

# West Michigan Coastal Kayaker



WMCKA is affiliated with the ACA through it's Paddle America program

The Newsletter of the  
West Michigan  
Coastal Kayaker's Association

Spring 2009

## Pigeon River by Brian Walker

I stopped by my local Paddle shop (Kayak-Kayak of Holland) Friday after work. I asked the owner, Skip, if anyone would be paddling this weekend. Since I didn't go to the RKC Swap Day I needed to get on the water. Skip told me someone emailed him about paddling. Skip told him to meet him at Pigeon River at 9 am Saturday morning. Well, something came up so Skip would not be able to go. I told Skip that I would meet the guy, Heath, at the launch off Holly Avenue.

I arrived at the boat launch around 8:50, a few minutes later than I wanted to. It was 32 degrees so I had to start the van to get the frost off the windshield. I pulled in the boat launch and saw another mini van with a kayak on top. When I started to back my



van down the hill to the ramp, I saw a little boy doing donuts in his electric wheel chair. That's when I realized that the kayak was a tandem. I figured that Heath must have another son or daughter going with us. I got out of the van and introduced myself, figuring that this must be the guy I was supposed to meet. No one else was with him so I figured the little boy in the wheel chair (his name is Dalton) must be going.

Heath asked me if I could help him take his kayak off the top of his van so I said sure. We put the boat near the water's edge. He had two clips on each side of the combing by the front seat. I was thinking maybe a fishing pole or something. I was wrong. He grabbed a paddle and clipped it in the clips and attached a paddle leash. Only at this point did I realize that Dalton was for sure going with us. He put Dalton in the front seat of the tandem and we pulled the vehicles up to park. We walked down and I launched Heath and Dalton in their Wilderness System Tandem.

We began our paddle around 9 am and the fog, sun, no wind and chilly air was just what the doctor ordered. The hardest thing I had to do was flip a coin to decide what boat to paddle. The P & H Capella 160 won the toss. Right off the boat launch the ducks



were flying, sitting, swimming. Heath asked Dalton if he saw the ducks and Dalton said he could. I was still unsure at this time if Dalton had been born with this disability or if it had happened in an accident.

We started talking about different place to paddle in the area. I told him about a book by Jerry Dennis called Canoeing Michigan that would give him all the information he needed on what rivers to paddle.

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## President's Paddle



Our club experienced an awesome Annual Gathering at Mesick! With fantastic weather and great company there were a few things that separated this outing. We had 80 plus members, family and guests who dined on a fantastic offering of roasted turkey prepared by our own board member, Bob Burmania. Thanks, Bob, for your excellent gift of your talent! Thanks also to board member Bill Keith and wife Anne for hosting the gathering and making the arrangements with the Northern Exposure Campground which had fantastic facilities, water front vistas and campsites for us! It was a great weekend for our club.

The attendance of members from two other groups made for a great outing. Thank you WeMogs and GLAC (Muskegon based West Michigan Outdoor Group and Kalamazoo based Great Lakes Adventure Club).

Thank you for electing me as your new club president. I look forward to serving you and this great club! Outside of my family, you are the most important people in the world to me. I don't ever want to attend a funeral of a club member or friend who has drowned, much less while kayaking and not wearing a PFD (personal flotation device). Even less while I am president of this organization!

Did you know that of the 155 kayaker fatalities reported to the US Coast Guard between the years 1996-2002, half of those fatalities were people not wearing PFDs? PFD non-use is the most prevalent risk factor among fatalities! If you want to read more about this, click on the link named [Critical Judgment I & II: Understanding and Preventing Canoe and Kayak Fatalities](#) on the American Canoe Association website under [Additional Resources](#)— at the bottom of the page.

### **Three Reasons to wear a PFD**

**First and foremost:** Your own safety and the safety of others in your group. Once the person is in the water, others are going to take risks to assist the swimmer. If that swimmer isn't wearing a PFD, the danger gets escalated exponentially. If someone is in need of help and the rescuer isn't wearing a PFD, then there is the risk of more than one person becoming a swimmer at high risk of drowning.

