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Inside this Issue:

- *GCA Florida Paddle*—page 2
- *Upcoming Clinics*—page 6

What Exactly Is a "Club Boater"? By Allen Hedden

If you follow the GCA Facebook Page you may have noticed from time to time a few posts disparaging or poking fun at "club boaters". If you haven't noticed them, there's a good reason. Those posts generally get taken down pretty quickly by the "club boaters" who volunteer a lot of their time to provide services, including the GCA Facebook Page, to the club and to the general boating public.

Since its inception, the GCA Facebook Page has been open to anyone who wants to follow it and/or post to it. You don't need to be a GCA member or even a "club boater" to use the page. We welcome civil discourse and the sharing of boating related information. The volunteers who give their time to provide this service and try

to keep it from degenerating into a verbal free-for-all tend to view these detractors as Trolls. And we all know that the best way to control Trolls is to not feed them. The ignored Troll is not a happy Troll and will usually seek more fertile ground to sow their seeds of disrespect. Back when the GCA Email List was the primary means of two way communication among GCA boaters, the same problem cropped up from time to time, and still does, though rarely. It was dealt with in the same way then that the Facebook Trolls are dealt with now.

In order to try and understand the underlying cause why anyone would join or follow a Facebook Page and then disparage its members, perhaps we should take a close look at exactly what a "club boater" is. Ever since the first recreational activities came on the scene, participants in those activities have tended to organize themselves. Clubs, groups, associations, affiliations, etc. formed around these activities for lots of good reasons.

(continued, page 2)



(Club Boaters, continued from page 1)

One of the big reasons for these organizations is the enjoyment of associating with like-minded people. For example, if you began paddling and discovered that you REALLY enjoyed the sport, but you only knew less than a handful of people who were into it, and even fewer who were very skilled at it, it would be most frustrating. No getting together to talk about boating and tell river lies, no one to put together paddling activities, no one to put together training groups, no social activities centered around paddling, not knowing enough paddlers to put together a safe trip, not to mention making the logistics of trips easier. What a great paddling world that would be! NOT!!

Another great reason for these organizations to exist is to add numbers and voices to the movements that protect and save our river ecosystems. They not only add numbers to the groups who support these causes, they add channels to communicate issues in these areas to those interested in joining the efforts. The same things are true of river access issues. If you write a letter or send an email to a legislator concerning these issues, that's one voice. If a state, local or national organization sends a letter or email to a legislator, that can be hundreds, or even thousands, of voices. And you better bet that the legislators

know this! The adage about strength in numbers certainly applies to river protection and access.

Being a "club boater" does not always mean that you only paddle with club-organized groups. In fact, I'd be willing to bet that the vast majority of "club boaters" do not paddle exclusively with club groups, but rather, after paddling a while and developing their own preferences of folks that they enjoy boating with, paddle with both club groups and loosely organized groups of closer friends. After having taken advantage of the club organization for getting formal skills training and their social networking, one would be foolish to limit their boating to only club groups.

Speaking of formal skills training, I could point to my own personal experience as to why "club boaters" are so important. I paddled white water for about 14 years before joining a club that promoted paddling -- the GCA. During those years, I sort of knew about the club, and because of my first on-the-water experience with a GCA group, I was pretty sure I didn't want any part of "club boaters". I and a couple of my independent paddling buddies were going on an Etowah trip. After setting our shuttle and arriving at the put-in, we encountered a very large group of boaters unloading and

(continued, page 3)



(Club Boaters, continued from page 2)

rigging their boats. Several of the participants in that group asked if we were GCA, and of course we, perhaps a little disdainfully, told them no and went our separate way. After all, who wants to paddle with a group of 25-30 boaters who were being herded around by a small cadre of what appeared to be somewhat bossy individuals. For quite a few years, that was our impression of GCA trips and "club boaters".

What we later discovered was that this group was not a normal recreational GCA trip, but a beginner canoeing clinic sponsored by GCA and its "club boaters" to help get this rather large group of rank beginner paddlers trained and started out on the right track so that they could participate in river trips safely and with a leg up skill-wise. We found this out sort of the hard way. We found over the years that often one or two of our small group of regular paddling buddies would be unable to go on a paddling trip on a given weekend because of growing family responsibilities, etc., and that would preclude us being able to put together a group large enough to be safe and be able to do the normal logistics of transportation and shuttle, etc. So out of this need, we ended up re-thinking the GCA, mainly because we realized that, hey, these people had trips availa-

ble to them nearly every weekend through the club's trip list, trips that were organized and promoted by "club boaters" of the GCA. By joining this group, we would be able to paddle most any weekend we wanted, regardless of whether other members of our small group were able to go or not.

