

The Racing Paddler

The June "Membership" Edition

A Quarterly Newsletter

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Chuck throws the paddling world a party! Thanks Chuck!

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Many articles this time, and a very good read! Hope you enjoy it!

Words from the Prez- Chas Billingsley

Hello Paddlers!

Here is the summer newsletter Membership edition. Summer is in full swing but there are lots of races yet to come. Why not use this contact info to find training partners or to share rides to races?

It's been a great race season so far. Two of our favorite north country races celebrated milestones this year with the 50th running of the Canton Canoe Weekend and the 20th anniversary of Madrid Canoe Weekend. Hats off to the race directors and volunteers who make it happen.

Now for the sales pitch. This is YOUR newsletter. Please contribute your articles or photos so we can keep this newsletter going.

-- Chas Billingsley

Notes from the Editor - Holly Reynolds

Wow, the year flew by! Now its time to prepare for Michigan and Nationals!

Thanks again for everyone that submitted an article, this edition has been fun to put together, PLEASE feel free to continue do so! I am very happy to publish your pictures, your stories, anything you want...within reason of course!

Send all your articles and pictures to (you don't necessarily have to have an article to send with your pictures!): [Canoechica@gmail.com!](mailto:Canoechica@gmail.com)





Canton Canoe Weekend

Canton Celebrated its 50th Anniversary this year, and Chuck sure knows how to throw a party!

Canton Canoe Weekend Race Director Chuck Bolesh (right) shown here before becoming a Race Director gave him gray hair. (photo by Cathy Giglio)

A milestone was reached this year with the 50th anniversary of the Canton Canoe Weekend. Think for a moment what an amazing achievement that is – for 50 years some brave and dedicated volunteers stepped up to organize and run a canoe race.

This year's CCW was a 3 day long celebration of canoe history and canoe racing. The weekend featured a historical display of Ruston canoes, a Friday night running of the original race course, town-wide events commemorating the 50th anniversary, a large C1 pro purse, lots of water due to heavy rainfall, and exceptional racing on both Saturday and Sunday as many of the area's top paddlers showed up for the celebration. (For an exciting

description of the racing action see Peter Heed's accompanying article.)

My intent in writing this article is to recognize and applaud the many volunteers who've kept this race alive and vibrant over the years. Race director Chuck Bolesh, Sue Bolesh, Gene & John Newman, Cathy Giglio, the St. Lawrence Valley Paddlers club, and countless other volunteers have worked the race for years and deserve our thanks. Chuck especially deserves some recognition as he had served as race director for eons – why, rumour has it that Chuck was young, thin, and had a full head of hair when he started with the race!

This year Chuck pulled out all the stops to make the 50th special. And what it is that makes Canton special? Well, the race course certainly is interesting – upstream current, an exciting passage through the rock garden, sections of suck water, eddies and current flow that rewards your river reading skills...and that's just in the first couple of miles! Add on the tight turns and shallow water of the Little River and you've got a great course. But that's not all that makes Canton special. The connection to local canoeing history remains strong as Canton was the home of the original Ruston boat shop that produced the Ruston canoes that made canoeing into a sport in the late 1800's. But that's not all that makes CCW special! The Sunday relay races involve the

community and nearby colleges in a fun event for everyone while recreational races give the more casual canoeist a chance to race.

Most of all, what really makes Canton Canoe weekend special is the community involvement, the organizational skills and dedication of the volunteers. Thank you all and let's hope for another 50 years.

For more information about the Canton Canoe Weekend check out the St. Lawrence Paddler's website <http://www.slvpaddlers.org/hccwhome.htm> and for great race photos visit <http://joannekennedy.net/>



Canton Canoe Race Weekend Race Director Chuck Bolesh accepts the NYMCRA proclamation at this year's race declaring him "Race Director Extraordinaire" for his service to canoe racing. (photo by Joanne Kennedy)

Canton Race Report

-Peter Heed

The Canton Canoe Weekend in far northern N. Y. has become renowned for the quality and depth of the competition in Saturday's C - 1 Pro Championship as well as Sunday's C - 2 Pro races. Every year many of the very best paddlers from the Northeast, as well as Quebec, Michigan, and even Nebraska come to this small town in the St. Lawrence Valley, where the rivers are swift, beautiful, and flow north! This year did not disappoint.

Canton has a great tradition (this was its 50th year) and a richly deserved reputation for being well-run by Chuck Bolesh, Gene Newman, and the rest of the good race committee. The pro purse (of over \$6,000) and the technically challenging river also helps to attract quality competition. In addition to the 14 mile pro races, Canton also offers a full schedule of 12 mile amateur races with all NYCRA classes. It's a long drive for folks from New England, but the gorgeous Adirondack scenery makes the time in the car go fast. I haven't been able to race Canton for several years, as it usually conflicts with the Ashuelot race. This year, however, the date of the Canton race was moved back one weekend, and so off I went to paddle with Joe Shaw - who was also doing the C - 1 Pro on Saturday.

