

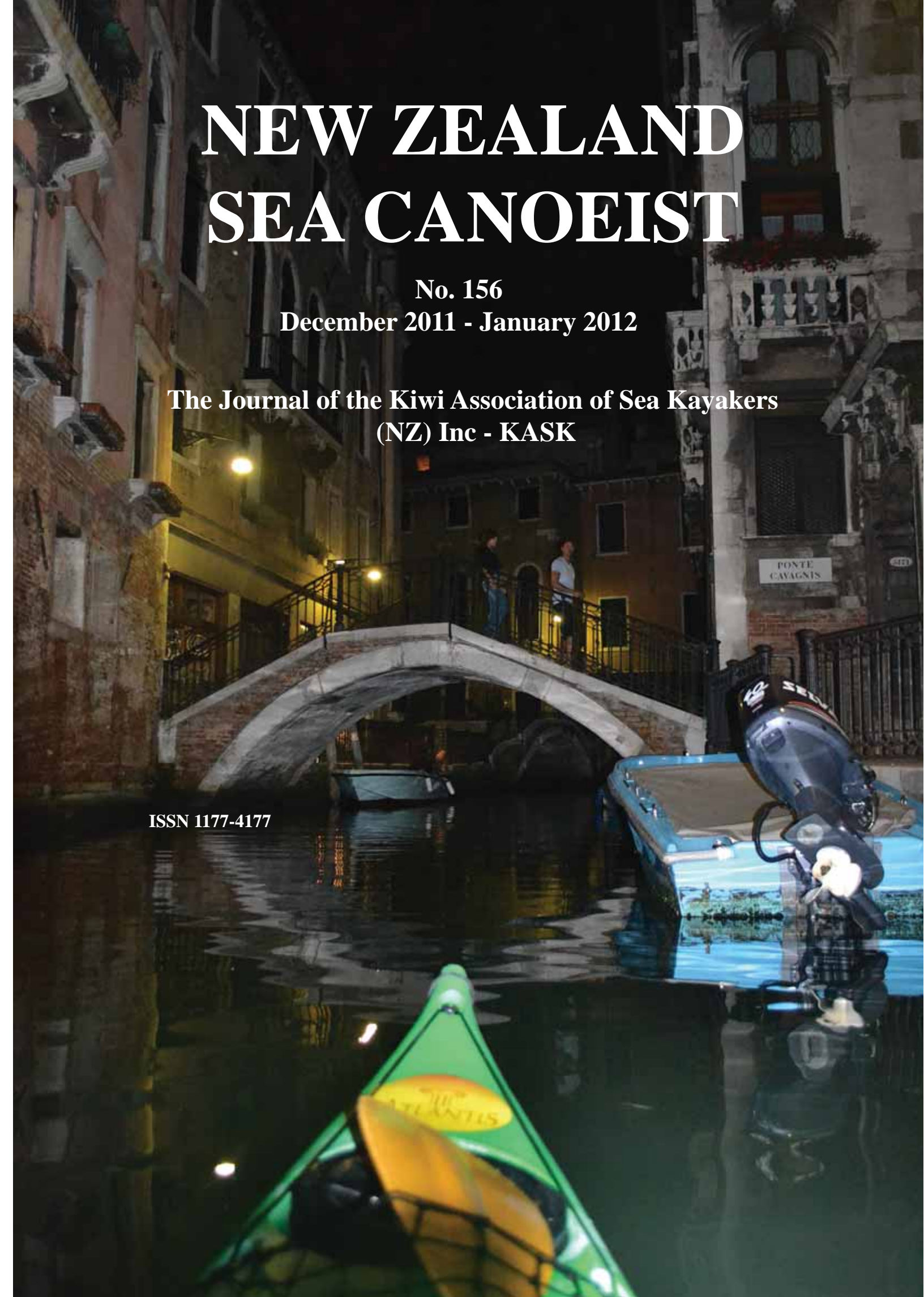
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**Thanks to all the
contributors**

**Deadline for articles and
photos for next Newsletter:
25 March 2012**

Editing & layout: Paul Caffyn

EDITORIAL

It has not been a good week for paddling legends; Tsunami Ranger founder Eric Soare's dicky ticker finally gave up the ghost and Canadian paddler Don Starkell died of cancer. In an exchange of emails with North American magazine editor, Jeff Moag, he wrote: 'Been a tough week for paddling legends. Be careful out there!'

Kiwi paddlers who met and paddled with Eric during his 2010 visit have kindly contributed their tributes to the memory of this outstanding paddling legend. Eric and I exchanged books after he self-published his *Confessions of a Wave Warrior* and best if I quote from my newsletter book review:

Eric Soares is a larger than life character who, through his articles in Sea Kayaker magazine, a co-authored book titled *Extreme Sea Kayaking* and DVDs such as *Kayaking Rock Gardens – A Tsunami Ranger Guide*, always left me with an impression of a gung-ho nutter who enjoyed trying to smash himself and his kayak to pieces on the rocky coastline of the western seaboard of the USA. I felt the messages conveyed – putting on helmets and body armour before launching into kayak and body crunching caves and slots – were not conducive for safe sea kayaking.

Those situations he described were those that I went to exceedingly great lengths to avoid, such as huge reef breaks, or ploughing into caves with a big swell running and no opportunity to turn around. In the back of my mind always, a sneaking suspicion that the poor buggers paddling on the western seaboard of the USA were so lacking in wonderful paddling destinations – sheltered landings, clear waters, spilling surf – that they resorted to trying to maim themselves and their kayaks in appalling coastal conditions.

When I met first Eric at Coastbusters in 2010, I told him that I had fully expected to meet a seven foot tall Rambo man, with muscles for Africa, teeth broken, and face scarred by encounters with numerous reefs.

Apart from a huge vertical scar on his chest, Eric was a mere mortal, shorter in stature and with far less muscle than Crocodile Winky.

What staggers me is the fact I had emailed Eric on the morning he fell off his perch, to ask for permission to include a recent book review of his in this newsletter (see p.19). Also, that both Paul Hayward and I posted tributes on Eric's website within a minute of each other. His regular blog updates, cheeky humour and inspiration for paddlers worldwide will be sorely missed.

Don Starkell was a different kettle of fish. His best known adventure was an open canoe paddle from Canada to the mouth of the Amazon River. He claimed to have paddled more miles than anyone else on earth. Given his dogmatic and pigheaded nature, the bulk of those miles were paddled solo and only recorded in his voluminous diaries.

In the 'History' section, Alan Bye writes about English paddling author Derek Hutchinson, who is on his way out with cancer. As with Alan Bye, Derek must be credited as a seminal sea kayaking author for the rapid growth of sea kayaking worldwide in the late 70s. In a group of paddlers, Derek crossed the North Sea on a second attempt and he both wrote and illustrated, excellent books on sea kayaking and rolling. Derek is a superb and entertaining raconteur, and a skilled instructor, and will be best remembered for his books.

Overseas Reports

While some of us have been slaving over hot computers, exceedingly lucky paddlers have been kayaking this winter in incredible locations such as Arctic Svalbard (Jillian Wilson) and at night through the canals of Venice in Italy (Sandy Winterton and Susan Cade). Aussie Dave Winkworth has responded to an urgent 'lean' with his usual thought provoking 'West Island Bits.'

Paul Caffyn

PHOTOGRAPH CREDITS

Cover: *Exploring the back canals of Venice by night. Photo: Susan Cade (See story on page 7)*

Opposite page: *Jillian Wilson's stunning photos of two mother polar bears with their cubs. (See story on page 4)*

KASK

Paul Caffyn NZOM

by John Gumbley & John Hesselning

The Queen, no less, was pleased on the occasion of the 2012 New Year to appoint Paul to be Officer of the said New Zealand Order of Merit (ONZM) for services to sea kayaking and water safety. ONZM is awarded to those individuals who have achieved a distinguished role in any field.

Paul is an internationally renowned sea kayaker, probably the most experienced expedition kayaker. He has lived on the South Island West Coast for over 40 years. Born in Australia, he got over it, but it was not until 1977 that he started serious sea kayaking, first in New Zealand but soon venturing in overseas waters in what has been widely acknowledged by the international sea kayaking fraternity, as some of the greatest small boat voyages in recent history.

He has completed a number of supported, unsupported, solo and group expeditions by sea kayak in various locations around the world. In addition to his adventure kayaking he has for the past thirty years voluntarily devoted a huge amount of time to promote the sport of sea, lake and river kayaking by regularly offering his services to training, speaking and assisting with the administration associated with KASK.

Associated with his kayaking involvement, Paul has tirelessly supported the aims of Maritime NZ and the Water Safety Council in promoting safety for all non-powered water craft. Paul has kayaked over 50,000 kilometres, mostly solo and all without sponsorship and without payment.

Sea Kayaking Expeditions:

1977/78 First kayak circumnavigation of South Island, New Zealand -76 days, solo with ground support. Book *Obscured by Waves*

1978/9 Circumnavigation of North Island, New Zealand - 86 days, solo, followed by a crossing of Cook Strait. First and only person to complete. Book *Cresting the Restless Waves*

1979 Circumnavigation of Stewart Island, New Zealand – starting with a crossing of Foveaux Strait, first duo to complete. Book *Dark Side of the Wave*

1980 Duo first circumnavigation of Great Britain - 85 days

1981/82 Circumnavigation of Australia, 360 days –solo and only again achieved, in 2009, by a solo paddler. Book *The Dreamtime Voyage*

1985 First circumnavigation of the four main islands of Japan – solo, 112 days

1987/89 Two attempted kayak crossings of Tasman Sea from Tasmania –blocked by bad weather and authorities

1991 First solo kayak of the entire coastline of Alaska

1996 Duo kayak of Prince William Sound Canada

1997 First circumnavigation of New Caledonia

1998 Duo kayak of south-west coast of Greenland

1999 Duo kayak of west coast of Greenland

2001/2 Duo kayak from Kuala Lumpur and circumnavigation of Phuket

2007 Duo kayak of East Greenland

2008 Duo kayak south-east coast of Greenland

Paul's contribution to KASK, including committee member since 1992 and editor of KASK bi-monthly *Sea Canoeist* newsletter since 1991, is widely known to longstanding members. His contribution to water safety (see *October-November 2011 issue*) was recognized in his being awarded the 2011 Sealord NZ Water Safety Award for Outstanding Individual Contribution.

