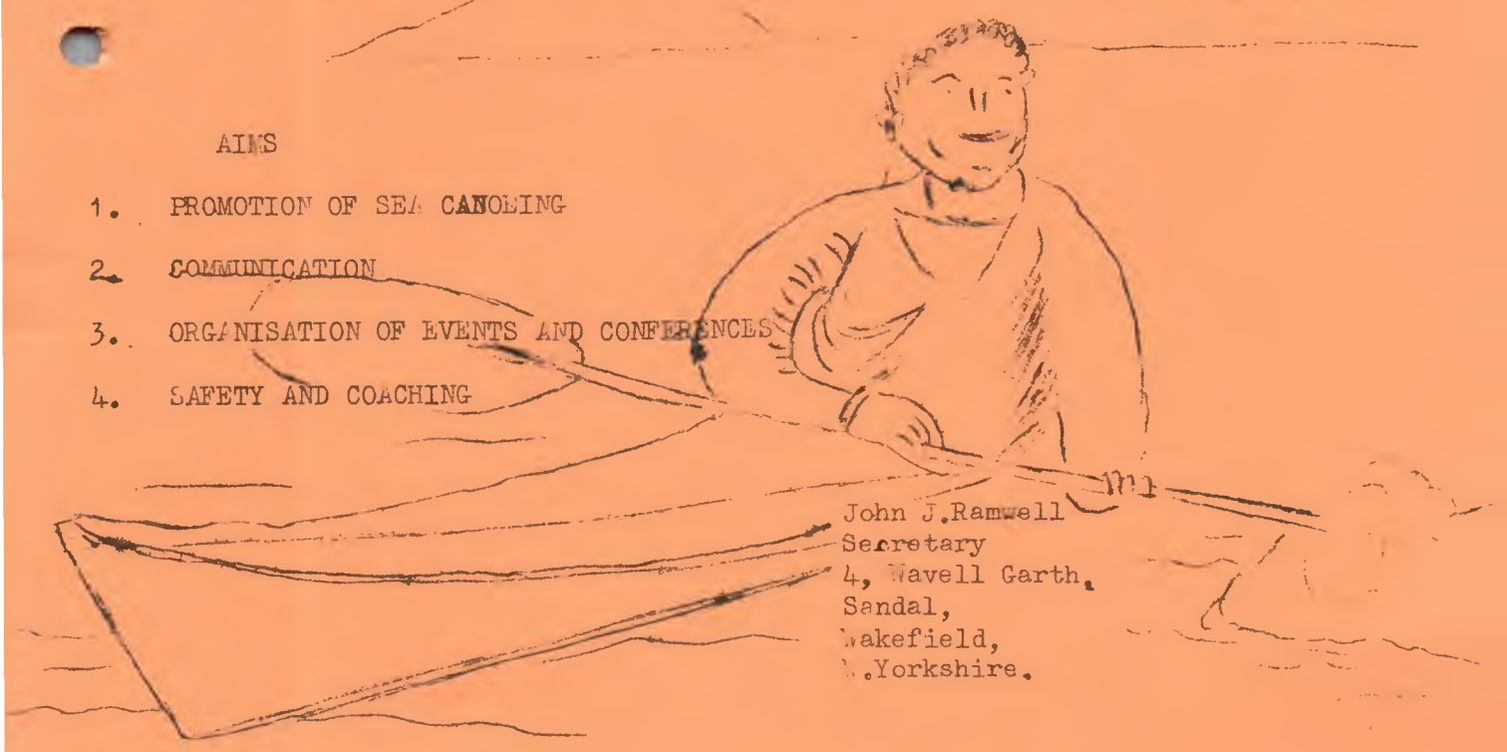
Advanced Sea Kayak Club

AN INTERNATIONAL SEA CANOEING CLUB OPEN TO ALL INTERESTED IN THIS ASPECT OF CANOEING

NEWSLETTER



AIMS

1. PROMOTION OF SEA CANOEING
2. COMMUNICATION
3. ORGANISATION OF EVENTS AND CONFERENCES
4. SAFETY AND COACHING

John J.Ramwell
Secretary
4, Wavell Garth,
Sandal,
Wakefield,
W.Yorkshire.

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ADVANCED SEA KAYAK CLUB

NEWSLETTER No. 29.

FEBRUARY, 1982.

FROM ME (EDITORIAL)

Woll, here we are into 1982. There have been times when I thought that at least I would never make it, never mind the rest of the world!! A Happy New Year to you all anyway. Here's hoping we all manage to achieve our own ambitions, (even those very secret ones!)

This Newsletter is thicker (in the physical sense of course!) than usual for two reasons.....1) I have a lot to fit in, and 2) I'm hoping to save postage by distributing this letter at the Canoe Exhibition.

THIS IS YOUR FINAL NEWSLETTER unless you have renewed your subscription. I shall be publishing a full list of members with the next Newsletter so it's up to you to ensure your name and address appears on this list. On the other hand it is also important that you let me know if you do NOT wish to have your name and address so published (you tax dodgers or escaped convicts!!).

Now to introduce this 'Letter. There is the long awaited account of our circumnavigation of Nunivak Island, Alaska - well, at least I've been waiting for it! There is a follow up article on Bernd Chilian's views on kayak design written by Nigel Foster. (Thankyou Nigel for your account of your recent awe-inspiring exploits off Greenalnd last summer to the sea canoeing symposium)

Whilst at the Royal Geographical Society Head Quarters recently I came across an interesting account of Gino Watkins' kayak which I thought well worth including. Thanks to Drew Delany for promoting yet more correspondence on John Dowd's concepts of sea canoeing. I have published John's letter in full.

There is the usual interesting batch of correspondence plus one or two notices of information. I have made some comment on the recent 4th.National Sea Canoeing Symposium. A full report is available if you're interested at £1.30.

And that's it. Hope you enjoy it. If you did'nt - don't tell me; if you did, tell your friends!!

-.-

A.S.K.C. SHOP.

ASKC Ties @ £2.50 each inc. p.& p.
ASKC Stickers @ 30 pence each inc. p.& p.
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ASKC woollen sweaters in all sizes @ £11 : available only from Sharon Rowe at Plas y Brenin National Centre, N.Wales.

-.-

Please tear off and send to

John Ramwell, 4, Wavell Garth, Sandal, Wakefield, W. Yorkshire.

APPLICATION FOR RENEWAL TO A.S.K.C. 1982 £3.00

Name..... Date.....

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SPARE PADDLES Peter J.Carter.

Spare paddles are a necessary evil, needed in case, but always cluttering the deck. Little thought appears to have been given to devising effective schemes for carrying the spare and having it ready for instant use. John Ramwell recommends (Ch.1.) that they be where "you are able to reach behind you, take up half a paddle and roll back upright again." With most stowage methods, impossible: see Hutchinson Fig 17 or Dowd, Fig.1.11