After joining the club and getting the newsletter, we also discovered that the GCA offered its members a wide array of training clinics at a very reasonable cost. Since we had been paddling for a good many years without getting that much better at paddling skills, we decided to sign up for a GCA clinic. That's when the realization hit us that the large group of boaters being herded around by a small cadre of what appeared to be somewhat bossy individuals that we had run into on that infamous day on the Etowah was a clinic and not a recreational GCA trip. I think I learned more about paddling that weekend than I had during my entire paddling career up to that point. For me and my other two paddling buds, the rest was history. The new skills learned and the new people to paddle with sucked us into being "club boaters". Of course now I would guess that less than 10% of my paddling trips are with planned, organized GCA groups, but rather with smaller groups of close friends that I've met over the years as a result, directly or indirectly, of becoming a "club boater". Unfortunately, my two other paddling buds that I joined

(continued, page 4)



(Club Boaters, continued from page 3)

GCA with eventually drifted away from paddling completely. So thank goodness for the club, and for the other paddling organizations that I've joined over the years. They have given me a lot of fun and great experiences on the river, and I've given them my support in the numbers that we need in the formal organizations to protect our rivers and our access to them.

But, hey, I'm just a dumb old "club boater". What do I know?!?! Hopefully more than the Trolls do ;-) - EL

Upcoming clinics

We are working to schedule training opportunities which comply with current CDC guidelines and recommendations. The Broken Nose Eddy Clinic with Joe Gudger has been rescheduled to July 5. The Slalom and Playboating Clinics which were cancelled due to COVID-19 will be rescheduled.

Additionally, upcoming planned clinics include: combat rolling, hand paddling, another Ocoee clinic and several trained beginner skills clinics. If you have any requests for clinics, please email Tammy Lea, training chair, at EddyLineEditor@gmail.com.—EL

Meet GCA Instructor Kerrie Barloga



I started kayaking way, way back when - sometime in the eighties. I spent every vacation taking kayaking lessons from Nantahala Outdoor Center for about five years and have been paddling since then. I love big water. I love technical runs. I love creeks and I love to surf. I started paddling with GCA about five years ago, obtained my ACA L4 whitewater kayaking instructor certification from Dave Kessman and started taking classes with great instructors to learn how to boof. I enjoy sharing my joy and passion for kayaking. - EL

KEEP YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS CURRENT
Each month numerous "copies" of the pdf version of *The Eddy Line* bounce back due to bad or outdated email addresses. If an email to you bounces back, you will be deleted from the recipient list until we get an updated email address.



Tips for Whitewater Open Canoe Tandem By Allen Hedden

So what's so hard about white water tandem paddling? You put one paddler in the bow and one in the stern and head down the river, right? Well... that's one way to do it. Another way is to try to know a little bit about what you're doing first. It's been said that tandem paddling is very much like having sex -- the main purpose should be to make sure your partner has a good time. This is most easily done when both members of the team have the right skills for the job and are able to properly and fairly share the responsibilities.

This article is (by far) not meant to be a know-all do-all for white water tandem canoeing. It assumes a pretty good working knowledge of the basic strokes and maneuvers required to paddle a canoe on white water. It's meant to be just tips and reminders of what's behind the roles of the paddlers in a tandem boat and how to make life easier once you decide to take the big leap into tandem white water canoeing.

Since a great number of tandem teams are comprised of a male and a female, if your tandem team fits into this category, my first recommendation would be to throw out all your preconceived notions of gender roles in a tandem boat. A paddler is a paddler regardless of gender or spousal circumstance. Many a married couple taking up tandem paddling

may go almost directly from the take-out to the divorce lawyer if they are not aware of this. Yep, seen it happen, folks! Another notion to throw out: If you are getting a newbie into paddling, many folks have the idea that it's easier on the newbie to start off as a tandem partner with a much more experienced paddler. My recommendation is that unless you are good enough to handle the boat and the tandem partner with little or no help, don't try it. Most experienced tandem paddlers will suggest that the best way to become a good tandem team is for each paddler to become a good solo paddler first.

All that said, let's get into some particulars about tandem boating. Probably the first thing to decide on is what type of boat to paddle. Common sense: Use a boat that's designed for the type of paddling you will be doing. Do NOT show up for a white water tandem trip in a 17 foot, flat bottom, no rocker boat that's obviously designed for flat or slow moving water. Rather, use a shorter boat, but not so short as to compromise dryness, with plenty of rocker, but still with plenty of space for two saddles. Ideally, you would want your boat set up so that the front and rear saddles are spaced so that the stern paddler can reach out and just barely touch the shoulder of the bow paddler. This concentrates the mass / weight near the center of the boat to facilitate quick, effective turns. So at this point, you and your prospective partner need to decide which position in the boat each of you should paddle.

