

Chesapeake Paddler



Publication of the Chesapeake Paddlers Association, Volume 16, Issue 2

March 2006



Brian Blankinship over Vince Dalrymple's bow

Gale Warning!

By Ed Johnson

I've had a growing desire to test my skills in rough winter conditions to obtain a clearer understanding of my true abilities. The forecast was "Gale Warning now in effect ... NW winds 30 knot (kt) gusts to 45 kt, waves 3-6 feet." That would certainly be a test.

Brian, my partner for this adventure, is a professional and someone I trusted to rescue me if I got into trouble. We decided to launch at Mayo Beach Park, I was in my P&H Sirius and Brian chose his VCP Pintail because it has a built-in foot pump. The wind had blown a lot of water out of the river and we had to carry the boats about 50 meters through what should have been water. We launched and headed directly into the wind, up river. It took us a half hour to cover the one mile to Turkey Point.

Thomas Point Light recorded winds during our trip of 23 to 27kt, gusts to 33kt and water and air temperatures of 41°F and 38°F, respectively.

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Off to the Races: CPA Just-For-Fun Kayak Races

By Brian Blankinship

Bill wants to go on CPA trips, but he knows he is slow. He is tired of holding up the group and wishes he knew how to paddle faster. Sally likes the interaction of group trips, but hates the slow pace. She wishes she knew more paddlers her speed. Both of our CPA paddlers need to get off to the races by entering the CPA Just-For-Fun Kayak Races.

Racing is a great way to improve your skills (see Susan Williamson's [article](#), inside). These races are designed for EVERYONE in CPA who wants to paddle efficiently. The first races will be held at Jack's Boathouse (Pirates of Georgetown). The first is on May 13, 2006, and will be short (2 miles). A second of 5 miles will be held on June 24. On July 15, there will be a 5-mile and a 10-mile race at Jonas Green Park in Annapolis.

Prior to the race series starting, we plan to hold Performance Paddling clinics. Those attending SK102 will have the chance to learn better strokes and be introduced to wing paddles. We also plan to hold mini-clinics at the Pirates of Georgetown and Pier 7.

All race days will feature a "standard" race and a "fun" race. The fun race will be something like team racing where two boats paddle, but one is being towed by the other, a slalom, or Wet Start (start outside the boat in the water or have to roll). Another fun race would be a "Leader Turn". This race would be a down and back along the same course.

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CLASSIFIEDS

Ads dated 3 months before the date of this issue will be pulled unless a new request is received by the 15th of the month prior to the next issue. And if it has sold...tell us!

Advertising Rates:

We accept display advertising that relates to the interest of our readers. Monthly rates are as follows:

Size cost wide x deep (col)
 1/8 page \$20 2.4" x 3.5" (1)
 1/4 page \$32 4.9" x 4.7" (2)
 1/2 page \$50 7.5" x 4.7" (3)
 Full page \$80 7.5" x 9.75" (3)

A 5% discount will be given for ads supplied as electronic files in acceptable formats (i.e. .tif, .gif, .jpeg, bit-map). Email or call for more information and for 10-month discount. See advertising contact in masthead.

Public service announcement and personal ads to sell kayaks/accessories are printed at no charge; non-members pay \$10 for 3 months.

WANTED—Volunteers for Article Editor and Advertising Coordinator for the Newsletter Team. Contact Ralph Heimlich, Managing Editor, at news_editor@cpakayaker.com



Chickahominy Paddle photo by Ralph Heimlich

SCHEDULE FOR 2006 CHESAPEAKE PADDLER

Chesapeake Paddler is published 10 times a year, with combination issues in November/December and January/February. The deadline for submitting copy is usually the 15th of the preceding month as follows:

Issue	Deadline for Copy
April 2006	March 15, 2006
May 2006	April 15, 2006 (eek!)
June 2006	May 15, 2006

Have an idea for an article, or is there information you would like to see in the newsletter? Email Ralph at news_editor@cpakayaker.com or call at 301-498-0722.

