

CPA Paddler Profile

By Rick Wiebush

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Name: Jesse Aronson

Lives in: Arlington, VA.

Real job: Informatics Program Manager at National Institutes of Health.

Member of a Piracy? Pirates of Georgetown, since 1999.

Number years paddling: 16

How did you get involved in kayaking? In 1992 I tried kayaking while on vacation in the San Juan Islands. That first trip was in a double kayak with my wife, who was pregnant at the time. Kayaking really resonated with me, but between work and parenthood over five years elapsed before I made it into a kayak a second time.

How did you learn to sea kayak? I started out with an introductory course and a couple of trips offered by Atlantic Kayak, then SK102. Since then I've taken classes at any number of symposia.

Any formal training or ACA/BCU certifications: None.

Boat usually paddled: Tempest 165 or CLC Shearwater.

Type paddle used: Primarily Greenland, occasionally wing.

Do you do any other type of paddling besides sea kayaking: I have been doing a little SUP paddling with my son.

Do you regularly do any other outdoor activities: Running, hiking, XC skiing in winter, and I am a casual cyclist.

How often do you paddle in summer? 2 times per week.

Do any winter paddling? Less than I used to, as I have some trouble keeping my hands warm these days.

Go to pool sessions? Yes, Lee District Rec Center in Virginia.

Favorite local paddling location: Mason Neck, VA.

Favorite non-local location: Lake Mendenhall in Alaska. It's a fairly small lake, but you can paddle right up to the Mendenhall glacier, which is an awe inspiring experience.

Best paddling trip/experience ever and why: My son and I went on a trip to the western Scottish Highlands, paddling Loch Moirdart, Loch Sunnart, Arisaig Sound, and out to Ardnamurchan Point. The scenery and wildlife was just spectacular, including curious seals which kept us under observation as we paddled through the skerries. We were the only Americans on the trip and it was fun to get into the culture of the Brits and Scots on the trip. Yes, the group did take an afternoon tea break every day.

Scariest/most dangerous trip/experience and why: I paddled with two friends out to Thomas Point lighthouse on a sweltering summer day. On the way back I started to suffer from heat exhaustion. I was dizzy and nauseous, vomiting at one point. My paddling partners, who may not have realized how bad off I was, decided the best course of action was to give me personal space and kept themselves at a distance. To keep the world from spinning I paddled back to Galesville with my eyes shut, occasionally peeking at my compass heading and my position relative to my friends.

Bucket list trip: Dalmation Coast of Croatia.

Three things you like most about paddling? By far my favorite thing about kayaking is that the moment you cast off you are in the wilderness. When I'm on the water I feel far away from the land-based world, even on the urban Potomac.

What do you like about CPA? Companionship, focus on skills development, emphasis on safety, supportive environment.

One thing other people find interesting about you: I worked on GPS when it was still an experimental system in the 1980's and am one of the first 20 people on earth to use GPS out on the water.