Paul receives his medal at Government House in April/May.

Footnote from John Gumbley: Paul, the award is for kayaking and so on, NOT your culinary skills. Suggest you decline Evan Pugh's very kind offer to wear his 'Michelangelo's David' BBQ apron at the ceremony.

OVERSEAS REPORTS

SVALBARD

by Jillian Wilson

all photos: Jillian Wilson

Remote, dangerous, and utterly mystical and magical, Svalbard drew me back again in July 2011, to explore its islands, fjords, mountains, and wildlife, hopefully a polar bear. At 78° North in the Arctic, Longyearbyen in Svalbard is in a little world all of it's own. It is located on the western coast of Spitsbergen, the largest island of the Svalbard archipelago, on the southern side of Adventfjorden, and is the most northern part of Norway. Not far from the North Pole it varies between cold in midsummer, to well below zero in winter.

My first Longyearbyen day though, was higher than balmy, was bright sunshine all day and night, and there was scarcely a cloud in the sky; trying to be cool enough for sleeping was a challenge with the one small window only opening a crack, and a huge puffy duvet on the bed! I had a great day for hiking on the Foxfonna Glacier, with glorious scenery, miles and miles of tundra, mountains, slushy icy snow, and jumbled rocks galore making for tricky footing. We had a wonderful lunch at a trapper's hut, and it was all such a treat, and just what I needed. So different from living in a cracked and torn house in earthquake ravaged Christchurch.

I returned to Longyearbyen three days later from a (approximately) 90 km trip by RIB to the Isfjord Radio Station, with eight other adventurers. The boat was an experience in itself, especially when the sea got up; wearing a full immersion suit, thick woolly lined Arctic hat, and thick gloves was mandatory, otherwise we'd have been extremely cold. We passed by immensely high bird cliffs, with bright green swathes of grass at the base, where the bird droppings have fertilized the grass, and where ever



Al Bakker of Southern Sea Ventures, who organizes the kayaking for Aurora Expeditions with the Polar Pioneer in the background.

hopeful arctic foxes roam to catch unaware young chicks. The Radio Station itself has, until recent times, been an active link between Svalbard and the mainland, but at present only three of the masts are operating. The buildings have been largely converted to a very comfortable remote outpost for visitors who want to experience being in such a wild part of the world.

Our second day took us over the mouth of the Isfjord to visit The Protector – a huge pyramid shaped rock dominating the bird cliffs where guillemots and little auks were nesting in their thousands upon thousands. We ventured further to glaciers up a side fjord, surprising a few basking bearded seals lying on little icebergs. Lunch sitting on reindeer skins overlooking an ice studded glacier terminal lake, and gazing at a bearded seal? Hmmm – different indeed from shaky Christchurch.

We walked along the tundra and seashore, out on the open-water side of the peninsula, seeing many reindeer, birds and beautiful little flowers including the plentiful purple saxifrage and Svalbard poppy, but not a hint of that polar prowler, the isbjorn (icebear). I crossed my fingers that I'd see one while sailing later with the *Polar Pioneer*.

Oh what excitement! I could never in my wildest dreams have thought that the Svalbard voyage would be

so amazing. My constant hankering to see a polar bear, a dream that I'd nurtured since 2008, to see one in the wild (instead of stuffed or in a zoo) had precipitated me into booking a 10 day trip with Aurora Expeditions. Being able to see polar bears and walrus in the wild, as well as millions of seabirds, from the deck of a ship, walking ashore, or best of all while kayaking, seemed to be my idea of heaven on earth, albeit wrapped in an icy crust!

The Norwegians say that there's no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing. Arming myself with that saying, plus layers of merino, eider duck down, and some man made polyesters, I set out on the ship down

the Adventfjorden, and then north, for the circumnavigation of the Svalbard archipelago. Would we manage to complete it, or would we be turned back by the pack ice in the Hinlopen Strait at the northeast of Spitsbergen?

At the very top of my wish list, was to see a polar bear; just one would do, as long as it was close enough to see without binoculars, but not within striking distance. We definitely needed binoculars and a zoom lens for the first two bears, but as they were on the pack ice at latitude 80°50 N and only 600 kms from the North Pole, it was an exciting sighting. They seemed to be fooling around playing games, sitting down, rolling over, and batting each other. Maybe they were teenagers. I managed to get some recognizable photos, and thought that, that might be it. How wrong I was.

We certainly saw bears, 15 of them! The second sighting was a Mumma Polar Bear with two youngsters, from a distance of about 10 metres. We were in zodiacs cruising around a lowish island near the Monaco-breen (Monaco Glacier) when a bear was sighted above us on the ridge top. Stopping to gaze from a distance, and take photos if we could, we were astonished to see it come walking down a slope towards us, with two youngsters in tow, eventually ambling along about 10 metres in front of us; even the staff was flabbergasted by our luck. We saw bears

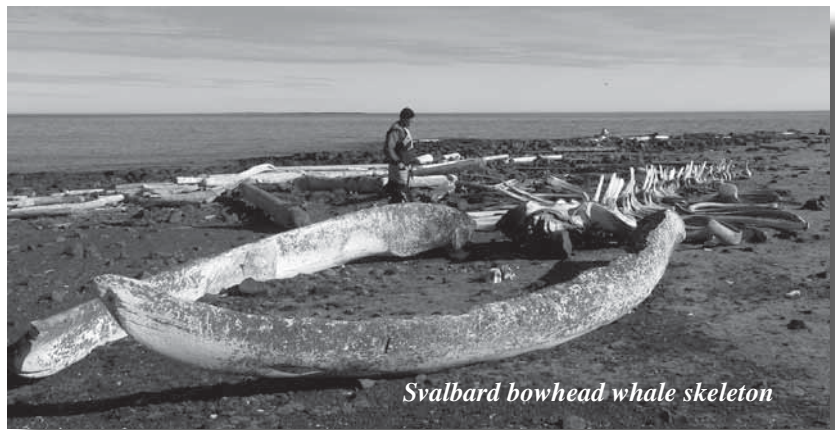
Paddlers heading towards the face of a Svalbard glacier



on ice floes eating their prey, bears on other islands, and on one of the last days the walkers on shore, high up under some bird cliffs, had a bear appear between them and their zodiacs. After it tried to take a bite at one of the boats a warning flare was shot and the explosion frightened it away into the water, where it took off swimming not too far from where we were paddling. It got to the stage that when we were kayaking, we were almost hoping there wouldn't be a bear on land, because it would have been too dangerous to go ashore!

As if that wasn't enough, we also saw many walrus, either swimming or sleeping. One afternoon saw us visiting walrus at Torellneset, this time a pulsing and heaving mound of about 40 huge mammals, in various states of rest and irritation, wriggling and itching, heaving and sighing, and settling back down to sleep again. It was like a huge undulating collective sleepover. Some five more wakeful walrus were in the water, obviously an easier environment for their huge bodies. We watched entranced at the scratching and luxuriating in the sea, then regularly sitting up abruptly to investigate the row of expeditioners sitting on the beach, waiting for the next walrus exploit.

The walrus were very accommodating, and came wallowing in at regular intervals around the islands. Seemingly slow and sluggish, apparently it's not a good idea to get up too close to them in a kayak, so the paddlers' best sightings were on land or from a zodiac. They're nowhere near as dangerous as polar bears, but can be unpredictable, and they do have those awesomely frightening tusks.



Svalbard bowhead whale skeleton

We spent one morning wandering on the arctic desert at Vibabukta, searching for fossils in the rocks. There were many fascinating items to be found, and oh so collectable, but we were under strict instructions to only take photos. I particularly loved being on land in this area, and enjoyed the two hours ashore, searching for fossils, and taking many photos of the surreal landscape.

Being part of the kayaking group of seven, meant we could make our own independent plans, and have our own quieter experiences, often landing on remote beaches, having snacks and gazing at the amazing scenery. We'd head away from the ship, exploring bays and islands, making sure there weren't any roaming bears close by before we landed.

Beluga whales provided our final coup de grace. Aurora Expeditions say they're happy if they get one sighting a season; we had four. To my absolute amazement two of them swam right under my kayak – my excitement was right off the scale. They're called white whales, but seen next to an ice floe they're creamy in colour, long and sleek, and very fast through the water. Their heads swivel from side to side, and they popped them up to eyeball us as they sped past. We also saw two pods of fin whales – they're huge, and blow huge sprays of water when they come up to breathe.

Gorgeous numerous oh-so-photogenic puffins, kittiwakes fulmars, guillemots, little auks, phalaropes – hundreds and thousands of birds, many nesting way up on the cliffs, and

waiting for their babies to pop out; the foxes down below wait too, for their next meal.

Yes we did complete our circumnavigation of the island of Spitsbergen, plus two other islands of Svalbard. We were fortunate to be able to get the whole way around as the pack ice in the Hinlopen Strait had forced the previous voyage to retreat. So many people have asked if I'm going to go back again. I just might!

Camera Notes:

I mostly used a Sony Nex5 with an 18-200mm lens (fab bit of glass). Those are the pics that start with DSCxxxxx The ones that are IMG are from a CanonS90 in a Canon waterproof housing - waterproof to 40m. Great little camera. Not as good as my Canon G9 (I think they're up to G12s now), but the S90 is smaller, therefore the housing is smaller, and easier to lug around. Two cameras, two chargers, etc. etc. and MacAir 11" - plus all the gear for the Arctic, and then to Turkey and it's different clothes etc.

Paddler biography:

Having brought up a family of four on a Taranaki back country farm, been widowed, and now only working part-time, Jillian is enjoying time combining a love of the outdoors with a passion for photography. Travelling within New Zealand keeps her in touch with her children and grandchildren, while a few overseas trips have taken her to some far flung places. Her future is uncertain, due to an earthquake-damaged house on Clifton hill in Christchurch still being white-zoned.