THE CHESAPEAKE PADDLERS ASSOCIATION

The mission of the Chesapeake Paddlers Association is to provide a way for people to enjoy sea kayaking within the Chesapeake Bay area and to promote safe sea kayaking practices through educating the local sea kayaking community and the interested public.

Steering Committee:

Coordinator—Barry Marsh, 410-728-4016, coordinator@cpakayaker.com

Membership, subscriptions—Sue Bauer, 410-531-5641, c/o CPA, PO Box 341 Greenbelt, MD 20768, membership@cpakayaker.com

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Potomac Pirate King—Dick Rock, 703-780-6605 pirates_potomac@cpakayaker.com

Patuxent Pirate King—Dan Wells, 410-414-2660, pirates_patuxent@cpakayaker.com; Don Polakovics, 301-866-0437,

pirates_patuxent2@cpakayaker.com

Georgetown Pirate Committee—Cyndi Janetko, 703-241-0036; Dave Biss, 703-241-0036; David Moore, 301-445-3273; pirates_georgetown@cpakayaker.com

Baltimore Pirate King—Bob Huber, 410-335-0994, pirates_baltimore@cpakayaker.com

Algonkian Pirate King—Jeff Walaszek, 703-670-7712, pirates_algonkian@cpakayaker.com

Sugarloaf Pirate Queen—Deb McKenzie, 240-601-1440, pirates_sugarloaf@cpakayaker.com

Pirate Queen of the North—Wendy Baker-Davis, 717-293-1086, pirates_north@cpakayaker.com

MEMBERSHIP: Subscription to the Chesapeake Paddler is included with membership. Membership is \$10/year or \$20/2 years. Send checks or changes of membership information to CPA, PO Box 341, Greenbelt, MD 20768. DO NOT send them to the newsletter editors.

DEADLINES: Closing date for articles, trip reports, information and advertisements is the 15th of the month prior to the next issue. The editors retain the right to edit or not to print any submitted material. See advertising information in the Classifieds section.

The Chesapeake Paddler is published monthly, except Nov-Feb and may be reprinted whole or in part if credit is given to this newsletter and any identified author (unless an article is specifically copyrighted), and a courtesy copy is sent to the Managing Editor.

Admiral's Walk



Ahoy, Paddlers!

Spring is almost here, and with spring comes the start of most members' paddling seasons. Over the next few months there will be many opportunities for you to become actively involved with your club. We're kicking the year off with two **Trip/Event Planning Meetings**, the first in Maryland on March 11 (preceded by a Steering Committee meeting, open to all members) and the second in Virginia on April 8; further info on both meetings is included on the website and newsletter calendars. Everyone is welcome to attend these meetings to suggest and schedule trips and events for the coming year.

The kayak demo day season will soon be here, and we're always looking for paddlers to help at the various events. Paddlers will be needed to support this year's **charity swim supports**, the first of which is in May.

As we do every year, we have a lot of exciting activities planned for 2006. Our annual **SK102 at Lake Anna** will be in late April, and the **weekly Piracies** should all be kicking off their new year in April or May. Through the efforts of Cyndi Janetzko and Brian Blankinship, we'll be launching a new **CPA Race Series** this year, with the first race scheduled for May. Of course, after the Trip/Event Planning Meetings, our calendar will start to fill up with all those wonderful trips our members are planning.

Reports of the recent on-water death of a local paddler serve to remind us of the hazards of our sport. While we are saddened to learn of the loss of a paddler, lessons may be learned from kayaking accidents and fatalities. Always remember to check the weather forecast and water conditions before you go paddling, and pay close attention to changing conditions and forecasts during a trip or event. Dress for the weather and water temperatures. Have the skills, experience, and gear you need to handle the conditions you may encounter. Tell someone ashore where you're going, what route you're taking, and when you expect to return. Plan alternate takeouts. Carry a VHF radio and a cell phone, and paddle with other experienced paddlers. Proper planning and on-water skills and diligence are keys to the safe enjoyment of our great sport.