The rain which came down steadily all weekend did not dampen spirits or the intensity of the competition. I arrived on Sat. just in time to enjoy watching the C - 1 Pro smackdown - which included many of the very best solo paddlers on the circuit - including Calvin Hassel, Andy Triebold, Steve Rankinen, Marc Gillespie, Nick Walton, Bob Rapant, Steve Lajoie, Terry Kent, and Matt Rudnitsky!! This promised to be exciting - and it was! I admired our New England racers, Tom Ellsworth, Joe Shaw, and Emma Ross for going out on the line with this quality group.

The starter got racers promptly to the line, and everyone seemed to get away fast, except it appeared that former US Sprint Team member Terry Kent broke a paddle with one of his first strokes! He made a quick recovery, as the paddlers headed downstream and disappeared around a sharp corner leading to the first buoy. It took less than 20 minutes for the competitors to come back into view, as they pushed hard upstream, next to shore. It was immediately apparent that the excitement was going to live up to expectations. In the front, there was a tight front pack of three, being lead by Steve Rankinen,

with Andy Triebold and Steve Lajoie right on his wakes. Only a few seconds back was Calvin Hassel, with Bob Rapant just a couple of more waves in 5th. After a bit more of a gap came Nick Walton, followed closely by Marc Gillespie and Matt Rudnitsky. Just a little further back but still in contention were Al Shaver, Ben Schlimmer, and Jeff Rankinen - all having strong races. After only a few more canoes, a close group including Joe Shaw, Tom Ellsworth, Mike Packard, and Jon Santor came by looking smooth and efficient. There were three good paddlers in the women's pro, being lead by Holly Reynolds, with Mary Schlimmer a close second, and Emma Ross looking strong in 3rd.

The course on the Grasse River takes paddlers upstream, through some technical rock sections, and it requires several decisions by the racers as to when to make a number of river crossings against significant current, before encountering the upstream buoy. It was nearly an hour and a half before the racers came down back through the start/finish area, and the top three were still right together, although it appeared that Andy Triebold was now pulling Steve Rankinen and Steve Lajoie. The race then takes a sharp turn into a side stream with shallows and tight twisting turns, known as the "Little River." After a mile or so up and back on the Little River, racers come back out on the Grasse River to the upstream finish.

The Little River is a great place to make a move - if you are feeling good - and that is where much of the definitive action occurred this year at Canton. Andy Triebold showed why he is now considered the fastest marathon paddler, as he dropped the hammer and left his competition behind. Andy won going away by over 1 and 1/2 minutes, in 2:06:22, with Steve Lajoie 2nd at 2:08:02, and Steve Rankinen 3rd at 2:08:59. Calvin Hassel finished a strong 4th in 2:09:25, with relative new-comer Nick Walton (from Michigan) coming on fast in 5th with a 2:09:36, and Bob Rapant with a fine 6th place in 2:11:13. Marc Gillespie looked strong in 7th with a 2:12:21 and Matt Rudnitsky taking 8th, but looking like he was working pretty hard at the end, with a 2:13:39. Al Shaver in 9th (2:13:52) stayed clear of a hard charging Ben Schlimmer in 10th (2:13:56).

Holly Reynolds looked very strong winning the women's pro in 2:27:20, with Mary Schlimmer in 2nd (2:32:36) and New England's Emma Ross with a fine 3rd place (2:43:30). Our other New England

racers acquitted themselves well, with Joe Shaw placing 16th in the men's race in 2:18:56, and Tom Ellsworth coming in 19th with a 2:20:37.

The C - 2 race on Sunday was just as competitive, but conditions were different due to the rain bringing river levels up (The "Little River" was now BIG - up over 2ft.!!) The race also developed differently, as Andy Triebold and Nick Walton took off at the gun, leaving no doubt as to first place. They won by over three minutes, in 2:00:22. A 6 boat pack formed for most of the race, involving 2nd through 7th places. The wild conditions in the "Little River" caused some fun tactical moves, with Cameron McClain (Michigan) and Patrick Armstrong (Quebec) emerging to take 2nd, while Tim Triebold (Andy's Dad) and Steve Lajoie took 3rd, with Matt Rudnitsky and Moped Schlimmer in 4th. Steve Rankinen and Calvin Hassel finished 5th, with our Pittsfield guys, Bob Rapant and Tom Keefe, having a strong race in 6th. Meanwhile, back in the pack, Joe and I had a fun and exciting race, just nosing out Larry Tinkler and Louis Richer (both from Quebec) in a sprint to the line for 11th place.

The mixed pro race was close and competitive, with Marc Gillespie/Holly Reynolds winning in 2:11:18. Mike Packard/Cathy Grimes had a strong race, finishing 2nd mixed in 2:13:16, with Dave Armstrong/Pam Fitzgerald taking 3rd (2:17:15) and Emma Ross/Tom Ellsworth a close 4th (2:17:59).

The Canton Canoe Weekend was a huge success, despite the weather. Everyone enjoyed the racing as well as the exhibits honoring famous Canton boat designer/builder J. Henry Rushton. We all celebrated 50 years of canoe racing, making Canton one of the oldest continuous canoe racing events in the country. If you get the chance to come up to the "North Country" some year, give it a try. It's worth the drive!