OVERSEAS REPORTS

A Venetian Adventure by Sandy Winterton photos by Susan Cade

Susan Cade and I are in the Italian Alps, and about to drive south. While New Zealand shrugs off the shortest day of 2011, we are getting in some outdoor activity ahead of a family get together, during which the hardest exercise will be lugging the shopping to the car. Yesterday was spent exploring corkscrew tunnels dug high in the Dolomites during the Great War, but today we head to the Adriatic for an escorted kayak tour of Venice.

Having camped outside the ski town of Cortina, we have breakfasted and packed early, ready to drive to the city of canals. Europe has made a mockery of our travel plans a few times already, so we allow plenty of time. The tunnels and bridges of the motorway would bring a tear of joy to the eye of a civil engineer, and we make good time through the mountainous north. With only a breakfast stop at a village and brief foray for maps, we check in at 'Camping Venice'.

Despite our early start, things are almost running late and the tent goes up in record time. Car parking is so scarce in Venice that the only guarantee is a note from the Pope, so we catch a perfectly timed bus into the city. With one eye on the clock, we prowl the street vendors' stalls in the Piazza and explore the nearby canals, cramming a day's touring into an hour. A 'vaporetto' water bus plunges us into the melee of floating traffic, which has the maritime equivalent of taxis, boy racers, trucks, ambulances, and bad drivers, over all of which the gondoliers hold sway.

We disembark at 5:30 pm on the island of Certosa and head to the hotel garden to meet René – the somewhat mysterious and sometime frustrating organiser of our tour. There have been erratic emails with her/him over the last few days, but it's



The Piazza

all a little bit uncertain. We are not totally sure that the trip is on and are relieved to see our names on the list. Over the next hour or so, other travellers arrive and we swap tales. The group is four couples from across the world. René turns out to be a strapping Danish fellow, who speaks fluent Italian and excellent English. He's been running the one and a half man company for several years now. He has a couple of dozen surprisingly good sea kayaks in his fleet tucked away between the hotel and a mosquito farm. We select a plastic double, don the spray skirts and lifejackets provided, and pack a few things into the drybags supplied.

No safety talk, no instructions; just into the boats and away. As René's assistant will not join us until later, he asks us to be tail end Carluccios. Luckily everyone can manage their boats, and the group stays fairly close together crossing the main lagoon, heading for a low slung silhouette looking like a cross section through a squashed hedgehog. It turns out to be San Michele, the cemetery island.



*Paddling towards San Michele,
the island cemetery*

The spiky profile is hundreds of pointy cypress trees growing between the graves. We thread a gap between the island's ornate church and a recently erected solid metal barrier. Stone buildings on sinking wooden piles are not a happy combination with rising sea levels. During storms, waves lash the delicate church so hard that this ugly protective wall has been installed, hopefully on a temporary basis until something more appropriate can be built.

As the sun starts to dip, the group heads across open water, this time towards the city. A modern sculpture floats in the lagoon depicting Marco Polo telling his old man that he's heading east, and not to keep his supper warm. We pass beneath the first of a billion bridges and into the canals. The gondoliers are out in force taking passengers on tours of the city. The prices they charge seem impossibly high to us, and we learn that some aspect of their trade induces amnesia. They are self employed and apparently most of the cash payments they receive for their



The floating Marco Polo sculpture

services are forgotten when it comes to doing the tax return. It's probably the hats.

We paddle on the right in the wide canals, but move to the left in small ones. René explains that the single oar of the gondola is always wielded to starboard, and the gondoliers must not get too close to the canal side, as contact between oar and wall would mean loss of steering and composure. They swap as they enter the narrow reaches to keep their oars towards the centre of the canal.

René uses a Greenland paddle which he had made by one of the local gondola oar makers – a choice which, along with his good *Italiano* has won him respect among the local boaterati. As we approach each corner René calls out to warn oncoming craft of our presence and he exchanges pleasantries with the gondoliers as we pass.

René leads, and like a family of ducklings we follow, listening to snippets about canal life and glad of his local knowledge – navigating without him would be a nightmare. Our track would have made an interesting GPS plot as we weave a complex path, not knowing where we are headed next. One moment we are on a deserted backwater and the next we are on the Grand Canal, with restaurants lining the banks. We absorb the unique atmosphere and the diners nearest the water wave as we pass. We scoot down another side canal and turn a few more corners as if to shake off anyone trying to follow.

René pulls up to some steps to a small piazza and gets out. On disembarking, one of the newbies manages to separate boat from bank, and takes a dip. Somehow we have not been told that there's a stop for a meal. We dine on spaghetti, the cost and quality of which would make a Pastafarian blush. This interlude is to allow the sun to set so we can continue in the dark, and despite the price of the meal, it's worth it. Everyone dons head torches forrard and light sticks abaft. An accomplished Aussie paddler tries a seal launch down the stone steps but has insufficient momentum. His stern jams



Cruising through the back canals of Venice

on the bottom stair and his boat turns turtle. To everyone's delight he gets a spectacular dunking, which he takes in good humour. Refreshed by this incident, we slip into the night with the canals almost to ourselves. The houses crowd right up to the edges of the waterways, and we occasionally peer in at families sitting down to their ravioli.

Over recent decades, Venice has cleaned up its act a great deal and the water is not as grim as it used to be. As we are at sea level, there is no elevation to assist with drainage, and many areas seem hardly to be connected by land. How the sewerage system works in these circumstances is a mystery best left unplumbed. Is there a tangle of pipework beneath the canals and pumps hidden away in old brick buildings? Perhaps Ve-

netian plumbers arrive by boat and come armed with wrenches, mask and snorkel.

René owns up to surprisingly few difficult moments during his guiding days. He relates the story of a couple who booked him for 5 days and who turn out to be a very ample lady and her autistic teenage son, neither of whom had paddled in their lives. The first day started badly and it all seemed to go downhill from there. René reckoned in four or five years he had only had half a dozen capsizes which we found hard to believe, bearing in mind the two incidents in our little group. However he is good company and since Marco his part time assistant has showed up, Susan and I are freed from rear guard duties. We scamper ahead then stop and get in everyone's way while the

The gondoliers stick left in the narrow canals





No kayak parking problems in Venice

ship's photographer snaps away, trying out her splash proof housing for the first time.

Silently paddling the canals at night really is a delight and we navigate a circuitous route, savouring the experience. There's not a breath of wind, and with only stone and brick buildings lining the canals, sound is unmuffled and reflects from all surfaces. Evening noises of uncertain origin entice us further into the labyrinth. We continue cruising and absorb the evening essence of Venice.

The tour goes on and on...and on. It is meant to finish at 10:30 pm, but it is after that time already and our destination is nowhere in sight. We are getting nervous. Our homeward journey leaves little room for delay. The last boat from Certosa to our vaporetto stop is 11:30 pm and the latest boat from there to our bus station is at midnight, arriving in time for the final bus to the campsite. Things are getting a bit tight and we are still in a maze of tiny canals.

Eventually we emerge back into the lagoon, twitchy by now and keen to get a move on, but the rest of the group is relaxed, weary, and going slowly. They are staying at the hotel on the island and feel no urgency. Headlights sway as tired paddlers cross the lagoon at water snail's pace. We arrive late and miss our ferry but René gets us the



hotel's water taxi. We climb aboard and head away, piloted by a teenage lad who knows the canals inside out. He takes a short cut to the vaporetto stop where our hopes are resurrected by being only five minutes late which, in Italy, effectively makes us early. We heave a sigh of relief and await our boat. We check every arrival, even at other nearby quays. The night wears on, and the interval between water buses increases as they drop their yawning passengers and head away. Not a movement for quarter of an hour. Ours must have gone. We're stuck.

We decide the best thing to do is to find a cheap hotel and stay over, catching an early boat tomorrow. Then, a familiar burbling noise, and a lurching silhouette comes alongside. It's our vaporetto – 40 minutes overdue and just as we had given up hope. We thank our Blessed Lady of Lateness and hunker down for the long ride to Piazzale Roma.

Once there, we find the last bus has gone and there are no taxis. The vendors are tucked up in bed and the only people around are restaurant workers heading home, vagrants and us. We wander round the deserted bus stands, hoping this will somehow fix things. Two taxis arrive but we get fended off by a fierce looking local whose voluptuous wife and bulging brood take over both of them.

"How do you make a Venetian blind?" The schoolboy answer is "Poke his eyes out," and we're tempted to try it, but the cabs depart before we get a chance. Again the place is deserted and we wonder what the night will hold for us. Eventually, a miracle taxi appears,

and takes us back to the campsite. The driver repels our attempted conversation. He tells us the only *Inglese* he speaks is *Campeeng Venice*. We forgive his late night surliness and would have voted for him as Europe's best cabbie. Back at camp well after 2:00 am, we're exhausted but grateful to be there at all.

The guided kayak trip is recommended. The vagueness of the booking was a bit frustrating, but we were tenuous about dates ourselves and did not pay in advance. Placing a firm booking would have brought more certainty. Like any group trip, the experience depends on the members of the party, and we were lucky in this respect. Our original intent had been to hire kayaks and explore Venice on our own, but there is nowhere that will hire boats for unaccompanied use. While this seemed ridiculous when we were planning the trip from New Zealand, in hindsight, with the nature of the waterways, their traditions and traffic, it is probably all for the best.

The cost was high in NZ terms – about \$400 each, but Venice is one of the world's expensive cities and you only do this trip once. It's an experience to see the city by the normal means and doubly so from a kayak after dark. The lack of safety was amazing, and we had a feeling that if there's a serious incident of some sort, which seems quite possible, Venice Kayak will cease to ply the canals. For more details: www.venicekayak.com

Sandy Winterton, with thanks to
Pastafarian and kayaker
Wendon Hutchings.

OVERSEAS REPORTS

WEST ISLAND BITS

by David Winkworth

'Bit of a funny summer over here! Huge floods up north, and down here in the south east just as it looks like settling down into nice weather - along comes a strong southerly wind and blows it all away. We packed the shorts away the other day and brought out the trakkie dacs! No wonder people say our weather patterns are changing! We're still looking forward to some nice March and April weather though!

Ocean Rowers Rescue

The other night Victorian Water Police were called out to rescue three ocean rowers south east of Wilsons Promontory. There were attempting to row from Melbourne to Hobart as a 'test row' for a planned Pacific Ocean crossing. Anyway, they were all in the cabin at night when a wave endoed the boat. One guy broke his elbow when he hit the roof of the cabin and the others suffered minor injuries. The water police took them into Port Welshpool, and from there they were conveyed to hospital.

