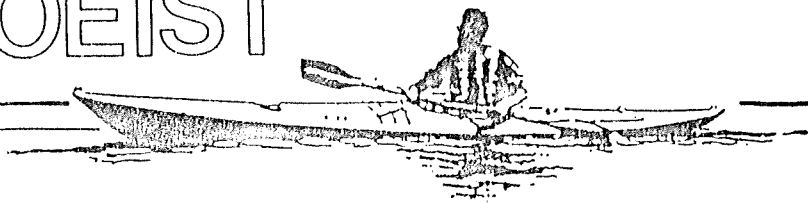


THE SEA CANOEIST NEWSLETTER 23

P O Box 26
NELSON
NEW ZEALAND



LAST NOTES FROM PAUL CAFFYN

Paul is now back in New Zealand, however I think it is appropriate to round off his reports with details from his last letter, received late August and giving an account of the last few days of his trip in Alaska.

A very successful trip, ended at Nome on the evening of 10 August. A total of 2762 miles, 89 days, with 2 weather bound days and 8 rest days. That is about 30 miles per day average over the entire trip, or 35 miles per paddling day. Paul says that he is quite chuffed with this average rate considering that he was carrying all his water, food, camping gear, clothing for the cold, etc on the basis of quite long sections before re-stocking.

The kayak is now packed away at Nome for the winter, so obviously Paul is thinking of returning for further paddling in the area. Nome, incidentally, is about half-way around the coast of Alaska.

When Paul wrote, he was back in Anchorage catching up on all the activity, paddling wise. One chap, Doug Van Etton led a successful team from Nome to Provideniya which is in the Soviet Union, roughly level with Nome but on the other side of the Bering Strait on the Chukchi Peninsula, and needing quite a trip up north before crossing the Strait and then paddling down south along the Soviet coast. The trip had 2 Japanese and 2 Russian paddlers. Paul reports that paddling on the Soviet side of the Bering Strait sounds fantastic with very friendly folk and many historical sites worth

visiting. Doug is proposing a gathering of kayakers at Provideniya in August 1992 - skin boats and all!

As far as the last few weeks of Paul's trip was concerned, he reports that the Kuskokwim-Yukon Delta was the absolute diabolical pits with mud flats drying out 10 miles from the tundra coast, and a diurnal tidal cycle, that is, only one big flood tide every 24 hours, and even then the tide only coming within 2 miles of the solid shoreline. Paul spent two nights stuck out on the mud flats, out of sight of both the shore and the sea. "Boy, was I glad to hit a gravel beach again!"

The last week was magic, sand beaches by limestone cliffs with plenty of bird-life and settled hot sunny weather. Paul made the last 173 miles into Nome in 4 days with a 33 mile crossing of Norton Sound.

"The contact with the eskimo folk has been great. Even saw old 'skin' boats in three villages (calico, not seal skin). The boats in use today are aluminium skiffs with big outboards".

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SEA KAYAK MINI SYMPOSIUM

Sisson Kayaka, Dave Robertson and the Auckland Canoe Centre are combining to run a weekend of sea kayak instruction, demonstration and kayak try-outs at Takapuna Beach on October 13 and 14. 11am to 6pm. These two days are by invitation only so you will need to register your interest pretty quickly if you would like an invitation. These days are for

'Entry level' only but will get as involved as the participants want to get. Register by writing to Sisson Industries, 8A Allan Street, Nelson.

This will be the first of a number of such events to be run around the country under the auspices of TASK. TASK is the organisation that was set up in May after the Coast Busters symposium. 'TASK' comes from the full title of the organisation - Trade Association of Sea Kayaking. The organisation is an independent body of people and companies involved in the manufacture, instruction and promotion of sea kayaking. So far all the major manufacturers of kayaks, and most of the associated gear retailers have joined TASK along with the main instructor organisations/companies.

While on this subject, make a note that the Coastbusters meeting in Auckland next year will be the weekend of April 26,27,28. The Sea Kayak Forum in Nelson will be the weekend of April 12,13,14 1991 (fortnight after Easter). Both weekends will be run under the TASK organisation. The Nelson Forum will be completely reorganised and much more structured than last year, with a number of events running at the same time so that participants will be able to pick and choose those subjects/activities that interest them most. Skill instruction, including rolling instruction, will be running throughout the weekend. Full programmes for both events will be circulated in the next few months.

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MORE ON THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT LAW REFORM BILL

The Resource Management Law Reform Bill has been delayed through the house and the present Government will not have it passed this session because of the complexity of the Bill and the unwillingness of the Opposition to allow it through without substantial modification. This is unfortunate given the almost two years of public consultation that has already gone into drafting the Bill. The Department of Conservation have, however, pushed on with matters that relate to the Bill, in particular the draft policy on coastal management. This document is now available for public comment. Because it has considerable impact on the coastal area where sea kayakers paddle, I would urge all paddlers to make themselves familiar with the document. Regional Councils will be working on coastal management plans that will put the policy into effect.

Public submissions on the draft policy were called for, and were to be into the DoC Head Office by 5pm on Friday September 14. Although this date will have passed by the time you receive this newsletter, because of the delay in passing the RMLR Bill, you might still consider a submission. Submissions, and copies of the draft document can be obtained from:

The Manager
Coasts and Water Section
Department of Conservation
PO Box 10-420
WELLINGTON

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FIORDLAND EXPEDITION PADDLERS WANTED

Sea kayakers wanted for a small group to do a Fiordland trip (To Wae Wae Bay to Doubtful or Milford Sound) for 3 weeks, leaving early February 1991. Participants will need to have reliable roll, good level of fitness and a sense of humour.