Best regards,

Peter

*Editor's note, Peter Rocks! What a great article, thanks for letting us reprint!





The Clinton

from a MUCH different perspective

a short story by Mark McDaniels

I was sitting in a canoe in the middle of Otsego Lake thinking how nice it would be to just sit there for a spell and watch the mist slowly dissipate in the morning sun. I would sip my lemonade and watch the birds skim along the surface of the lake and maybe once in a while I would catch a glimpse of a fish as it jumped out of the water feeding on the bugs in the morning sunlight. I was snapped out of my reverie, though, by a megaphone blaring a scant fifty feet to my left.

“Paddlers, please line up with the stern paddler holding the rope.” The slightly balding stocky 50-year-old man with the megaphone was standing on the bow of a motorboat that had a rope attached to it that stretched several hundred feet across the lake where it was tied to another like motor boat. Shawn Reeves my paddling partner turned around and looked at me quizzically.

“Am I in the stern or are you?” he whispered.
“I don’t know,” I said. “Just follow the other boats.”

The other canoes were all lining up with the back person holding the rope so we paddled the boat forward a few feet and Shawn carefully ducked under the rope, as I tried to keep the boat steady, so we wouldn’t tip over. Then it was my turn to do the early morning limbo. As I lay my torso back flat and tilted my head to the left, I noticed out of the corner of my eye that all of the other 150 boats had started in front of the rope and were simply backing up to the rope. Yes, that certainly did look like the smarter way to do it, but as the day proved, when it came to canoeing experience and expertise we were most definitely on the low end of the normal curve.

I sat up, grabbed the rope with my left hand and the thought of pain never crossed my mind. I had bigger things to worry about, such as how hold onto my brand new bent shaft racing paddle with one hand and the rope with the other and not tip the canoe over.

“What now?” I asked Shawn.

“Paddlers be ready!” came the megaphone.

“That’s what,” said Shawn.

I gulped hard. “Good luck, Shawn,” I said as I gripped my paddle tighter.

“You too,” said Shawn. “I hope we make it.”

“Yeah, me too.”

At the sound of the horn that the starter held high in his hand, I dropped the rope and quickly dug into the water, paddling madly like I had never paddled before. It wasn’t far from the truth. The seventeenth running of the 70 mile Clinton Canoe Regatta was under way and Shawn and I were far too dumb to know that we were in way over our heads.

I had dreamed of doing the seventy-miler, as it was called, ever since I was eleven years old and had gone to see my brother Mike race. My parents, my sister Lea and I would follow Mike and his paddling partner, Steve Irving, in our car, cheering for them from various bridges along the route, as they passed underneath as they traveled from the source of the Susquehanna River in Cooperstown to Bainbridge, seventy miles down river. Later in the afternoon we would watch the canoes arrive and finally sometime towards dusk, Mike and Steve would arrive tired, wet, but happy to be finished. I badly wanted to be a finisher like my brother. Most of all, though, I wanted to own one of the gleaming gold finisher trophies, that were lined up in rows on several tables next to the bank of the finish line. I had several baseball trophies, from little league at home, but they paled mightily compared to the determination and sheer will it would take to hold one of those little gold canoes in my hands.

Over the years it had become a bit of a tradition for scouts from our troop in King Ferry to do the seventy miler and therefore, when a fellow scout Shawn Reeves, asked me to be his canoe partner, I jumped at the

chance. I'm not sure whether it was a life changing event or not, but hopefully it wouldn't be a life ending one.

As we paddled madly across the lake toward a tiny outlet in the distance, the water boiled up wildly in large standing waves close to three feet high. I struggled to keep us going straight by using the J-stroke to rudder us back in line. I had never seen so many canoes before, much less in a race. Oh yeah, I had never even been in a race before.

In a couple minutes of wild paddling we came to the outlet where Otsego Lake became the Susquehanna River. The opening was only 30 or 40 feet wide and we banged off several canoes as 150 canoes all tried to squeeze into the opening at once. As we swept downstream close to a thousand people five, six, seven deep, cheered wildly. I knew my parents weren't at the race yet, but the screaming fans, along the banks and on the bridge we quickly passed under, made my skin prickle with goose bumps.

"Yahoo!" I yelled. "This is what it's all about Shawn." "Yeah, it really is something," he yelled back. Even the gross miscalculation that I made on the first turn couldn't dampen our spirits. The first turn was a sweeping left hand turn of a little more than 90 degrees. Shawn was paddling on the left and I was on the right, so when we entered the turn I yelled, "Switch," and crossed my paddle over to the left and ruddering hard. The boat spun nicely to the left and we were soon pointed downstream; for a moment. I thought, "Hey, no problem. This isn't so bad. Then we weren't pointing downstream, we were pointing up stream. And then downstream again and then upstream as we just kept spinning down the river.

"What do you want me to do?!" Shawn yelled out.

