six years, am always out hiking, camping and X-C skiing the rest of the time. In other words, I knew better, but look at what happened! I write this in the hopes that it may prevent a similar experience, or worse, for somebody who reads it & thinks a casual outing is, ...well, casual. I spent a wonderful day last Monday shooting film for twelve hours of the new recruits being inducted into West Point, for the Discovery Channel. Later I picked up the film at the lab in midtown. Tuesday I spent two hours driving to Ossining

right above my head. Fooled me...

I reached Teller's Point, about 2 miles out of Ossining, with 10 swans for company. The water was flat, barely rippled, and the tide incoming at about 4 knots. I floated peacefully, barely paddling. When I rounded the point, (this is Croton Point Park which separates Croton Bay from Haverstraw 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 mile long stretches over Peekskill. I still thought I was safe, and that it was moving north & east. It wasn't!

bers 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 without capsizing. 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 of me.

Meanwhile, the storm had come in like a freight train and I was praying loud and hard for God to see me through this safely and get me back alive. 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. (That's a clear violation of law, I was later told.) I had turned tail to the wind, headed back to Ossining, but had only gone a few hundred yards when it descended on me.

The skies were like a blender filled with oil, the water ran swirling in every direction, black and senseless. 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 wind came in, I was told later, at 53 m.p.h., turned me perpendicular to it and I braced as long as I could, then went over. I cleared out alright, surfaced and was in suddenly

I KNEW BETTER!

- Paul Hollerbach

due to screaming t-storms and several accidents. The Saw Mill Parkway was closed for a few miles - must've been a multiple vehicle accident. I could have taken this as an omen, but didn't. In between these terrific storms it was sunny, as it was when I reached my friend's studio. He was waiting for a couple to come at 6 for an appointment, so while I was at the lightbox editing the West Point film he ran up to Peekskill and brought down our kayaks.

He suggested we go out on the river for an hour or so for some casual drifting just to relax. So I did so at 6pm thinking he'd be along soon. But as I kept paddling out into the center of the Hudson and turning around to look for him at the boat club he didn't show, -his appointment was an hour late.

Right above my head was the dividing line in the weather. Looking at the Tappan Zee bridge to the south & east it was sun, deep blue skies and cumulonimbus clouds like whipped cream, 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

From the other side of the point I could barely see the town of Haverstraw across the bay, it was nearly totally obscured. The sky was a giant blanket of darkness, and the dividing line that was above my head a minute ago was far to my south.

I cannot describe the fury or the speed with which things changed. It was 7:30, Alan was just putting in looking desperately for me as the boat club mem-



Paula and Richard Ivany (Linda's parents) who graciously offered their cottage to us for our annual picnic and invited us back next year.

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 roll, making it tighter. I gasped for air, the boat continued to roll with each wave and my leg started to raise up, sending me below.

I got clear of the leash, reached the stern and put myself at it, then quickly wrapped the stern line 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 as night in the troughs.

I 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, cold as ice, but the Hudson itself was warm, thankfully. If it wasn't I wouldn't be here to tell you about it. I prayed and kicked; the wind howled; the lightning streaked all around me giving the only relief from a darkness, like turning on a light switch. It was 7:40 p.m.

Fortunately, the weather was pushing me back to Ossining. I could barely make out the lights of Sing Sing on the shore. By this time, Alan was scrambling around Croton Point Park with the local policeman. He told 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 and what to say to tell them if 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' and the rain slowed to a halt. I tried righting the kayak. 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 zero. 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.

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 righted the boat, hauled myself up on the aft deck and rested, but still kept kicking. I began 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. 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 at least felt that I would. So, I 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 Dept. that they saw me go out and not return. After an hour and a half in the water, and 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. It headed back to the boathouse then turned south and then towards me. I was later told that somebody at the water plant spotted me, ...how, I don't know, since I had no lights.

They got me in their searchlight, called to me over the P.A. and asked me 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. I shouted to the crew that I was unhurt, just cold and tired.

