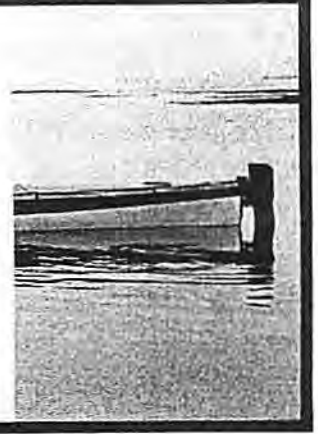




SOUTHERN MAINE SEA KAYAKING NETWORK NEWSLETTER



P.O. Box 4794 Portland, Maine 04112

October 2000

Mission Statement

The Southern Maine Sea Kayaking Network is an association of paddlers interested in connecting with others who enjoy the sport of sea kayaking. Our purpose is to promote safe and responsible practices and, at the same time, have fun.

EXPAND
YOUR
KAYAKING
HORIZONS

View of the Blackburn Challenge

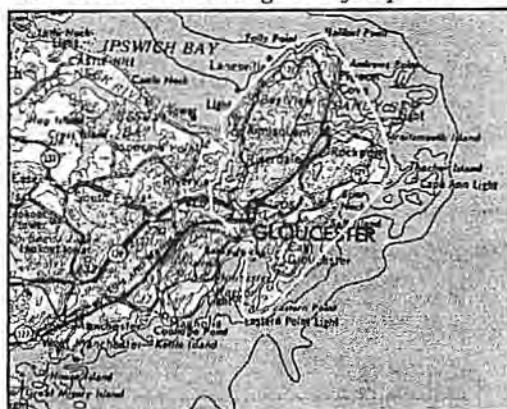
By James Vicenzi

Editor's note: On July 15th, SMSKN member Jim Vicenzi participated in the Blackburn Challenge, a 20+ mile race around Cape Ann, Massachusetts. It was the 13th running of the event; about half the participants used kayaks. We've reprinted excerpts of an e-mail Jim sent describing it, in case others want to consider stepping up to the "challenge" next year.

Here's my take on the Blackburn Challenge as a first-time participant. My overall impression is that it's an extremely well-run event managed and attended by a very nice group of people. Veteran participants were very helpful in terms of telling the newcomers what to expect, what to look out for and what to do. I'd certainly recommend it to any experienced paddler.

The paddling classes include single touring kayaks, single racing kayaks, surf skis, and double touring kayaks. Each class has

Course is the circumnavigation of Cape Ann



a men's and women's division except for the doubles. Racing kayaks are defined as any kayak with a beam of less than 20" or any kayak, regardless of beam, powered by a wing paddle. The only other craft that are paddled are the outrigger canoes that have teams of six paddlers; these were just a joy to watch. As you might expect, there are several classes for rowed craft, since the event is sponsored by the Cape Ann Rowing Club.

"Challenge" is an appropriate name for the event. It's a long way back to the starting point in Gloucester—20 to 22+ statute miles depending on the line you take—and the conditions can be, as they were this year, less than ideal. (A couple of folks told me they were the worst they could remember.) We experienced healthy winds and confused seas; I believe the forecast was for 15 to 20 mph winds and seas of two to eight feet. My guess is that there were occasional five-foot swells on the beam with chop thrown in, but I may have perceived things as being worse than they were because of fatigue. The organizers make a point of letting you know that EMT's are available (!) and that several chase boats are around.

The race starts in the Annisquam River and runs along it for the first three or four miles, then continues into open ocean. The tide was flooding the river the whole time we were in it—a tough way to get

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Acknowledgment of Outstanding Contributions by Members

As we come to a close of our regular kayaking season I would like to acknowledge the time and energy a number of club members gave to the club that made this year a success. We owe thanks to all of the members who have led paddles or organized activities. I know by mentioning just a few individuals I will accidentally leave members out who have also contributed and I apologize in advance. The following is my short list of members who I believe have made an outstanding contribution this year.

Bob Arledge - Bob along with Steve Winter and Dorry Shaw I thank for the great work they have done to get our web site up and running. Bob has also been very active in leading trips.

Lee Bumsted - Many thanks to Lee for her connecting us with a host of interesting speakers for this years meetings and leading a number of paddles. Lee is also been keeper of the well utilized club library.