Media reports said they were hit by a 'freak' wave. We hear this often don't we! Freak waves - is there really such a thing? Big waves yes, but freak waves? Nah, I don't buy that. If you're on the ocean then big waves are part of the scene. The questions are: Are you ready for them and can you deal with them?

Still on these ocean rowers - they were raising money for cystic fibrosis. I don't have a problem with that - it's a worthy cause - but can someone tell me please how these funding arrangements work? Do these adventurers deduct their expenses and costs from the total amount raised? I've often wondered about that. Are fundraising adventurers using a good cause or charity to bankroll their wilderness pursuits? If that's the case then it seems like a pretty good little earner. Raise a hundred thousand dollars for charity then cream off fifty or sixty thou as costs! It seems to me that wilderness fundraising is debasing the value of that wilderness and turning it into a fundraising vehicle.

Rolling

Back in the KASK Newsletter No. 154 (August - September 2011), Colin Quilter wrote a terrific article on roll training and getting your roll. It's good to see this in the newsletter because, to me, a reliable roll is a fundamental kayaking skill and one,

which capitalizes on the design of our craft. You just can't do this in any other watercraft!

I do admit to feeling smug, when out at sea and occupants of a fishing runabout have said to me: "Watch out you don't tip over in that kayak mate!" I pop a quick roll and say: "Can you guys do that when you flip?"

I've been teaching paddling skills and rolls for a long time - and over that period I've developed an approach that seems to work for most people. I call it 'Back to Basics' and that's really what it is: give paddlers the simplest, easiest-to-learn, most basic roll that they can use to get themselves up 100% in tough conditions when their schmicko roll fails to work. That roll has got to be the Pawlata Roll - only a couple of key points, no hip flick required, great finish brace position.

I think it's a life saver but there are some over here that say it discourages paddlers from seeking technical refinement. I dunno. When you're upside down in really messy surf, technical perfection is not high on your list of priorities! Many years ago I surveyed the best paddlers in the NSW Sea Kayak Club on rolling. One of the questions was: what roll would you use in the absolute worst conditions? Everyone said

Dave paddling his Nadgee kayak on a quiet backwater near his home in southern NSW.

He has advised this photo is a carefully contrived camera-on-tyre-tube auto timer operation! Dave was dramatically disqualified from the 2011 KASK Forum foto competition for a similar photo of himself.



the Pawlata Roll! Damn, I wish I'd invented that! Immortality in sea kayaking!

Now, getting to my point: a problem with the Pawlata Roll is the paddler's top hand having to grip the blade end. For some feather angles the grip is less than ideal, so I made up a 2.1m paddle a few years ago with one blade removed and a T grip 'glassed on in its place! Impossibly long to paddle with but combined with a foam flotation sleeve for the blade, learning to roll is easy. Paddlers get the FEEL of a roll very quickly. A good roll FEELS good! Once you've done a few, you'll know! I do weekly training here on our local river and the 'Rolling Blade' is a winner.

I'll bring it over for the Forum. If you're keen to get a roll, come to Akaroa and have play with it!

Scary Times at Sea

I was chatting with a mate the other day about scary incidents. We've all had them – admit it! Not all of them are scary AT THE TIME but possibly later when you sit down and go through the "what ifs." If we're lucky enough to escape unscathed then we can maybe use the lessons learned for future paddling and be the "Wise One" to our mates.

Here's one of my scary times. About 12 years ago I was doing a week's paddle in the first production model of my *Nadgee* kayak with a couple of mates along the Victorian coast. Now this boat was fitted with a bulkhead footrest – a molded affair that incorporated rudder pedals and a recessed footpump between the pedals. If you make something like this and intend to put it into production, then you must have a duty-of-care to your customers. Losing a customer is bad for business! I thought this bulkhead would be strong enough...but how do you test it?

It was the second day on the water and the swell had picked up all day. We'd stayed at sea all day. A big surf entry confronted us that evening with our fully loaded kayaks.



Dave Winkworth with his rolling practice paddle

One friend went in first and injured himself as he hit the beach. Not a good omen! I went next, in what I thought was an adequate lull in the boomers. It wasn't! Foolishly, instead of backing off, I thought I could race an approaching big wave past its break zone - but of course it was much faster than me. I was doomed!

It caught me as it formed into a dumping liquid mountain on the edge of a bar, carried me to the top, and dropped me vertically. Down, down I went in freefall as I hunched forward in a roll set-up position. I took a big breath as the bow pierced the surface and my kayak continued downward. I remember grunting underwater as the kayak hit the bottom, all my descending weight on the bulkhead, and then came the slam and turbulence of the dumping wave.

It seemed to take ages for the turbulence to subside. I struck out for a roll - which failed - and I fell

back underwater. 'Did it again - successfully this time - and surfaced to see that my kayak ended at the front hatch! The whole bow had broken off in the impact! Dry bags from the bow compartment littered the surf.

I paddled ashore, the fragmented forward section scooping and bulldozing the sand.

I jumped out of the damaged kayak... and enthused wildly to my mate that the bulkhead had held intact! If it had failed I was surely dead, most likely drowned with my feet impaled by jagged fiberglass. It was probably worth busting that kayak to find that out!

I carried the kayak to the coastal lake behind the dunes and paddled it 5kms backwards across the lake to a road. Yep, a little scary afterwards that one was!

See you at the Forum. Umm - are there any sandflies at Akaroa?

KASK Forum Wainui Akaroa Harbour - Canterbury

9 - 11 March 2012

PLEASE REGISTER SOONEST

The previous newsletter (No.155) included the forum registration form, but it is also available as a PFD file on the KASK website.

Please register with Mike Neason as soon as possible.

The KASK AGM will be held at 6pm on Saturday 10 March, and nominations are sought for:

- committee positions and any motions to be put (send to John Gumbley)
email: gumbleyj@wave.co.nz

- the three KASK awards (send to Paul Caffyn) email: kayakpc@xtra.co.nz

1. Graham Egarr Trophy award for outstanding contribution(s) to the KASK newsletter during the past 12 months

2. Graham Egarr Trophy award for outstanding contribution to New Zealand sea kayaking during the past 12 months

3. The 'Bugger!' Trophy, awarded for the most humiliating, embarrassing, humorous sea kayaking encounter over the 12 months.

Who to get in touch with:

- Registrations: Mike Neason email: neason@xtra.co.nz

- Program & timetable: David Welch email: David.Welch@xtra.co.nz

- On the water instruction: John Kirk-Anderson email:
jka@press.co.nz

- Forum enquiries: Sandy Ferguson email: kayakamf@gmail.com

Speakers and instructors include:

- David Winkworth - rolling, towing, sculling and bracing
- Conrad Edwards - expeditions & paddling techniques
- Max Grant
- Sandy Winterton
- Rick Wiebush from the U.S. (BCU and ACA certified instructor)
- David Welch - towing, rescues
- Doug Aitken - surfing, half day paddle
- Kerry-Jane Wilson - sea birds

MCs for the weekend: Ian McKenzie & John Kirk-Anderson

Usage of Photos

Winning photos may be published in the KASK Newsletter. Photo competition entrants agree to allow their entries to appear in the KASK newsletter, and agree to enter in discussion with KASK re their use in either KASK safety promotional material or the handbook.

Judging of the photos

The judges for this competition are Christchurch Press photographer John Kirk-Anderson and Jillian Wilson, who won far too many awards at the 2011 competition.

ANNUAL KASK PHOTO COMPETITION

2012 Forum Akaroa Harbour

Enter your best photographs for the prestigious forum photo competition. Entries must have a sea kayaking or coastal connection. Sorry but no mail entries. The competition is only for paddlers attending the forum. Please ensure your photo is submitted to the appropriate category.

Guidelines:

Photos may be entered for the following categories:

- Open (knock your socks off photos)
- Action (sea kayaking)
- Seascape (kayaks or people do not dominate the picture)
- Coastal / marine flora or fauna
- Kayaking bloopers / bugger! moments / salty humour

First, 2nd and 3rd places will be awarded per category, with a forum paddlers' choice for the best overall photo, with prizes awarded for first places and certificates for all place getters.

Limit:

Four photos per photographer, per category.

Format/Techniques:

- colour or black and white prints to a maximum size of A3

- note on each photo's rear: category, caption or locale, name, mail address, email address.

- images can only be edited with: cropping and resizing, lightening and darkening, dodging and burning, sharpening, and colour correction. In other words, images may be 'tweaked' to improve impact, but no manipulation such as cloning is allowed.

Submission:

Entries can be submitted on arrival at the forum, up to 9am Saturday 10 March 2012

While every care is taken, KASK will not accept liability for damage to entries

EQUIPMENT REVIEW

MSR Water Filter reviewed by Paul Hayward

In early 2010, I suddenly realized that I needed a water filter for our trip to Alaska. I had never before wanted to spend the money for one (and face all the slow pumping) – so I had just boiled water during our kayaking & tramping in NZ, when I had any concerns about Giardia or other bugs. I'm not talking desalination here – just turning unhealthy water into safe water.

Needing a filter, I turned to the internet to see what was 'hot'. For once, my timing was good. The outdoor community was in a tizzy - a miracle had occurred in the world of water filtration. Cunning new tech had produced a robust filter that gravity-flows bug-free water faster than you can use it (1.5+ litres/minute). You could shower under it! All with no pumping!

The MSR AutoFlow Gravity Micro-filter makes use of this new hollow fibre technology (as do a number of competitors) – but MSR shows their usual nice attention to detail. Fairly lightweight (300 gms), compact (about water bottle size when rolled up), it has a number of well-engineered features that make using it a pleasure. The filter element is in a rubberized canister half-way down the outlet tube and seems pretty robust – as does the whole unit.