(continued, page 6)



(Whitewater Tandem Canoe, continued from page 5)

Keep in mind that being that closely spaced in the boat is a far greater advantage than a disadvantage. The bow paddler in the normal course of events will do a lot of cross strokes, whereas the stern paddler should rarely ever do a cross stroke, so the relatively close spacing should not interfere with normal tandem paddling strokes, or cause the bow paddler to be struck in the head by the stern paddler's paddle. You should also decide at this point who will paddle left and who will paddle right. And don't change your mind in the middle of a rapid. There's a good reason for one partner to paddle on the left and one on the right. It has to do with having a solid low brace on each side of the boat, and with making it easier to keep the boat going straight.

Here's where physiology comes in. Nothing to do with gender, but more to do with height and weight. In order to keep the trim of the boat in a favorable range (anywhere from level to 1-2 inches bow light) you should choose your paddling positions so that boat trim is not compromised. And to maximize visibility of the river by both partners, it's probably best to have the taller partner in the stern. After all, it's tough for a 5 foot 6 stern paddler to see over and around a 6 foot 4, 240 lb. bow paddler, not to mention what that positioning would do to the boat trim.

Something else to consider in tandem white water paddling is that, unlike solo paddling, it's a team sport that requires excellent communication and cooperation skills. It's been

said many times that there's no "I" in "tandem". If one paddler screws up, both will suffer the consequences. It's never "You messed up," or "I messed up," but "We messed up" so "we will swim." If there's a swim, it's very rare that only one tandem partner swims.

So let's take a look at the roles of the bow and the stern paddlers in this communication and cooperation. Have you ever noticed how noisy it gets out in the middle of a white water rapid? All that noise is going to be the first barrier to effective communication between paddling partners. That brings up a very important point in the roles of stern vs. bow. If you and your partner are positioned correctly in the boat, it's much easier for the stern paddler to communicate with the bow paddler, but very difficult for the bow paddler to communicate with the stern paddler. For this reason, it's generally easier for the stern paddler to set and communicate the strategy, i.e., pick a general route through a rapid and communicate the information to the bow paddler. With the stern paddler facing forward and located with his/her mouth mere inches from the bow paddler's ear, it's much easier for communications to be heard by the bow paddler.

However, it's very difficult for the stern paddler to see the "little things" in the water very close to the bow of the boat that get in the way, like that rock hiding just below the surface right in your path, or the submerged log guarding the entrance to an ed-

(continued, page 7)



(Whitewater Tandem Canoe, continued from page 6)

dy. And there's generally not time for the bow paddler to turn their head around and yell "left" or "right" loud enough for the stern paddler to hear it and respond. Therefore the bow paddler sets the tactics, i.e. the exact line the boat must follow within the confines of the strategic path set out by the stern paddler.

Consequently, it's the stern paddler's responsibility to not only watch and read the river, but to also watch and read the bow paddler's strokes in order to know if there is a sudden "right" or "left" required and to follow the bow paddler's tactical lead. If the bow person wants to go right, and the stern person fails to notice and continues to try to go left, the boat is going to be on the rock right in the middle -- not a great place to be. Communication and cooperation!

Another important aspect of tandem paddling is synchronizing your strokes. It is much more efficient and maximizes speed and acceleration when both bow and stern paddlers are stroking in unison. The bow paddler has the responsibility of setting the stroke rate, mainly because the stern paddler can see the bow paddler's strokes and match the rate. But it's the responsibility of the stern paddler to let the bow paddler know if the stroke rate they have set is too fast for the stern paddler to keep up with, or if the stern paddler is ending up loafing a bit because the bow has set too slow a stroke rate. That said, do keep in mind that speed is not always your friend when running a rapid.

There are many times when slower is faster, times when you don't want to overrun your turns, blow past your eddies, or bury your bow in a wave or hole, thereby taking on water and ultimately slowing you down and destroying your balance and maneuverability.

The more time you spend paddling tandem with the same person, the more you learn about that paddler's tendencies on the river, and the easier it is to "read" or anticipate their moves and follow through. The only thing I know of more inspiring than watching a good tandem team moving through a rapid seemingly just knowing each other's moves, is actually being part of such a team. Once you reach that point as a team, tandem paddling really is easier than solo paddling because you only have to horse around half a boat, and your partner can horse around the other half.

Good luck aspiring tandem paddlers! - EL



Gaby Schlidt & Allen Hedden
Nantahala River below Lesser Wesser.
Why you need a solid low brace on both sides.



TRIP AND EVENT SCHEDULE

Please see the GCA Calendar for details, updates, and to sign up at www.gapaddle.com. For any questions or class suggestions, e-mail eddylineeditor@gmail.com.