Mark Daniele - Mark organized 3 Spring pool sessions, a number of paddle clinics, and a Mooselookmeguntic weekend trip.

Bill Ridlon - For his work as board member and membership coordinator, and paddle leader

Dorry Shaw - For her continued work as board member and treasurer.

Jonathan Swan - For leading a number of overnight and day trips.

Kristen Woodberry - For her work as board member and organizing the wilderness first aid clinics, Coast Guard safety clinic, and numerous trips.

The organizers of the Stonington week this year, great company, paddling, weather, and accommodations. Thanks to Lee Bumsted, Dorry Shaw, and Cynde Clark.

Thanks for a great year, Bob Murray, Club President

Blackburn Challenge *continued*

started. Head winds were present after we left the river but somewhere near the halfway point they became side winds. A checkpoint is situated near the halfway point and competitors who have not reached that point within three hours are requested to bail out.

One thing that I found disconcerting was the attitude of the people in large watercraft in the area. They didn't seem to have any interest in avoiding kayakers even if the effort involved was slight. In short, they acted like Boston drivers. As a former Boston driver myself, I decided that the prudent course of action was to avoid playing chicken with them.

"The best part of the race is when it's over," said one of the veterans before the start. I can't say that I disagree with her. I was clearly dog-tired when I came in under the greased pole that marks the finish line. Basically, I was a little stiff all over; even after getting out of the boat and stretching for five or ten minutes, I still walked like Walter Brennan. Fortunately, the organizers provided both a chiropractor and two masseuses to participants (!). In my condition, this was such an attraction that I postponed getting food and beer (!!). The post-race party was a lot of fun and I decided then and there to return next year.

For more information on the race, refer to: www.blackburnchallenge.com/page1.asp. The site includes the history of the race, a map, and results. An article by Tamsin Venn about the 1995 contest appears on: www1.shore.net/~ack/ack/1995/sept_95.htm#blackburn.

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Fort Williams Fireworks Paddle

By Bill Ridlon

It's 5:30 on Thursday, June 29th. I've rushed home from work, put the boat on top of the truck, grabbed the kayaking gear, and headed the few miles to Willard Beach. I'm the first one here but others soon appear. Bob arrives, Ray drives up, Lyn shows up just down the beach, and Barbara comes in last, but with plenty of time to make the 6:00 PM launch.

Shortly, we're ready to head out. But wait. There are two others that have arrived and plan to join us so we paddle out a few hundred feet and wait. Finally, we're a concentrated group with all paddlers off the beach and we start across the channel to House Island. It appears that the two paddlers that arrived last don't have a lot of experience with Level 2 paddles. They have trouble with the chop and they begin to fall behind the main group. No matter, it gives us an opportunity to practice keeping a disparate group together.

After crossing the channel, we stop on the little island in Whitehead Passage to make clothing adjustments. Ray offers to return with the two paddlers that are having some difficulty. They decline his invitation. So... we continue through Whitehead Passage and out around Cushing Island, passing between Cushing and Ram Islands. Out here, we experience the Atlantic swells, which are great fun if you're prepared and experienced, not so much fun if you're not. Three of the experienced paddlers head off towards Fort Williams and Portland Headlight while Ray and I stay back with the two slower paddlers, Andy and Samantha. Ray is paddling with Andy and I'm keeping watch over Samantha as we travel slower, and slower, and slower.

Suddenly I hear, "Bill?" It's Samantha. I paddle over to her to find out what's on her mind.

"Yes?"

"I think I'm getting seasick."

Well, this should be a challenge. I give Samantha the standard warning to not lean over her boat to vomit. She follows my advice and lets the ocean wash everything away. Quite quickly it becomes clear that Samantha will be going nowhere, other than possibly out to sea, without some help. I clip

my towrope onto her bow and we start making a little progress.

Eventually, our little pod of 4 paddlers arrives in Ship Cove at Fort Williams and we join the rest of our group. We manage to get Samantha and Andy onto the shore and Andy wisely chooses to walk back to Willard Beach to collect his car while Samantha settles her stomach.