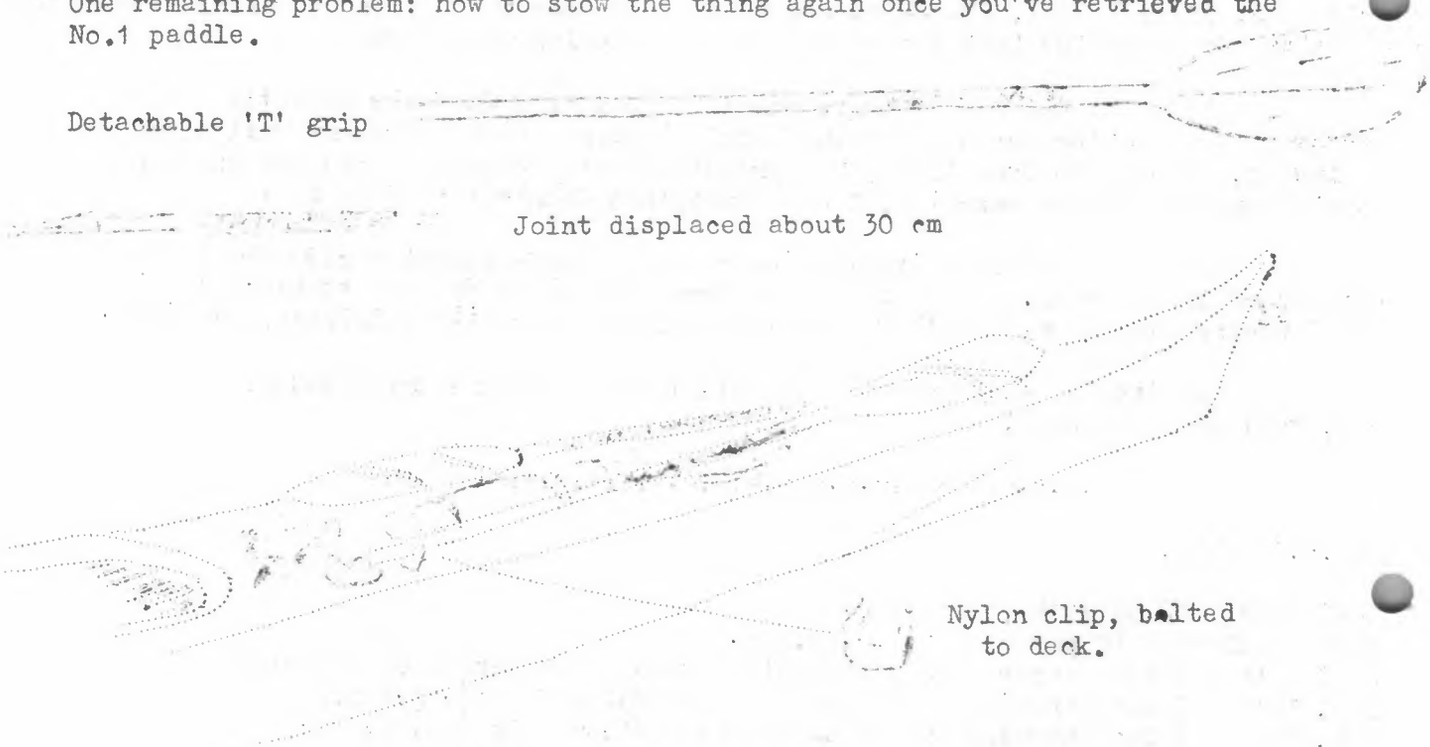
This new system overcomes many, but not all, the problems.

The spare, or at least half of it, becomes a Canadian paddle, complete with 'T' grip. It can be used to roll (reverse Canadian rolls are very easy in kayaks) and paddle around with much more power and control than is possible with only half a paddle. Once out of the immediate danger, the 'T' grip is removed and replaced by the other blade.

To use an existing paddle, fit the 'T' grip to an extra length of shaft about 30 cm long; for a new one, make or order it with the joint off centre and fit the 'T' grip directly. Use the same type of joint as the other blade.

Stow the paddle on the deck on the preferred side, so that you can lay back, release it and roll up. The blade is held as usual by shock cord, the other end by a clip, preferably with a rubber loop over the points for extra security.

One remaining problem: how to stow the thing again once you've retrieved the No.1 paddle.



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BRITTANY EXPEDITION

This nine-day wonderful week, staffed by B.C.U. Coaches, aims to explore the coast between St. Malo and Brest and will be for paddlers of Sea Proficiency standard and above. The expedition will be shadowed by a mini-bus and there will be a few places for wives, boyfriends, etc. who wish to explore and accompany by this method.

There's scope to choose from these delights: island hopping, B.C.U. Advanced Sea Training, access to beauties on remote beaches, B.C.U. Advanced Sea Testing, French wine, cheese, Etc, etc.

A first opportunity to legally paddle French coastal waters under new agreements.

Dates: 31st.July to 8th.August,1981.

Further details from
Calshot Activities Centre,
Calshot Road,
Calshot,
Southampton, SO4 1BR. Tel.Fawley 892077.

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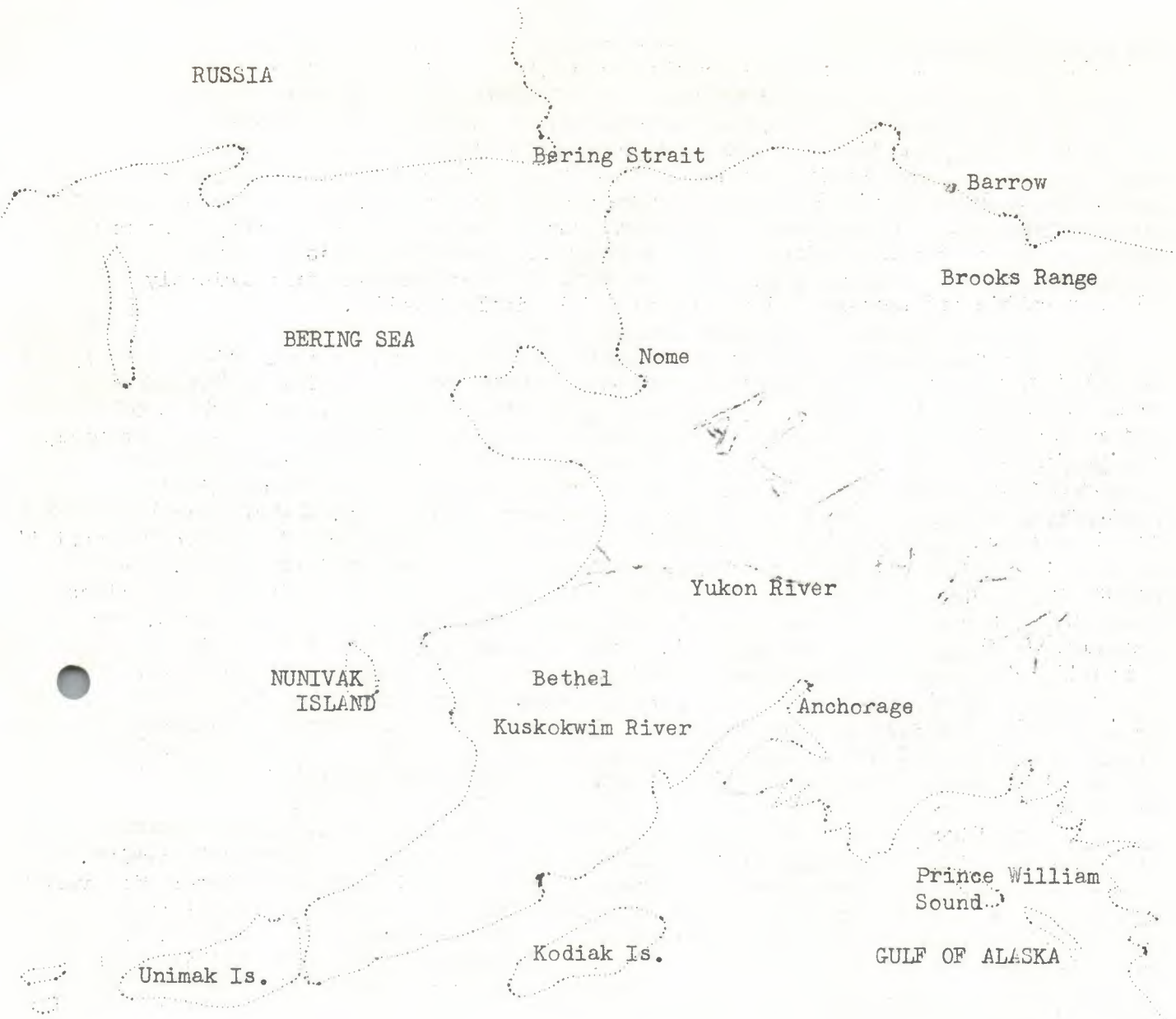
SEA TOURING COMMITTEE CAR/CANOE STICKERS



1981 BRITISH EXPEDITION TO CIRCUMNAVIGATE NUNIVAK ISLAND OFF THE COAST OF ALASKA

MEMBERS.....RAYMOND ROWE, JOHN RAMWELL, FRANK MAGUIRE.

