

CPA Paddler Profile

By Rick Wiebush

Name: Paul Casto

Lives in: Bowie, Maryland

Real job: Manage a software development team for Infoblox (in Annapolis)

Member of a Piracy? Yes, Pirates of Arundell

Paddling Buddies: Carrie Casto. Get out with different people on different occasions.

Number years paddling: 7 years sea kayaking, with very occasional canoe for many years before that.

How did you get involved in kayaking? I canoed as a Boy Scout, and a bit more as a Scout leader. Went to double bladed paddling first when playing in the waters off of Southern California in the early 80's with some of the early Ocean Kayak sit-on-tops. Then Carrie and I decided it was an outdoor activity both of us would enjoy, and we were hooked.

How did you learn to sea kayak? Started with just renting and trying them out, and then took a guided trip in Maine. Joined CPA and watched and listened to advice. Read a lot of books. Kept trying new things. SK-102 and other classes.

Any formal training or ACA/BCU certifications? Certified as ACA level 3, BCU 3-Star Sea, and have some BCU 4-Star training. Have taken classes in forward stroke, surf, and recently attended the Kiptopeke symposium.

Boat usually paddled: NDK Romany 16ft white/white for general purpose / surf / play; NDK Greenlander Pro 18ft yellow/white for keeping up with groups without working quite so much...

Type paddle used: Euro (Werner Cyprus). Will use a Greenland paddle occasionally, but don't have a comfort level with it when water gets rough.

Do you do any other type of paddling besides sea kayaking? Have Canoed in the past, but it's been a while.

Do you regularly do any other outdoor activities? Downhill skiing a few times each winter. Used to hike and camp as a Scout leader (and a Marine), but have been out of that for a few years (15 years)

How often do you paddle in summer? Try to go out twice a week, and when possible get at least one kayak focused longer trip during the summer.

Do any winter paddling? Occasionally. I have a dry suit, but need to use it more.

Go to pool sessions? Yes, often. Generally Fairland, but have been to many other locations over the years.

Favorite local paddling location: Annapolis area. Wide variety of launch spots, and river & bay paddling.

Favorite non-local location: Emerald Isle, North Carolina. Have wound up there with non-kayaking friends several times, and I can go play in the ocean while they waste their time on the beach ☺

Best paddling trip/experience ever and why: Cape Lookout, North Carolina. I went out with Carrie on a 20 mile trip that she wouldn't have been able to make if it hadn't been for her experiences with KIPP. The weather and sea conditions were very favorable, and we were able to go from the sound-side out into the ocean and to the point and around. It wasn't quite the trip I'd initially envisioned, and there were some challenges along the way, however I felt mostly prepared, although a couple of things were a bit dicey. Portaging across the tip of the point wasn't fun, but I had wheels, and it kept us out of the area where there were very confused seas. We finished up right as the sun was setting, and all and all it was a beautiful day.

Scariest/most dangerous trip/experience and why: My oldest son and I were down at St. Mary's for the end of the Governor's Cup Sailboat race. It was his first time with a sprayskirt on, but we'd talked through the wet-exit procedure, and we were going to try those later in the day. However, not 5 minutes after launching from the beach, a 50-foot off-shore fishing boat (that was ferrying the racers from the boats to the docks) swung out of the dock behind us, on a line where we were completely in his blind spot. We saw it come up directly behind us, moving fairly slow, but faster than us. We tried to turn out of its way, but the bow of that boat clipped the stern of Ben's kayak. The boater heard the yelling from the docks and shore, and stopped, and Ben got his first wet-exit under extreme duress. I got him back in the boat, and amazingly he was still up for paddling the rest of the day...

Bucket list trip: Back to Maine. Would like to do more paddling there. Georgian Bay looks like fun as well.

Three things you like most about paddling? The balance between solitude and companionship – trips can have each. The opportunity/excuse to get outdoors and exercise. That it's something Carrie and I can do together, and our youngest son Daniel is now hooked as well.

What do you like about CPA? The spirit of volunteerism – folks are willing to help pass along what they've learned to others. And there are a lot of fun and interesting people in the group.

One thing other people find interesting about you: I'm a retired Marine officer, and have lived in Okinawa, Japan and Naples, Italy.