Happy and safe paddling. See ya at the Trip/Event Planning Meetings and on the water,

Barry
CPA Coordinator



(Continued from page 1) **Gale Warning!**

Along the way Brian continually assessed the conditions and eventually changed our course to the leeward side of Mayo Point (a mile NW of Turkey Point). Paddling with the wind a few degrees off the starboard bow made it hard to hold position without broaching. We beached our boats on the leeward side of Mayo Point and Brian discovered his skeg controller had broken leaving the skeg fully extended. He jammed the skeg back into its box, accepting the kink in the cable rather than being forced to use a skeg in these conditions.

I wanted to try rolling and self rescuing in the cold water. Our location (Selby Bay) provided some protection from the wind and waves. I knocked out two [Pawlata rolls](#). The second took two tries due to a diving paddle. We then paddled out into the waves and I did a self rescue. The wind and cold made it harder, but I quickly re-entered my P&H Sirius. We paddled back to the beach and I emptied the kayak.

It was time to demonstrate my skill with a following sea. The tide turned while we were out, making the waves steeper now that the tide was against the wind. On our way back towards Turkey Point we surfed the 2+ foot waves at a slight angle. I unsuccessfully tried to rudder to stay headed down wave and broached. When I capsized, Brian was downwind and fought to turn towards me. Before he could maneuver around, I did my first "combat" roll. After some

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CPA Pool Sessions, 2005-2006

Where: Fairland Aquatic Center,
Burtonsville, MD

When: Saturdays, now through spring

Time: 4-5:50 pm and 5:50-7:45 pm

Fee: \$7 per person. Pay at FAC

These are open sessions, not lessons. You must bring your own boat and gear.

Required:

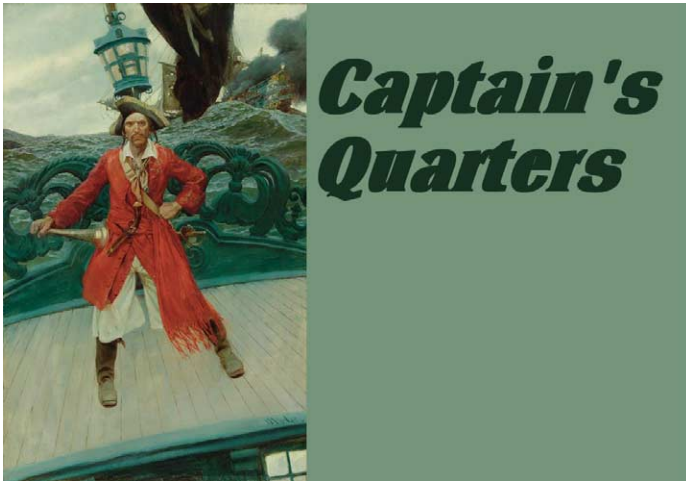
1. Boats and gear must be clear of leaves, mud, grass, etc.
2. A reservation. To get a reservation, go to <http://www.cpakayaker.com/pool.htm> (preferred) or call 301-559-3345 by the Thursday prior to the session; leave a message with the following information:
 - a. your name and phone number
 - b. date of session
 - c. time slot
 - d. number and type of boats (WW or sea kayak)

You will receive a reservation number. If you *do not* receive a reservation number, you *do NOT* have a reservation. Reservations will not be accepted more than 2 weeks in advance.

Directions: Take your best route to I-95 between Baltimore and Washington. Exit at MD-198 West. Turn left at 2nd light, Old Gunpowder Road. The pool is about a half mile down on the right. Boat entrance is around to the left side of the building. In case of inclement weather, call the center to see if it is open: 301-206-2359



Note that new forum has been added at the CPA Kayaker Forum Index, "[Indoor Pool Sessions.](#)"



CPA Trip/Event Planning Meetings Scheduled

Address: 7914 Belgaro Road, Laurel, MD (in Howard County)

When: March 11, 2006 (Saturday)

Organizer(s): Led by Ralph Heimlich 301-498-0918 (H).

