

# The Bow Line

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## President's Message

John Swart

Hello Penpaddlers,

It's hard to experience a wonderful paddle like the Toronto Islands, accompanied by twenty friends, without realizing how fortunate we are.

We might complain about the cost of fuel for getting to a paddle, but we double up and save a nickel where we can. Although sometimes we mutter under our breath this or that could go a little smoother, we know most paddles go off without a hitch and our tour leaders do a great job. We've all got aches and pains and personal situations, some more than others, yet we can still get in our kayaks and paddle for 25 kilometers or 6 hours because we love it.

At our group dinner, over stories and laughter, I overheard a veteran paddler ask a new club member how he was enjoying the club. The newcomer replied that it was great. The veteran added, "I used to paddle a lot on my own, then I met a couple of Pen Paddlers and went on a few paddles. I've never looked back, they're a great bunch of people." That's really what it's all about isn't it?

Let's be sure we take a moment to smile and acknowledge our good fortune the next time we climb into our boats for a club paddle.

See you on the water.



## "A Great Start"

By John Wolfenberg (Social Director)



The annual paddle and pot luck that for many years now, has represented the official beginning of the paddle season was, by all accounts, a resounding success. For the first time in several years the weather cooperated, with warm sunny skies and mainly offshore southwest winds. This allowed for a lake paddle instead of a paddle up Fifteen or Sixteen Mile Creeks.

We had our largest paddle group in years with 28 club members taking part. The trip to Port Dalhousie Beach was quick and easy, assisted by the following offshore winds - the five kilometre return trip was more of an effort as the winds began to shift to the west with the improving weather. The wind whistled across our ears creating a significant sound; that same wind has a nasty habit of slapping the flat blades of the paddles. None-the-less, the paddle was well worth the effort.

The weather continued to cooperate as temperatures remained warm allowing most of the pot luck people to sit out on Ed's large upper deck to enjoy the great variety of appetizers, main dishes and desserts. With the 28 people at the pot luck, it too was a great success - another stellar start to the paddling year.

## Virgin Trip Leader

by Judy Luffman

Early in the year, paddlers were encouraged to sign-up as a Trip Leader. And, since I live in a different area of the province than the majority of our paddlers, I thought .. hum .. why not. I can do this. I have the Grand River at my doorstep and, I have paddled some awesome day trips within our reach. A piece of cake!

So, I checked out the calendar availability, as I needed a date early in the season, due to water shortage in the mighty Grand. I found an opening on the calendar, and I put my name forward. I've committed myself.

Already, lots of questions going thru my head and, now I question my ability to carry out my responsibility with the same expertise as set by other members. Yikes! Now what!

The Club Communications Director sent out the first notice. This is really happening. With it only a few weeks away I feel, for whatever reason, I should first navigate the highway route myself. Great! Did that, obtained distances on an enjoyable day driving in the countryside. The put-in location was the easiest. Now, where to take out? How far will participants want to go? All of a sudden, more questions started popping up. Again, the water levels a huge concern, and I don't have time to get out on the water. Now, what about dinner after the paddle? What will paddlers want to eat? Or, will they want to stay and eat? So, I picked a restaurant, and called to make a booking .. change reservations .. call again, and change reservations for the second, third time Ah!

Great. Got "all" that sorted out, and now a week before the paddle I'm watching the weather channel faithfully, constantly, non-stop. Rain -no rain . sun - no sun; windy -. no wind. Everyday it changes. It's driving my crazy!

Now, where are the paddlers. Slowly, very, very slowly the emails start. Paddler numbers increase. Paddler numbers decrease. Some for dinner .. some not for dinner. Ah. This isn't difficult stuff, so why am I stressing myself!

Day of the paddle. Up at 5:30 am. Turn on the weather channel, which I've learned not to trust, and weather forecast is "iffy". But, the decision is made. The trip is a go. After all, we have rain gear! And, we have John W. .. he'll paddle in any weather.

I leave home and drive to the take-out area, then up to the launch area, just to make sure there is no new construction or detours. I arrive at launch site, unload my boat, buy some home baked goodies for my guests at the Mennonite Store while listening to the thunder in the distance. Now I'm feeling excited because I know my fellow paddlers will enjoy the Mennonite horse and buggy's as they go by and enjoy the last standing covered bridge in Ontario.