Determined to paddle our sea kayaks off Alaska we scrutinized th maps to search out an area to explore. We were after two objectives. First we wished to take our kayaks to an area not previously explored by British sea canoeists, and secondly we wanted to discover a true wilderness area where there would be the type of total committment not readily available here in the British Isles.

Nunivak Island off the S.W.Coast of Alaska seemed to fit the bill and so we started writing round and visiting libraries in an attempt to get as much background as possible. It was surprisingly difficult to discover very much at all. For example, all our information pointed to the fact that Nunivak Island was un-inhabited and as our story unfolds you will see that in fact this was not the case.

All we could discover for certain was that there were regular flights to a town called Bethel which is about 400 miles due west of Anchorage. We could not elucidate with any certainty that the planes making this journey could frieght our sea kayaks,never mind the journey from Bethel to Nunivak Island; a distance of another 120 miles in a westerly direction. The only option was to get ourselves to Anchorage and start making enquiries regarding the possibility of frieghting our kayaks to Bethel and if successful in this stage of our journey with the sea kayaks, to again make enquiries regarding getting ourselves and kayaks to Nunivak Island. Remember that at this initial planning stage we were under the impression that Nunivak was un-inhabited. We were therefore relying on the possibility of a sea plane taking us to Nunivak, and this was the method of travel we almost adopted. Our contingency plan if Nunivak was not accessible by plane was to canoe down from Bethel on the River Kuskokwim and then turn west along the coast to al least reach Nunivak Island, if not circumnavigate it. We were discussing here a trip of over 500 miles and so we allowed ourselves a month in Alaska. In the event we actually took two weeks, one week in travelling

out with our kayaks and one week on the water circumnavigating Ninuvak.

On arrival in Alaska we started to discover all sorts of things that no amount of research back home in the U.K.would provide. We found we could frieght our kayaks to Bethel, and having tracked down the only air cargo company able to take them, the problem remained as to how, after clearing customs, we could transport the kayaks the 5 miles to the other side of Anchorage Airport to the company concerned, Alaskan International Airlines. The answer.....a taxi driver with a sense of adventure and a roof rack on his cab. We found this combination in a friendly Alaskan cabbie and managed this objective with little trouble.

Could we get our kayaks to Nunivak? No way of saying at this stage. It's not every day that three sea kayaks need to be frieghted to remote areas of Alaska. All we could do was wait and see. Our own flight to Bethel was scheduled for the day after our arrival in Anchorage and so having ensured that the kayaks would eventually arrive in Bethel (we were told it could take up to a week or longer) we headed for down town Anchorage. This city is described as the place where civilisation meets the wilderness and in my book this is an apt description. The city is a combination of luxury hotels and shopping precincts among a sprawling, almost 'shanty'' like town of cheap buildings apparantly built in a hurry on a tight budget. The roads are wide and the way some of the natives drove around in their huge cadillacs and trucks one could appreciate how useful this feature was. We were treated, for example, to the antics of one'cowboy', complete with large ten gallon hat and exhaustless Triumph Stag, charging round the streets of Anchorage at breakneck speed, doing Stasky & Hutch type cornering and accellerating, and all this at 3.o'clock in the morning. One could hear him approaching from three blocks away and if we heard him whilst we were actually crossing the road the three of us would freeze and post look out in all directions. The first one to spot him would shout and we would make a bee-line in the opposite direction for safety!

You may well ask what we were doing loping round Anchorage at 3.00 in the morning. We had earlier that same night booked in at the Palace Hotel which we later discovered was a cross between a hostel and a brothel, - still, the sheets were clean and it was cheap! We woke in the early hours of the morning for two reasons really, one, the noise was loud (it was only at about 8.00 in the morning that everything seemed to settle down to the relative peace of a busy Anchorage rush hour!) and two, our own biological clocks insisted it was early afternoon. We were still adjusting to the time difference between the U.K. and Alaska.

So having survived the attempts to drive us down, we made our way to one of the many 24 hour eating houses and enjoyed a meal of eggs and pancakes with endless cups of cpffee. The colourful and aged lady who both cooked and served our meals with fascinating efficiency, we named Alice, after the name of the eating house itself, 'Alice's Place' She learnt of our plans to visit Bethel as we engaged another customer in enquiries regarding that far flung corner of Alaska. Her remarks remained with us for the duration of the trip - "you can't buy booze in Bethel", and "you're going to die in Bethel". Said with such candour and finality, we began to believe her!!

We had an interesting conversation with one of Alice's customers regarding the Brown bears. At this stage we were contemplating buying a rifle to protect ourselves as we had received conflicting reports as to this necessity. It is known that Brown Bears do attack humans with little provocation if they suspect food is present on the camp. We had seen a stuffed bear in a glass case at Anchorage and it towered a good 4 or 5 feet above the tallest of us. "No real problem," said our friend, "Just shove a fistfull of gravel down it's throat when it gets close enough, this chokes the bear and deters it from continueing with it's attack." What really worried us was the apparant seriousness of this suggestion and we had all on not to choke on our pancakes as we took all this in.

Once the stores opened our task was to buy in all the freeze dried food for our expedition and we were led by an advert. in a local paper to the Army and Navy Stores on 4th.Ave. where we bought in three weeks supply. The freeze dried packeted food was manufactured by RICHMOND, and there were several varieties of breakfast, lunches and dinners to choose from. The total cost for the three weeks supply was S 320 and it turned out to be very satisfactory.

As we had emptied our ruc-sacs the day previous into the kayaks we were able to stuff all this food into our sacs for transporting to Bethel.

Next day, Saturday, we caught the early morning flight to Bethel and an hour later

we were stepping into the 'back of beyond' airport at Bethel. We were in luck, the kayaks had already arrived. Could we get them on to Nunivak? Our first line of enqiury took us to the local bush pilot and we learnt to our dismay that getting us and our kayaks would require three journeys as only one kayak tied to a float could make the journey at one time. The whole venture was going to cost us in excess of $1,000 and there was no certainty that the kayaks could be got out to Nunivak within the week.

By this time we were discovering a few saliant facts. Nunivak was inhabited after all. There was one village on the north side with an airstrip. There was a population of about 150 eskimos and the name of the place, Mekoryuk City. We also learnt that canoeing from Bethel to the sea was possible but the terrain for miles around was extremely inhospitable; consisting of a vast treeless flat landscape covered in thousands of lakes and water holes. Canoeing along the coast from the mouth of the River Kuskokwim would be fraught with problems as the shore line was mud flats extending for miles into the sea. Apart from small fishing village at the mouth of the River the area was totally unpopulated and offered little if any scenic value. It was with grave reservations that we decided on canoeing from Bethel to Nunivak in the absence of being able to make Nunivak by air. Most of the information we gleaned from maps (there were no charts available) which we obtained from the Geology Office in Anchorage and studied at a ski slope cafe in the mountains surrounding Anchorage. It was here that we determined our trip could only realistically consist of circumnavigating Nunivak, so long, that is, we could get ourselves and equipment out there.

The airline that took us to Bethel, Wein Air Alaska, had a cargo office at Bethel and approaches to them showed that they could get our kayaks to Mekoryuk, Nunivak Island. Our luck was holding, the big question was when!! When could Wein Air ship our three kayaks to Nunivak. Could be next week, good chance it would be soon, but at least the operation would not be costing us anything like $1,000.

So having removed tent and sleeping bags from the kayaks and replaced them with the freeze dried food from our ruc-sacs, we left the kayaks to the mercy of Wein Air Alaska and hoped that they would arrive on Nunivak in time for us to complete our expedition.

Our own flight to Nunivak was scheduled for the next morning, Sunday, and so having done all we could regarding the passage of our kayaks, we 'bummed' a lift into Bethel itself. Again it was a story of contrasts, only more so now than an Anchorage. The roads were dirt tracks with pot holes as large as dustbins, the buildings were shanty, the side-walks were of flimsy planking, though they enabled us to pick our way round the town of about 5,000 population. On the other hand we were shown a new hospital that would have done justice to a Star Trek Space Station, and we visited a small shopping precinct that would not have been out of place in any British City.

We spent the night in the tent at Bethel Airport which was a salutory experience, but at least were well ready for our flight to Mekoryuk the next morning.

