

# Paddler Profile: Carolyn Sanford

By Bob Browning

**Lives in:** Chesapeake, VA

**Real job:** Retired Public Health Nurse, officially over 1 year retired. I was a dedicated state employee for over 36 years. My real job is now to just enjoy life.

**Do you regularly attend a Piracy?** No, but I wish there was one in southern Virginia. I am hoping to start one in my area this year.

**Number of years**

**paddling ?** Kayaking 6 years, but I have canoed flat and white water for many years.

**How did you get involved in sea kayaking ?** I borrowed a friend's kayak and found out I really enjoyed it much more than canoeing. Being in control of your own boat as well as sitting lower in the water appealed to me.

**What boats do you paddle ?** Currently I paddle a Valley Avocet LV 15' 11", but I had an Epic 16x until recently. My first boat was a Tsunami wilderness 135, which I still have.

**Rudder or skeg?** Skeg

**Type paddle used ?** I use a Euro paddle but did buy a Greenland and hope to use it some this year.

**Do you do any other type of paddling besides sea kayaking ?** Canoeing, and I have tried SUP and enjoyed it. I have also done whitewater rafting.

**Do you regularly do any other outdoor activities ?** I am an avid cyclist and enjoy hiking as well. Although I love downhill skiing, my fear of falling or being hit outweighs my desire to ski. I do cross country skiing, but my skill level is very low.

**How often on average do you paddle between May and October?** I try to get on the water 1-2 times a week.

**Do any winter paddling?** Yes, although this past winter I was in recovery mode because of my broken arm.

**Favorite local paddling location?** My go-to place is the Dismal Swamp because of the easy access and tranquility. There's no getting lost and I can get into zen mood and not think. I really love it.

**Favorite CPA trip you've ever been on and why?** They've all been great and memorable. I especially enjoyed the practice kayak



Photo/Ralph Heimlich

camping trip on the Patuxent River a couple of years ago. The camaraderie and scenery were memorable. Despite a sudden pop-up thunderstorm, we all survived. I think being on an island without the distractions of electronics, etc. made the trip.

**Coollest paddling trip you've ever been on anywhere and why?**

I had the opportunity to paddle in Florida the month I retired with a one-way plane ticket and not knowing when I was coming back. In-and- of

itself, that set the stage for a memorable experience. Every day we explored a new area. One of my favorite days was when we were paddling at Sanibel Island and 2 or 3 dolphins started playing chase under and around our kayaks. It was so thrilling to watch them through the crystal clear water.

**Scariest/most dangerous trip/experience and why ?** This question has two answers. The scariest experience was on the same trip to Florida when we left St. George for Little St. George Island to camp. The sun was starting to set and the currents were not in our favor. I saw the destination and was determined I was going to make it before the sharks ate me for supper. Happily, we all made it and I learned a lesson in currents.

Many CPA members may have heard about the tree limb falling on my arm and head and breaking my arm on Nov. 10, 2017. It could have been so much worse. The wind blew as I was searching for a suitable bathroom area. Luckily, the tree limb hit me before I stripped down to my birthday suit. I came running out of the woods, "I need help"! Everyone was wonderful and assisted me. The goose egg on my head was a concern, but I assured everyone I had a very hard head. I found out I had a totally displaced ulna, which is the bone along the outer part of the lower arm. A stranger drove me back to Chickahominy Campground where I was tended to, undressed, cared for and nursed in a very compassionate way. My words can't say enough for what everyone did for me. My tent and car were packed, my boat was towed, and I was driven to the hospital on a Friday afternoon! I survived and I promised I'd be back.

**Future bucket list trip(s)?** Alaska.

**Three things you like most about paddling ?** Connecting with nature, fulfilling my need for exercise and activity, and the spiritual mind-body connection.

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