

CPA Paddler Profile ~ Chip Walsh

by Rich Wiebush

Lives in: Gambrills, Maryland

Do you paddle with a CPA Piracy? Frequent P7

Paddling Buddies: Non-CPA member Steve

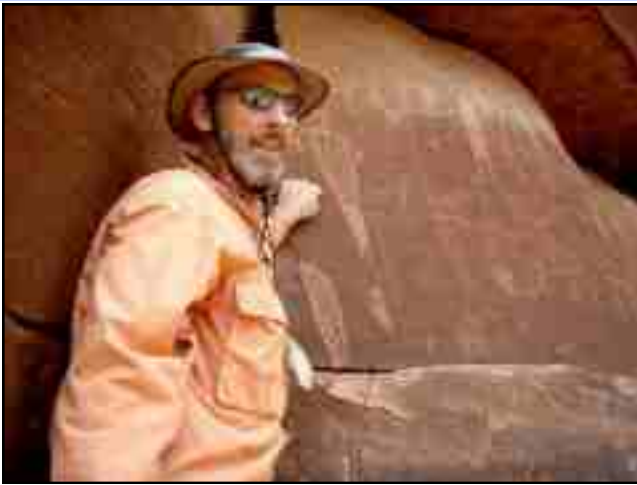
Number years paddling: 13

Boat usually paddled: Azul Sultan, yellow, 18'

Type paddle used: Greenland Paddle, Euro-blade, and single-blade

How did you get involved in sea kayaking? I began sea kayaking because I love outdoor activities and wanted to take advantage of living next to the Bay and its tributaries.

How did you learn to sea kayak? I canoed with some people in New Orleans while visiting Louisiana. Mimi Clifton was one of them. One day she surprised me by inviting me to try a sea kayak. Another surprise was that Mimi was a sea kayaking instructor, and she gave me some personal tutoring. Then, back in Maryland, I read books, and



Chip Walsh at Dead Horse Canyon, Utah
photo by Marc Webster

got lots of pointers from CPA peers, especially at P7. Going to SK102 in 2012 was very enlightening!

Do you do any other type of paddling besides sea kayaking? Most years my canoeing days outnumber my kayaking days.

Do you regularly do any other outdoor activities: I irregularly bicycle, hike, backpack and cross country ski. I need outdoor activity, and if I can't be paddling, I fill in with one of these activities.

How often do you paddle in summer? Two-four times per week

Do any winter paddling? I generally paddle year-round, unless the water gets hard.

Go to pool sessions? I have seldom gone to pool sessions. When I have, it has usually been to Fairlands, although last year I went up to Goucher with the Greater Baltimore Canoe Club. This winter I am vowing to get a hip snap. I get away with a weak hip snap in the sea kayak, but still dream of being able to roll a canoe.

Favorite local paddling location within 1-2 hours of your house: I log many launches from Jonas Greene Park in Annapolis and perhaps as many on the woody, upper sections of the Patuxent. The Gunpowder, Belair Road – Jones Road is a favorite when the whitewater is running.

Favorite non-local location: Assateague

Best paddling trip/experience ever and why? In 2000 and 2002, I took week-long trips on the St. John River from Baker Lake to Fort Kent, Maine. It's a lovely, north-eastern river trip through 120-miles of deep forest, had no portages, and had a few stretches of whitewater just for spice. I had to be convinced by a friend to make this trip because it seemed like a lot of trouble. I didn't get "wilderness tripping." I remember asking, "Why can't we just go out and paddle the Shenandoah for the weekend?" About the third day into the trip, three days of seeing nobody and not hearing human-made noise, I suddenly got it. Wilderness tripping is different world. These trips were not the most scenic or most fun trips I have taken, but it's what got me started. So, these two trips were the best paddling experiences of my life, because had I not taken them, I might not have ever taken the others.

Scariest/most dangerous trip/experience and why? One of the scariest things that has happened a couple times is having paddlers get separated from my group. It plays havoc with my mind as my imagination races through tragedy scenarios. But the single scariest moment happened out of the boat, as many "boating accidents" do. Climbing up a bank of Arkansas' Buffalo River, my friend slipped and with the help of gravity impaled his thigh on a jagged tree limb. He was on the ground crying out, "I'm hurt, it's bad, I need help." I got over to him and could see torn flesh and blood coming from his inner thigh, about 5" below his groin, around where the femoral artery is. As I unstrapped my first-aid kit I wondered if he was going to bleed out right there on the riverside. At that point, I was very scared. He had a large and at least 4"-deep wound, but as I cleaned him up it was quickly evident there was no damage to the artery and he was going to live. I bandaged him up and we decided to put him back in his boat to paddle to the nearest take out, about an hour down-river. We got him to an ER about seven hours after the incident where they stitched him up, started him on antibiotics and a year-long, complete recovery.

Bucket list trips: Apostle Islands, Alaskan Fjords, Sea of Cortez

Three things you like most about paddling? I love outdoor activity and paddling gets me out there. These next two are contradictory. I like people and paddling helps because paddlers tend to be some of the nicest people I meet. I like solitude, and paddling can take me places where the crowds don't go.

What do you like about CPA? CPA has introduced me to many paddlers. Through these paddlers I have learned a great deal about boat-related gear and repairs as well as most of what I know about sea kayaking. The [CPA forums](#) are a huge resource in this regards, too.

One thing other people find interesting about you: Many of us have more than one boat, but some find it interesting that I have six canoes.