The first of two CPA Trip Planning Meetings in the spring is in Maryland on March 11 (Saturday). Everyone is welcome. The purpose of these meetings is to identify and promote trip and event ideas for the CPA throughout the coming season, and also just for winter kayaker camaraderie. A Steering Committee Meeting, open to all CPA members, will be held starting at 11 AM prior to the Maryland meeting. A light lunch (soup and crackers) will be served at noon. The Planning Meeting starts after lunch.

The second Planning meeting will be in Virginia on April 8 (Saturday) at the home of Cyndi Janetzko, 703-241-0036 and Dave Biss, 703-241-0036, 6668 Barrett Rd, Falls Church, VA 22042.

Got some great ideas for a day paddle? Car- or Kayak camping trip? Extended excursion? Training event? Bring them to the March Maryland and April Virginia CPA Planning Meetings!!

Please come prepared to discuss the following:

- * Trip type and description
- * Trip date
- * Trip location

(Continued from page 3) **Gale Warning!**

congratulations we continued our paddle back. Again, I broached but this time my roll failed. I only had a roll on one side, and it was the wrong side for these waves. I banged the hull and swept my hands. Knowing Brian was not close, I punched out. Brian made sure I was OK and paddled to the bow. He lifted the bow with one hand, afraid to let go of his paddle. I hung onto the craft while Brian maneuvered it, and quickly completed the assisted rescue.

Our intermediate destination was the standing wave set at the end of Turkey Point. But once again, paddling at an angle to the waves, now approaching 3 feet, caused me to broach and capsize. I wet exited without attempting a roll ... I was relying on my partner for yet another assisted rescue. Clearly I was tired and this was affecting my judgment and placing my partner at risk. Brian decided we should head straight down wave to shore. This heading allowed me to stay upright until we landed.

I may have been able to continue, but after three rolls and rescues, not to mention paddling against gale force winds, I was beat ... and Brian knew it. The thought of paddling broadside to the now over 3 foot waves to get out past the standing waves at Turkey Point didn't seem a good idea to Brian. He knew that if we had to do another rescue, we could end up in the pylons of the piers before we I could get back in my boat. Once we rounded Turkey Point, we would no longer be carried towards shore if there was a problem, we would be carried out into the Bay.

Fortunately the resident of the house next to the beach where we landed gave Brian a ride the 2.5 miles back to his car. On the way, the driver mentioned the episode of "I Shouldn't Be Alive" featuring the kayakers in Rosario Straight. Brian suggested the big difference between us and them was that we didn't let testosterone cause us to make the final mistake they made. Instead we opted out of the danger and took the ride.

After reflecting on the day's experience I am a better kayaker. I am more knowledgeable about my skill level. Clearly, practicing rolls and rescues in calm warm water is one thing, executing them in strong winds and seas and in cold water and air is something else entirely. The best kayakers are those that have both good skills AND good judgment. The latter is critical. I must admit some disappointment at not being able to make it back all the way to our put-in but I will have an opportunity to paddle again in similar conditions if I choose.

2006 13th Annual 7.5 mile Potomac River Swim for the Environment

By Cheryl Wagner



The Saturday, June 3, 2006 Potomac River Swim for the environment needs support kayakers to ensure the success of the swim and safety of the swimmers. (As a new feature this year, we have 3 swimmers doing a double crossing. These three will begin swimming very early from Point Lookout, and then joining the main group of swimmers for the swim to Point Lookout. Kayakers who are interested in also doing a double crossing should contact Cheryl Wagner. (PLEASE NOTE that emergency support ambulances, Coast Guard, and DNR police will not be available until the official race start. The double-cross swimmers are providing their own boat and kayak support.) Free camping is available for all Potomac Swim paddlers at Point Lookout State Park Friday

night, June 2, and Saturday night, June 3. A complimentary pasta supper will be served Friday, June 2, 6:30PM at the water safety planning meeting at Trinity Parish Hall, St. Mary's City.

