

CPA Paddler Profile ~ Dave Wilson

Interview by Rick Wiebush



Dave Wilson near Rocky Point Park, 2013

Photograph by DJ Manalo

Name: David Wilson (Dave)

Lives in: Nottingham, Maryland

Real job: National Heart Lung Institute/recruit reviewers for medical grant applications

Member of a Piracy? Pirates of Baltimore. I'm the Pirate Captain.

Paddling Buddies: Rick Wiebush, DJ Manalo, Jay Perry.

Number years paddling: 7+

How did you get involved in kayaking? After 15 years of canoeing, I came to realize one day that my Discovery 164 had suddenly become much heavier and difficult to load on my truck. Looking round for a paddling alternative, someone recommended a one person kayak. It seemed to fit my solo style, so I sold the canoe and bought a kayak.

How did you learn to sea kayak? I paddled a Pungo for several years before beginning to learn about "sea kayaking." My first exposure to this form of paddling was through CPA and its members. So, I guess you'd say I learned by osmosis. You can't be around other paddlers for very long before you learn something you didn't know before.

Any formal training or ACA/BCU certifications: No ACA or BCU certifications, but I have received training in the basic skills, such as paddle strokes, kayak control, and rescue techniques in a number of skill sessions taught annually by Rick Wiebush and other local instructors. In addition, I have taken multiple courses through Cross Currents, a local instructional/guide service, for example: a two-day course on kayak navigation; a trip planning course that culminated in crossing the Chesapeake Bay between Sandy Point and Queenstown; a multiday paddle from Saxis, Virginia to Tangier Island/Smith Island; and a surf course. Each course is a mixture of classroom and on the water practice. Nothing like being in the middle of the Pocomoke Sound and suddenly having to take a pop quiz on the many varied ways one can rescue a fellow paddler. Ever performed an assisted ladder rescue?

Boat usually paddled: Wilderness Tempest 170, red (known to some as Mt Tempest). But this year it may be my newly acquired yellow and white P&H Bahiya.

Type paddle used: A solid wood Greenland, of course. Are there other types?

Do you do any other type of paddling besides sea kayaking? Would like to get back into canoe, but no, not currently.

Do you regularly do any other outdoor activities? Ex-mountain biker, ex-rock climber, ex-long distance hiker, still active cross-country ski enthusiast.

How often do you paddle in summer? Probably twice a week average.

Do any winter paddling? Occasionally.

Go to pool sessions? Yes. College Park, Catonsville, and Fairlands.

Favorite local paddling location: Dundee Creek to Pooles Island.

Favorite non-local location: Hard to select a favorite from the long list of great Chesapeake bay locations: Wye Island, Eastern Neck Island, any launch along the Eastern shore coastline.

Best paddling trip/experience ever and why: My most memorable paddle was a trip that began in Virginia (Saxis), paddled down along the eastern shore, then crossed Pocomoke Sound to Tangier Island. From Tangier we paddled up through the Smith Island channels to Ewell. The final leg was a ferry boat ride back to Crisfield, Maryland. This was my first long open water crossing and was a learning opportunity best experienced with seasoned paddlers. It was. The people of Tangier only accentuated the memories.

Scariest/most dangerous trip/experience and why: Scary probably isn't the term I would choose to describe an encounter with the confused waves that a tide change had setup at the mouth of Great Egg Harbor Inlet, New Jersey. The other members of our surf class may remember my "misjudgement" as scary, but I was too busy trying to remain upright to become afraid then. Looking back...well, I'm just happy things turned out the way they did.

Bucket list trips: I have two bucket list trips in the planning. Trip one is a series of segmented paddles from Elkton, Maryland to at least Crisfield, Maryland. The other is to paddle the upper reaches of the Potomac River from Cumberland to Harper's Ferry. If the paddle goes well, and time allows, I'd like to continue on to the Bay in later years.

Three things you like most about paddling? Solitude when needed, companionship by necessity, adventure always.

What do you like about CPA? It's filled with good people who share common interests for the sea, the Bay, and inland waterways.

One thing other people find interesting about you: That I'm still alive and enjoying life.