

Afterthoughts KIPP '07

By Marshall Woodruff

'07 KIPP Paddlers--Bob Pullman, Debbie Schmiel, Ed Johnson, Eric Zacharias, Frank Day, Jay Huntington, Mark McKeel, Pat Kennedy, Peter Ghalipe, Susan Hicks, Suzanne Copping, Yvonne Thayer, Marshall Woodruff, Todd Angerhoffer.

Marshall, April 8, 2007-- One of the hardest things to do in a sport is to plan an event and due to circumstances cancel it. Obviously, in our outdoor sport there are so many factors that play into it; the conditions playing the lead. But when do you cancel? Do you cancel due to the conditions or the comfort zone of the paddler? I believe that each person must determine their own comfort zone, which in my opinion, is the right way to choose if a trip goes or not.

Today was a perfect example. I have talked to all of you and I know you were eager to start your season off and start another new direction in your paddling, which hopefully the KIPP will help provide. Still, the conditions came too early to try, damn.

Yes the weather reports said it would be cold, snowy, and windy, with gusts. Who really knows what the weather will be until you get there? You build confidence in these reports, even though you may not want to hear them. You make contingency plans to work around these forecasts, unless of course it is lightening, tornadoes, earthquakes, etc. And so today was a day for contingencies.

It was a tough call for each one of you, but your choice was the right one for you..... It certainly was an interesting paddle. Yes it was cold, it did snow and it flurried all day. It was certainly windy, 15 to 25 knots with gusts of 30, the water was quite confused with 1 to 2 foot waves, but we still had choices and that is my point. For me being on the water is a passion. As I said before at Goodhands Creek, we could have paddled there, slid over to another creek and paddled about 8 miles with mild winds, because of the sheltered area. As for the temperature, we couldn't do much except for clothing and to paddle a little faster (an inside joke). In the creek, the waves are negligible. This could have acted as our paddling fix to start out KIPP 1.

As it turned out, a small group decided to brave the elements. In this group we had, Todd A.,

Bob P., Eric Z. and myself. We felt confident with our skills under these conditions and paddled out turning south to Parsons Island, circling around the east side, coming around the west and back. Whew, what a paddle!

Going south to Parsons, was nice. We had the wind to our back, some waves, and the sun was coming out. We had smiles on our faces. As we paddle around the Island, we saw a lot of erosion on the Island shoreline. As we paddled, the sun went back in and the wind picked up, more and more and more. The water was getting real choppy. We saw our usual lunch area off to our right, but the winds were still picking up to 25mph. The waves were getting more turbulent and confused, and it started to snow again. We decided to paddle past our stop off and paddle back across to Kent Island, a short water crossing [about ½ mile], but in these conditions a little tough. And we were now going into a head wind.

Once we crossed, we stopped, stretched, and relaxed. Now we started back, with the wind blowing hard.

I think for our next paddle in May we will call it KIPP-1 and make that our starting paddle, so no one feels they missed out. We will call today just a learning experience, and a challenging one at that. After all, as I say, the KIPP is not meant to be a speed paddle, but a learning paddle where you will grow in your paddling experience and your knowledge of our sport.

Marshall, May 8, 2007—Wow, what a great day yesterday was. Before you start to thank me for the dead sleep you got last night, I want to thank you; Bob, Eric, Ed, Pat, Suzanne, Mark, Yvonne and Peter for making it such a delightful day for me. We had fun and we worked hard at what I believe the KIPP paddles are all about.....learning and working towards better paddling and more enjoyment. Yesterday I got all that and the bonus was that I was with some old friends and met new people that wanted to share this with.

I think we couldn't have asked for any better weather for our first official paddle together. Looking out onto the creek it was pretty glassy, but as we got close to the Bay the wind picked up and carried us down towards Parsons at a nice clip. We had a chance to taste a light wind, current and some confused water. As the next KIPP paddles continue, there may be more of these challenges at a higher level, maybe more wind, more waves and stronger current. All challenges, but we will grow into them and take them into account as we paddle. We will grow. It was fun when you all wanted to go up through the Narrows, a little different current, becoming more aware of boat traffic and how to adjust to it and a little longer paddle.

I know, we started out with an 8 to 10 mile paddle and maybe we went a little more. But we did it, we did it together and that is why you slept so well last night! Yuk, yuk. Our next paddle will be even a little more in distance. But it will be what is comfortable with you, remember there will always be places you can bail out. So do come out, don't worry about distance. Just get what you want out of these paddles. There is nothing wrong in getting tired and no one will judge you. We will just make you get the food after the next paddle.

Marshall, June 2, 2007--Not a bad paddle, a little wind, some waves a sunny day, couldn't ask for much more than that. Oh, and a good night's sleep.

Well, maybe it was a little more than that. So we had a seventeen mile an hour headwind, 1 ½' waves and it was hot, not like August, but hot, with a twelve mile paddle. I know it was a dirty trick to do to you. I know we thought a short paddle in those conditions would be better. But we did succeed in a nearly 20 mile paddle. From now on we will use the wind and currents to our best advantage, or try.

You know what was especially nice about this paddle for me? It seemed that we looked out for each other more. A good example was Jay. Wow, what a workhorse! He took the lead (glad we assigned that to him, who knew!?). He kept a pace and rhythm, that he wanted for himself, but still looked out for the other paddlers. He stopped for water breaks, stopped to give everyone a chance to catch up and move on so we wouldn't be spread out. Some would have complained about this, he didn't. The rest of us

worked hard and kept going, gave advice and encouragement to each other, shared paddles and looked out for each other. We had more breaks than usual, but it kept the paddle comfortable, we kept a good pace, no one overheated, or got overly tired and became clumsy in paddling, this is good and safe. Though it has only been two paddles, we have gotten to know each other a little more. Trust is building. Our learning curve is growing and we look forward to the next paddle and maybe a little picnic after. Paddling sure is great.