Contact:

Eric Van Toor
39 Marsden Road
GREYMOUTH
Phone (027)6908

or (027)7206 Bus.

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RESCUE

Last year, members of the Kaka Point Surf Life Saving Club were presented with the WESTPAC OUTSTANDING RESCUE OF THE YEAR award, an award that is given each year to a notable rescue within the Surf Lifesaving movement. The award was for a rescue of sea kayakers, and the story is worthy of mention. Apparently two kayakers, members of a small party of kayakers, had been blown offshore south of Balclutha. A local fisherman contacted the Surf Rescue LRB (Inshore Rescue Boat) crew. The IRB crew found the first kayaker 1.5km offshore. He was conscious but suffering from hypothermia. The second kayaker was eventually found clinging to a reef 500m offshore, but being thrown about by the surge of the swell; being washed off the reef but managing to scramble back each time.

Robin Beattie, the IRB skipper, took the rescue boat close in to the rock and Stuart Eldens (IRB crewman) swam 50m to the rock, fitted a rescue tube and managed to bring the kayaker back to the IRB. Both kayaker and Stuart were much battered by the experience when a wave washed them into a cleft in the rock.

Once these two kayakers were ashore and into an ambulance, the IRB then returned to sea to locate the remainder of the party. They were found after a one hour search.

When the details of this unfortunate incident have been described to other sea kayakers, the response has been to reply with one of the following comments:

1. "Oh, but they were not club people"
2. "Yes, but were they real sea kayakers, or were they inexperienced paddlers?"
3. "But this wouldn't have happened had they been using purpose-built sea kayaks!"

The first comment is totally irrelevant, the second is a cop-out (what exactly is a 'real sea kayaker' - how much experience do you need to qualify as a sea kayaker?), and the third comment is an admission that you need neither common sense nor skill to go sea kayaking provided you have the best equipment. People who give one of the above replies display appalling attitudes to safety. About as appalling as the paddler who recently advised another, inexperienced paddler, that he could go anywhere in a 'Southern Light' paddling it solo. The fact is, the high initial stability of the larger double sea kayaks have lulled some incompetent paddlers into thinking

that they are totally idiot-proof boats.

In May I happened to look up the drowning statistics for kayakers and canoeists. Since 1980 through until May 1990 there have been 27 deaths by drowning in kayaks and canoes in New Zealand. Only 10 of these have been on whitewater or swiftwater rivers, that is about one third. All the rest have been on lakes, estuaries, or on coastal paddles. 4 were on open coastal situations and 1 on an offshore trip (across to Great Barrier Island).

It seems to me that there is something seriously amiss with the way kayaking skills, at entry level, are taught. My perception is that in New Zealand we have focused on whitewater river kayaking to such an extent that we have lost sight of the real needs of the average paddler. Basic skills should include deep-water recovery procedures, party management, contingency planning, and SAR procedures. The needs of the sea kayaker, in terms of skills, are closer to the needs of the average sheltered water paddler, than that of the whitewater paddler. Whitewater paddling skills need to be developed upon a basic kayak skills course. When demonstrating skills at the Coastbusters Sea Kayak symposium in Auckland in May, I was very surprised that so many participants regarded some of the skills being demonstrated and talked about, as being new or in some way advanced techniques. These days, even eskimo rolling is a basic technique.

It is interesting to note that the Canadian Park Service have recently held a workshop of sea kayaking experts and interested parties in order to facilitate the development of safety standards. I have a copy of the initial draft discussion paper which will be used by the CPS to

develop their standards and the requirements for sea kayak guides. The appendix to the discussion paper is enclosed with this newsletter. It seems to me that until you can say that you meet these requirements, or pretty close to them, you have no right taking others out onto the sea in kayaks, whether as a commercial operator, instructor, or club trip leader.

In NZ we are developing a Code of Practice for sea kayak hire operators which will eventually come under the control of the Ministry of Transport. Unless recreational sea kayakers get their act together, the end result may be the imposition of standards that will be difficult to meet.

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QAJAQ

In a newly published book called QAJAQ-Kayaks of Siberia and Alaska, David W Zimmerly has this to say about the different types of kayaks of the Arctic:

"...The Greenland Eskimos designed low-profile, low-volume sea kayaks with a needle shape and upawapt ends. Typically 17-18 feet long, these narrow (about 19-inch) hard-chined boats with their V-bottom cross sections demanded the utmost skill from a paddler. These boats required that their paddler continually balance with either paddle or body movements. The Greenlanders responded with over 25 capsize recovery techniques, both self- and team-rescue tactics. With his watertight sealskin parka sealed tightly around the cockpit rim, wrists, and head, the kayaker faced capsizing with relatively little trepidation.

The boats' ultra-low profile shed the Arctic gales well and was difficult to spot from a seal's-eye view. But the low, flat decks offered little carrying capacity for captured game. Instead, the Greenland hunters usually towed their quarry home using complex toggle systems..."

It is the kayak of the western coast of Greenland that modern sea kayakers have chosen as the model for their recreational craft. One begins to wonder if it was the right boat. However you wish to view it, the kayak requires skill on the part of the paddler in order to be safe.

"...The Baffin Islanders, who also hunted sea mammals, solved the seaworthiness/carrying capacity problem in a second, far different manner. They built wide, flat-bottomed kayaks that were so stable that capsize recovery techniques were not needed, or at least not learned. These most stable of all Arctic kayaks had flared sides and high cockpit coamings, nearly eliminating the need for a spray skirt. They had great game-carrying capacity atop their broad, flat afterdecks - up to 1,000lbs. The design is rather agile, but requires hard paddling..."

Perhaps we ought to switch to these latter type of kayak as the model upon which to develop recreational kayaks (or is 'Qajaq' the correct spelling?).

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