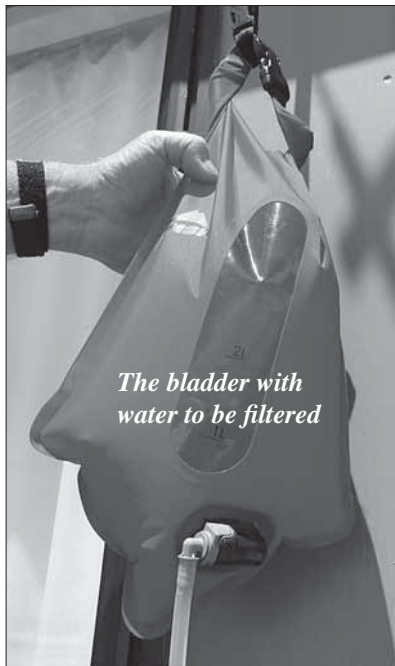
It is basically a big red dry-bag with an output hose. The output hose unplugs easily, so that you don't need to take it over to the stream (This seems completely OTT {over the top}, until after you've tripped over it a couple of times – then you'll appreciate this feature). You open the bag, scoop 4 litres of water from a pool or waterfall, roll the top and secure it with the clip (like a drybag). Then you hang it up – perhaps in a tree using the longer strap sewn onto the bag – to achieve the gravity flow.



Paul Hayward with the filter set up

There is a beautifully simple on-off valve, which you can't break or lose and the output hose terminates in a screw-on cap that fits Ortlieb or MSR bladders, Nalgene bottles, and about 6 other brands of water containers. Clever stuff.

Then it just works. If you get it plugged up with pond flotsam or sludge, MSR say that you just need to reverse-flow some clean water back through the filter to flush it out. Apparently that usually does the trick – I haven't yet needed to



The bladder with water to be filtered



The filter

do this. I've used it in Alaska and here in NZ on the D'Urville Island streams with complete satisfaction.

The one thing that kills the new filter technology is freezing. That breaks it. For kayaking use, I don't see that as a problem.

Note that you may not be able to buy it in NZ yet – for some reason the NZ agents for MSR were still not bringing it in last month when we checked. However, you can get it from Amazon, MEC or a dozen other suppliers for 100 \$US. Replacement cartridges (should you need one) are around \$45.

The crystal clear, filtered water



HISTORY

Derek Hutchinson by Alan Bye

This is about Derek Hutchinson, dying from cancer. I hear he is not concerned that this be known.

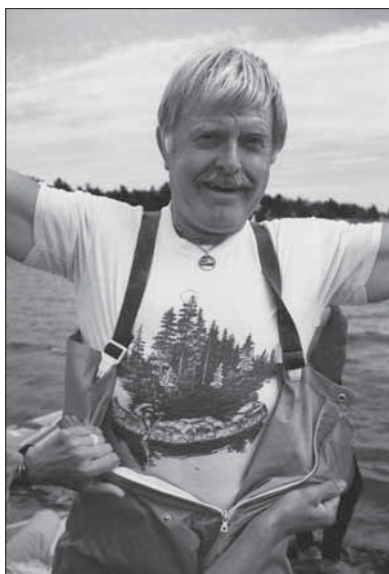
This is a pre-obituary; the subject a sea kayaker of considerable power. He writes books and made extended sea journeys. I write with respect for him and his works.

In the UK there is or was an organization 'Central Council for Physical Recreation'. The Northern region office was on the other side of the road from the government office in Durham City where I worked as a civil servant. That year Britain enjoyed full employment, we were not busy. I had an agreement with the telephone switchboard operator that when I was out of the office I could be found just across the road organizing kayaking events. If needed, I was a minute away. Bill Saunders invited me to teach rolling skills in the local baths even though during the six-week series, I failed to roll even once, although about half of those attending succeeded.

A course was advertised at Hartlepool Harbour. That wintry day was dreary and chill but on a Sunday morning about a dozen were on the gravel beach:

The waves they was piddling and small; there were 'nt any drownings nor shipwrecks, in fact nothing to laugh at at all

Derek was late. He was dressed for the city, not the sea. We asked him would he change? He seemed a tad haughty and explained he did not intend to capsize. Several eyebrows were raised. He had a Gmach 'Sea Rapier' It was not so much a rapier as a blunt instrument. It was made of glass reinforced plastic, 14 ft long and 32 inch beam. The cockpit was five feet long and two feet wide. All it lacked was a pair of brass taps and a plughole.



Derek Hutchinson as a young fella back in 1984 at the first North American sea kayak symposium at Victoria in BC. Photo: P. Caffyn

A wave break rippled on the gravel shore. Further out beyond the harbour mouth there was a sand bar where incident waves divided; half the wave went round one side of the just submerged sandbar, the other half the other way. It acted as a convex lens, focusing the wave's energy in a point between the bar and the shore. A sweet curling point break developed which we could sort of surf. Small but for novices, satisfying.

Derek saw what we were doing but lacking a bracing stroke, capsized. He wore a tough canvas anorak with a pocket across the chest. In it was a small camera. I can still see the look of resignation as he took the camera out, opened the back and watched the sea water dribble out.

That winter, a local school allowed us to use the school baths. Shorts draped the exposed steel roof beams, ancient plimsolls populated the deep end. The CCPR organized a course where one could learn to roll a kayak. Derek arrived with his Sea Rapier. He tried but as the cockpit was so large he could not do much except turn it over half way and watch as the water filled the cockpit. We used a broom shank broken off to wedge him in but he sank anyway.

Next week he had reduced the beam from 32 inches to 24 inches. He took

a tuck from each side. The cockpit opening was reduced to suit by an alloy sheet riveted over the rim. Enthused by his willingness to succeed but lacking a sprayskirt, we stood around to help him as he sank yet again. By the end of the sixth week he was rolling by the 'put-across' method with a sprayskirt almost 100%.

I hear you ask, "What has this to do with KASK?" A few years later he and a small group attempted to cross the North Sea to Holland but after 36 hours, they had to accept a lift from a great ferry. Within sight of the shore the tide turned and they could not fight it. Two years later they succeeded.

Derek was a teacher, he had the skills of the blacksmith. His attitude and physique were appropriate to both callings. You may have read his books? *Sea Canoeing* A&C Black, 1976. I have another book on rolling but can't find it just now. There are others. An intro he used from Synge *The Aran Islands*:

A man who is not afraid of the sea will soon be drowned, he said, for he will be going out on a day when he shouldn't. But we do be afraid of the sea, and we do only be drowned now and again.

One other disaster he had years ago, his house was a three storey end of terrace brick built in South Shields. The council dug a trench alongside the wall to put in a pipe or cable. That night the whole end of the house fell in to it. The toilet was exposed but he hung up a blue plastic sheet which allowed him to use it

For sheer persistence and willingness to learn from and overcome his problems, I salute him. It is not drowning that is killing him.

Derek's other books include:

Guide to Sea Kayaking (1985)

Rolling for Survival (1988)

The Complete Book of Sea Kayaking (1994) see review in KASK n/1 No.55

Guide to Expedition Kayaking (1995)

OBITUARY

Eric Soares

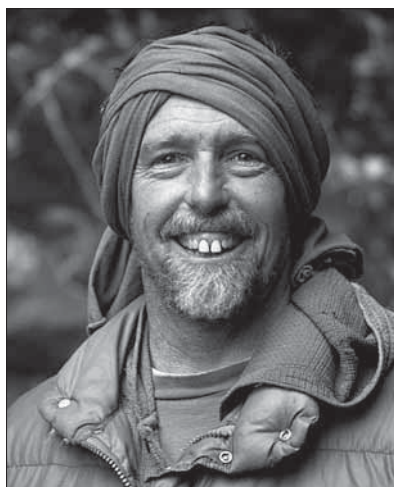


Photo: Michael Powers

The following is a cobble together of tributes from Kiwi paddlers, while the first is a note from Eric's Tsunami Ranger website on what caused him to fall off his perch.

From Tsunami Ranger John Lull:

Several days ago Eric took a fall while skiing with his wife Nancy. He was not seriously injured, but he did go into the doctor to get checked out and they found an aneurysm on his aorta. The fall itself may have been incidental; the aneurysm was probably there already, but I'm not a doctor so can't say for sure. They flew him down to Stanford after discovering the aneurysm.

He actually had been moved out of ICU to a regular hospital room on Wednesday, he was feeling fine, and they were even considering releasing him by Friday or Saturday. An operation (or two) may have been necessary, but they thought there was time. Evidently there wasn't and maybe an operation wouldn't have been successful.

In any case, the aneurysm must have blown and that was the end. Nancy had talked to him and he was feeling well and in good spirits just prior to that, so it was very sudden.

From Kevin Dunsford:

Recently, Eric took a fall while skiing with his wife Nancy. He was not seriously injured, but he went to the doctor for a check where they found an aneurysm on his aorta. While waiting for an operation Eric died. He is survived by his wife Nancy and his many friends.

Eric's personality was larger than life and so was his sense of humour. Attendees at the last Coastbusters Symposium may have heard Eric Soares and Jim Kakuk giving an impromptu rendition of coyotes calling on the shores of Baja, enhancing a fellow speaker's presentation. This was typical of Eric's humour. He was also fond of displaying his 'zip', where surgeons had sewn up his chest after heart surgery. But behind this outgoing personality beat a large heart and a seriously analytical mind.

Attending my first Coastbusters around 1986 or so, I saw a Tsunami Rangers video where seemingly mad American kayakers, dressed in padded wet suits and helmets, jumped off rocks onto kayaks exiting through surging sea. During the last two Coastbusters, I got to meet some of these paddlers and discovered Eric and Jim, far from being mad, had applied academic rigor to developing systems, techniques and skills to be safe in extreme kayaking in surf and rock gardens. Eric said he noted what other kayakers did, trying out everything, eliminating what did not work and retaining and developing what did. Eric enjoyed life; he enjoyed writing and passing on knowledge.

I spent but a few days with Eric and Jim, but long enough to realise Eric was no ordinary bloke. He was extraordinary in his passion, his thirst for knowledge, and the application of what he had learnt and helping others to learn. Eric's mind was not bound by convention and he drew what he needed from diverse cultures, philosophies and systems. Possibly that is why the Tsunami Rangers still exist, why his friendships are long living and why his passing has attracted comments like these from around the



Eric endeavouring to tip Jim Kakuk over at the 2010 Coastbusters.