If we thought Bethel was the end of the earth, then Mekoryuk was the end of the universe. The airstrip was little more than a level dirt track and it was four miles from Mekoryuk City to which it was joined by the now familiar dirt track. We were able to scounge a lift in one of the trucks heading for the 'City'. The sign on the outskirts said 'Welcome to Mekoryuk'. Having been unceromoniously dumped in the middle of the village we stood in some bewiderment to take in the scene. The houses were made from sheets of hardboard and corrugated metal. The grandest building was the church. The total length of road, including the four miles to the airstrip was no more than four and half miles, but there were at least half a dozen trucks moving round the village most of the time. The focus of the village was NIMA stores. We cleverly worked it out that NIMA was the name of the indian tribe living in the village. To our dismay it simply stood for Nunivak Island, Mekoryuk, Alaska! Oh, well!!

Surrounding each residence was such a mess that one wished for the snow to come along and cover it all up. Among the long grass which only grew in the village, was a tethered dog, usually a huskie. The whole impression was one of general apathy,neglect and untidyness. The snow would tidy everything in appearance when it inevitably came in October.

Meanwhile our task was to search out the village elders and explain the purpose of our visit to their island. We were met with more than indifference. The natives

were against us embarking on any trip by kayak from their island and continually warned us of the dangers. Suddenly they came up with a reason to prevent us setting forth. Had we got a permit from the Wildlife and Fisheries Protection Superintendant? No, we had not; though we had written from the U.K. requesting one, and the letters had been returned undelivered. Ah! in that case, definitely there was no way we were going to be allowed to circumnavigate the island by kayak. We explained how we had tried to obtain a permit, how it had cost us a lot of money and planning to get our kayaks and ourselves thus far. None of this created any sort of impression and all we could get from the representative of the Wildlife Refuge Park was a vague agreement that he would telephone the Wildlife Refuge Office in Bethel the next morning (Monday) to ask them from that distance for the necessary permission. We held out little hope and so dispondently erected the tent on the outskirts of the village and shared the one remaining sandwich - all our food was still in the kayaks. We had two problems - when would the kayaks make the island and would we ever get the necessary permission to use them. We even visited the church that evening and spent two hours in the over-heated chapel whilst we listened to the eskimos sing and pray. This proved to be quite an insight into the native culture and as far as we were concerned our own prayers were answered. Our kayaks arrived safely the same day and after a lot of delay and hassle we eventually got our permission to canoe round the island.

NUNIVAK ISLAND.

The following description is taken from the Bering Sea and Strait Pilot.

"Nunivak Island, which is seldom approached by vessels, lies with Cape Corwin, its low eastern point, about 47 miles west-north-westwards of Cape Avinof; the coast of this island is generally bold and rocky. Except for Twin mountains, 627 feet high, about 8 miles north-westwards of Cape Corwin, the eastern part of the island is low. Roberts Mountain, about 21 miles west-north-westwards of Cape Corwin, is 1,675 feet high, with gradually sloping sides. About 10 miles eastward of Cape Mohican, the western extremity of the island, is a hill, 886 feet high.

For a distance of 10 miles offshore, especially on the eastern and northen sides of the island, the depths are reported to be very irregular. In 1899, the U.S.S. Corwin circumnavigated Nunivak island, keeping about 2 miles from the coast and outlying islands, and found general depths of from 7 to 10 fathoms. There are herds of reindeer on the island.

Current. Tidal Streams.
Between Cape Mendenhall and Cape Mohican, the tidal streams set north-eastward and south-westward along the coast at a maximum rate of 1¾ knots. Between Cape Etolin and Nash Harbour, a current setting south-westward along the coast, with a rate of 3 knots, has been observed. A current sets strongly from Cape Newenham in a north-westerly direction and passes through Etolin Strait, this and the tidal streams in the Etolin Straits are sufficiently strong to prevent the middle part freezing over in winter."

THE CIRCUMNAVIGATION.

So, on Monday morning at about lunch time, the 3rd. August, 1981, we were at least on our way to attempting to circumnaviga one of the most remote islands in the world. Once we left Mekoryuk we were definitely on our own. There are no other villages on the island other than Mekoryuk, despite information to the contrary in the Pilot which speaks about the inhabited village of Nash and smaller camps during the summer. It was made perfectly clear to us by the natives of Mekoryuk that we were entirely on our own and indeen, fully responsible for our own safety. There was no way of asking for help and should our appearance back at Mekoryuk be long overdue, then and only then would there be a search which would not by any means be gauranteed to find us.

It was therefore with some trepidition that we sallied forth, past the Mekoryuk Airstrip on our left. After several hours paddling we passed through and interesting overfall caused by the tide passing through the narrows between a headland and off lying islands. As we rounded this headland the coast changed from being low lying and gently sloping to the sea to being rocky and cliff like.

Soon after these overfalls we struck our first camp and as on every subsequent camp, our first priority was the acquisition of water. Though our carefully waterproofed map showed there to be small lakes and streams in abundance, in

actual fact. apart from a couple of sites, this was not the case and we had to trudge some distance in search of bog water.

By Tuesday evening we made Nash Harbour. Here there was fresh water from a stream. Along side this stream was evidence of the toing and froing of much wild life including bears, though we had been told there were no bears on this island. Here at Nash there was also evidence of a once inhabited settlement. Long overgrown grass and dilapidated buildings gave the feeling of a ghost village. We made camp right on the shore as we had promised the people at Mekoryuk that in no way would we interfere with anything.

We were lucky that the thick fog that swirled about for most of the day stayed clear until we had crossed the bay into Nash Harbour. Once safely there the fog again descended and blocked off the view and the sun.

Next day we were up early and, breakfast consumed, were on the water by 7.30 am as we had over 30 miles tp paddle before rounding Cape Mohican to arrive at the first available camp site and landing spot. Cape Mohican was well named. The profile of the Cape from the seaward, which juts right out into the Bering Sea to form the most S.W. point, looks like the outline of an indian chief lying on his back. The bird life on these cliffs was incredible. It is hoped to include a seperate chapter on the flora and fauna of Nunivak in this report; suffice to say that they were very numerous, both in sheer numbers and in variety. When they swooped off the cliffs in any numbers they could momentarily block out the sun.

This days 30 mile paddle was totally committing as a study of the map revealed no egress until the 30 miles was up. This proved to be the case in actual fact and by 5.30 pm we were still looking among the cliffs for a break and a landing place indicated on the map. We came eventually to the lagoon we were searching for and found it to be an ideal site for our third nights camp. Having found fresh water we started preparing our meal on the drift wood fire and very soon we had company. Red foxes as bold as you like wandered down to within a few metres of us and spent most of the evening running to and fro, quite unconcerned about our presence.

Next morning we woke to find a small herd of Muskox grazing just across the other side of the stream and I was able to film them at close quarters before they noticed us and made off over the slopes.

Again by 7.30 am we were on the water and facing another days paddle across large open bays and along high cliffs covered by thousands of sea birds. We found ourselves a fantastic spot for lunch,reminiscent of the Bounty Bar advert on the television. We found it by paddling through a narrow opening which opened into a huge blue lagoon in which seals were busy fishing. The weather at this time was ideal...warm and sunny with a gentle breeze. On landing we found further evidence of another disused settlement or summer camp.

Having lunched we paddled off and within half an hour the weather and conditions changed quite dramatically. From a gentle breeze the wind increased to a force 6 and though in our favour, it gave us a wet and uncomfortable ride for the remainded of the afternoon. We were committed to a lengthy paddle and round each headland we searched in vain for a suitable site for the night. At last we found a beach on which we might camp, but to get to it meant riding big surf waves. Needs must when muscles drive and we safely made the beach and set camp. Again we were visited by the foxes and it was truly amazing how unafraid of us they were.