Our remaining group floats in the cove for awhile, listening to the Portland Symphony orchestra. We also paddle here and there around the cove, playing tag with the mosquitoes.

It begins to get dark so we put our lights onto the boats. The concert draws to a close. Some of us paddle closer to where we think the fireworks will be launched. Suddenly, the first one is fired! Then the second, the third, fourth, fifth, and many more without a break in between. It's quick, probably less than 2 minutes. But, seeing fireworks erupt directly above you makes it all worthwhile. Seeing them from that perspective makes the word *spectacular* seem too tame for the experience.

The paddle back along the Cape Elizabeth shore to Willard Beach is almost as nice as the concert and fireworks. There is no moon in the sky so lighting is by stars and navigation by lights along the shoreline. At about 10:00 PM, 5 happy paddlers slip back into Simon-ton Cove, load boats onto cars and trucks, and head for home.

After an easy put-in, four of us paddled out for the evening from Sabino Town Landing near West Bath. For a September 13th evening paddle, the temperature was balmy. Deepening pastel colors filled the evening sky and the water was glassy and still. As we paddled, darkening sky put us on watch for the moon.

A glow began over a group of trees. We crossed the bay to get a better view. As we waited and watched, the full moon rose with a beam-like brightness over the trees and into the night sky.

Our surroundings were faintly lit and the silhouettes were striking. We paddled back in moonlight and coastal beauty, lights dotting the shoreline, and ended the evening with cocktails on the deck at Ray's place looking out over the cove. Thanks, Ray.

Sabino Moon

Thanks to Hank Andolsek for our August meeting!

I do not know if it was the fascinating information about Inuit kayaking or perhaps the Thompson's "totally useless roll" that did it—but it was clear that many at the August meeting left with new or renewed interest in Greenland paddling. There was suddenly a waiting list for the Greenland rolling class this fall and people asking for more opportunities like this. I guess the statistic that 15-20% of Greenland men died kayaking didn't scare anyone off. It does make you thankful for the safety equipment and measures we have available. Maine water starts seeming pretty warm, too!

Then again, having a tulik seems to have some distinct advantages. A tulik is the single waterproof garment which Inuit paddlers use which serves as both dry top and spray skirt. It is tied around the face and wrists as well as to the cockpit rim. A wet exit is not an option in arctic waters so you might as well be sure no water gets in.

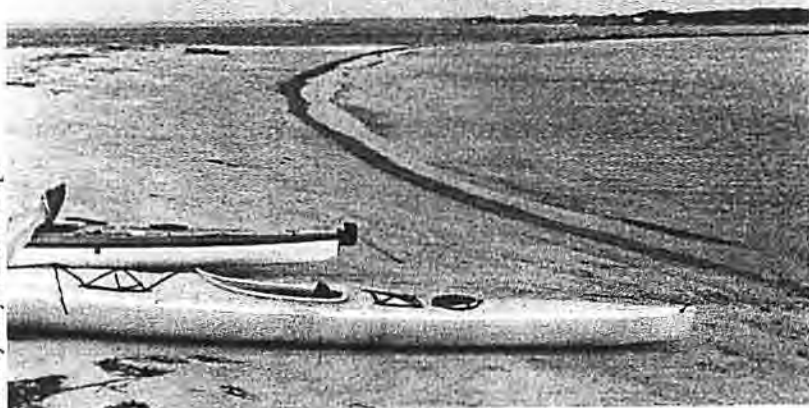
Hank Andolsek, our speaker for the meeting, is a Cape Elizabeth resident, and alongside multiple work endeavors and being a dad, is an avid Greenland kayaker and kayaking instructor. He explained how the Greenland paddlers size their boats and paddles specifically to their body sizes. Boat length is a multiple of arm spans. The width is equal to

the paddler's hip width plus two fists. The paddle length was traditionally an arm span plus a cubit. The width of the paddle loom is the paddler's shoulder width and the blade width at the widest point is the width of a comfortable open handgrip.

I'm sure there are several paddlers out there besides me who find most standard paddle grip sizes uncomfortable. The idea of a custom-fit paddle is pretty attractive, especially when you can start with a 2x4 from the local lumberyard. Thanks to Dave Dufour, a beautiful homemade cedar paddle was available for inspiration. Commercial Greenland paddles are available, some made specifically to paddler size, but maybe it's time we have a winter paddle-making clinic. Anyone want to host it?