Thanks again for joining in and making it a delightful paddle. See you July 7th.

Marshall, July 7th, 2007—Well we did it again, another sound sleep after a little paddle. I am paraphrasing my ad for this paddle from last year: *"Another fun Paddle.....just a little different the main event won't be until September!!!!!" This Paddle will be something we have to work up to, a real challenge, a paddle you won't forget, I promise. It is a paddle geared towards someone who wants to practice and get in shape over the next several months in preparation for the long distance paddle. The Kent Island Peer Paddle it is not meant just for a race of distance among a few paddlers; it is meant for all paddlers. It is there for something to be achieved, a measurement in paddling. It is meant for a little discipline in paddling, a teaching aid, a push, some fun and something to look forward to at the end of the season. To see how each paddler has grown in their skills and comfort with our environment and sport we have chosen."*

I think we delivered this weekend. So much has been learned in such a short period of time, you all should be proud, really proud of yourselves. Soooooo, my mileage for this last paddle was a little off, I didn't want to scare you off. With the two eight mile segments and with the final six, it worked, we did it and we did it together; as a team. Taking on the eastern section of Kent Point again was important and the crossing to Parsons was also important. On a dull day, it could be a long, long paddle. On a windy, wavy day it could be a very different paddle; something to look forward to. I guess you have figured out that I am very verbal and passionate in talking about paddling. What I have learned I try to pass on, what I don't know I go after the answers for. I try to be prepared. I consider paddling a very dangerous sport, I could die. I cut the odds down as much as possible by being prepared, learning the skills, dressing for the paddle and having the gear that will help me the most.

I see two types of paddles trips; those that include groups of people like the KIPP and Eastern Neck paddles, and personal paddles. For group paddles, I care very dearly who I am with. We are in each other's hands. And in the conditions where we go out, it is very important that we have learned to communicate. After all, I want to come back. I guess what I am saying is it is so easy to become complacent in paddling, let your guard down, not be prepared. Opening a door that should not be open.

With these KIPP paddles we are learning more about ourselves, paddling and paddling conditions. I think if we look in the mirror today, we will see different paddlers then we saw last week. I am proud to be paddling with you and look forward to our August paddle.

Mark, July 9th, 2007—Hi Marshall and company. I just wanted to give some positive feedback about the KIPP 3 trip. Marshall, after all the TLC work you obviously have put into these trips over several years,

I felt I owed you that much as a new CPA member. I went on the KIPP 1, but could not attend #2. The trips have been like jumping right into the frying pan (but, in a great way) as my paddle distances had been limited to 5--8 mile excursions for the most part. And, I knew what I was getting into. I bought a sea kayak last autumn, learned some basic safety skills and strokes, and worked on them. Then, I wanted to jump right in and get a real taste of what it has to offer. See if I could hang in there with some veterans, rather than just play it safe. After KIPP1, I put in a couple of 10-14 mile kind of practices.

And, sometimes, I believe in simply going for something that is a bit of a stretch, as a kind of test, without doing something completely irrational or stupid. So, the mileage was a jump for me. And, I thought, how hard could it be? Which reminds me of the line about Custer's famous last words.

There were a lot of great lessons learned. Never having gone on a long distance endurance kind of event in any sport, I learned that it:

- Tests what your body and mind are capable of, and how your body responds to physical stress. When the going gets tough, you just bear down and grind it out.
- It was a lesson in the effects of heat for sure.
- How a day lacking wind really can make a paddle long...as you mentioned.
- The three trips you have organized that I have attended (KIPP, EN) have taught me how amazingly varied the conditions on the bay can be.

Man, those awesome pelicans we saw on that rock formation were a real lift. Peter, your photos brought that memory right back. How beautiful that was.

The fatigue and dehydration of some of our members and my own extreme soreness reminded me of the potential dangers that Marshall mentioned. I must get a radio when I go out alone, and a tow rope when with others.....among other things..... such as a first aid kit.

But, mostly I am thankful for the opportunity. Being relatively new to this sport, obtaining information and guidance is important. The cumulative years of experience and knowledge among the very giving trip members is not lost on me. To be able to try out an epic paddle (thanks Bob), an Impex Force kayak which I have been reading about, and learn just a little about the racing aspect of the sport (thanks Susan) is incalculable.

At the end of the day, this trip really kicked my ass! And, I do feel I come out a changed paddler.

Marshall, I think you have organized some amazing trips that provide a variety of conditions, beautiful locations, and great training and learning opportunities. People spend a lot of money taking classes and paddle trips from outfitters, etc., to get the same kind of experience. I am really pleased with the KIPP and Eastern Neck paddling opportunities.

Sunday, for the first day in some time, I had no desire to even think about getting on the water! Thanks,

Everyone, I really enjoy paddling with this group. You have all made these paddle trips so much fun that the 22 miles flew right by. Yeah right, the last 6 miles seemed like it went on forever. But we all made it back safely.

Thanks to Bob and Marshall for sharing their knowledge and supplies. I think that 16 miles was the limit for the Pungo. I was wishing I had a more efficient boat for the last 6. I was very impressed with the efficiency of Susan's super slick, screamin' demon, Pungo spankin', speed racer kayak of the skin on frame variety.

Thanks for the experience everyone!

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