"Paddle hard on the left! No the right! No the left! Crap!"

The canoe pin wheeled several more times until we plowed through several feet of cattails along the right side of the river and slammed into the bank at a nice 90 degree angle that would have made my geometry teacher Mr. Sinon proud. We hit the bank so hard I almost fell flat on my face.

"Ok," I called. "Back it up. Back it up." I had no idea what I was doing, but I was good at being in charge.

We backed the canoe up, pointed it down stream and kept going. I began to think that maybe we should actually have practiced at least once on a river before we did the race.

"Hey Shawn, Do they have a time limit on this race?"

"I sure hope not. It would be nice to finish today, though,"

"No duh."

So we kept paddling. After our third or fourth botched turn, people started yelling advice as the passed us. "Try using a bow rudder on the turns."

Shawn turned part way around and looked back at me. "What's a bow rudder?"

"How should I know? What do they know anyway?"

Soon after that we heard, "The J stroke is slowing you down. Try just paddling without ruddering."

"Great," I thought. "There goes my best stroke."

"Thanks," I yelled back. "We'll try it." I kept paddling the J stroke. And paddling and paddling and paddling. It is one *long* freaking race.

About a third of the way through the race we hit Goodyear Lake. It was at this point that someone looked over at us as they passed us and said, "Try turning your paddles around. It'll work better."

I was mortified. We had been paddling for almost four hours, bouncing off of muddy banks, using the J stroke, which no one else was and now I found out that the whole time we had had our paddles facing the wrong way. Yep, we sure were some well prepared Boy Scouts.

Finally we decided to switch every 8 strokes so that I wouldn't have to use the J stroke, we had our paddles facing the correct way and the river had opened up so that we didn't have to steer so much. It was halfway through the race, but we felt we were starting to get things under control.

Suddenly we noticed that everyone was getting out of their canoes on the right bank of the river. We weren't completely stupid. Close, but not completely, so we dutifully followed the others onto shore.

A race official, in a blue jacket and an orange hat came up to us as we pulled our boat out of the water.

"After you portage around the dam here, there is going to be a fork in the river. You can go to the left around the island, which is calm water, but a little longer, or you can go to the right which is a little shorter, but rougher water."

"Ok, thanks," we called over our shoulders, as we hustled our canoe back into the river.

We immediately found ourselves in foot high fast water for a short ways. We bounced around a bit, but while it got our adrenaline going a little, it didn't make us too nervous.

"Hey, that wasn't too bad," Shawn called back."

"That was great," I said. "Which way do you think we should go at the fork up ahead?"

"I don't know what do you think?"

"I don't know. Let's look at it when we get up there."

As we were talking, a sleek wooden pro boat slid quietly by us. We watched curiously as they turned right into the short cut.

"Ah, what the heck," I said. "If they can do it, so can we."

Deciding to take that shortcut was one of the single, dumbest decisions that ever I made in my life. At 16, though, sense of adventure is a lot more prevalent than brains. With in ten seconds we were surfing for our lives on waves that had swelled to four feet high and were crashing madly down a quarter mile stretch of water.

"Cowabunga!"

"Whooweee! This is great!"

We flew down the river, up and down, faster than we had ever dreamed possible in a canoe. I had a huge grin on my face as my hair streamed behind me. Now this was canoeing!

Suddenly some people to our left along the bank of the river were yelling at us. We looked over to see that the pro boat that had just passed us was upside down and several people were helping the paddlers make their way to shore.

"What did you say?!" We yelled back.

"Duck!"

We looked up and smack dab in front of us was this immense section of a black metal railroad bridge that had fallen into the water with its right end fully submerged and was now staring at us straight in the face. We threw our torsos forward flat against the canoe as our right gunnel skimmed by, mere inches from the bridge. As we passed under the bridge, we sat up and breathed a deep sigh of relief.

"Wow that was close!" said Shawn.

"I thought that we gonners," I replied.

"Me too."

Our relief was quickly cut short by cries of "Paddle! Paddle!" coming from shore.

We had been flung from a near fatal collision with a railroad bridge into a 20 foot wide whirl pool that was trying to suck us to the bottom of the river.

"Pull hard on the left," I yelled, as I saw the boat drift towards the whirl pool also on our left.

I had never seen a whirl pool before and I never want to see another one again. Sweat slid down my face and arms, as we pulled hard against the swirling water. For a few seconds we were just standing still; as the whirlpool pulled unemotionally on the boat and we continued to paddle, stroke after stroke, not moving forward or backwards. It was eerie to be on the precipice of life and death, with the power of nature not caring whether we lived or died. Suddenly, though, we were free and once again moving down river. It was amazing how quickly the river changed. Within a quarter of a mile, we were paddling down a quiet stretch of river with green pastures and cows in the fields. The transition was surreal.

It was in fact the last exciting thing that happened during the race. Excitement, though, brings adrenaline, adrenaline brings energy, and we found ourselves without either of them.