The highlight of this meeting was Hank's demonstration of the special features and techniques using a Greenland boat and paddle. These were developed by necessity to assure a paddler's survival in the course of a hunt, even in the case of broken equipment or injury. Some techniques are used primarily for competition and may be less functional for recreational kayaking, but opportunities for fun and development of boat control. (I think this is where the Thompson's totally useless roll fits.)

Hank prefers the Greenland paddle style for general touring because it provides a lower stress, higher frequency stroke, a natural lift in the water, a very versatile tool for varying conditions, and some pretty nifty bracing and rolling options. He made it clear that he was not advocating for one way of paddling over another, but I do recall he struggled a bit to answer one question: "Are there any disadvantages to paddling with a Greenland style paddle?" He didn't recommend it for play in rock gardens. I hope Hank will visit again and know we'll be asking him and Pete Thompson to teach us more of what they know! Thanks again, Hank, for an excellent presentation!



Fore River Paddle

Saturday

June 24, 2000

By Bill Ridlon

It was a beautiful Saturday on June 24th, just a great day for a paddle, and six adventurous souls set out to do some “urban” paddling. We started in the early afternoon from Willard Beach in South Portland to take advantage of a rising tide. “We” included Lyn, Jean, Nadya, Debra, and me. We met David further along the paddle. Instead of heading out into Casco Bay as most paddles do, we headed “in”. We paddled out of Simonton Cove and around Spring Point. We then paddled beneath the bow of a giant oil tanker docked near Spring Point. Did I say giant? I meant gigantic! From 3 feet above the water an oil tanker right in front of you looks like a mountain cliff it’s so huge. It becomes very clear why a kayaker does not cross in front of an oil tanker that is under way.

From the tanker excitement, we pushed on around Bug Light and into Portland’s inner harbor and the Fore River, paddling along the South Portland side by the city boat ramp, the Sunset marina, and the Center Board Yacht Club. The view across the water to Portland’s waterfront was fascinating, and quite different from the normal SMSKN paddle views of islands, rocks, and seaweed.

On we paddled to the new Casco Bay Bridge where we got a close-up view of the “ship bumpers” where tremendous spiders lived, and the underside of cars as they sped across the draw portion of the bridge deck.

Just after the bridge we crossed the river to the Portland side, paddling alongside old, dilapidated wharves where it appeared that railroad cars at one time were loaded from ships that had come up the river. We continued along this side of the river, crossing under the Veteran’s Bridge and the I-295 bridge.

Suddenly, after I-295, we were in a different world. There was no longer any commercial or industrial activity along the river. As a matter of fact, there was no activity at all. No wharves, no warehouses, no houses—just trees and fields. The only differences between a river through rural Maine and this section of the Fore River were the occasional jets coming overhead to land at the nearby jetport, and the interstate highway in the background.

It seemed like a good place for a break and “afternoon tea” so we pulled in to the wooded Portland side for a short time.

Soon, we were off for our destination, the Fore River bird sanctuary on the other side of Congress Street. We paddled under the bridge on Outer Congress and were suddenly in another

world again. This time we were in fingers of the river that meandered through a marsh, much like the Scarborough marsh. We tried one finger and reached a dead-end. We tried another and found a passage that allowed us to silently travel single file several hundred yards into the marsh before it became impossible to continue.

Our next challenge was getting turned around. The passage had become so narrow that we weren’t able to swivel and paddle back. We had to find a side passage in which to “back” into and then paddle out from there.

As we approached the Congress Street bridge for the trip home, we heard cries of “help” behind us on the pedestrian bridge that crossed the river. We paddled back to determine what was going on. Two of us scrambled up the riverbank to find what help was needed. Because the two people on the bridge were young boys, my initial thoughts were that we were going to be the butt of a joke and soon the boys would run away. But they didn’t. As it turned out, one of the boys had fallen from his bike and hurt his leg quite badly. The three of us that had scrambled ashore were recent graduates from the SMSKN-sponsored wilderness first-aid course (big trumpet *ta-dah* here) so we looked forward to putting our training to use. Fortunately, the boy’s leg was mostly scraped and bruised so no major first-aid response was needed. This was good since one of us (me) probably would have had to retire to the bushes to vomit if there had really been blood and trauma to deal with.