Raymond had us up and about by 6.00 the next morning and by 7.30 we were underway. We had our sights set on passing the most southerly tip of the island and to do this we needed to paddle to the distant headland. We made excellent progress and we reckoned to have covered about 18 miles in just over three hours so that by mid-day we had passed the southerly tip. According to our plans, which had been very accurate up to this stage, we should now be heading N.E. for the east side of the island, but the position of the sun indicated that we were still heading due east. Because of the large compass deviation experienced in this area of the world we needed to place more credence on our watches and the sun's position in the sky than we did on our compasses.

If following the contour of the coast meant continueing east, then we had little choice, and so we plodded onwards. The map was now of little help and we considered ourselves quite lost. The weather broke during the late afternnon and before making landfall we crossed a large bay, head into wind. Making painfully slow progress we eventually landed among the sand dunes. The wind refused to abate and sand blew into everything, and I mean everything!!

I suppose spirits were at their lowest ebb at this camp site. We were tired, we were lost and the lonliness and isolation of the area was getting through to us. I guess we relied more on each other at this time than at any other time before or since.

The evening chores of finding water, collecting drift wood and erecting the tent kept us well occupied, and soon we crashed for the night. The wind, unusually, did not lessen during the night and over breakfast we reluctantly predicted a difficult paddle.

Our prediction was realised. If anything the wind increased and we were being blown out to sea and making little progress in a forward direction. Things became so bad that we had to head right into the wind and aim directly for shore where we landed to take stock of the situation. We agreed that we had no real choice but to hug the shore line and use the bays as some protection from the wind. Progress was slow and the strong winds refused to relent. We eventually stopped for lunch and sheltered from the eternal wind. It was such a relief just to get out of the wind that we could gladly have remained put. In fact I said that should a boat pull into view and offer a lift to Mekoryuk, I'd take it!! Raymond reckoned I would'nt really but as no boat appeared or was ever likely to appear there was no chance that we would ever find out who was right!

Returning to the water and the incessant wind we continued along the coast which was now low lying and consisted of either rocks or sand dunes. Rounding one headland we came across Twin Mountains, an easily recognisable twin peaked hill. Studying our map still gave us no accurate indication of our position and we decided the map just had to be incorrect, that the whole south east corner of the map of Nunivak was wrongly mapped and in fact did not show 15 or 20 miles of coast line at all. We were still basically heading eastwards. Even the identification of Twin Mountains was of little help.

We camped on an idéal site with fresh water and plenty of drift wood in immediate abundance. The weather improved, and Raymond even went so far as to cook us pancakes after our meal. Things were definitely looking up! Perhaps we would make the village and civilisation after all! I mean, it was only a case of following the contours of the coast. Spirits were improving, particularly when Frank insisted that the position of Twin Mountain and some local inlets indicated on our virtually useless map that we were making fine progress. I was'nt that convinced as it appeared we were still heading basically eastwards and I would'nt be happy 'till the sun was on our backs and we were heading northwards along the east side of the island.

It was'nt until next morning that we realised it was possible at last to locate ourselves on the map. We passed the base of Twin Mountains where it came down to the sea level and we were now at last heading north. The map was now proving accurate again and we easily pin-pointed Cape Meldenhall and later Cape Manning.

We made good progress as the wind had dropped and the sea was calmer. Our spirits really soared during the morning when the plane from Mekoryuk, en route to the mainland, spotted us and came over to take a closer look.

This day we completed the whole of the east coast and started heading west towards Mekoryuk itself before making camp by a creek sheltered from the sea.
We knew that this was to be our last camp and we looked forward to making Mekoryuk the next day. To do this we had a nine mile paddle to perform which seemed to take us for ever. We rounded the spit of land at 10.00 am and, there to our delight, was Mekoryuk and the first signs of life since leaving this same village seven days ago exactly.

We broke through the moderate surf waves and confused sea which was a feature of the particular area on the west side of the spit, and landed on the beach at Mekoryuk at 1030 am. We were greeted by the eskimos who wandered down to meet us as we canoed in. Two young lads were taken quite by surprise when Frank and Raymond stepped out of their kayaks and without ceremony handed these lads the kayaks as presents. Immediately eyes fell on mine but I had already decided to have mine flown home.

SO WE HAD DONE IT!. Over 200 miles of coast line, averaging well over 30 miles a day. We could never work out how strong the tides were and how much they helped or hindered us. We knew the tidal range was only a few metres but there were times when we felt we had the tide on our side or we were fighting it. THE END.

I recently visited the Royal Geographical Society in London and there I found the kayak on display that belonged to Gino Watkins. Along side it was the following explanatory essay.

WATKINS' KAYAK by J.R.Rymill.

The kayak which we found adrift on 20th.August 1932 has been hung among the relics in the Museum of the Society with all its hunting gear in place; and the following brief account is designed to explain its construction and use.

The East Greenland kayak consists of a wooden frame covered with seal-skin, usually of the crested or bearded seal. It requires great skill and long experience to make a kayak frame. The young men seldom build their own, usually getting help or leaving it entirely in the hands of of an old and experienced hunter. If the curves are not just right the skins will be cut by young ice, or if the proportions are slightly wrong it will be a bad boat in a rough sea. Each kayak must be made to fit its owner, for when one is in a kayak it must be part of one, neither moving independently of the other. If this were not so it would be quite impossible to right the kayak again after it had been capsized, which is actually quite an easy thing to do either with the paddle, harpoon thrower, or hand alone. When the kayak is finished the women cover it with seal-skin, sewing it with sinew thread and using a waterproof stitch. This is done by passing the needle through only half the thickness of the skin at each stitch, therefore when the thread is pulled tight there will be no stitching visible on the outside of the skin. When the women have finished the covering, the whole kayak is given several coats of blubber to preserve the skins and also to fill up any small holes left in the seams.

We will describe the kayak gear, beginning from the bows. First comes the framework for the screen. This screen is made of white material and may be seen rolled up and lying under the tray holding the harpoon line. When the screen is rigged on the frame for hunting it looks remarkably like a small piece of drifting ice when seen from some distance in front of the kayak and is used to hide behind when stalking a seal.

Behind the screen frame comes the tray for holding the harpoon line. Under the tray will be seen a seal-skin rifle bag. Between the tray and the cockpit is a collection of small wooden objects which are used for plugging holes in dead seals to prevent the blood escaping. One of these is longer than the rest. This is forced between the skin and blubber of the seal and the hole thus formed is filled with air and when plugged causes the seal to float while being towed behind the kayak. Near these pegs is a piece of wood pushed under the seal-skin bands which go over the kayak deck. When fishing and shooting or getting in and out of the kayak one end of the paddle is placed under this piece of wood in such a manner that it will hold the paddle at right angles to the kayak, thus giving the effect of an out-rigger. Lying along the right side of the kayak is the harpoon, in such a position that it can be quickly picked up in the right hand. The end of the harpoon consists of a narwhal-ivory shaft about 18 inches long attached to the main wooden shaft by a short seal-skin thong. Behind the cockpit is a bladder float made from the skin of a young fjord seal. This bladder is attached to the harpoon line, which is coiled up in the tray. On the other end of the line is the harpoon head, which lies in the centre of the tray. When the kayak is rigged for hunting the harpoon line lies along the harpoon shaft, and the head, which has a small hole between the barbs, is placed on the ivory end of the harpoon. The line is then pulled tight and attached to a bone peg about halfway down the shaft by means of a toggle, any slack line is then taken up and coiled in the tray. When the end is given a strong pull sideways it becomes detached from the wooden shaft, thereby slackening the harpoon line and freeing the head. When the harpoon is thrown the hunter immediately throws the bladder overboard. After the line has run out of the tray, which is a matter of a few seconds, the harpooned seal has no connection with the kayak. One of the dangers with this method of hunting is the possibility of the line being badly coiled and catching as it runs out of the tray, or else getting caught on part of the deck cargo, in which case the hunted seal would overturn the kayak as it pulled on the line. The hunter usually carries a knife on the deck pushed under the two thongs which hold down the back support of the tray. If he is overturned he can cut the line while upside down in the water and then right himself in the usual way.

Behind the cockpit and to the right of the bladder is the paddle. This is made as short and as narrow as possible with a protective covering of whalebone or narwhal ivory along both edges and at the end of the blades, which are very thick. This construction is necessary as the paddle is often used as a pole when

pushing among the ice floes. The bone edges are very necessary when breaking through young ice, for without their protection the paddle would be cut and splintered in a few days.