35 miles to go and I was hurting. Each stroke on my left started with a sharp pain in my left arm that traveled up to my shoulder, burned its way across my back and neck and exited out my right arm. The only relief I got was when we switched sides and the pain started in my right arm and went out of my left. Then to make matters worse, it started to rain.

With 20 miles to go, we got a much needed lift when we saw Mark Osterhoudt and Dave Irving waving down to us from a bridge, as we went under them. Mark and Dave were our Boy Scout buddies who were also doing the race. We expected them to finish ahead of us, but we were surprised that they were so far ahead, that they had already finished

"Go Shawn!"

"Go Mark!"

"Only 20 more miles!"

"Wow," I said to Shawn, "They're finished already. They must have had a great time."

"Yeah," said Shawn, "If they can do it, we can too."

Stopping was never an option, especially now that we knew that Mark and Dave had finished. But the last couple of hours seemed endless. There were no more bridges for our friends and family to cheer us on and the few spectators that we did see were completely clueless.

Some time after we had seen Mark and Dave someone shouted out from shore, "Only 10 more miles to go. You're almost there."

Then a while later, "You're doing great, only 5 more miles."

A half an hour later, "Only 8 more miles. You're almost there."

"What a bunch of idiots," I thought glumly.

Finally, after what seemed an eternity of paddling, we rounded yet another bend in the curve to see a multicolored banner of small triangles strung across the river. That simple cheap strand of plastic was one of the most glorious sights that I had ever seen in my life. We gave a small burst of speed as our muscles lost their ache for a brief moment and then after watching that blessed multi colored banner pass over our heads, we collapsed in exhaustion.

We were drenched in sweat and rain. We were sore and stiff from head to toe. We could barely walk as we half crawled out of our amazingly unscratched dark green Mad River canoe. We had survived. We had made it. We had finished! Dave and Mark helped us get our canoe out of the water and carry it back to their truck as my parents walked along beside us quietly.

"Way to go Mark and Shawn," said Mark Ousterhoudt.

"Yeah, great jobs, guys, chimed in Dave. 11 hours isn't too bad for a couple of high school Boy Scouts."

Thanks, guys," I said. What place did we finish?

"It should be on the board, next to the trophies," said Dave. We walked in silence for a bit. Then I looked up at Dave and Mark.

"Wow, you guys must have had a really good time. We saw you way back with about 20 miles to go."

Dave and Mark looked at each other, but didn't say anything.

"What," I asked. "Don't tell me you finished first."

"Hardly," said Mark, as he looked at his feet.

"We didn't finish," said Dave.

"Why? What happened asked Shawn?"

Dave looked at Mark and Mark nodded his head for Dave to go ahead.

"About halfway through the race a couple of guys in an aluminum canoe decided that we had raced long enough and cut us off as we were going by them. They drove us into a tree and the force of the water wrapped the boat completely around the tree and sank it. We managed to get the boat out, but it's toast. See?"

We were back at Mark's truck. There on the ground sat their once proud brand new fiberglass canoe now warped and streaked where the fiberglass had bent and cracked. It was obviously useless.

The worst news was yet to come. After we changed our clothes, we sat down to eat the traditional post race meal of barbecued chicken with Mark, Dave and my parents. Our gleaming golden canoe trophies sat proudly in front of us. I looked up expectantly at my parents who were silently watching us eat a little too intently for my own comfort.

"What?" I finally asked a little exasperated. "You look like you haven't seen me for days."

"You didn't hear what happened?" asked my Dad quietly, as I took another big bite of chicken.

"Abof the boaf?" I garbled through a large bite of a drumstick. I swallowed hard and wiped my mouth.

"About the boat? Oh, yeah, sure. Mark and Dave showed us. It looks pretty bad."

"No," My mom said slowly, "About the young man who went back for his brand new racing paddle, after he tipped over."

I stared at them quizzically. "No, I didn't hear anything. Is he ok?"

"He drowned," My Dad said.

"We were worried that it might have been you," My mom said with that "if you were 10, I would give you a big hug right now" voice.

I felt like a boat load of ice water had been suddenly dumped on my head. I thought back to the rapids, the tipped over pro boat and the whirl pool. I silently finished my chicken a little confused. Five hundred paddlers had started the day with excitement and anticipation and one of us had died. It didn't make sense. It didn't seem right. I didn't know whether it made my finishing trophy more important or less so, but more than anything I just felt exhausted. On the car ride back home, I was asleep before we even got out of the park.

Feeders

by Ed Greiner

Having raced in the 70 miler and having been a pit crew for amateur teams in the past, Kim and I pride ourselves in knowing what canoe racers need and we think we deliver pretty well. This year's General Clinton gave us a new challenge in supporting paddlers.

A couple of weeks before Memorial Day, we received a forwarded e-mail from a Wisconsin mixed Pro team looking for "feeders" for the 70. In the mid-west they have feeders instead of pit crews. Since we had no prior commitment, we volunteered for the job. Having never met Barbara Bradley and Allen Limberg before, we agreed to have lunch with them in Emmons on our way home from the Sunday sprint race. They gave us a list of their needs and specific instructions as to how they wanted things done, as well as where they wanted us to meet them. We thought their choices unusual at first, but this was their game.