Kayakers need to report to the dock at Point Lookout State Park at 6AM Saturday morning, June 3. Boaters will launch and paddlers will be transported (on a skipjack) across the Potomac River to the start. The swim starts at Hull Neck, Va. Swimmers swim across the river, to Point Lookout accompanied by individual kayakers. Kayakers support an individual swimmer by giving them food and water, helping them stay on course, and signaling for help if the swimmers need assistance. A free picnic sponsored by the park, Potomac River Association, Southern Maryland Sierra Club, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin--all of whom benefit from the pledge money raised by the swimmers--will follow the swim. Tee shirts designed by local artist Jeanne Hammett to commemorate the event will be distributed to all involved. For info, contact:

Potomac River Swim for the Environment
 c/o Cheryl Wagner (202) 387-2361 Home Phone
 3103 Hawthorne Drive, NE (202) 478-0948 Fax
 Washington, DC 20017-1040 Email: [<cherylw@crosslink.net>](mailto:cherylw@crosslink.net)
 Web: <http://www.crosslink.net/~cherylw/pr2006i.htm>



Susan wading in Blackwater Sound

Lady Racer

By Susan Williams Lewonski

The Bogey (13.2 miles) and Bacall (6 miles) Races were held at Key Largo, Florida, on February 4-5, 2006, and I participated as a kayak racer. Kathy Kenley, my best friend, dragonboat and kayak coach, and mentor for years, has been racing the Bogey & Bacall since its inception a decade ago, so when she said I could do this race, I trusted her implicitly. As soon as I looked at the water, I knew that the southerly 20-25 knot winds were going to make for a rough ride across Blackwater Sound. There would be a steady burst of wind-driven beam waves for the 3.9 mile open water crossing, the first leg of the Bogey Race on Saturday. As I looked out across the water, I could barely make out the tops of the Bogeys, tiny pinhead-sized islands of red mangrove on the horizon. I began to pray when the first big beam wave hit, then expanded my prayer recipient list (Jesus, Allah, Ganish, Mother Nature, Buddha, Neptune...) as the waves crashed over my deck, sometimes rolling up to my chest. The Bogeys seemed very far away as all 60 of the other racers passed me. My biceps began to burn and I knew I was paddling very poorly. I began to chant, "Relax your hips . . . waves go up and down, . . . relax your hips . . . lean into the waves . . . the waves go up and down." Still the Bogeys seemed no closer, and soon the chase boat was

circling behind me. If I had looked up, I'm sure vultures would have been circling, waiting for their "seafood" opportunity.

Finally the opening to the Bogeys neared and I knew I was going to make it. Suddenly things changed— my stroke improved as the sight of land motivated me. I pounded out the last 100 yards and made it inside the mangroves. My GPS registered 3.92 miles of open water crossing. I had never accomplished such a feat before and was ecstatic. But then came reality . . . I had more than 9 miles still to go to finish this race. As I rounded a turn in the mangroves, two very wet people were bailing out their canoe. How they made it is a mystery to me. I later learned that a guy in a PAX 20 (the same boat Kathy and I are building in her basement) had also overturned in the mangroves. I consoled myself by thinking that they were probably just as elated as I was to make the open water crossing and probably capsized out of pure gratitude to be alive.

Kathy had said that the water in Florida Bay on the other side of the Bogeys was shallow—so shallow that you just have to relax and slog through it. Well, I rounded into the Gulf smack into 20-25 knot headwinds and deep water. The tide was coming in and my promised shallow slogging calm water was disappearing. Headwinds and wind driven waves came straight over my bow. My boat felt rock-solid. I love headwinds, and with my weight and the weight of my boat, I began to fly. There was no relaxation here because stopping meant being blown backwards. I powered up and was gaining on Kathy, ready to blast her for the lack of calm shallow water that she promised me. I passed lighter people right and left in lighter boats were working hard while I was cruising. Come on headwinds, try and get me! My boat crashed down over a wave. Yee-haw, bring it on! I was closing in on Kathy, and I was determined to give her an earful as I passed.

