

NEWS: News has just come to hand that Paul Caffyn has had to abandon his Alaskan attempt for the summer. It seems that the boat, which was built in rather a hurry, was not able to stand the conditions met with. When you build a Nordkapp at super-low weights with ultra-high technology you have to have the building conditions just right and all the time in the world, which was not the case with Paul's latest boat. This was complicated by air-freighting the boat to North America with the deck hatches sealed - aircraft pressurise their cargo cabin to the equivalent of 7000' and when you can get bulges in a kayak with sealed hatches when you drive over Arthur's Pass - well it all goes to show that there is more to kayaking than paddling a boat.

BAIDARKAS: I recently had the good fortune to look at a copy of Geroge Dyson's book '*Baidarka*'. The Baidarka is another form of North American skin boat to the kayak, some would argue that kayaks ought really be called Baidarkas. Anyway, overlooking all that, the book is about a person's rediscovery of these craft and retracing some of the voyages made in them. Dyson builds his baidarkas with space-age materials - aluminium frames lashed together with kevlar and covered with two-ply nylon as a skin. Well Dyson actually gives the lines-plan of one of his latest creations and there is some interest in building a 'two-hole' baidarka to try out. As these boats also have a rather interesting sail that folds up like a fan, I am naturally interested in all this. If there is anybody else who would like to be involved in this Baidarka project they might like to let me know.

RESCUES: When Paul and Bob called off their Trans-Tasman trip due to a number of problems including continuing hassles from the Tasmanian authorities, I received an interesting observation from Bill Anderson. Some years ago Bill was involved in a trip across Cook Strait when some of our local 'authorities' happened to be flying about in a helicopter and spotted them. Well you should have heard the fuss. Fancy kayakers crossing Cook Strait without a support boat! The long and short of it all was that the Marine Division of the Ministry of Transport (as it then was, it now goes by the name of 'Maritime Transport' a division of the Ministry of Transport) was fearful that a supertanker could have run them down and the Marine Division could have issued an international navigation warning to alert such a tragedy. (Incidentally it was the same MOT guy who claimed that whitewater rafters ought to carry a grapnel so that if they have problems in a rapid all they need do is toss this grapnel ashore onto a willow tree and haul themselves out of the problem!) So Bill was at the receiving end of this little bit of international politics. I mention all this because a rather simple, to us, act of taking a well planned paddle may not always seem so to other people. Bill goes on to observe:

"...the report of Paul and Bob's abandoned Tasman crossing attempt certainly does illustrate the nature of the bureaucratic problems such adventuring can face. I can recall the critical comments some minion in the Ministry of Transport made on TV about safety aspects of the first Cook Strait crossing I was involved in. I know concern was not warranted in that case and I believe that the concern about Paul and Bob's attempt would also be unwarranted. However, given the attitudes we face, we cannot afford to give the bureaucrats any cause to believe their own ill-considered views of sea kayaking and sea kayakers to be true. Yet I feel that this is exactly what Paul and Bob did. Despite

their preparation, when the time came and they should have been able to go, they turned back after only two hours. Can't you just see the Aussie officials turning to each other and saying "See! We were right. They didn't know what they were doing. We did the right thing, and if these guys are amongst the most experienced in the world, why should we let anyone do it - ever! "

These were the thoughts that Bill put to me and although I have discussed them with a few people since, I have not raised these issues with either Paul or Bob as I don't think that it would be entirely fair. There is always a dilemma when you attract publicity for an adventure of any sort whether to proceed with a venture because you feel you have obligations to sponsors or fellow adventurers, or even as Bill suggests, to other people who may come later on similar ventures. Or whether to decide to abort your adventure because conditions are not entirely favourable. I am mindful of the sort of thing that happened on the first Round the World Solo Yacht Race with Donald Crowhurst who went a trifle insane and committed suicide. (The book '*The Strange Voyage of Donald Crowhurst*' by Nicholas Tomalin and Ron Hall is worth reading).

Bob McKerrow experienced two occasions in a couple of weeks when 'authorities' felt he needed rescue and they are, I think, good examples of some of the things that will happen unless we educate the outside world of our activities. Bob tells of these two incidents:

12:03:1989 A team of 5 sea kayakers leave Paraparaumu at 09.00 for the southern end of Kapiti Island. Forecast is for NW wind rising to 20-25 knots in the afternoon. Party consisted of myself, a very experienced sea kayaker who had previously been around Kapiti twice and numerous other trips to and from the Island. Good local knowledge. I was leader. Second person was Allan Quinn, an ex Outward Bound Instructor with Commercial Launchmasters ticket. Both Allan and I have about 5000 hours in launches and yachts. Allan is an experienced sea kayaker. The other 3 were from Wellington and had been kayaking for 2 years each. One is a surgeon with specialist knowledge in outdoor first-aid. I had left particulars of our trip with my wife and gave the usual "If we are not back by this time something is wrong. Let the police know...". We had spare warm clothing, a lifejacket each, emergency food and shelter, EPIRB, flares, torch, light-sticks, compass plus spare charts, rope, first-aid kit, repair kit, and an adequate water supply.

When we were about 30 minutes from Kapiti a boat with 'RESCUE KBC' came alongside and asked, "Who is the leader?" I said that I was and immediately the person said, "Do you know the forecast?" "I have a message from the local (Paraparaumu) Sergeant of Police. If you go any further, in the event of a death or any other incident, you will be charged with criminal negligence or manslaughter". He did not ask if we were experienced, what equipment we had etc. When I started to tell him we were well equipped and had flares, EPIRP etc, he interrupted and said that an EPIRP was of no value around here. He was not interested in listening to my viewpoint. I told him I would continue. The irony of this situation was that we came across less seaworthy craft such as aluminium dinghies and runabouts that were very poorly equipped later that day.

I feel that this was another example of sea kayakers being discriminated against by people who see conventional boats as seaworthy and sea kayaks as unsuitable.

29:03:1989 I took another experienced kayaker out at Waitarere Beach

for a look at the mouth of the Manawatu River. A front was passing through and the worst was over. We experienced a really good swell and breaking surf. Brian got hit by a big wave just as he was getting through the surf and came out of his boat. We effected a two-man rescue quickly and continued towards the Manawatu River. We decided against going in over the bar as the breakers looked a little threatening. As we turned back we noticed a plane circling around the area. After 20 minutes I said to Brian that I thought that the pilot must have been practicing SAR grid search procedures. A few minutes later the plane spotted us and came in low over us. It was then that the penny dropped, they were searching for us! As we neared the Waitarere Surf Club an IRB came up to us and seemed to be a little embarrassed as we were obviously totally in control. He said, "Are you Bob McKerrow?" and then when I confirmed that this was so, he replied that that was okay as "you know what you are doing". He said that a local had seen us go out and had reported to the police that we were going towards Taranaki. On my return I telephoned the police who said, "we got a call from a local so we felt obliged to do something about it. Better safe than sorry".

Should I let the police know every day that I go training on the local lake or on short sea paddles? Surely we should have the experience and maturity to decide when our trip requires information to be given to the police in case of SAR.

We leave these thoughts with you.



Bob McKerrow & Paul Caffyn in their double kayak 'Southern Light' on a training paddle at Mapua prior to leaving for Tasmania