

CPA Paddler Profile ~ Brian Blankinship

Interview by Rick Wiebush



Brian Blankinship on the Occoquan Reservoir, Virginia
photo by Kristina McCoy

Name: Brian Blankinship

Lives in: Woodbridge, Virginia

Real job: Department of Defense bureaucrat

Member of a Piracy? Occoquan/Georgetown

Paddling Buddies: Kristina M., "Tall Tom," Suzanne F., Frank D., Yvonne T., Bela M. and Jen B.

Number years paddling: 18

How did you get involved in sea kayaking? I was a backpacker, but was tired of carrying all that weight on my back. I wanted to try kayak camping and let the boat carry the weight for me. In 1995 my knee was kicked out in a police training incident, and I stopped backpacking and became serious about kayaking.

How did you learn to sea kayak?: Greg Welker taught me to roll my first night at Pier 7. I learned from fellow club members for four years, then I took my first professional lesson when I achieved BCU 3Star and that started me on a course of certifications. I've been privileged to take lessons from the best in each discipline such as Maligiaq Padilla (Greenland), Cindy Cole (hand rolling), Dana Chladek (strokes), Nigel Foster (surf), Greg Barton, and Oscar Chalupsky (performance paddling).

Any formal training or ACA/BCU certifications: BCU 4 Star (old version), ACA L4 instructor, ACA canoe instructor (expired)

Boat usually paddled: Epic surfskis and Epic sea kayaks

Type paddle used: Wing

Do you do any other type of paddling besides sea kayaking? Canoe (rarely)

Do you regularly do any other outdoor activities? Cycling metric centuries (100 kilometers/62 miles)

How often do you paddle in summer? About 3-5 times a week

Do any winter paddling? Yes, but less than I used to.

Go to pool sessions? Mostly University of Maryland College Park (Thanks Mike H.)

Favorite local paddling location (within 1-2 hours of your house): Occoquan Reservoir...other end of my street. It is just too easy.

Favorite non-local location: Maine Island Trail

Best paddling trip/experience ever and why: Mayor's Cup (race around Manhattan). It was my only internationally classed race, and I came in 4th in the sea kayak class. I learned about nutrition for long distance races when I bonked in a practice run, and it was exhilarating paddling with some of the finest in the world, including my paddling hero Greg Barton (USA most decorated Olympian in Canoe/Kayak). And I got to go there with Cyndi J. and Dave B.

Scariest/most dangerous trip/experience and why: Kayak surfing in San Diego. Hawaii had bigger waves (7-foot) but I was on a sit-on-top. In San Diego I used various decked, British kayaks and found the 6-foot breaking waves would decide when I started and when I stopped by rolling me a couple times. On the 5-foot waves I could steer one way and when they were 4-foot I could cut back, but those 6-footers really got the adrenaline going.

Bucket list trips: Caribbean (which I just did this past winter), Baja.

Three things you like most about paddling? I love outrunning rowing shells on the Occoquan in a V12 surfski. I love kayak camping with a group of good friends. I absolutely love SK102!

What do you like best about CPA? From the start I was impressed with the skills of some experienced paddlers and how willing they are to share their knowledge.

One thing other people find interesting about you: I used to run SWAT teams for a living, including doing Presidential Details at Andrews AFB.