But it was not to be. As we turned on the next leg of the race, beam waves from Florida Bay now crashed at me from the other side of my boat. I was close to land this time, and for some reason, possibly fear being a great motivator, I was still passing people. My boat felt steady as a rock as others I passed were wobbling about like fishing bobbers in the waves. I passed a tandem so close to the mangroves I thought they'd be blown into them. As I passed a man in a QCC, awash in beam seas, he yelled something through the wind about the water being wild. I yelled back, "No worries, I already made peace with God."

As I entered the mangroves at last, all of a sudden, I realized I was in the tropics. Key Largo, even in February and even with 20 knot winds, was hot. REALLY hot. There is no rest for the weary and in the heat and still air of the mangroves, I slogged onward. My GPS said I still had over 6 miles to go. Winding my way through the mangroves, I came back out into Blackwater Sound, my nemesis. We were supposed to head toward the Marriott, the largest building we could see. What large building? All I saw were some little dots on the horizon way across the sound. The QCC guy came up beside me. "Do you see the buoy?" he said. "No," I replied, "Everything looks the same to me." We went side by side for some time and finally we saw some racers way up ahead of us, heading toward something orange. "I think that's it," he said, "by the big building with the blue roof."

(Continued on page 9)

CPA Trip Requirements and Ratings

All trips are organized by and for members of the club. When you participate, please remember that trip leaders are "hosts", not professional guides, but you must be willing to follow their instructions. They are neither necessarily trained in first aid or CPR, nor do they always carry first aid equipment or safety devices for your use.

You, and you alone, are responsible for your personal safety.

Trip leaders will pre-screen all participants for skills, equipment and willingness to abide by club rules and policies. If you wish to join a trip, you must contact the leader in advance.

REQUIREMENTS

Equipment: While on the water, all paddlers must wear PFDs, spray skirts

and clothes appropriate to the water temperature. Boats must have water-tight bulkheads or flotation devices to prevent the kayak from swamping when capsized. All paddlers must have—and know how to use—a pump, paddle float and whistle. On the day of the trip, leaders may refuse to admit participants for noncompliance with any of these requirements, so if you are not sure, discuss it with the leader in advance!

Waivers: All participants in CPA-sponsored trips must sign legal release forms each time before setting out on the water. Only one release per season is needed for regularly scheduled events (e.g., the weekly activities of the "pirates"). The legal release absolves all participating CPA members from legal liability for the injury or death of a fellow participant.

RATINGS:

First Timers: Participants have never paddled before. No prior skills needed.

Beginners: Participants have paddled some, taken classes, or have been on short (up to 4-mile) trips and can do a wet exit and paddle float re-entry.

Advanced Beginners: Participants have been on longer trips (up to 10 miles, full-day outings), have some experience with varying conditions such as winds and waves and have good rescue and groups paddling skills.

Intermediate Paddlers: Participants are comfortable with open-water crossings of 2+ miles, can handle a variety of water conditions and have strong self- and group-rescue skills.

Calendar

Participants in CPA events must read and comply with the statement of CPA trips requirements and ratings. Please contact the trip leaders in advance, even if you are familiar with the area being paddled. They need contact information in case of changes, and there may be space limitations or other trip restrictions.

March	<p>11 (Sat) Trip/Event Planning Meeting for 2006, Maryland (Ralph Heimlich)</p> <p>19 (Sun) Greenland Paddle Workshop see http://www.cpakayaker.com/events.html?event_id=306, Led by Gina Cicotello (301) 263-9371. Where: Carderock (Bethesda, MD) in the pavilion</p>
April	<p>8(Sat) Trip/Event Planning Meeting for 2006, Virginia (Dave Biss and Cyndi Janetzko)</p> <p>28-30 (Fri-Sun) (First Timer) 8th Annual SK102</p> <p>Led by Brian Blankinship, SK102@BayKayaking.com The event is geared towards the new paddler and includes free lessons in strokes, bracing, rescues, rolling, and more. Where: Lake Anna, VA.</p>
May	<p>6 (Sat) 6th Annual Chesapeake Paddle Fest, Gunpowder Falls State Park, Hammerman Area http://www.cpakayaker.com/events.html?event_id=310 Led by Hal Ashman 410-335-5352.</p> <p>13 (Sat) CPA Race 2 Miles, Fun Race, 2 Mile race and "fun" race at Jack's Boathouse (Pirates of Georgetown). http://www.cpakayaker.com/events.html?event_id=313 see article.</p>