On race day, we saw them to their boat with good wishes and took off before the start for the first pit stop. They wanted us to meet them upriver from Index, as they start with very little fluid, presumably to save weight on the first portage. We paddled upstream, past the railroad bridge and found a straight stretch where we would be visible to each other. Not finding an eddy to sit in, we hugged the bank and waited. Soon enough, Andy Triebold and Steve LaJoie came charging around the bend with the rest of the Pros in pursuit. Their wakes were pretty impressive in that narrow, fast-moving stream. Not long after, we saw Marc and Holly appear with Al and Barb close behind. They spotted us and eased over the few feet necessary to make the exchange. After dropping their empties upstream, I plunked their bottles into their laps. Al asked Kim for a paddle at the next pit stop and she immediately handed him his spare, which she had been using. They never stopped moving and were gone in seconds. After waiting for a clear river to turn around, we retrieved their bottles and paddled back to the bridge.

They wanted their second "feed" at the end of the Goodyear Dam portage. We knew we had lots of time so we decided to

stop at Milford to watch. As before, the first Pro team to come through were Triebold and LaJoie, alone and increasing their lead. After a slightly longer wait, Marc and Holly came into sight with Al and Barb on their wake. Holly pulled in on river left for a pit stop and "our team" blew by to take the lead. This was building up to be a very exciting race.

Soon we were off to our next meeting. We put in at Knots Motel Rd. and paddled the quarter mile to the portage. Our bottles in a knapsack and carrying spare paddles, we hiked past the dam to the narrow put-in at the bottom. Here we waited longer than expected, but didn't mind as we got to see and cheer for our friends in the various amateur classes. We weren't even half way to the finish and some of them looked pretty spent. It was a hot day and they had already paddled 25 miles or so. The Pro teams came and went with more space and time between them. We saw Marc and Holly come running down the hill, once again first-place mixed. Al and Barb were close behind and we accomplished our feeding task in seconds as their boat hit the water. Not having much time to spare, we hiked and paddled back to the cars, passed up stopping at Bear Pond Winery and headed for Oneonta. We weren't scheduled for a pit stop at the dam but we wanted to be there in case something unexpected had happened to "our team". They came through within a few minutes of us getting there, a little farther behind the lead boat than before. Back to the cars and off to Otego.

Trying to get into the Otego fishing access site on Memorial Day is like going into a shopping mall on Christmas Eve. Traffic is stopped going in, nobody can get out and all of the parking space is behind you. We were able to sidle into a space, double parked by a motorcycle, after only five minutes. Taking the boat off of the car, we loaded it and headed for the narrow, muddy put-in. The sun was blazing hot by this time so we waited in the shade on river left. This was a good choice as it took the Pros quite awhile to get down there. After Triebold and LaJoie went by with an even greater lead, we crossed the river to our appointed spot. This gave us a good vantage point to watch how the Pro paddlers do things. Most obviously, they work together. Andy and Steve aside, most of

the Pros ride in packs of two to five boats, taking turns pulling and resting. That is one reason they have a little left at the end of a long race for the sprint to the finish line. Marc has been trying to drill this into our poor, addled amateur brains for several years with limited success. Speaking of Marc, he and Holly appeared in the distance with Bruce and Rebecca Barton close behind. Al and Barb followed a few minutes later. Another fast drop, retrieve the bottles and paddle back to the car.

At the Unadilla fishing access site, we thought we had plenty of time before the Pro class showed up. Not true. The Rudnitsky-Walton pit crew were already out on the gravel bar, awaiting their team. We grabbed our supplies and waded out with them. Our wait was longer than theirs, but only long enough to fill our shoes with gravel. It's not easy to maneuver standing waist deep in a strong current. Al ruddered the bow to the right to show me where he was going. I scooted aside, made the drop and they were gone again.

At the finish line, we were too late to see Triebold and LaJoie finish. The second and third place Pros gave us a show, sprinting to the line with less than a second between them. After 70 miles, they still displayed an amazing amount of power. From the top of the ramp, we couldn't tell that Josh Sheldon and Steve Kolonich edged out Matt Rudnitsky and Nick Walton for second place. Al and Barb came in third in the Mixed Pro 4 minutes and 51 seconds behind Marc and Holly. We didn't know until later that they took a swim above Otego. We also were not aware of when the Bartons overtook "our team" but they finished a mere 48 seconds behind first mixed.

Being part of this race, even just as a "feeder", was really exciting. The speed and level of competition was a notch above anything we had done before. Al and Barb were grateful for the support we gave them and were generous in praise for our effectiveness. We were just happy to be a part of it.

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Chapter One-Coming Back or Letting Go

by Becky Sutter

Every athlete knows how important it is to take rest days. It's imperative to recovery and rebuilding strength and conditioning. But if you're like I am, these days don't come easy. I have to force myself to sit still and be gentle to myself and recover. There were times when I looked forward to rest days though-like while I was training for a marathon, and the day after my long run was so needed. My training log had big smiley faces on these days.

