

Who's Paddling? Woody Woodward

By Dave Biss



Woody lives in Manassas, VA and has been a member of the CPA since mid-1999.

What got you started paddling? I was at work one day and as usual I always go in early and get my coffee. There was a guy who had a catalog of beautiful wood strip canoes. I said "They are nice, but I already have a canoe." He then told me that they make kayaks too. So after looking into it, I went and got a kit for a wood strip kayak and built it in my basement. That was the winter of 1999. Now, having had no other kayak that this one in my life, and not knowing better, my first day out was January 1st, 2000. I was wearing wind pants and a wind jacket and the water was dripping off my paddle and freezing as it hit the deck. Soon after that day, I was hanging out on kayak websites and that trip was even posted. I am sure that the write up is still out there. The first comment that I received about that trip report was "You were lucky to have survived." After hearing that, I started trying to learn about cold water and how

dangerous it was as well as what skills I might need to paddle, safely.

If you could describe your favorite boat, what would it be like? I have a few kayaks that I enjoy, but I cannot say what kayak would be my favorite. I don't think I have ever sold a kayak. Maybe I gave away one which belonged to my daughter. All the kayaks that I have paddled have their strengths and weaknesses. They all have their purposes and I enjoy them for that. I still even have one that I cannot fit into anymore.

I know that you have paddled a lot with your daughter. Can you describe what that is like? It has always been an extreme bonding experience to share paddling experiences and to share nature with your kin. Kayaking is a way to share early life experiences with others.

You have paddled many places in this area, do you have a favorite? Not a favorite place, but I do rather have a favorite type of conditions. I like it when it is quiet. I like the feeling of being alone. But I also like

the camaraderie while paddling with others. I've told people I can paddle alone when paddling with others. When I am paddling in a group, talking and listening, and sometimes just taking strokes, I can zone out, putting it all on automatic. That is my favorite time; my favorite place; my favorite condition of paddling: a Zen-type state.

If you had a paddle philosophy, how would you describe it? For me, again, it is that mental state. Sometimes paddling is about distance, sometimes skills, sometimes to look at birds. Early on when I was beginning to paddle, it was all about the skills which I focused on. I wanted to make sure that I could learn the skills that would help me out and I wanted to make sure that those skills would be automatic in any conditions later, when I needed them. I did that to allow me to get into that Zen state, and not to have to think about my paddling while I was out. I always wanted to be able to get prepared so that I could just enjoy where I was.

Do you have a most memorable trip with the CPA, which you can describe? There were many but I do have a coolest one I remember. It was a Bill Dodge trip. Although I think that every single Bill Dodge trip would be in the list of the coolest trips. One that sticks out was a trip at New Point Comfort. On that trip we had a fast group and a slow group. I was stuck with the slow group so that I could help out. I really wanted to be with the fast group. I didn't want to paddle-paddle then glide; paddle-paddle, then glide. Well, it turned out that the slow group was the best place to be that day. A pod of dolphins came up and played with us; swimming around us, passing under the kayaks. Suddenly it was about being there and enjoying myself in the moment. I don't know that I have a favorite trip out of the man, but that one I remember a lot.

What season would be your favorite paddling season? All seasons have their strengths and weaknesses. In summer you can jump in and play since the water is so warm, but you have to watch out for boats. In the winter there is the cold water to deal with but there is far less boats to watch for. And I think that all seasons are different, even those in between seasons. They all have their good points and bad points. I used to hate going out early in the morning when it was cold but then after I was out, I enjoyed myself. For me it is just about being out there and enjoying it for the moment.

Tell everyone I said "Hi."

Interview for this *Who's Paddling?* was conducted on March 11, 2008.