American Canoe Association Activities

FYI, the American Canoe Association passed a proposal for a Coastal Kayaking Trip Leading Assessment— a pass/fail course with a skills check list and written exam. It is a two day program designed for clubs, schools, camps and commercial entities who lead trips. Those wanting to certify as paddling instructors still take the Instructors workshops. If you want more detail ask me mikearonoff@aol.com, it will go on the ACA website, but I am not sure when.

Mike Aronoff

Off to the Races *(Continued from page 1)*

Brian cranking photo by Ralph Heimlich



Once the person in the lead passes you, you can turn right then rather than go all the way to the mid point. We may simply do a relay race or something else that makes it more fun than a standard sprint-type race.

June 24 will also feature a Recreational Kayak race. Only boats shorter than 14 feet will be allowed to compete and there will be two classes. The first class will be people that paddle a rec boat at least 80% of the time. The second class will be people who paddle a rec boat 20% or less of their paddling time.

Speaking of classes, the "normal" races will be divided into classes and each class will be divided by gender. If we have enough competitors to make it useful, we can also divide by age group. The classes are borrowed from the Blackburn Challenge race:

Kayaks (Racing):

- Racing Kayaks: Less than 20" beam, wing paddles allowed. For those paddlers who concentrate on racing and have the equipment to go with it. Previous top finishers of the Fast Touring Kayak class are encouraged to enter this class.
- Fast Touring Kayaks: 20" beam or greater, wing paddles allowed. For fit paddlers who don't specialize in racing but have faster than average kayaks and/or are faster than average paddlers.

Kayaks (Recreational):

- Touring Kayaks A: 20" beam or greater, 17' or longer, no wing paddles. For first time racers in typical sea kayaks, and experienced paddlers who are less serious about racing.
- Touring Kayaks B: 20" beam or greater, less than 17' in length, no wing paddles. For first time racers and beginner paddlers in slower boats.

Winners in each class will receive a CPA Race medal. Second and third place will receive a ribbon. Every participant will receive a race rocker.

CPA is sponsoring these races for its members so anyone competing either has to already be a member or join CPA. Since the races are being insured by the ACA, competitors will either need to be ACA members or become an event member (\$10).

For those who attend SK102, we are offering a special on ACA membership. They can pay an additional \$20 at SK102 and we will make them ACA members for the year, a \$40 value.

For more information on the CPA Just-For-Fun Kayak Races, visit the Performance Paddling forum at www.cpakayaker.com/forums.

CPA will be providing safety boaters and on water demonstrations for Chesapeake Light Craft's annual **Okoumestock** weekend June 10-11, 2006 (Saturday-Sunday) at Camp Lets on the Rhodes river in southern Anne Arundel County, MD. Contact Greg Welker at gdwelker@verizon.net if you are interested.

Susquehanna Sojourn—Berwick to Safe Harbor Dam—128 miles, three 20 mile paddle days, a NEW bucolic stop or two, otters, eagles, chestnuts, tales from thru-paddlers, and an ice cream social. Register before May 15 at <http://www.acb-online.org/project.cfm?vid=259>

The latest issue of **Wave Length Magazine**, the Feb/Mar MARINE ADVENTURES issue, is now available FREE online at <http://www.WaveLengthMagazine.com>. Articles include wildlife encounters in a Baja lagoon, a grueling solo kayak expedition around remote Haida Gwaii, a trip around two stormy Vancouver Island capes, a mothership trip in the Galapagos, a kayak fishing trip off New England, a 'rediscovery' of the Gulf Islands, and more.