Thinking of joining a paddling trip?

When deciding to join a GCA trip, whether an “official” trip posted on the website, or a pop-up trip posted on the Facebook page, please keep the following bit of river etiquette in mind: **Always** check with the trip coordinator before inviting a guest to come along on the trip with you, especially if your guest is an inexperienced paddler. This is to insure the skill level of your guest matches the targeted skill level of the group. Many pop-up trips will not have safety boaters., and it’s considered rude to expect the other paddlers in the group to be responsible for an unexpected paddler. Please don’t put the trip coordinator in the uncomfortable position of having to turn someone away because their experience level doesn’t match that of the group.

Your Trip Could Be Listed in This Space — email Cruisemaster James Wright at jwrightnmaul@hotmail.com

KEY TO GCA SKILL LEVELS

Flat Water - no current will be encountered; safe for new paddlers.

Beginner - mild current, occasional Class 1 ripples; new paddlers can learn basic river techniques.

Trained Beginner - moving water with Class 1-2 rapids; basic strokes and bracing skills needed.

Intermediate - rapids up to Class 3; eddying and ferrying skills needed; kayakers need solid roll.

Advanced - rapids up to Class 4; excellent boat control and self-rescue skills required.

Signing Up: Call the trip coordinator listed to sign up for trips. Most trip coordinators will move a trip to an alternate venue if the water levels and conditions for a particular trip are not favorable. Call early in the week to ensure you get a spot on the trip, and in consideration for the coordinators, PLEASE avoid calling late in the evening.

Training Trips are a combination of recreation and training designed for those boaters who have completed a formal training clinic and would like some on-the-river time with instructors practicing what was learned in the clinic and expanding skill levels.

Canoe Camping Trips are multi-day trips, generally on flat or mild water, with at least one night of camping. For details on a scheduled trip, call the trip coordinator. To arrange a trip, call Vincent Payne at 770.834.8263.

To Volunteer To Lead Trips: Email Cruisemaster James Wright at jwrightnmaul@hotmail.com or Berry Walker at bcwalker55@gmail.com. As usual, we need trip coordinators for all types of trips, from flatwater to Class 5 whitewater. Our excellent trip schedule depends on the efforts of volunteers, so get involved and sign up to coordinate a trip on your favorite river today! The GCA needs YOU!

Chattooga Trips are limited to 12 boats on ANY section on ANY trip, club trip or private (USFS regulation). Boating is prohibited above the Highway 28 bridge. Your cooperation in protecting this National Wild and Scenic River is appreciated.

Roll Practice: see gapaddle.com for information.



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Nomadic Flow Outfitters is Atlanta's premier paddlesports retailer conveniently located just north of Atlanta in Canton, Ga along the beautiful river banks of the Etowah River. We offer a full service retail shop carrying all the best brands in the industry, rental/demo programs, paddling schools and guided trips. Our friendly and knowledgeable team is dedicated to serving our amazing paddling community and making paddling adventures more easily accessible for all. So whether you're looking for those relaxing float trips, fishing your local spot or chasing after the rush of whitewater our team at NFO is here to help you!

Keeping In Touch

To contact the GCA, write Georgia Canoeing Association, Inc., P.O. Box 611, Winston, GA 30187.

Groupmail: GCA maintains a group email list to help members share information of general interest. To sign up, send an e-mail to gcalist-subscribe@groups.io.

Website: Information about GCA, forms (including membership application and GCA waiver form), a link to the GCA Store and links to *Eddy Line* advertisers are all at <http://www.gapaddle.com>.

Facebook: Visit the GCA Facebook page for photos, video, trip reports, or to join an upcoming impromptu trip.

ALL ABOUT THE EDDY LINE

The Eddy Line, the official GCA newsletter, is available in pdf format. To subscribe, contact Vincent Payne at 678-343-5292 or vincent.payne9354@gmail.com, or mail your request to P.O. Box 611, Winston, GA 30187.

Submissions/Advertising: All submissions and advertising should be sent to *The Eddy Line*, at: EddyLineEditor@gmail.com.



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[WE'RE ON THE WEB:]
www.gapaddle.com

The purpose of the GCA is to have fun and promote safety while paddling.

GCA is a member-operated paddling club with over 500 family and corporate memberships comprising more than 1500 Individuals. Canoeists and Kayakers of all ages and paddling abilities are equally welcome. Some of our mutual interests include whitewater river running, creeking and playboating, river and lake touring, sea kayaking, paddle camp outs and competition and racing activities. We espouse conservation, environmental and river access issues as well as boating safety and skills development. Group paddling, training and social activities of all kinds are conducted throughout the year thanks to the volunteer efforts of our many members and friends. Membership is NOT limited to Georgia residents.