**Second:** If you for some reason ignore the first reason— think of the longevity of our organization: West Michigan Coastal Kayaker's Association. It is our club rule that PFDs must be worn at all club functions. Don't attend a club function without a PFD. It is an ACA rule that as a Paddle America Club, all kayakers at

out functions must wear PFDs. If we were to experience a drowning incident at a club function, our club would lose our insurance and have no chance of attaining insurance from any other source. Without an insurance policy we would never attract certified instructors to our Symposium or other events, which would also cause our club to cease to exist.

If you are paddling on water where you can't possibly fit below the surface, anywhere in the body of water, while sitting, much less standing, I can see why you could take your PFD off, if paddling on your own time. I have done this in the past which brings us to my last reason to wear a PFD.

**Third:** Set an example for young people and new kayakers that your personal priority is teaching and modeling our sport of kayaking in a safe and responsible manner. Wear your PFD all of the time. A PFD in your kayak, but not being worn is no more useful than a boat anchor.

It was an email from an observant guest attending our Mesick gathering that really was the catalyst for this message! I have to share the experience that happened to our impromptu group that paddled the Pine River on Sunday during the Mesick weekend. At the put-in at Peterson Bridge some members met a young couple that were alone and invited them to join us. (Good job on the club hospitality!) The couple accepted the offer and were just ahead of our members in the water. Both of them had PFDs in their kayaks, but not being worn. The girl soon became a swimmer not 10 minutes into the trip. Members all assisted in the process of recovery and the cold water temperature definitely had a shock factor to the swimmer. Both of these young people were wearing their PFDs for the remainder of a very enjoyable paddle! At least they learned a valuable lesson and had others to surround them when needed.

Please see Lori Stegmeier's article [Sunday Morning Baptisms](#) on the club website—Fall 2007 newsletter, which outlines safety lessons learned that pertain to any paddling group, large or small, coastal paddle or river trip.

See You in the Water!

*Steve Adsmond*

## Cooler Kayak Hauler!



## Thanks Bob and Kathy!



When WMCKA members meet we like to kayak, but we also like to eat. Thanks to Bob and Kathy Burmania our outings are extra special because of the delicious food they prepare. Bob has roasted pigs, turkeys, hot dogs and whatever else we have asked of him. What most people do not realize is that he starts preparing for the events days before they actually began. Not only does he do the shopping, he packed up his cookers, pots, pans, etc. to make our meals fantastic. He and Kathy announced at the Messick outing that they will be handing the responsibilities over to someone else.

About 20 years ago, Kathy was a single mom of three. She was on her sailboat at Hartshorn Marina in Muskegon. Her motor had broken and stopped working and she was trying to fix it. She had the manual on the seat and oil on her face. She thought she must have looked interesting (?). Apparently Bob thought so, because he sailed over and, she said, "One flick of his fingers, he had it fixed!" Kathy and her dog, a Samoyed, joined Bob and his friend on a sail that day and they have been sailing together ever since!

They were married 3 years later and just celebrated their 17th anniversary on January 1. (Happy New Year!)

Bob grew up as a third generation John Deere Dealer in Byron Center. He then moved on to long haul trucking and then to building and home repair. Kathy is an Occupational Therapist, currently working for the school system and for a community based rehab agency. They have 5 children and 10 grandchildren between them. They are proud to say that the children and grandchildren appreciate grandparents who like to boat, ski, camp and bike with them!



We asked Bob what he would like to do now that he will have so much time on his hands. *He thought it might be nice to go kayaking!*



## For Sale

Non-commercial "For Sale" and "Wanted" ads are available for WMCKA members and other area clubs. Each ad will appear for **two issues** unless the individual placing the ad notifies the editor otherwise. Ads should be submitted in electronic format to the editor at:

newsletter@wmcka.org

**WMCKA Club owned EPI Kid's Kayaks**—Four in color yellow and reddish-maroon. Choice. \$300/each. Call 231-924-3719 or email [Adsmond@comcast.net](mailto:Adsmond@comcast.net) The board of directors is offering these boats for sale with the express intent to use the funds generated from the sale to purchase more kayaks that better fit the needs of the Symposium Kid's Program.