To the left of the bladder is the lance. This is used for killing wounded seals and is thrown with the same throwing stick as the harpoon. Unlike the harpoon it has no bard on the end. When the lance strikes a wounded seal the end becomes detached, and as the thongs holding the end are fastened in the centre of the shaft, it will float at right angles to the head, and thus the drag on the shaft will pull out the head of the lance as the seal swims through the water. The lance can then be picked up and used again. This should be unneccessary with a fjord seal, but when hunting larger seals or narwhal it is sometimes necessary to throw the lance several times before hitting a vital spot.

Seals must be the staple food for anybody proposing to live off the country in South East Greenland. To procure seals in these waters it is essential to become an efficient kayak hunter. During the summer months if the seals are killed while in the water they will sink at once. To prevent their sinking and so being lost, the Eskimo has evolved a method of harpooning them with the harpoon head attached to the bladder float. This cannot be done from a boat as the seals are too shy to come within harpoon range; so the kayak must be fitted and used with it's protecting screen. When hiding behind this screen it is possible for a good hunter to approach within a few yards of a seal. The seal can then be shot and harpooned while it is sinking, or if the hunter is expert enough it may only be harpooned..

In Greenland on H.G. Watkin's last expedition we had a small supply of provisions, but we relied on the country to furnish us with the greater part of our food. We had no difficulty in providing ourselves, but it occupied about half our time.

There is a certain amount of risk attached to kayak hunting whish was made very apparent by the tragic death of Watkins when his expedition had only been in Greenland for a few weeks. According to evidence which we found I do not think there is very much doubt concerning the cause of his death. I will not give a detailed account of the evidence here as it could only be appreciated by an experienced kayaker; it is sufficient to say that we found his trousers and kayak apron on a very small ice floe close to an active glacier. His trousers were wet and must have been in the sea. We also found his kayak floating full of water and with the hunting gear not seriously out of place.

If while out hunting the kayak screen is knocked by a piece of ice it is likely to get disarranged, and if this happens it is neccesary to get out of the kayak for a few minutes to right the screen, as it cannot be reached from the cockpit. We think this happened to Watkins' screen, and he, thinking he would only be a minute, landed on a small ice floe in a dangerous locality. While on the floe a large piece of ice broke off the glacier, starting a wave big enough to upset the floe on which he had landed. There was strong wind blowing off the glacier at the time, which would carry his kayak away while he was climbing back on to the ice floe. He then took off his trousers and kayak apron and tried to swim after his kayak. It would be impossible for him to get into his kayak in the water and he must have been overcome by the cold before he could get it to an ice floe. This pf course is only a theory, but from the evidence we found and from personal experience it seems the only possible solution to a great Polar tragedy.

* * *

A NOTE FOR YOUR DIARY

British Canoe Union, Sea Touring Committee

SEA CANOEING EXHIBITION.
This is to be held in conjunction with the Calshot Small Boat Sale at the Calshot Activities Centre, Calshot, Southampton on SUNDAY 9th. MAY, 1982.
Canoe Manufacturers are being invited to bring their sea kayaks and equipment for exhibition and for a 'Try It' session in the adjacent Southampton Water.

Many thousands of visitors are expected on the Spit on this day which is being planned not only as an opportunity for the sea canoeist to see and list his specialist equipment but also as a day out for the family to enjoy visiting the second-hand Small Boat Sale and seeing Boardsailing, ski-ing, cycling, shooting and archery displays in the enormous sports hangers.
Application forms for stands for the Trade and for voluntary Sea Kayak organisations may be obtained from: Calshot Activities Centre, Calshot, Southampton, SO4 1BR.

RACING MULES by Nigel Foster.

I cannot resist following Bern Chilian's article in the last A.S.K.C. newsletter. I very much sympathise with his unfortunate experiences as I have in the past suffered similar disasters, but must counter a few of his statements in the light of some of my more fortunate experiences.

Bernd writes, "I am pretty sure that nobody on a real expedition without any human help, outside in the wilderness will drive a Porsche, but will be glad to come through with an old mule.....or are your boats built to compete in races?" and also, "instead of being proud of the speed, you should be proud of the behaviour of the boats in rough water conditions."

At present I paddle a Vyneck, maybe describable in Bernd's vocabulary as a 'Porsche', and possibly the most specialised sea expedition kayak design available at present. You may have noticed that sea kayaking has gained recognition as a specialist branch of the sport in its own right? Let's look at some of the other branches of the sport, such as slalom competition, sprint racing and surfing, and consider the kayaks used. What do we find? We find specialist kayaks, each carefully designed to do a particular job well, none of which is particularly easy to paddle when first encountered. I know that when I fist sat in a sprint kayak I felt tippy; when I first sat in a slalom kayak I had difficulty travelling straight, and when I first paddled a surf kayak I found it difficult to paddle out through the soup. Each type of kayak takes practice before it can be used to its best advantage, and new skills are developed accordingly.

Let's return to sea kayaks. We have in this branch of the sport an obvious difference. With surf kayaks we have no compromise kayak, we have learnt to control the extreme design, the same with slalom kayaks, but not with sea kayaks. Here we have many designs aimed at catching newcomers to the sport and providing them with a "predicable" canoe, which runs fairly straight, but is fairly manoeuvrable, is initially stable and beamy, and carries a reasonable amount of equipment. The trouble with many of these kayaks is that they fall short in their performance, often broaching badly in strong winds and giving a difficult time. However, any paddler could climb aboard in easy conditions and find sea kayaking an easy sport. Fair enough! I feel it is fair to include here a number of the earlier designs applied to the sea which were high volume, beamy, difficult to roll, but as Bernd points out, controllable if a rudder is used, and probably quite efficient....provided nothing goes wrong with the rudder. Am I right to class all these kayaks as "mules"? Maybe I'd be more accurate to say that mules are included in this group!

On the other hand we have the 'extreme' designs, the 'Porsches' of Bernd's world which are uncompromising, and make the in-experienced quite ill at ease to start with. The 'Porsches' are designed to do a particular job well, rather than to pamper the paddler. When I first sat in a Vyneck I felt tippy and insecure, but as I learned to paddle it I came to appreciate it's finer points. I had to develop new skills in order to properly use the boat because to start with the boat was more a sea kayak than I was a sea kayakist. I have since landed and launched from awkward places, surfed it, looped it forwards and backwards, played in tidal races and overfalls and completed some quite long journeys in it. I find it reliable, predictable, yet I wish I were a better paddler because the boat is built to go faster that I am capable of pushing it. So.....this is the 'Porsche' !!

What about these wilderness expeditions then, in boats 'built to compete in races' !! Last summer I packed up camping gear, food and cooking fuel for a month, an anti-polar bear rifle, admiralty pilots, charts, camaras, etc., etc., and set off in my kayak by myself to explore the 'races', whirlpools and overfalls, islands and icebergs to the north and south of the Hudson Strait. The Hudson Strait is not very close to human habitation and I must admit I thought I could class my trip as a 'real expedition'. Why then did I choose a 'Porsche' rather than a 'mule'? The ease with which the Vyneck copes with rough water was one reason, its' ability to hold a course in rough windy weather was another, its carrying ability was another (although I admit a mule would carry even more!) the ease with which I can roll it and,,quite important in an area of such unpredictable yet violent tides, its' speed.....all led me to believe a (Porsche' would be a good choice.
I was not disappointed, and after nearly crossing the Hudson Strait, after paddling some eight hours out of sight of land in rough windy weather and cross tides of up to 7 knots, I was able to hold my own against a tidal stream that threatened to sweep me away from my island landing, in a direction that seemed most likely to cause me the most problems. A further six hours of fast paddling in a fast kayak (in quite violent seas and ultimately total darkness) saw the turn of the tide and after two more hours eventual landfall. A slower kayak or 'mule' would have seen

me where? Somewhere, deep in the dark of Ungava Bay...probably to this day.