Photo: Paul Caffyn

world on his weekly blog, where you too can leave a comment if you wish: <http://tsunamirangers.com/>

Eric's legacy will endure from his writings, teaching, and in how he has touched others during his travels.

From Paul Hayward and Natasha Romoff:

A mighty Tsunami has fallen. Yesterday (February 1 2012), Eric Soares banged on the doors of Odin's Hall and picked out the kayaker's table. A Tsunami has great impact, is feared and long remembered, but Eric was a Tsunami worth remembering with joy.

Eric visited New Zealand as a guest of Coastbusters in 2010. He wowed us with his huge personality, his vitality and his stories of adventure and escapades off the Californian coast – especially during storms!

He was a co-founder of the Tsunami Rangers along with Jim Kakuk. He had a great website and it is poignant to us Kiwis that his last entry, on the day he died, included thoughts on New Zealand and Coastbusters.

He made many friends on his short trip to New Zealand. He drew people to him, impressing us with his knowledge, the depth of his thinking, and his generosity of time to mentor and teach and discuss.



The ever present grin.
Photo: Michael Powers

Also to laugh and joke and have a whole lot of fun! I recommend you have a look at his website <http://tsunamirangers.com/> and read up about him. See the comments section of his last blog for comments from fellow-rangers, friends, and admirers around the world.

He leaves the kayaking world a legacy of thoughts and teachings.

From Dave Winkworth:

So, Eric has left us! A very sad day for sea kayaking. I can remember reading about the Tsumami Rangers in the very early Sea Kayaker magazines of the 80s and thinking: 'these guys are crazy!'

Of course they weren't - their surf coast antics were cool and calculated - as Eric and Jim demonstrated to us in New Zealand a couple of years ago at Coastbusters and during the following International Kayaking Week. What a lot of fun that was! Jim was straight and Eric was the clown! Great presentations, obviously honed over many years.

And there we were in the hot springs pool with Eric proudly displaying his 'zipper,' {surgical scars from several open chest operations} proclaiming he was living on borrowed time and knocking off repeated 25 metre underwater swims with no push-offs! "Um, do you think you should be doing this?" I enquired. He just smiled. He was happy.

An honour to have known you mate.



Eric ready for action in the surf zone off Big Sur. Photo: Michael Powers

From John Kirk-Anderson:

Eric Soares, co-founder of the Tsunami Rangers, a group of paddlers on the US west coast who revolutionised exposed coast kayaking died on 1 February following a skiing accident. He had a major heart operation several years before and it may have been a complication of that which finally got him.

A mild-mannered marketing professor by day, Eric was also a fearless rough water paddler, martial artist, author, and motivator, who laughed in the face of sea conditions that would destroy most.

Outspoken, he fell foul of *Sea Kayaker* Magazine in its early days with his arguing that kayakers must be prepared to swim in the waters they paddle. The Tsunami Rangers used Moto-X body armour to protect against the rocks they paddled amongst, and developed wash-deck kayaks (sit on tops) made of Kevlar and built like tanks, with seat belts to hold the paddler in place. They held selection courses for those seeking to join them, and held ranks, in a somewhat pirate-style.

Calling on his marketing background, Eric led the Tsunami Rangers from their fringe lifestyle among the wave-smashed coasts to international fame with books, videos and a National Geographic TV doco.

Many saw their antics as crazy, and wrote them off as lunatics. Most were simply in awe of their courage, skill, and camaraderie, and a select few managed to join them in their adventures.

Eric came out to Coastbusters in Auckland in 2010, along with fellow Tsunami Ranger, Jim Kakuk. This followed a visit two years previously by Jim and Deb Volturno.

As Jim and he explained during a presentation, what to outsiders seemed to be madness and luck, the Tsunami Rangers relied upon skill, knowledge, courage, timing, and yes, a bit of luck. They certainly paddled in extreme conditions, with huge potential for harm, but they did it in style, and while laughing.

"Larger than Life" is the only way I can describe Eric. A cheeky grin, two too-white false teeth bared, erupting into a twinkle-eyed laugh, dragged in everyone around him. He had an infectious humour that masked a deadly sharp mind, a funny man who didn't suffer fools.

I treasure an early morning chat about Ju Jitsu, a shared passion, on a deserted beach as Eric relaxed after Tai Chi forms while I stretched following a run. We were both there for kayaking, but the conversation easily drifted. Aware that many were after Eric's time, I was careful to give

him space but he later sought me out to continue our discussion, which was humbling.

He spoke lovingly of his wife, Nancy, also a Ju Jitsuka, and the many characters who make up his local paddling community.

He and Jim were in awe of the exploits of Paul Caffyn and Conrad Edwards, and obviously thrilled to hear their presentation on a Greenland expedition. They simply thought visiting Australian David Winkworth was mad, and shook their heads at the story of him grabbing a crocodile that was attacking a friend, thereby saving his life. These exploits were different to their own, but the ethos of planning, skill, endurance and courage were doubtless familiar to them.

Eric Soares was a wave warrior who lived his life to the full. He would not have wanted people to mourn his passing, but instead to fill their own lives with adventure.

His words to live by have been quoted as: "Go For It. NOW"



JKA & Eric discuss "Does Size Matter?" in a hot pool at the 2010 International Kayak Week



Photos: Paul Haywood

OBITUARY

Don Starkell

by Paul Caffyn

Don Starkell, who claimed to have paddled more miles than any person in history, died of cancer on 28 January 2012 at his home in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He was 79.

In 2010 Starkell (see photo below) was seriously injured in a fire at his home, suffering burns and smoke inhalation. He managed to overcome that setback, as he did many others during his adventuring years.

The famously stubborn canoeist is best known for paddling 12,000 miles with his son Dana, from their home near Winnipeg in Canada to the mouth of the Amazon River.

It was but one episode in a life of canoeing and kayaking that, according to Starkell's meticulous journals, spanned nearly 75,000 miles.

On the first of June 1980, Don Starkell and his two sons Dana and Jeff, portaged their 21-foot canoe down the street from their home in Winnipeg, Manitoba, to the banks of the Red River and set off for South America. They were arrested, shot at, kidnapped by pirates and nearly starved. They had lived through terrifying hurricanes, food poisoning, and near starvation.

But two years later, at Belen on 2 May 1982 Don and Dana finished the 12,000 mile epic (Jeff bowed out after one too many near-misses) and they claimed their place in the *Guinness Book of World Records* for the longest canoe trip of all time.

In addition to the Amazon expedition, Starkell took part in the 1967 trans-Canada Centennial paddle.

In the northern summers of 1990 and 1991, he attempted to kayak the Northwest Passage from Churchill in Hudson Bay through to Tuk near the mouth of the Mackenzie River but made little headway.

In 1992 he had more success when paddling with Victoria Jason. After Victoria was forced to pull out with oedema at Gjoa Haven, Don continued on his own for Tuk. Trapped in pack ice and slipping in and out of consciousness, the then 59-year-old Starkell was helicopter rescued just 36 miles from his finish point at Tuktoyaktuk.

Had it not been for his son Dana's concern over Don being overdue, and Victoria Jason contacting the RCMP, he would have died from the freezing temperatures of early winter. As it was, he lost all his fingertips and some toes to frostbite.

Don wrote two books, the first titled *Paddle to the Amazon* is a very readable account of their incredible open canoe trip from Canada to the mouth of the Amazon River. Editor Charles Wilkins reduced a million words of Don's diaries to 316 pages with eight pages of black and white photos.

His second book *Paddle to the Arctic* I found very tough to review (see KASK newsletter No. 66). Don had no end of drive and determination but his arrogance, and pig headedness left me feeling embarrassed as an expedition kayaker who has paddled solo through similar waters.

Nevertheless his paddle from Canada to the mouth of the Amazon ranks in my view as one of the great open canoe odysseys.

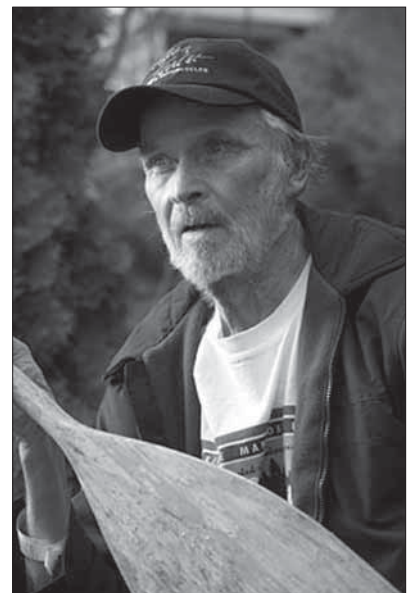


Photo: Ian McCausland

BOOK REVIEW

Title: *Paddle*

Subtitle: *A Long Way Around Ireland*

Author: Jasper Winn

Published: 2011

Publisher: Sort of Books UK

Website: www.sortof.co.uk

Contents: 321 pp, sketch maps, b&w photos, colour pics inside cover

Cover: softcover

Size: 129 x 198 mm

Price: NZ\$ 29

ISBN: 978 0 95600 388 1

Availability: Parson's bookshop Wellington and also from Amazon

Review: Paul Caffyn

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this narrative about an Irish bloke paddling around his home island. Although there are well written books by Brian Wilson (*Dances with Waves*) and Chris Duff (*On Celtic Tides*) on earlier solo trips around Ireland, once I started reading *Paddle*, it was my bedtime reading until it was finished.

Jasper's boyhood was in West Cork (Southern Ireland) and he left school at the age of 10 and educated himself by reading, riding horses, learning farming/rural skills and playing music. As a teenager he spent a summer paddling a fibreglass kayak out of Dublin, along rivers and canals that carried him across the country, then south through England and down the full length of France. In the mid 80s, with two mates in two folding kayaks, he paddled 2,000 kms down the Danube. Apart from a short trip to Patagonia, the earlier trips had all avoided the 'big grey seas outside'.

A circumnavigation of Ireland was in the back of Jasper's mind for nigh on three decades but a first attempt by Jasper and his partner Elizabeth in 2006 came to a sudden halt after only four days with a painful gallstone attack. Two stays in hospital left him barely able to walk 100 yards with a stick. However on 9 June the following year, Jasper set off solo in a yellow plastic *Narpa* from South Cork and headed westwards for a clockwise paddle around Ireland.