BB Valkyrie For Sale. Beautiful condition. Compass. Large back hatch for touring. Tow cleat, front zip spray skirt, extra fiberglass bottom strip. Bottom and top refinished by AI and never paddled after refinishing was done. \$1,800.00 Star Swift: [MarisStellaMary@gmail.com](mailto:MarisStellaMary@gmail.com)

### Pigeon River-cont.

Heath explained that he could only paddle for about an hour because he was going to the Michigan game. I didn't hold that against him (GO BUCKEYES!) I said that would not be a problem so we continued to paddle. We went by more ducks and eventually our conversation turned to Dalton. He said that when Dalton was 3 he was doing flips on the trampoline. (Dalton pipes up and says, "I can still do somersaults!") I asked Dalton if he was having a good time and he said yes. Then I asked if he was cold and Heath said that is one of the problems. Dalton cannot feel his boy parts so they have to be careful so he doesn't get too cold. After this Heath explains that Dalton says, "But my teeth still chatter!"



We went down the river about 1.5 miles and decided we had better turn around and head back. On the way back I asked Dalton if he wanted to paddle my boat and I would swim back. That made him smile so I knew he was having a good time.

Heath began to tell me what happened to him and his family. I hope I get all the details right. They were traveling in their car 2 years ago in the town of Hudsonville just north of Port Sheldon Road on 48th Avenue. A car coming the other way lost control and hit them head on. It was the first snow fall of the year and everyone in Michigan knows what that first day of snow on the road is like. It's never a good thing. Heath said that he was in the hospital for 6 weeks with facial injuries and a shattered knee. I'm sure he had lots of bumps and bruises, also. His wife was with him and she was also in the hospital for 6 weeks. I didn't ask about her injuries. They had a little baby who I think is named Brody who suffered no injuries at all. Dalton was sitting behind dad. Well, when the car hit them, Dalton became a quadriplegic. When I asked Heath why they decided kayaking as a hobby and he told me that he wanted something he and Dalton could do together.

We got back to the boat launch around 10 AM and had paddled about 3 miles. Dalton got out his wheelchair and was having fun at the launch. He was doing donuts again and it was cool. I helped Heath get his kayak on his van. He asked me about racks and I told him about a couple of options. He is also thinking that he might get a rec boat for himself. I said I would let him borrow one of mine if he wanted to. As we talked and loaded the bans, Dalton got his wheelchair stuck. Before Heath could help him, he gunned it and spit rocks up and got out by himself. He was laughing. This whole time I kept thinking to myself how amazing this guy and his son, Dalton, were. This is the reason I love to be outdoors and paddle with lots of people. What an amazing experience!

## Cutest Dog!



Bill & Anne Keith's dog, Remy (a Yorkie-poo), enjoyed a walk with mom at the Annual Meeting in Mesick last October.

## President's Paddle II

Greetings, with gusto, with the disappearance of the hard water! Sometimes March isn't thought of as prime kayaking weather, but March 21 was our first kayak trip for the season. Lauren and I joined our friends Norm and Donna Rosema for a paddle down the Muskegon River. The rest of the family was busy on Saturday. We woke up to a fresh skiff of snow on the ground and temperatures below freezing. Lauren sat in front of me in her child seat of our blue bathtub recreational kayak. We put in at the Maple Island Rd. boat launch and headed on a mission.

The fish were running and were after the fisherman. Not the ones with rod and reel, though there were several of them on the river. We were after the awesome birds of prey that most of us see on the quarters in our pockets. Yes, our motivation to paddle was to see the eagles fishing along the river. This section of river is mostly unpopulated and could be described as bottomland, with few houses. It was high and fast, compared to the typical slow poke current of the wide Muskegon. After paddling for over an hour and seeing nothing, we thought we had been skunked.

Five minutes later we saw the first eagle. It was an immature that did not have white head and tail feathers yet. An eagle does not get its adult plumage until it is 5 yrs. Old. We knew it was an eagle because of the 6 foot wing span (as compared to a hawk whose wingspan is 4 feet). The eagle flew down river. Soon we saw another and finally a third immature eagle. They were all in our view. As we continued on, we saw an adult eagle sitting majestically on a tree branch overhanging the river. The white head was noticeable from a long distance up river. As we approached, it flew down river and perched closely to another adult eagle. They flew from tree to tree down river and one of them finally stayed put on a tree that we paddled right directly under. Now that made a cold trip worth while!

See you on the water!