My own choice and advice on kayak designs; I cannot do better than repeat Bernd's own words when he says he leaves "it open to everyone to choose his own philosphy and with it his own type of boat and his own way of paddling." Choose a kayak in which you will be safe doing what you want to do. Choose your 'mule' or 'Porsche'; but first ask yourself, do you choose the mule because you can already ride it and are avoiding having to develop the new skills required to cope with the'Porsche', or do you really think that slow and steady is the best way.

Nigel Foster.

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CORRESPONDENCE

From Alan Byde.
'The beard is a face drain
It takes way the sea pain
Of salt upon the skin."

As for the Portuguese venture, I had no response until last week (early November) I am obliged for the information from Ed Van Rossum. I have experienced the water off Faro, over three weeks. At the start it was chilly, almost as cool as the North Sea in summer. But half way through the holiday it warmed up after a change of wind from Africa, the sea changed colour, and the fishing improved. Then it was warm. In fact further ideas have occurred, and the Rover Duoro from Zamorra to the mouth at Oporto seems a likely tour. This could be combined with a coastal trip, possibly collecting the westermost lighthouse in Europe which is about thirty miles west of Lisbon. Who knows!

I did enjoy the item on Ramsey Sound. I was there! I have been there several times. I have also met an ancester of that seal upon the rock at North Bishop. There is a sort of plateau of flat rock on the side facing the mainland. There is also a cleft going right through to the Ocean side of the rock. I went through there to be faced with a wall of water seething, bubbling and about to break from overhead. It didn't until I had been swept up, executing a pirouette on its crest. I then tore back through the gap riding over the deck of my companion, Les Guest. I was very scared, and felt a long way from home. My head was splitting with tension, and the water between me and Whitesands Bay from where we had started was piled up into regular ridges, like the North lights on a factory roof. It was moving north towards south. When I mentioned my distress to Les some time later he said that he had had no problems. It was my exped. was'nt it?.... and I was the expert was'nt I? This had anything but a good effect upon my sea pain. We met a fishing boat carrying a part time coastguard, and 'twas from the good ship Puffin that we were put overboard just off Point St. John. We arrived back, bang on time, 1600 hrs Later, much much later,in fact it was well into another day, we drove delicately down the road to the car park at Whitesands, after a long and enthusiastic evening at the rugby club. I could'nt do it now. The rugby club bit, that is. I hope our friends from Puffin are still there and enjoying the fishing.

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From Nigel Harsen, Seattle, U.S.A.

Dear John & Club Members,

The back issues you sent gave me the opportuntiy at last to read the articles concerning narrow boat safety among other matters. Having heard some rumours of its content, I did call John Dowd and advise him of inaccurate assumption made, and wanted to let you know as well. He mentions a 'brush with death' and cites the incident as an example of failure of a narrow boat. It is unfortunate that none of us involved was contacted personally before this OKA&fBC article was published. First, the trip was private, not with W.K.C. sponsorship. Second, the boat which overturned was an experimental home made design. The boats making the rescue, both by supporting the swimmer in the water on the blade deck in paddling for assistance, were Nordkapps and both performed admirably. The major difficulty was the lack of either bulkheads or flotation in the experimental boat which prevented righting and emptying out. As to the point of having boats alongside for rescue, the technique of 'rafting up' was successful. A Coastguardsmen assisting in the pick up stated that this was the only rescue out of seven in which he had participated, where a victim of a capsize was still living (and she required no medical help) This incident, while most unfortunate, should not be used for criticism of a Nordkapp type design. (And hopefully we have learnt enough from the

whole affair to be able to avoid such drastic self-field-testing of rescue and safety ideas.)

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From Joe Lamb, Australia.

Please let me have a small space to apologise publicly if indeed my intention to recommend John Hicks' cunning rafting to make a temporary diving platform can be construed as having taken his name in vain. Had John kept his appointment for the Sea Meet in far north Queensland he would have been given the proof of the workable device of flexi-straps. I am sorry to note John has managed to jam his paddle in attempting to acquire the technique.....we perhaps should blame the Lettmann Olymp V if one keeps capsizing it in grade 2 rapids, condemn the Nordkapp if one fails to execute a victory roll in it, and swear at the Henderson TCL4 locker door for jumping overboard !! Perhpas it's a case of if at first you don't succeed, try, try again.

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A FULL REPORT ON THE 4th. INTERNATIONAL SEA CANOEING SYMPOSIUM

Held at Calshot Activities Centre, Southampton over the weekend of the 12th. and 13th. December, 1981.....was a great success and despite the atrocious weather, well attended by delegates from France and all points of the U.K. We were disappointed that several members could'nt make the venue because of the weather - in fact I suspect several members are still marooned on the Spit at Calshot due to high tides and even higher winds!

Thanks to our interesting contributors and the efforts of Drew Delany we shall soon have ready the full report of this Symposium.
In the past I have distributed these free to all those who attended the symposium. Funds do not allow this on this ocassion, - so if you want a copy send me £1.00 with your order.

This report is available to all...so feel free to send for your copy whether you attended or not.

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FOR SALE
VYNECK SEA KAYAK One trip only - fully fitted, - bulkheads, - deck lines, - etc.

£150 - contact Dave Moore on Windermere 4000, anytime.

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VERY IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

Valley Canoe Products have discovered an inherent instability problem in their VCP hatch rims. This means that the rims sometimes, even several months after being fitted to a kayak, are shrinking, allowing the cover to come lose.

They have now produced a completely new rim in UV stabilized ABS injection moulded plastic, which is specially formulated to bond to glass fibre.
These rims allow the hatches to withstand over 15 lbs. to the square inch of pressure without leaking, making them superior to any other hatch on the market; which was the original intention!

The new hatches CAN BE GLASSED OR BOLTED INTO THE CANOE TO REPLACE THE OLD ONES and if canoeists who have leaking hatches contact Valley Canoe Products, giving the serial number of the boat concerned, new hatch rims will be forwarded to them free of expense. People with VCP hatches in boats other than VCP boats must go through the manufacturer of the boat concerned, and not direct to Valley Canoe Products.

Valley Canoe Products apologise to their customers, and assure them that the new rims do really cure what is a potentially dangerous fault.

Contact Valley Canoe Products, Private Road 4, Colwick Estate, Nottingham.

In the July edition (No 26) Newsletter, correspondence from the Ocean Kayaking Association of British Columbia, Canada Newsletter was quoted which debated two issues - 'tippy' and 'stable' boats, and the issue of 'certification'. Because a review by me of the book by John Dowd happened, coincidentely, to be in the same issue and contained other points of debate, I feel the situation could be confused.

Having receiced and reviewed the book after detailed reading, I must reaffirm that it is balanced, but at times, challenging. It frequently praises British designs on their merits (notably page 17), but does extol the virtues of the Klepper type boat where relevant - like crossing the Atlantic or rounding the Nordkapp in 1936.

As to the internal affairs of Canadian sea kayaking, it is not my place to comment - it's unfortunate that local matters be seen out of context.

Below is a letter sent by John Dowd to me recently for British sea canoeists.

DREW DELANY.

To Frank Goodman, Derek Hutchinson & Co.,

Oh my goodness gracious me!! ..... di I ruffle the feathers of the roosters who think they're holding up the chicken coop roof? Such outrage that I should dare point out the ß obvious: of course, high volume boats are better for expeditions than low volume boats; they carry more equipment. Of course, beamy kayaks are better for relaxing in at sea of for the safety of novices; they are more stable. You guys have been playing the King's Suit of Clothes too long if you think otherwise.

Let's get it straight: I LIKE narrow boats; I simply want to put them in perspective .... like the man says, they are "an end in themselves, not a means to an end" (and not a means to an expediton, right?). Derek, I am surprised that you of all people should take issue with me on this, since you have been increasing the width of your new boats almost to the point where they ARE practical for expeditions and novices!

Your letters largely seemed to be responding to points I never made. Maybe you were trying to guess what I would be saying in my book and counter it in advance?. I hope someone will give you a copy to review and you will discover how unnecessary that was. As for the technical points you raise, the book will answer them.