Everyone arrives, and boats unloaded. I give my wee welcoming speech, and forget a few things I wanted to discuss. But, the shuttle starts on time. So far, so go. Drop the cars at the take out and start heading back. What I didn't schedule was the wicked rain, and hailstorm, which forced us off the road. My mind is racing, wondering what should we do? Finally we're back on the road, and back to launch site. The covered bridge has now become our 45 minute shelter area, as we wait for the torrents of rain to let up. Although, I'm smiling, knowing that this storm will pass, I finally think there will be enough water in the mighty Grand for a smooth trip.

The decision is made ... we launch. It's official.

Now, where are we to stop for lunch? Will we make it back in time for dinner reservations? We've gone a few more km's than anticipated. Will anyone still want to go for dinner? Ah!



So, you're wondering if you can be a Trip Leader ... Yes - I survived, all participants survived. And my hair is already grey, so that's not a problem!

The long and short of this experience ... there was a lot of totally unnecessary worrying on my part. We have the greatest paddlers in our Club, with a great sense of adventure, humor, and who are very appreciative of your time and effort. They make being a Trip Leader worthwhile. Thus, I booked a second trip, but this time I won't be a Virgin! This time I know that everything will fall into place, it just happens a few days, hours before the event.

### MEMBERSHIP BENEFIT – CLUB DISCOUNTS

*The following retailers are supporting the Peninsula Paddlers in 2009 by providing discounts on select regular-priced merchandise, excluding boats. You must present your 2009 membership card, and each store will provide details of their individual programs.*

Outdoors Oriented – St Catharines  
Tumblehome – Burlington  
Suntrail Outfitters - Hepworth



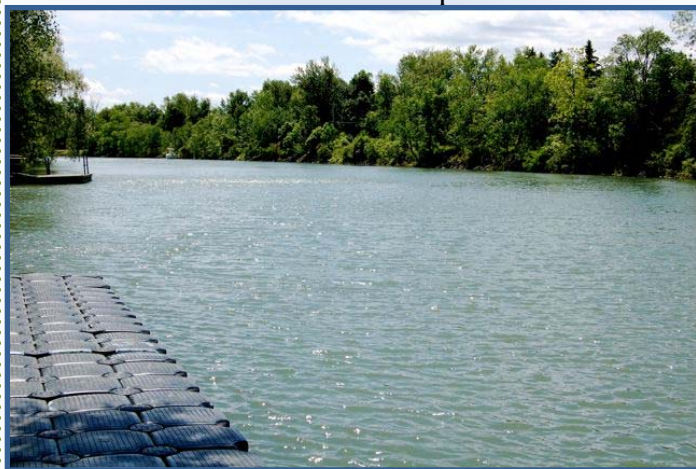
## **PADDLING PLACES FROM OUR FRIENDS TO THE SOUTH**

*Ray Wolf was kind enough to scout out some places in the States that look like interesting paddles. Here is a look at three of those points of interest.*

### ***Amherst Veterans Canal Park, Amherst, NY***

Description: Launch may be made from a boat ramp or floating docks. Paddling can be done in a loop in either direction. A slight current runs west to east. Paddling west to the Niagara River is 11km. There are three boat launches between the Park and River. Paddling east 5 km takes you to Ransom Creek, a narrow scenic stream. Restrooms, picnic tables and a gazebo are located in the Park.

Directions: From I-190 take I-290 east and exit at Route 62N (Niagara Falls Blvd.). Travel north on Rt 62 for approximately 4 km. Make a right turn on Tonawanda Creek Rd and proceed about 3 km. Turn left onto Brenon road - the park is on the left.



Description: Paddling may be done in either direction on this generally slow moving waterway. The easterly paddle is approximately 6 km in length before coming upon riffles. It meanders mostly through woods and foliage which are scenic and provide protection on windy days. The westerly direction is about the same distance on a straighter stream and ends at the Erie Canal. For a longer paddle you can take the Canal to the Niagara River. This is a loop paddle, requiring no car shuttling. Restrooms, picnic tables and shelters are located in the Park.