The writing flows nicely with a good mix of all the highs and lows of solo expedition paddling, ie., the morning climb into a damp, cold wetsuit, wretched wet and windy weather, trying to find a sheltered, level campsite at dusk, but great encounters with locals from friendly seals, to a huge intimidating shark, and the evening missions to find a local pub and join in with a jam session.

Jasper's descriptions of the coastline, fauna, flora and locals he met are easy to visualize with no over dramatization or embellishment. Aside from the writing style, I like the expedition style of this bloke – no sponsorship, no website to update each night – very much on the bones of his arse trip.

Below are a few comments from a website where Jasper talks about his book:

It's the pubs that make Ireland a rather better bet to paddle around than, say, Australia. Company and talk was a large part of what my trip was intended to be about. From the age of seven, I grew up in rural West Cork and, although I left as a teenager, I still think of it as home. I wanted to test out my Irishness – to talk, drink and play music.

The trip also gave me a reminder of just how gorgeous the place is. My exploration of Ireland had been patchy before setting off in the kayak. I have travelled along some of its canals, ridden around County Cork, and lived for a spell in Dublin.

But when you work your way, slowly, around a thousand miles of a country, you start to see places in a different way. You get to camp



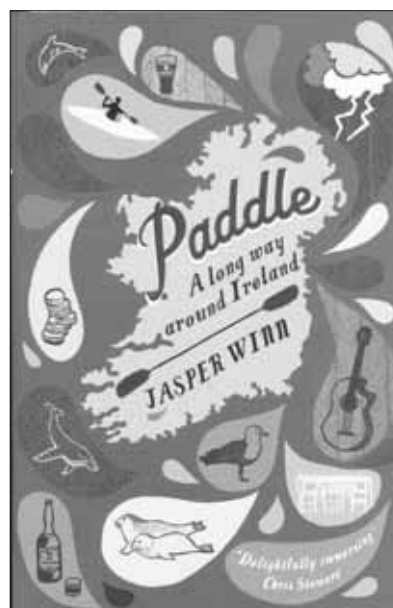
Journey's end: Jasper paddles into Reen Spit in West Cork after his paddle around Ireland

in solitude on uninhabited islands. You get to see wild places, such as Inishmurray or the Blaskets, where the harshness of life finally drove the population to the mainland in the Forties and Fifties. And one long day, I paddled past the Aran Islands, the home of TV's fictional Father Ted. Looking at the distant rocks, I was reminded of Father Dougal's take on relativity: 'Ah, Ted, that cow over there is very small, isn't it?' 'No Dougal, it's not, it's just a long way away.'

I felt on many occasions that a similar misconception summed up my own trip. Ireland isn't that small at all. And out at sea, it can seem an awfully long way away.

The book is paperback size, which leaves the four section maps with lettering a tad small for older eyes. The only photos in the text are included as chapter headings. The only colour pics are six small photos on the inside cover and a small pic of the author on the inside cover.

I recommend *Paddle* as a fine kayaking reading companion, fitting easily into a kayak compartment, for bedtime reading and bad weather days. But given how well written it is, I would have liked to see a hardcover edition produced with more pictures in the text, such as the 'journey's end' pic which I nobbled from a website.



BOOK REVIEW

Title: *The Fat Paddler*

Author: Sean Smith

Published: 2011

Publisher: Finch Publishing, Aust.

Website: www.finch.com.au

Contents: 206 pp, two colour plate sections

Cover: soft cover

Size: 150 x 230 mm

Price: RRP NZ \$40

ISBN: 978 1921 462313

Availability: try your local bookshop or the NZ distributor:

www.bookreps.co.nz

Review: Eric Soares

The book's title says it all. This just-published book by Aussie kayaker Sean Smith tells the story of an ordinary bloke who took up sea kayaking in earnest because he had to. It's not about a long sea kayaking expedition. It's about a fun-loving rugby rower out riding his scooter who was run over by a hit-and-run driver. He got banged up pretty badly, and his femur was broken in two. After recovering from that ordeal, he was in Bali for a rugby tournament when the terrorist attack on the nightclub occurred. He witnessed the explosion, carnage, and confusion, and though he did not get blown up, he was emotionally traumatized.

Later, he was a passenger in a sports car and was nearly killed in a serious auto accident. This time his pelvic girdle was destroyed, and he suffered internal injuries as well. He details his recovery experience with straightforward language laced with dry down-under humor and understatement. As a person who has also spent some time in hospital, I could relate to his suffering and depression.

His doctor told him he was morbidly obese and a prime candidate for cardiovascular disaster. He quit smoking, toned down his partying, dieted, and began an exercise regimen. Since his lower body didn't work right, he took up sea kayaking to develop his upper body. He

relates a funny story of his first trip on flat water and how he capsized several times and had to endure the applause of little old ladies when he was towed to shore. All kayakers should think back to their first excursions on the water and remember the awkward and embarrassing moments. *Fat Paddler* has a knack for self-deprecating humor that really tickled my funny bone.

He had a strong desire to paddle among icebergs and so traveled to America with a folding kayak and paddled here and there until he finally reached Alaska, his ultimate destination. Since Australian waters are comparatively warm, he had no idea about drysuits, which are essential in the frigid Alaskan seas. He wrote:

It's hard to describe the discomfort of a drysuit in a manner that gives the full sensory experience. The rubber suit doesn't breathe and it is immediately lined in sweat. It becomes clammy and slippery on the inside, even as the cold outside air freezes your face and hands. The neck gasket feels like a rubber garrotte, maintaining a constant pressure as each breath fights against your crushed windpipe. I was having flashbacks to hospital and the respirator tube in my throat and struggled with the rising fear of being choked again.

He started his famous website, www.FatPaddler.com to share his adventures and learning experiences and to help beginners with their trials and fears.

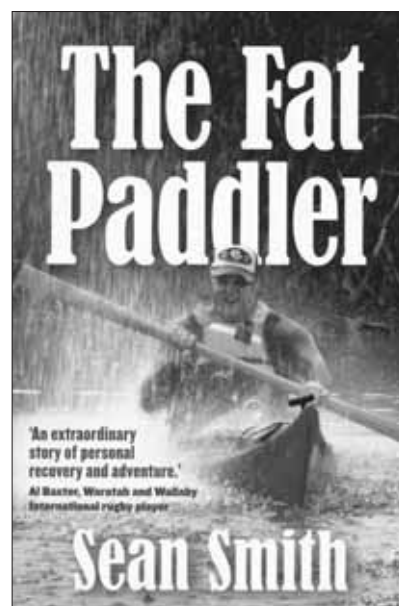
He also used his website to promote charitable causes. One of these causes benefits leukemia research and features a 111 kilometre night paddling race called the Hawkesbury Canoe Classic. Sean decided to enter the race and trained for it. After weeks of preparation, the Classic happened and Sean went for it with everything he had. Here is an excerpt from *The Fat Paddler*, which indicates how tough the race was:

When I passed the final checkpoint, almost eighteen hours

had passed since the start of the race. My pelvis was screaming, my hands were blistered and my hips now streamed blood into the boat from the pressure sores. But I could see the finish line only a couple of kilometres away, and my pace picked up to full sprint, racing along the final stretch. My Greenland paddle sang as it whirred through the water. This was it, the final burst of energy before achieving the goal I'd set several months before.

Does the *Fat Paddler* finish the race? You'll have to read the book to find out. After finishing the book, I discovered that Sean Smith, aka the *Fat Paddler*, is a wonderful human being, the kind of bloke you'd want to paddle with, to share a brew and a sausage on the barbie with. He is unpretentious and a straight arrow. He still loves to have a good time, but is now on the high path of a life worth living. His inspirational writing style makes you feel good, like talking with a good friend.

I read *The Fat Paddler* over a couple of days while sitting in the shade next to a beautiful little creek. It was an easy read, full of adventure and fun. Filled with tribulations and triumphs, the book was a delight. Erik the Red (Soares) says, "Check it out!"



HUMOUR

The Cursed Kayak of Relationship Doom

The following double kayak advertisement, with potential buyer's questions and seller's answers, was spotted by Wellington paddler Peter Williamson, who was looking on Trade Me for a double kayak.

Excerpts from the advertisement:

Buyer beware! This kayak has a cursed legend attached to it, which no amount of spirit fingers will undo. I present to you the kayak that ends relationships in the blink of an eye.

The kayak was purchased in October from a guy who bought it as something to do with his girlfriend. They then broke up and he sold it to me. My then boyfriend and I journeyed to Tauranga to pick up the kayak with stars in our eyes.

Oh, the plans we made for our new joint hobby! Alas it wasn't to be. How did it do it? Because it is cursed! And cursed kayaks have a grudge to settle. My theory is that it was left for a long time unloved in a previous life and is now seeking revenge.

If you're convinced your relationship can stand any test, save the expense of pre-marital counselling and just buy this kayak! Once you're in it, you'll know. If she can't rudder, then you'll know it's done. If he can't read a topographical map, dump him. Alternatively if you're struggling with how to break up with your partner, purchasing this kayak is a simple solution and cheaper than doing a runner to Mexico.

All jokes aside, here's the details: Purchased new six years ago and rarely used. It's stable, fast and the two cockpits are far enough apart to allow paddlers to get out of synch without causing problems. Buyer must pick up the kayak. I do not have the ability to transport it (he got the bike, I got the ride on lawnmower).

Potential buyer's questions and seller's answers:

Q. Is it possible that the kayak comes with couples' counselling to detract from the chance of break up?

A. Excellent question. My track record indicates taking advice would be unwise. But I can throw in 'Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus' if that's what you need.

Q. It should have been yellow.

A. Yellow indeed would have been both symbolic and practical; even better if it was a boat made of bananas.

Q. Do you have to own it for these magic qualities to happen or can we rent it from you?

A. Well now, that's something I hadn't considered. If you were to own it, you'd have unmitigated control over the demise of your own relationship. On the other hand, if you were to rent it from me, you'd have to take me kayaking with you. Which could be unwise because I'd only paddle when it suited me because I'm done compromising! And the cost of rental would be taking me out for an expensive dinner and showering me with gifts. So really, probably not worth renting it.