Lady Racer *(Continued from page 6)*

Relieved that I was close to the end, I found renewed strength to finish. To the left of the big orange buoy, further down the shore line, were several other orange buoys. Hallelujah I could see the finish line. The rest was easy. As I rounded the big orange buoy in front of the Marriott and attempted to sprint as best as my exhausted mind and body could manage, I knew I'd be back next year. Kathy finished first in her division with a time that was 7 minutes faster than my 3:06, and I finished 4th. I was the last to cross the open water and was scared out of my wits during most of that crossing. I passed a lot of people in the Gulf headwind, and I made it through the second set of beam waves very strongly, still passing people before we went into the flat water channel.

After much needed reviving, we showered and dressed for the barbecue party that Florida Bay Outfitters throws for the racers. What a party! There was food galore, shrimp, chicken, kielbasi, red beans and rice, Jambalaya, pasta salad, and more. There is also a free flowing drink called a "Pain Killer" (8 oz. dark rum and 3 drops orange juice) that was aptly named. There was excellent live music, and a raffle drawing for racers. Kathy's name was drawn and she won a Current Designs Kestrel kayak! As peaceful sleep was about to overtake me, I realized we were about to get up and do this all over again with the Bacall Race the very next day... for Susan's adventure's in the Bacall send her an email.

How I Found Paddling Skills As A Kayak Racer

As a middle aged, overweight, and novice paddler, I finished last in all 11 races my first year. And I was last by a lot— sometimes the awards would be given out before I even got back. You'd think I'd have been too embarrassed to continue to show up with my plastic recreational boat in the midst of all those fancy racing boats and buff bodies, or asked not to return, or at least been given subtle hints that maybe racing wasn't for me. But none of that ever happened.

The whole reason I started racing was to wear my pink breast cancer survivor hat to every race. I figured that if I could reach just one woman on the shore to show that I was out there trying, and she got the message that she could too, then I won. What I didn't realize, until the following year when I did it all again, was that I was seriously improving my kayaking skills just by showing up.

Seeing, meeting, and observing better paddlers is always an education. I got a lot of encouragement that year, especially from the men. They didn't care that I was last, they kept telling me that they thought it was cool that I just got out there and did it. I frequently got some impromptu lessons, even 30 seconds with an experienced paddler looking at your technique before or after a race can make a dramatic improvement in your stroke.

The race courses themselves challenged me and improved my skills. Twisting, narrow rivers presented turning challenges (I lost my pink hat when I took a swim on a turn at the Toms River Race in New Jersey that fall). Open water crossings presented wind and current challenges. Some of the distances presented challenges. I paddle alone most of the time. Racing allowed me to go into conditions which I was sure I could handle, but would not risk handling on my own. After a race, if I mentioned that I had trouble with something (low tree branches, shallow water, current, wind, turns, etc.) I could always count on generating a lively conversation about how everyone else handled those conditions - what an opportunity to learn!

Last year was my 3rd year racing. Because I got very good at watching and learning from the better paddlers at races, and by practicing what I learned, I brought home several medals last summer. I've become a confirmed "hardware junkie." After swimming two years in a row on the Toms River Race turns, I won my division last year by a decent margin. Didn't ever find my pink hat though.

I strongly encourage every novice kayaker who I meet to go to as many races as possible. Your mom was right, it doesn't matter if you win or lose, it's how you improve that counts. Challenge yourself. Dare to be last in every race. See what it feels like to become better than what you are.

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Inside our March 2006 issue:

- **Gale Warning!**
- **CPA Race Series**
- **Trip/Event Planning Meetings**
- **Lady Racer**
- **Potomac River Swim Support**
- **Pool Session sign up info**

Upside down in her kayak...at the pool photo by Greg Welker

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REMINDER: Please check your mailing label for your membership expiration date. If your CPA membership has expired, or will expire soon, please send in your dues. SEE BOX ON PAGE 2 FOR ADDRESS.