They lifted me aboard, lashed on 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 the dock. They retrieved my dry bag from the aft hatch and I changed 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. It turned out the guys who pulled me out were waiting for me as they're club members, and there were a lot of firemen and policemen in there.

Call me Mr. Lucky, my guardian angel has waterwings, my prayers were answered. It has 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 paddled at all.

2. No paddlefloat, which prevented re-entry once it was calm enough to do so.
3. No learned and practiced roll, which I couldn't have done anyway in those conditions, but besides-
4. I had no spray skirt.
5. No strobe on my vest, it was here in the closet, safe at home.
6. No flares or even a flashlight.
7. No knife.
8. I was in street clothes; the dry-suit was also safely home in the closet. If the water were cold, I'd almost certainly have perished.
9. Tether the bilge pump in. I nearly lost it three times.
10. I was out alone.

I'm still shaken. When I got home the next night I watched a Trailside episode that taped while I was gone to try to relax. It was one about 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.

My kayak is a 16' Baltic Mari 4, made in Estonia, high-volume and made of fiberglass/composite. The paddle is theirs, too - a carbon-fiber one. The Extrasport PFD worked well, but (only because the waist strap was cinched as tightly as I could stand it). I think some novices who haven't actually been in the water in their vests, make the mistake of buckling up and leaving 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 water.

*Grateful beyond all words,
thanks,*

Paul Hollerbach
Burlington, N.J.

Paul is formally a CT Resident now living in NJ.
...thanks to Fern Usen for forwarding this article from online.
This article runs with permission from Paul Hollerbach.

The sport of Sea Kayaking can be as safe as you want it to be. We all choose the risks that we take, with knowledge and awareness the key factors in these decisions.

We run these articles as we get them with the intent of sharing knowledge and experiences. It's not our intention to portray our sport or club as a group flirting with danger. Almost all Sea Kayakers will enjoy a lifetime of adventures without any incidents whatsoever by just adhering to their own sense of awareness and common sense.

-Ed

CONNYPAC MEETING

WED. OCT 21, 7:30 PM
WALLINGFORD PARK & REC.

DEREK HUTCHINSON VIDEO- PADDLING
ON THE NORTH SEA

WALLINGFORD PARK & REC
Exit 15 (Rt 68) off I-91 in Wallingford. West
on Rt. 68. (toward Wallingford)
Approx. 3/4 mile take a right at the Fire
Station (Barnes Road). Take your first Rt. off
Barnes on to Fairfield Blvd.
Wallingford Park & Rec. is the 2nd building
on the left.



Mark Lustig - ConnYak Picnic



Stan Kegeles - ConnYak Picnic



Don White Sr. showing off his roll at the ConnYak picnic in July.

Last week I was in Minneapolis on business, then drove two hours to Northwestern Wisconsin, to a small town called Trego. Trego is on the Namakagon River, which is a National Scenic Riverway. That means the Federal Government is buying up all the land along the river and restoring it to a wilderness area. It was absolutely beautiful. In 22 miles of paddling, we didn't see any evidence of mankind. Not a house, a car, or even any other people. Just lots of herons, ducks, raptors, one deer and one muskrat. I used an outfitter in Trego called Quiet Sports Outfitters. I rented an Aquaterra Chinook, and they also provided the shuttle service. End of summer was a great time to go from the standpoint of solitude, but the water levels were a little low. There were about 10 times when we got grounded in shallow water. We never had to get out of the kayaks, but it did put a few new scratches in the plastic hulls. During the height of the season, you'll be sharing the river with a lot of people floating the river in inner tubes. Personally, I prefer the shallow water.

- Tom Dittrich

PADDLING



BLUFF POINT PADDLE /PICNIC

SATURDAY, OCT 10 - GROTON
RAIN DATE OCT. 11

There's a large pond and protected bay as well as two islands in the harbor.

DIRECTIONS -

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..

In the water by 10:00 a.m. (pack a lunch)

CT. RIVER - ESSEX- FOLIAGE

HAMBURG COVE AND BEYOND SATURDAY,
OCT. 17

Leave Essex - into Hamburg Cove and further up River.