Q. Hmmmm if the rental money was spent on you going out - would it be smarter to ask you out?

A. Well you could, but I prefer men who own kayaks - especially those I'm trying to sell. So buy my kayak and then I'll ask you out.

Q. Can you guarantee that this boat's curse will work? How do we know if this is false advertising to get a quick sale?

A. Fair question. I'd recommend the yellow pages to find a good gypsy who can inspect the curse and provide curse insurance, that will be a cost in addition to the cost of sale.

Q. Why the relationship troubles? Maybe due to the fact that anyone who even considers buying a double kayak is slightly more than nuts? The great thing about kayaking is freedom to go where and when you want so why would you be surprised you had troubles when you take that ability away? And then there are those idiots who ride tandem bicycles. The only reason anyone should use a tandem kayak or bike is if they have a physical disability.

A. So I take it you're not interested in my tandem bicycle? Or my tandem skydive kit?

Q. I'm tempted to try my luck without owning a kayak.

A. Brave man.

At the end of his handwritten note, Peter Williamson wrote: 'I actually bought the kayak. No ill effects so far.'

SAFETY Improvised 'Old Bottler' PFD

Full marks for ingenuity in devising this 'blow up' PFD out of old plastic drink bottle containers. Good for floating on the back or front, but not so good for keeping the head out of water.



HUMOUR

Cat Food Dinners

A woman was enjoying a good game of golf with her girlfriends. "Oh, no!" she suddenly exclaimed. "Look at the time! I have to rush home and fix dinner for my husband! He'll be so annoyed if it's not ready on time." When she got home, she discovered all she had in the fridge was a wilted lettuce leaf, an egg, and a can of cat food. With no time to go to the supermarket, she opened the can of cat food, stirred in the egg, and garnished it with the lettuce leaf. She greeted her husband warmly when he came home, and then watched in horror as he sat down to his dinner. To her surprise, he seemed to be enjoying it. "Darling, this is the best dinner you've made me in 40 years of marriage! You can make this for me any day?"

Needless to say, every golf day from then on, the woman made her husband the same dish. She told her golf partners about it, and they were all horrified.

Two months later, her husband died. The women were sitting around the clubhouse, and one of them said, "You killed him! We told you that feeding him that cat food every week would do him in! How can you just sit there so calmly knowing you murdered your husband?"

The wife stoically replied, "I didn't kill him. He fell off the window sill while he was licking his bum."

Lion Tamer Job

A circus owner runs an ad for a lion tamer and two people show up. One is a retired golfer in his sixties and the other is a gorgeous blond in her mid-twenties.

The circus owner tells them, "I'm not going to sugar coat it. This is one ferocious lion. He ate my last tamer so you two had better be good or you're history. Here's your equipment -- chair, whip and a gun. Who wants to try out first?"

The girl says, "I'll go first." She walks past the chair, the whip and the gun and steps right into the lion's cage.

The lion starts to snarl and pant and begins to charge her.

About halfway there, she throws open her coat revealing her beautiful naked body.

The lion stops dead in his tracks, sheepishly crawls up to her and starts licking her feet and ankles. He continues to lick and kiss her entire body for several minutes and then rests his head at her feet.

The circus owner's jaw is on the floor. He says, "I've never seen a display like that in my life." He then turns to the retired golfer and asks, "Can you top that?"

The tough old golfer replies, "No problem, just get that lion out of there."

How to Give a Cat a Pill

1. Pick up cat and cradle it in the crook of your left arm as if holding a baby. Position right forefinger and thumb on either side of cat's mouth and gently apply pressure to cheeks while holding pill in right hand. As cat opens mouth, pop pill into mouth. Allow cat to close mouth and swallow.

2. Retrieve pill from floor and cat from behind sofa. Cradle cat in left arm and repeat process.

3. Retrieve cat from bedroom, and throw soggy pill away.

4. Take new pill from foil wrap, cradle cat in left arm, holding rear paws tightly with left hand.

Force jaws open and push pill to back of mouth with right forefinger. Hold mouth shut for a count of 10.

5. Retrieve pill from goldfish bowl and cat from top of wardrobe. Call spouse in from the garden.

6. Kneel on floor with cat wedged firmly between knees, hold front and rear paws.

Ignore low growls emitted by cat. Get spouse to hold head firmly with one hand while forcing wooden ruler into mouth. Drop pill down ruler and rub cat's throat vigorously.

7. Retrieve cat from curtain rail. Get another pill from foil wrap. Make note to buy new ruler and repair curtains. Carefully sweep shattered figurines and vases from hearth and set to one side for gluing later.

8. Wrap cat in large towel and get spouse to lie on cat with head just visible from below armpit.

Put pill in end of drinking straw, force mouth open with pencil and blow down drinking straw

9. Check label to make sure pill not harmful to humans and drink one beer to take taste away. Apply band-aid to spouse's forearm and remove blood from carpet with cold water and soap.

10. Retrieve cat from neighbour's shed. Get another pill. Open another beer. Place cat in cupboard, and close door onto neck, to leave head showing. Force mouth open with dessert spoon. Flick pill down throat with elastic band.

11. Fetch screwdriver from garage and put cupboard door back on hinges. Drink beer. Fetch bottle of scotch. Pour shot, drink. Apply cold compress to cheek and check records for date of last tetanus shot. Apply whiskey compress to cheek to disinfect. Toss back another shot. Throw T-shirt away and fetch new one from bedroom.

12. Call fire department to retrieve the damn cat from the top of the tree across the road. Apologize to neighbour who crashed into fence while swerving to avoid cat.

Take last pill from foil wrap.

13. Using heavy-duty pruning gloves from shed, tie the little *&#%^'s front paws to rear paws with garden twine and bind tightly to leg of dining table. Push pill into mouth followed by large piece of filet steak. Be rough about it. Hold head vertically and pour two pints of water down throat to wash pill down.

14. Consume remainder of scotch. Get spouse to drive you to the emergency room. Sit quietly while doctor stitches fingers and forearm and removes pill remnants from right eye. Call furniture shop on way home to order new table.

15. Arrange for RSPCA to collect mutant cat from hell and call local pet shop to see if they have any guinea pigs.

How To Give A Dog A Pill

1. Wrap it in bacon.
2. Toss it in the air.

KASK

KASK, the Kiwi Association of Sea Kayakers (N.Z.) Inc., a network of New Zealand sea kayakers, has the objectives of:

1. promoting and encouraging the sport of sea kayaking
2. promoting safety standards
3. developing techniques & equipment
4. dealing with issues of coastal access and protection
5. organizing an annual sea kayak forum
6. publishing a bimonthly newsletter.

The Sea Canoeist Newsletter is published bimonthly as the official newsletter of the Kiwi Association of Sea Kayakers (N.Z.) Inc.

Articles, trip reports, book reviews, equipment reviews, new techniques, letters to the editor, and moments when the word 'Bugger!' was said singularly or often (referred to by some as incidents) are sought to enliven the pages of the newsletter.

Send via cybermail to:

**Editor: Paul Caffyn,
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West Coast N.Z.
Ph/Fax: 03 731 1806
Email: kayakpc@xtra.co.nz**

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Correspondence/queries/ changes of address to:

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or email Kay at:
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4th Ed. KASK HANDBOOK

Updated to March 2008
For trade orders of this mother of all sea kayaking handbooks, contact Paul Caffyn, RD 1, Runanga 7873 West Coast Ph: 03 731 1806
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New members: \$35 + \$15 = \$50

The 4th edition of the KASK Handbook, is a mammoth compilation on all aspects of sea kayaking in New Zealand, by many of the most experienced paddlers in the Universe. Following a brief introduction, the handbook is divided into six sections:
- Kayak, Paddle & Equipment
- Techniques & Equipment
- The Elements
- Trips and Expeditions
- Places to Go
- Resources

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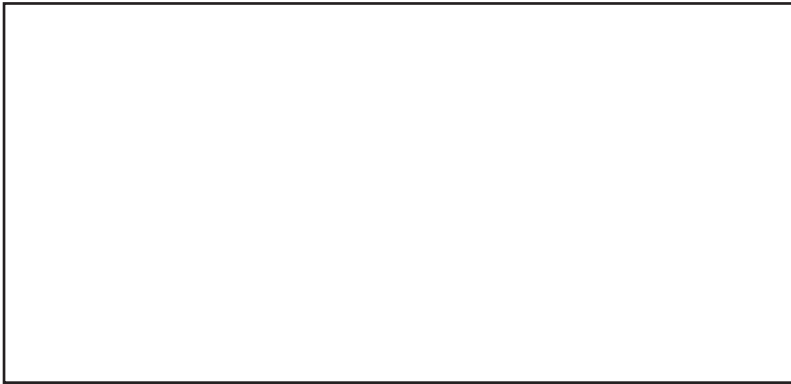


*Jillian Wilson as bow paddler and
Kerrie Pain on a magic day off the
glacier- fronted coast of Svalbard
(see page 4 for Jillian's article)
Photo: Al Bakker*



*A Svalbard Puffin with its colourful, but
unusually shaped bill. Photo: Jillian Wilson*

MAILED TO



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Paddling on Lake Coleridge, Canterbury, with the Cascade Range and Mts Murchison and Greenlaw in the far distance. No wind and very calm conditions with only the noise of cattle lowing and sheep on shore, the sound of kayaker's paddles and the occasional trout breaking the mirror calm surface. Photo: Steven Cooper

KASK MEMBERSHIP POLICY

Current membership fees are:

- \$35 for ordinary membership
- for new members \$35 or \$50 to include a copy of the KASK Handbook
- \$40 for family or joint membership (\$55 to include a Handbook copy)
- \$35 for overseas membership (PDF newsletter only);
\$50 for new o/s members plus cost of overseas postage for a copy of the KASK Handbook
- members should endeavour to renew by 1 August
- the KASK financial year runs 1 August to 31 July the following year
- a subscription due notice and up to two reminders are sent out with the newsletters between June and October
- if a membership renewal is not received by 30 September, membership lapses
- new members who join between 1 June and 31 July automatically get their membership credited to the following year, receiving a 14 month membership
- the KASK committee puts its emphasis on confirming renewals from existing members from July to October; and promoting new KASK memberships from November to February

