

Paddler Completes Richmond-Washington Serial Paddle

By Pete (BayMystic)

Bay Mystic's round-trip paddle from Richmond to Washington, D.C. is finally complete. Pete finished the last segment, from Gravelly Point to Alexandria on the Potomac, on November 3. Pete's odyssey was mostly done on Mondays, his day off, over the past two years. How do people get into these things? Pete says, "Like most trips, I didn't start out intending to do this. First I decided to paddle the entire tidal James. Then I completed the Pamunkey, Mattaponi, and York. After this I decided to connect the James and York and paddle around the Virginia Peninsula (Newport News, Hampton, and Poquoson). As I headed up the Chesapeake Bay, I got the idea of going all the way to Washington, D.C. I probably averaged 3 Mondays a month, 12 months of the year."

Here are just a few highlights:

- Most Challenging Segment:** The 5-mile open water crossing at the mouth of Rappahannock River. On the return trip the wind changed direction and picked up speed making the water very rough with a strong headwind. I was afraid I would experience muscle failure before reaching the other side. Suddenly a dolphin, that seemed as long as my kayak, surfaced alongside me, just feet away. It so startled and excited me that the adrenaline gave me the energy to finish the crossing.
- Most Beautiful:** New Point Comfort on the Chesapeake in Matthews County, VA. A 200 year-old sandstone lighthouse sits on a rocky island. The sandy beaches are beautiful and the confluence of the York and Chesapeake waters create big waves as they hit the shallow sand bars. I went back here several times and played in the surf.
- Most Interesting:** The military bases in Yorktown, Newport News, Dahlgren, and Quantico. I got to see an aircraft carrier passing over the Hampton Roads Tunnel. The Ghost Fleet on the James and the remains of the World War I wooden steam ships on the Potomac were fascinating. Also, the 2 miles of riprap made from a cemetery (Chotank Creek to Caledon on Potomac) was very unexpected.

Paddling on a journey like this, especially in the winter, is for those who are trained and well-equipped. Sometimes the air temperature was under 20° F. In cold water temps I always wore a drysuit or wetsuit that would allow me to survive hours in the water. Plus I carried the proper safety and communication equipment and others knew my itinerary. I was not too proud to knock on a door and ask for a ride to the boat ramp when conditions turned too rough to continue. I used to be a survivor instructor and I was always thinking of what I would do if the worst happened. As it was, I never capsized once during the entire journey, but I was ready, both with a practiced roll and with proper apparel and equipment for a wet exit. I won't belabor the point, but I don't encourage anyone to place themselves at risk. Thanks for your encouragement along the way!



End of the journey, Torpedo Factory docks at Alexandria

Upcoming CPA Events

If you thought the season was over, you'd be WRONG!

December

Dec. 6 (Sat) **CPA Holiday Raid**--Carouse with the Pirates of the Chesapeake and Swap booty! AARGH! **Skill Level:** NONE **Organizer(s):** Ralph Heimlich heimlichfamily@comcast.net See article on p. 4.

February

Feb. 8 (Sun) **Maryland Planning Meeting**--Got some great ideas for a day paddle? Car- or Kayak camping trip? Extended excursion? Training event? Bring them to the Maryland CPA Planning Meeting!! A light lunch (soup and crackers, feel free to bring dessert or whatever) will be served about noon and the Planning Meeting starts after lunch. **Organizer(s):** Ralph Heimlich 301-498-0918 (H, leave a message) **Location:** 7914 Belgaro Road, Laurel, MD (in Howard County).

March

Mar. 7 (Sat) **Virginia Planning Meeting**--Here is your second chance to get in on the club trip planning! People come to make new day-trip plans and over-night-trip plans. People come just to meet other club members interested in the same things. It's a fun time for all. We will have coffee, and tea available, as well as some breakfast-like goodies. Feel free to contribute. The meeting will commence about 10:00 am and will run until everyone is talked out. That is usually about 2:00 to 3:00 pm. **Organizer(s):** Dave Biss 703-241-0036, Cyndi Janetzko 703-241-0036. **Location:** Cyndi and Dave's Yak Shak, 6668 Barrett Road, Falls Church, VA 22042