DIRECTIONS -

From exit 3 off route 9, go to stop light and go east on West Avenue in to Essex Center - to the rotary at the head of Main Street and then go (left) north on North Main Street for 1 short block and turn right onto Bushnell Street. Just before entering the Dauntless Boat Yard there is a dirt road to the left, leading a short distance to the boat launch and parking area.

In the water by 10:00 a.m. (pack a lunch)

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)

Trip Cancellations - In doubt due to weather? call 203-481-1881 - a message will be on answer machine.

COLLINSVILLE CANOE AND KAYAK DEMO DAY AND SALE

Saturday and Sunday Oct. 4 & 5

Kayak & Canoe Trials and Sale.
Sea Kayaking rescue and rolling demos - Beginning Kayaking - Rolling Contest - Canoe Demos

Call for further info. (860) 693-6977

CLASSIFIED

Feathercraft K1 Expedition Single (foldable kayak) 15' 11" x 25", costs \$ 3850.00 sacrifice \$3500.00. Never in the water. 203-772-3174.

2 Woman's Kokatat drysuits, med & small - Bib style, boots incl. New \$275. 860-693-9625

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

Necky Sea Kayak Looksha IV. 16' like new, used one season. White and Turquoise. \$1800.00 860-228-0105

Wood Strip built, Laughing Loon "Panache" 18' x 21" totally glassed. \$2300. 203-481-3221

Wanted, used double Kayak Call 203-426-2414

Wilderness Systems 3yr old Sealution—Kevlar w/ rudder, blue/white. Includes Werner 2-piece Camano paddle, Spray Skirt, Bilge pump, Paddle float, Yakima saddles. \$1500. 860-485-9173

Thule rack system, complete with 2-58" bars, 4 saddles without straps, 4 gutter feet with locks. \$150. Call 860-613-0622

Necky Arluk 1.8 18' x 22", white, glass, includes spray skirt \$1100. 860-747-1223

Betsie Bay Manitou - fiberglass 22" x 18', excellent cond. \$1400. 203-269-0569

Kokatat Dry suit- woman's medium, never used (tags still on it) \$150. Kokatat Dry Suit, men's sm. - New neck seal. \$80. 860-537-5385

Wilderness System Sealution. Glass - all Gray w/ red deck lines, rudderless, VCP hatches, Suunto Compass, Spray skirt, very good condition. \$1100 (860) 521-9054

12 ft Pirogue (flat bottom canoe) Stitch and glue construction in marine grade plywood. Epoxy/glass. Good for quiet lakes/ swamps etc. Used twice. \$250 (860) 521-9054

Reiver - Derek Hutchinson design, 17' 1 1/2" x 22" - fiberglass, Day hatch, spray skirt. ex. cond. \$1600.00 (203) 457-0149.

Nigel Dennis Greenlander kayak, white over white with skeg \$1350. 860 659-1223

P&H Capella, poly, blue, \$1000 860 659-1223

Orca, Royalex 16' with rudder, demo red over white, \$1400 860 659-1223

Nigel Foster VYNECK, red over white, \$700. Kayak Trailer for 6+ kayaks and gear box, \$860 659-1223

\$650 Primex Kayak cart. Paid \$119, asking \$80. Used twice. 203 426-8286

Aquaterra Chinook, 16' x 24" plastic, \$495. 203 481-1881

Toksook demo paddle, 2 piece, \$150. Ainsworth 1 piece paddle, \$50 860 659-1223

CONNYPAK T-SHIRTS

Cost to members is \$6. ea. - our cost. They will be at the meetings and at various paddles etc.

Please contact the Newsletter when items are sold.

KAYAK SKILLS & ROLLING

Urban Eskimo Kayaking - Mike Falconeri

Skills Workshops and Eskimo Rolling

On-going pool lessons and trips by appointment. Call 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 with a club discount 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

Website: mindspring.com/~connyak

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



ConnYak

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c/o Stan Kegeles
P.O. Box 2006
Branford, CT 06405