However, a long period of forced rest due to injury is every athlete's worst nightmare. We think, "I'm going to lose all my conditioning!" or "I'm going to get fat!" Which may very well happen, but it's not the end of the world and it's not irreversible. In 1993 I had the Terrible Triad in my left knee. I partially tore my ACL, MCL and LCL. I never had it repaired, and only completed 4 weeks of PT. I didn't want to take the time off from running. I was back to training within eight weeks of my injury. For 17 years I

sailed along gleefully only experiencing a little instability on occasion which I chalked up to fatigued muscles. Then in March of 2010, I was four miles from home halfway through an eight mile run. As I crested the high point of my run, my left knee literally exploded. The POP was so loud I heard it over my music. I stopped dead in my tracks and stared at my knee. I thought, "OK, you're still standing; try to bear weight on it." I took a step and it collapsed inward and wobbled a bit, but it didn't hurt. I took another step and another and then began what a friend of mine refers to as a "stobble" (stumble-hobble) to get home. I made it back home and immediately called a trusted friend and explained the symptoms. There was silence on the other end of the phone. Even though there wasn't really bad pain or swelling, I knew it was bad; bad enough that my life as I knew it was going to change. I didn't know how exactly, but I just felt an uncontrollable force working its way in.

A few weeks later I saw a specialist and a subsequent MRI revealed I had blown out my knee. I had to make a choice as to whether I wanted an ACL replacement or return to living without an ACL. In my

mind this meant skiing with a brace, no more trail running, no more adventure racing and a long period of inactivity. If the ACL was the only injury, I would have considered just moving forward with no surgery. But the MRI revealed a level 3 articular defect on my kneecap-probably from the blunt trauma mountain biking accident- and a shredded lateral meniscus as well. When these other injuries were revealed, I made the difficult decision to go with an ACL replacement, partial meniscectomy and microfracture of the defect. It meant I would be giving up the activities that defined me as an athlete for a long time, if not forever, and my doctor told me the microfracture might not work. Meaning, the scar tissue in the defect that is purposely created by drilling microscopic points into the defect, might not adhere and I could have a worse defect than was already there. It was all very depressing. Since the day I swam that first 50 yard race in second grade, I had lived my life based around competition, training and fitness. I like to win. If I didn't win, I felt like a failure. Most of what I had done up until the point of my knee injury in 2010 had been to stay competitive and race in

whatever discipline I could find. I had even had other traumatic injuries that didn't keep me down. In 1994 I was hit on my bike and walked away with a separated AC joint, in 1993 I had the Terrible Triad and in 2003 I had L4-L5 hemilaminectomy for a massive disc rupture and wasn't supposed to return to racing. All of these injuries healed and never really caused me to change anything-especially my perception. But knee surgery seemed like The Big One. I felt like my life was going to change forever. On top of turning 40, I had this injury that was going to knock me out for a full year- if everything went well- and coming back to the form I was in before the injury, probably wouldn't happen. I had to come to terms with a new self definition. I had to change my perception.

After the surgery, the first week of non-weight bearing immobility was OK because I had good friends and neighbors that kept me comfortable and positive. I had a bed set up outside my kitchen and only had to crutch about 10 feet to get to a bathroom. Life was OK. My surgeon did a fantastic job and I only had four incision points and minimal swelling. I read the books I had been planning to read, called

friends, wrote letters and wrote music. By day nine, as indicated in my journal, I crashed and spun into a self-pitying, self loathing depression. I felt like I'd never run again, I'd never ride again, my doctor said I couldn't do the 90-miler even though it was four months away, and all my friends were out enjoying the summer. On top of it all, my adventure racing team had been picked up by a sponsor and they were racing with a younger, faster female.

Then in the span of two days something happened that lifted me out of my self-absorption. My friend Griff died in his sleep. He suffered from diabetes and heart disease and we knew he was sick, but we hadn't expected this. I was shocked into reality. The reality of how precious life is and how unimportant winning a race is. Don't get me wrong, I still felt the need to recover and rehab and live my life, but living took on a different meaning. To try to explain the transformation in writing is difficult for me, so I'll just say that I've changed. It may have been as much a part of acceptance and the beauty of self awareness as it was Griff's passing. I'm still not sure. I guess I was open to change and it happened. Griff was a gifted and powerful athlete with a humble and

unassuming presence. I continue to admire him-even in his absence.

When I think about the timing of his death I still get goose bumps. I was at my bottom and searching for an answer within myself. I got the answer from outside of myself. I know that part of me died with Griff's passing, but it was a part that I no longer needed to be the person/athlete I want to be. I received a great gift in letting go of that part of me.

I'm still finding out who I am with my new ACL. The microfracture was a success, and who needs both menisci? I raced Canton with a "newbie" in a C-2 stock in the chilling rain and flooding Little River and laughed out loud while pushing through the pain. I just completed my first Cannonball with a wonderful, fun group of friends on a gorgeous summer day in the Adirondacks. Who knows, maybe I'll do the 90-miler in open touring. One year post-op I can trail stobble, bike, hike and paddle at my leisure. But more importantly, I can sit on my couch with my cat and look across the lake at the mountains at my leisure too. My knee injury was the end of a long chapter of my life, but I think I'm going to like the new story that's been started. Thanks Griff.