One thing I should clarify is my definition of a tippy kayak. How about: 'one which won't look after an ill or incapacitated paddler in choppy water, and will have to be looked after instead?' -- or 'one which prevents photography with normal cameras?'. In your book, Derek, you refer to the Nordkapps "lack of initial stability." Now what is the difference between 'lack of stability' and 'tippyness'?

So deep water rescues with loaded boats have been 'out' since 1975! Oh! why did'nt someone tell me!! What about the 1979 questionnaires I sent to British paddlers who overwhelmingly claimed so much faith in the X rescue, etc.; were they all as ill-informed as me?. I looked through Ramwell's 1978 edition of Sea Touring, and there was no mention of pump and re-entry techniques. In 15 pages of rescue 'kayakrobatics', Derek, your 1979 edition only mentions in passing the difficulty of performing the traditional rescue techniques with loaded boats. It gives no instruction on a workable alternative -- or were you serious about the life-raft on the after-deck?

You have both become embroiled in what began as an internal discussion, and I'm not sure you'll want to thank the Editor, whomever he is, for having leant on you. My main aim at this stage is to reduce the chance of silly hierarchies and regulations gaining a foothold in British Columbia. Frank, as Supreme Commodore for Life of a similar group in Australia (whose aim is to .... "co-ordinate and manage the adventure of sea kayaking) I'm sure you'll understand what I mean.

Your responses have highlighted a link between British commercial interests and the Ocean Kayak Association, B.C., which makes some of us more wary than ever of an executive so eager to establish British style political control over sea kayaking in this Province. I like the idea of an OKABC dispensing knowledge, promoting the sport and making sea kayakers' views on enviromental issues heard in Victoria. It's too bad so much energy is put into establishing controls we don't need, indeed would do better without. Let's leave certification of instructors and the setting of professional standards to the pro-organisation.
The OKABC has done it's bit by galvanizing it into action.

JOHN DOWD.

PADDLING SOLO by Liz.Savage.

Even in a small town like ours, with a flourishing canoeing fraternity, the frequency with which local people venture onto the water alone is steadily, if slowly, increasing. They may be local people paddling occasionally for pleasure, youngsters training for competition, students training generally or, as happened recently, a highly experienced canoeist involved in a full scale expedition abroad - solo.

However, this is not just a phenomenon of one town as solo paddling, at a variety of levels, is happening everywhere. Reasons for this may include :-

1. The rising standards of skill and boat technology.
2. The increasing demands of competitors in terms of training.
3. The realisation that, with the relevant precautions,(preperations, skill, experience, etc.) one can paddle alone in comparitive safety.
4. The dawning of awareness of the real capabilities of the kayak and
5. the recognition of the values of the solo experience.

With reference to the last point, what are the values of the solo experience? Most people would accept the following as being some of these:-

1. A heightened sense of awareness of and respect and love for the enviroment coupled with
2. A development of a sense of humility. The outdoors is big and powerful; and alone, we are unbelievably small.
3. An acceptance of responsibility for ourselves (perhaps lacking in many young people today)
4. A demand for good basic human qualities, including determination, vitality, integrity and self-discipline and a need for courage.
5. A demand for the mental and emotional, as well as the physical involvement (e.g. decision making, planning) Thoroughness in preperation and planning before hand requires personal responsibility.
6. Increased self respect and a sense of satisfaction in the real achievement on completion because you did it on your own. Colin Mortlock discusses such values in his book(*) in relation to Adventure Education generally, but there seems an obvious relevance to the solo canoeing situation as well.

Looking through the present B.C.U. Coaching Handbook (1979 edition) the sound and wise advice of the B.C.U., the responsible body for this adventure activity, to those who are going to sea who are young and inexperienced or both is:-

"Never boat alone.....
Never less than three....
Don't surf alone....
Don't go out alone....."

However, may canoeists, even top members of the coaching scheme, do just that and few would deny its values. Inevitably, they will influence others.

Britain has a long history and tradition of adventure and exploration,- Scott, Hillary, Tilman, etc. Despite the general decline in the 'flare' of western civilisation, this spirit of adventure can still be found and is indeed instinctive in young people(*).

That 'the solo experience is the most intense adventure experience'(* is generally accepted and in other adventurous activities. Consider -
sailing, climbing, mountaineering, aerial adventure, skiing.
In sailing there have been many round the world single handed expeditions.
In climbing adults and even very young people (12 yrs) solo on rock.
Everest has been conquered solo.
Soloing is well precedented in many activities and by young people.

The very nature of the sport of canoeing or kayaking lends itself to individualism, even in open canadians. The saying, "paddle your own canoe" is highly relevant. Even in a group, situations can arise enviromentally when you are effectively very much on your own and a mistake can be disasterous regardless of the numbers present.

There are arguments against solo paddling - bad publicity for the sport in the event of accidents, demands on and risks to rescue services, bad influence on younger paddlers, etc. However, against these we should consider that:-

1. Widespread developments of the sport have occured through the efforts of such individualism
2. For any enviroment, with the appropriate training and experience, solo paddlers

should be well equipped to cope with all but exceptional circumstances.

3. And most importantly, meaningful and worthwhile achievements are gained by positive rather than negative thinking (see CoDe No 6, Autumn, 1979, "The Lone Paddler". There is a straight analogy here with river paddling- strokes must be positive and decisive to achieve success.

Solo canoeing and the ability to roll competently (in the relevant boats) are inextricably linked together. We in Britain do not have a tradition of rolling for survival (it is a comparitively new skill) possibly due to lack of

a) knowledge of the skill
b) appropriate boat design and
c) appropriate boat construction

in the early days.

Perhaps because of this our concept of safety lies in " Safety in Numbers" rather than "Safety in Skill". This latter concept is essential for the lone adventurer.

What are the implications for the B.C.U. in the light of the present growth of and increasing levels of skill in the sport? What questuons should we be asking?

1. The object of the B.C.U. is to promote the sport of canoeing in ALL its forms. Should there be a reconsideration of official policy towards solo paddling, a recognition of the individual's personal freedom to canoe alone without the stigma of setting a bad example or of being foolhardy, a wider recognition of the values of the 'solo experience'?

2. With the increasing numbers of young people with considerable levels of skill who wish to (or have to) train alone, journey alone, compete in B.C.U. events, is "never boat alone" the best we can do for them? Is there room for recognition and appreciation of what the young people can do and achieve when out alone - officially as well as unofficially?

3. B.C.U. coaching policy rightly influences the canoeing policy of many organisations, bodies and clubs involved in the coaching of canoeing, particularly with younger people. For example, D.of E. Awards, B.S.C.A., Scouts, L.E.A.s...is there a dnager, however, that B.C.U. advice can work AGAINST youn people who are at the same time capable who are attempting to gain meaningful experience and recognition of achievements in solo situations? (Enviroments need not present a high degree of danger of difficulty like exposed coasts or a difficult river). Are we guilty of not allowing young people to achieve? As Betrand Russell put it, "While many of us recognise that contact with reality has been good for us, few of us have the courage to believe that it is good for our children". Which of us would take on this responsibility?

4. A past and present criticism of the B.C.U. has been that it does not cater for the needs and wishes of it's members (or potential members). Accepting that solo canoeing is on the increase, whether we like it or not, how can we help POSITIVELY to maximise safety and create more obviously meaningful and practical reasons for being a B.C.U. member?
There is no short answer to this, but those who teach and coach must ensure that their novices and students gain the relevant skills and ability and experience before venturing out alone, that they are taught the means of survival, they appreciate the dangers, and where appropiate kayaks are concerned, they learn to roll right from the start, - the ultimate means of survival. Accept rolling as one of the first, if not the first stroke to be taught, as we are not proficient without it. This has implications for the B.C.U. tests and awards.

We cannot (and being canoeists, would not wish to) prevent others paddling alone. We cannot 'cure' a drowned person, but as responsible governing body, seeing that the demand for competence and self relf reliance exists, we can help them survive rather then condemne individual enterprise and endeavour.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS REFERENCES

in particular to
(*) Adventure Education by Colin Mortlock, 1978 and his work in adventure education in general.

CoDe No. 6, Autumn 1979.

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