Directions: From I-190 take I-290 east and exit at Route 62 N (Niagara Falls Blvd.). Travel north approximately 2 km and make a left turn at Ellicott Creek Rd. Launch is on the right.

### ***Erie Canal, Lockport, NY***



Description: Launch is from a boat ramp in the marina. Loop paddles can be done in either direction. Slight current runs west to east. Paddling west for 2.5 km takes you to lock system. If you wish to travel through the two locks, it is advisable to wear gloves as you have to hold on to slimey ropes as the water rises. Traveling to the east from the launch is the village of Gasport (8 km). Restrooms, showers, picnic tables, and shelters are located in the park. Hot dog/ ice cream stand is located across the street. Erie Canal Museum and an observation platform are located at the locks.

Directions: From Queenston: Take Route 104 east to Route 78. Turn south (right) onto Rt 78. Travel Rt 78 (Lake St.) south until shortly after passing Old Niagara Rd in the City of Lockport, turn left onto Matt Murphy Way, crossing the Canal and turn left onto Market St. Marina is on the left.

### ***Ellicott Creek Park, Tonawanda, NY***



## "Paddling Etiquette"

The recent successful Paddlefest and Pot Luck highlighted a few areas that paddlers need to be mindful of, paddle etiquette and safety. With a large group such as we had paddling (28), it is difficult to keep in touch with all members of the group. At this time of year the Lake waters are deceptively cold and, should someone capsize, a very serious situation develops instantly. For the most part, on the return trip from Port Dalhousie, too many people were paddling much too far out into the lake - even paddling as a group it would have been very difficult to get a paddler back into the boat and safely to shore. Of course everyone carried the requisite full change of clothes in a dry bag in their hatch so at least you could change once ashore.

There was a paddle leader and two sweeps - yet some paddlers were in front of the leader - a perennial problem that comes with the exuberance of a paddle on such a beautiful day. By the time the last paddlers were landing, the first group were racing out of the parking lot. Etiquette and concern for safety would suggest that paddlers stay to help until all participants are ashore and accounted for. Certainly, had a problem developed in the sweep our most powerful paddlers would have been long gone. In a group such as ours it's fine to have the ability to forge ahead, but, it is those very paddlers who are needed to keep the group somewhat together and to offer their encouragement, expertise and camaraderie to the slower paddlers.

An obvious lesson learned here is that with such a well attended paddle, two or more distinct groups need to be established, each with its' own lead and sweep and each with paddlers of different abilities, following the dictum that no one passes the leader and no one falls behind the group sweep. As well, the lead and sweep need to be within communication distance by a sound device or walkie talkie.

Paddlers are by nature a solo lot, exploring the nooks and crannies of the area being paddled or testing their mettle against nature with power strokes in open windy waters. However, we must be mindful that in a large group the dynamic has to shift to the "we" aspect of paddling, suppressing our individual desires to that of the group to make it a safe and enjoyable event. It only takes one serious accident to bring lasting shame to our paddling year.

## I WAS JUST THINKING

*The Eager Beaver*



*Why is it that* when "you're looking good" riding the waves towards a beach full of people, a large wave decides to wash over your stern. Of course that's also the time you are not wearing your spray skirt.

*Why is it that* when you are taking pictures, sitting in an eddy of a fast moving creek, that your paddle decides to fall into the water and go down stream without you.

*Why is it that* when you think that your cockpit skirt is completely on, suddenly you feel cold water going down your backside. We all know now that the last thing you check before casting off is to make sure that the skirt is hooked on all the way around.

*Why is it that* when your backside is cold your spare clothes are warm and dry in the van.

*Why is it* when you can't find your water bottle, you suddenly remember, it's still sitting on the counter at home.

*Why is it that* when you break your paddle, it's always the time when nobody else has a spare.

*Why is it that* when you get hung up on a rock in fast moving water, nobody else is around. Somehow have managed to get yourself at the back of the pack and all the others are around the next bend in the river. (they do come back, but only to get a picture of me in a compromising position.)

... BUT THEN I WAS JUST ONLY THINKING

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