Voices

What do you think about when you are paddling? Sometimes I think about the job I'm involved in at the present time or I have conversations with people in my head (that's when I miss huts), but mostly I think about my technique. When you're a mediocre paddler like me, you need to constantly reinforce the things you've learned over the years. In the past, I've written about the many mentors who've tried to make a paddler out of me. Their voices echo in my memory giving gentle correction and advice. As I paddle, whether racing or training, their words come back, helping me keep it together.

Last night on the Mohawk River, we were out in C1s looping between locks "Stay close to shore and out of the current" (Joan), the wind was blowing upstream and the waves were coming from behind "Slide your seat back in a tailwind" (Roger). As we approached the upper lock, we needed to get out into the rougher water to make our turn "Lean forward to lower your center of gravity" (Marc and Al). We hugged the shore going downstream to stay out of the wind and encountered some shallow spots "Pop the boat in the shallows" (Pam and Marc). The same voices help me during races and time trials. On Wednesday evenings things get pretty exciting and it's easy to forget technique when you need it most "Drop your shoulder and knife your paddle in sideways" (Alec). After rounding the downstream buoy, it's an all out sprint for the finish "Bury your blade before starting the power phase" (Jim, Alec). During all of the races so far this year, we've encountered plenty of squirrely water "Lean forward and keep the power on" (Al). In the downstream stretches the temptation is to kick back and relax a bit "You sit up too straight, lean forward" (Joan, Alec, Jason, Al). When trying to move up on someone's wake, "The stern wake is highest in the middle and lower on the outside." (Peter) Sometimes during a race, I see Marc in his technique video, seated on his paddling machine. As we set up for a buoy turn, Mike Fries is there in his Kevlar comp cruiser. When riding on a wake, there is Peter and his blanket. With all of the extra people in the boat, it's a wonder it doesn't sink. I'm glad to have them, though. Otherwise I'd just be flailing at the water.

200 / 400 Mile Club

OK, I admit it – the real reason I race is to acquire the cool t-shirts given out at races.

Here is an opportunity to add another t-shirt to your collection. Once again Mac's Canoe Livery and NYMCRA are joining together to sponsor the 200/400 mile t-shirt club. The club is intended to foster paddler participation at races across New York State though in recent years some have struck out for the Yukon just to get the qualifying miles.

It's easy to participate – just get out there and race!

There are just a few simple rules to qualify for the club:

- 1) All races are from a single paddling season.
- 2) At least 200 miles must be from New York State Races.
- 3) You must finish the race for it to count.
- 4) You must submit an application available on macscanoe.com by October 1st

Should NYMCRA become NYMCKRA?

by Chas Billingsley

Our organization proudly proclaims we are canoe racers. However, some of us are also kayak racers. The question was raised at last year's banquet – should we change the name of our organization to reflect our more eclectic mix?

At least one member has suggested the New York Marathon Canoe and Kayak Racing Association – NYMCKRA for short.

The board asks that members weigh in on this topic. Do you have an opinion or suggestion? Please share it! Let the board members know if you favor a name change, don't care about the name, have a favored acronym, or no opinion at all.

Should we add a kayak to our name and logo? Board member Peter Ross applied his graphics skills to include a kayaker in the logo – see below.

Look for an upcoming poll on the NYMCRA website and cast your vote – or contact any board member with your opinion.

NYMCRA Membership List 2011

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Madrid Canoe Regatta celebrates 20 years of Canoe Racing

By
Chas Billingsley

What a year for anniversaries! Not only did the Canton Canoe Weekend make it to 50 years but this June saw the 20th running of the Madrid Canoe Regatta.

Many of you know and love the Madrid races and those of you who've never attended are really missing a great weekend. The race course is interesting, the camping facilities terrific, and the competition intense, with pro races both Saturday and Sunday and a full lineup of amateur and recreational races.

The race is well-organized and expertly run by the Moulton family. It's a true family affair. Bernie and Amy have been involved in running the race for the last twenty years, taking over from Bernie's parents, Terry and Sandy

Moulton. Now a third generation is involved as Bernie and Amy's children Paige and Nathan help out.

In my book, the Madrid Canoe Regatta exemplifies the highest qualities of canoe racing and it's easy to see why the race is perennially a top vote-getter for NYMCRA Race of the Year.

Congratulations and thank you to the Moulton family and let's go for another 20 years!



New York Marathon Canoe Racing

This is YOUR newsletter, please contribute! We love hearing what you want to see in the newsletter, and love YOUR pictures, and YOUR articles! Hope you are having a great winter and enjoying the skiing, snowshoeing, ice skating and other winter activities that New York has to offer

Don't Forget to Renew Your Membership! www.nymcra.org



New York Marathon Canoe Racing Association

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