

CPA Paddler Profile ~ Fran Arnott

Interview by Rick Wiebush



Fran Boat Shopping at the
2013 Jersey Paddler Show
Photograph by Tom Hunt

Lives in: Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Real job: I work for a small sales and marketing firm. I used to sell pharmaceuticals but left that for a less stressful life.

Member of a Piracy? The new Pirate of the Lakes. We have been meeting every Tuesday, and I find it a great opportunity to paddle with new people and share experiences and skills. I used to only paddle on weekends, so it offers something new.

Paddling Buddies: Tom Hunt, my husband. Sandy Bixler and Dave Bronson have become great paddling buddies.

Number years paddling: 5½! (We won't count the year, two decades ago, we had a flat bottom, tandem divorce boat that weighed as much as my first car!)

How did you get involved in kayaking? When we moved "down south" to central PA I found the summers to be hot and humid. I enjoyed running and biking but grew to dislike getting up pre-dawn to beat the heat. We went on a guided tour in a tandem up Somes Sound, Mt. Desert Island, Maine in the early 90s. It was geologically stunning through the fog! I loved it! Right after that, Tom and I bought the above cursed tandem, and I enjoyed getting wet and the cool breezes on the river. It hung in the garage for a decade and a half because it was too heavy. About five years ago we each bought 14 foot Necky Manitou, and I piddle paddled around for a year before I bought my Current Design Willow.

How did you learn to sea kayak? I have to admit, I have never been an athlete. I just love the outdoors and like to move my body. I didn't really move forward until I took a class with Ben Lawry and did the Kiptopeke Symposium last year which I really enjoyed. It motivated me to learn more. I set a goal to roll before I turned 55,

and I got it in with a few weeks to spare! I just finished training in Ithaca, New York with Rick Wiebush, and I have been setting goals for myself. The nice thing about kayaking is that technique overrides strength and it is something us "old" people can keep improving on!

Any formal training or ACA/BCU certifications: No certifications, just workshops.

Boat usually paddled: Current Design Willow 15' 6" white

Type paddle used: Euro

Do you do any other type of paddling besides sea kayaking? I tip and sink canoes, and I am afraid of what I would do on a SUP. So, the answer is no.

Do you regularly do any other outdoor activities? I swim laps and walk.

How often do you paddle in summer? Two times a week.

Do any winter paddling? Yes. I prefer cooler weather, so I bought a dry suit at the end of last year. I am a bit of a nerd, so I read through the National Center for Cold Water Safety website and scared myself to death, swearing I wouldn't get on the water until July. But I started the season in January after testing my gear in the water and enjoyed a couple paddles each month.

Go to pool sessions? No.

Favorite local paddling location: Lake Clarke, our piracy paddle. There is some open water and some islands that are deemed International Important Bird Areas. Lock 15 at the Conowingo Pond located below the Holtwood Dam on the Susquehanna River is another favorite as it has rock formations and some fun water to play in.

Favorite non-local location: Really enjoyed the barrier islands off the coast of North Carolina last year.

Best paddling trip/experience ever and why: Our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary was a trip to paddle the Fulton Chain of Lakes in the Adirondacks. It was desolate before tourist season, and it became unusually sunny and warm. We had the place to ourselves. The water was crystal clear, and it was the first time I started to play in my boat. I had such a sense of peace on the water like I had never experienced before.

Scariest/most dangerous trip/experience and why: Very early on when I thought you just get in, paddle, and all would be well, I was paddling with the skeg down in windy, rough conditions. I tried to cut through a marina, and I could not control my boat. My knees were knocking as I was violently blown into the motor boats, and I had no idea how to turn my boat in the wind. I heard Tom yelling "skeg up" but was afraid to take my hand off the paddle! I've come a long way, and I recommend formal lessons to all beginners!

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