## WMCKA Board of Directors

Title	Name	Phone	Email
President	Steven Adsmond	231.924.3719	adsmond@comcast.net
Vice Pres.	Bill Keith		steven49@msu.edu
Treasurer	Frits Kwant	616.956.6125	frits@iserv.net
At Large 1	Al Anderson	231.352.7774	bbkayak@betsievalley.net
At Large 2	Bob Burmania	616.682.0640	robertburmania@yahoo.com
At Large 3	Jack Keyes		jackkeyes@charter.net

## WMCKA Non Board Positions

Title	Name	Phone	Email
Sympos. Chair	Lynn Dominguez	989.774.7305	Domin1LA@cmich.edu
Web Guy	Karl Geisel	616.452.3239	Karl.geisel@wmcka.org
Newsletter	Rocky & Char Kimball	616.698-9477	newsletter@wmcka.org

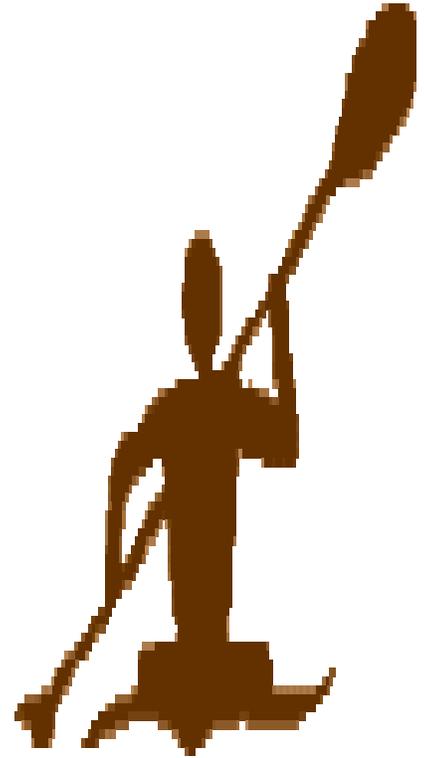
## SUBMISSIONS

Articles, photos, trip reports, announcements for trips or any other materials relating to kayaking are welcome for submission.

Electronic media is preferred (plain text, or MS Word format please). Materials are subject to editing.

Send to: [newsletter@wmcka.org](mailto:newsletter@wmcka.org)

**Submissions for the Summer WMCKA Newsletter  
need to be received before: June 15, 2009**



## WMCKA Membership Form

- Address change
- New Member
- Renewal

Please select a Membership option:

- WMCKA Individual (\$15/yr)
- WMCKA Family (\$20/yr)
- WMCKA & ACA Individual (\$45/yr)
- WMCKA & ACA Family (\$60/yr)  
(Dual WMCKA/ACA Memberships  
Include 1 year of Paddler Magazine)

Please make checks payable to WMCKA.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

- I would like my name, phone # and e-mail address included in the WMCKA membership directory sent to members each year.

Mail To: **WMCKA**  
c/o Karl Geisel  
1900 Clearbrook SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49508

### A word about WMCKA events

These events are gatherings of paddlers who share an interest in kayaking and spending social time together. They are open to all interested individuals of any (or no) skill level. There are no leaders, lifeguards, or anyone else responsible for the safety of those who choose to participate. Everyone is responsible for his/her own safety and is expected to use common sense and good judgement both on and off the water. Neither WMCKA nor any of its individual members can be responsible for the safety of those attending club events.

# 2009 Upcoming Events

**April 24-26**

**Spring Confluences**

**May 22-25**

**20th Annual WMCKA Symposium**

**June 18-21**

**Inland Sea Kayak Symposium\***

**July 11**

**Kayak for Light**

**July 18**

**Snug Harbor Day**

**Aug. 21-22**

**Lake Leelanau**

**Sept. 11-13**

**End-O-Summer Weekend**

**Sept. 11-13**

**St. Joseph Island Rendezvous\***

**Oct. 9-11**

**WMCKA Annual Meeting - Mesick**



\* Indicates a Non-WMCKA Sponsored Event. Listed to help you connect with other paddlers

Please check the website [WMCKA.org](http://WMCKA.org) for details!

WMCKA requires a PFD (lifejacket) to be worn by all paddlers while they are on the water during WMCKA events



Rocky & Char Kimball  
432 Mistywood  
Caledonia, MI 49316