After getting back onto the water, we paddled up into the Stroudwater River to the dam. It was a beautiful spot, with water misting down over the dam and the sun shining through the mist and creating miniature rainbows.

The remainder of the trip was relatively uneventful except for a side trip under a dock and another close-up view of the Casco Bay Bridge spiders (whew! They sure are big!).

The trip is an excellent one for an early season paddle. It’s relatively protected from wind and waves and, as long as you keep to the sides of the river, from other boats as well. There is varied scenery along the way from a salt marsh to wooded riverbanks to a city waterfront. Oh yes, and don’t forget the oil tankers that seem to tower 100 feet above you. If you see it on the SMSKN events list again, don’t hesitate to sign up, especially if you’re wilderness first-aid certified!

Monhegan Island – Sunny Haven in a Sea of Clouds

By Bill Ridlon

Friday, July 28th was the start of OpSail 2000 in Portland. It was also the start of the SMSKN trip to Monhegan Island, 12 miles off the Maine coast. It was a small group that made the crossing from Port Clyde. Five traveled by kayak and three, Dorry, Jill, and Christine, traveled by ferry. The trip out was relatively uneventful, unlike prior years. The wind was mild, the swells were under 5 feet, and the weather was perfect.

Jon, Marty, Debra, Chuck, and I paddled away from the harbor at Port Clyde at about 10:30 and arrived at Fish Beach on Monhegan before 3:00. Well, actually, Chuck arrived quite a bit earlier than the rest. He was very anxious to get his body out of the kayak seat. It seems he was missing some critical “padding.”

The weather forecast was for a weekend of cloudy, rainy weather. The weather gods smiled on us for four full days though, providing sunny conditions for our entire trip.

On the island, we did the usual tourist things: took pictures, walked the trails, ate at the restaurants, lounged on the lawn, and visited the art galleries. We also did the usual kayaker things: paddled around the island and explored things from the water.

Sunday came all too soon for some. It was time to return to the mainland and the hustle and bustle of “normal” life. Jon, Marty, and Chuck headed north to Port Clyde on Sunday morning, traveling over gentle Atlantic swells ahead of a wispy tailwind. Dorry, Jill, and Christine boarded the early afternoon ferry for a stress-free ride home. Debra and I remained behind for another day in the artists’ paradise.

Monday came all too soon, too. Now it was time for Debra and me to head north as well. We chose to take a side trip, though, to Eastern Egg Rock to see the puffins.

Another day of near-perfect conditions. As we traveled to “puffin central” we were accompanied for a short time by two porpoises and were passed by a minke whale.

Eastern Egg Rock was covered with birds. We were lucky to find the two dozen or so puffins. Compared to gulls and cormorants, puffins are very small birds. The photos on the calendars that you sometimes see are very much enlarged. They do have a funny walk though. It’s a little like Charlie Chaplin in some of his movies, swaying from side to side.

Beaching at Port Clyde came all too soon. Possibly, the longer one stays on Monhegan the harder it becomes to leave. After spending four days by the water, it was difficult to store the gear, rack the boats, and drive away, inland.

The Return from Monhegan Island

‘Three Paddlers in a Pod’

By Marty Burgess

The three p’s in the pod
woke up in a fog
as they readied for the long reach

all of the paddlers
promise to leave no stragglers
as they gathered off fishin’ beach

Passing the pier
expressing no fear
they slipped out through the breach

with deadmans cove to starboard
and duck rocks off to port
Burnt Island was next for these sports

The sea was calm
for when there is no wind
there is no wave

porpoises passed by in a flash
leaving us to our dash

While the whistler resounded
we crossed the parade line
with yachts motoring by
the cruising real fine

Little Burnt Island provided
the counter to dine
we refueled and we bailed
setting of on a new line

The lighthouse smiled to us
with reefs all around
we paddled our way
back to solid ground

The ferry had passed us
our crew safe and sound
we loaded our gear
as we planned for next year

We then left the shoreline
with deserts on our mind
so off to Moody’s
for all to dine....