

Wooden Canoe Heritage Association

NORTHWEST CHAPTER

Northwest Chapter WCHA

Spring Newsletter

April 2023



Fun and games in the Aberdeen Museum's 1925 War Canoe at the 2015 Spring Meet: Vern Heikkila, Colleen Hovey and Martin Ferwerda paddle against Claude Delisle, Steve Ellsworth and Jan Heikkila. Livdahl photo.

Spring Meet May 11–14, 2023

YMCA Camp Bishop

Shelton, WA

Winter is almost over, with signs of spring showing all over the yards, fields and woods. It's time to make plans to attend the **Northwest Chapter's Spring Meet**, Thursday May 11—Sunday May 14, 2023. Good friends, beautiful boats, sunny weather by the lake . . . all the important elements are in place for another great gathering to admire, learn about and use wooden canoes. Come for a day, overnight, or all four days!

See inside for a draft Meet schedule, accommodation information, costs and driving directions. Our first day, Thursday May 11, will be a work party day at Camp Bishop, so bring gloves and work clothes. Plan to bring something tasty to share for Saturday night's potluck/ salmon barbecue, and irresistible must-have items for the auction to follow. Bring your own canoe, or plan to enjoy ours!



Dick Cross beautifully restored this Monohan canoe, seen here at our Spring Meet 2015. Livdahl photo

NW Chapter Spring Meet May 11–14, 2023

Directions: Camp Bishop, 1476 West Lost Lake Rd., Shelton, WA

- From I-5, take exit 104 to Hwy 8 and 101, west to Shelton
- Take first exit to Shelton, Hwy 3. Go 1.5 miles to first stoplight
- Turn left to Acadia Rd, then left to Lake Boulevard, (becoming Cloquallum Rd), go for about 9 miles.
- Turn right to West Lost Lake Rd, go 1-2 miles. Camp at road end.

Accommodations: \$10 per person per night. Check-in after 9 am Thursday

- Covid protocols per Camp Bishop (see website); additional precautions your choice.
- Ample tent area, non-heated sleeping cabins, heated lodge rooms.
- Small campers/trailers in parking lot/lodge area. No hook-ups.
- Restrooms and shower facilities. New bathhouses in cabin area.
- No cooking in cabins. Full kitchen/dining area.
- Dogs must be leashed at all times. If dogs in the buildings: kenneled + \$50 fee.

Reminders: Work party on Thursday at the camp. All help welcome; bring gloves!

- Vern's Salmon Barbecue Saturday evening potluck. \$10/person donation.
- Potluck: bring side or dessert to share, or eat on your own if you wish. Bring gently used and new "valuables" for Saturday fundraising auction.
- Bring musical instruments and voices for sing-alongs.
- Program information on our website: northwest.wcha.org

Draft Schedule: Spring Meet 2023

Thursday: May 11.

Check in after 9 am.
Work Party Day. Bring gloves, work clothes, earn Karma points!
Greet friends, settle in.
Evening videos in lodge.
Meals on your own.

Friday: May 12

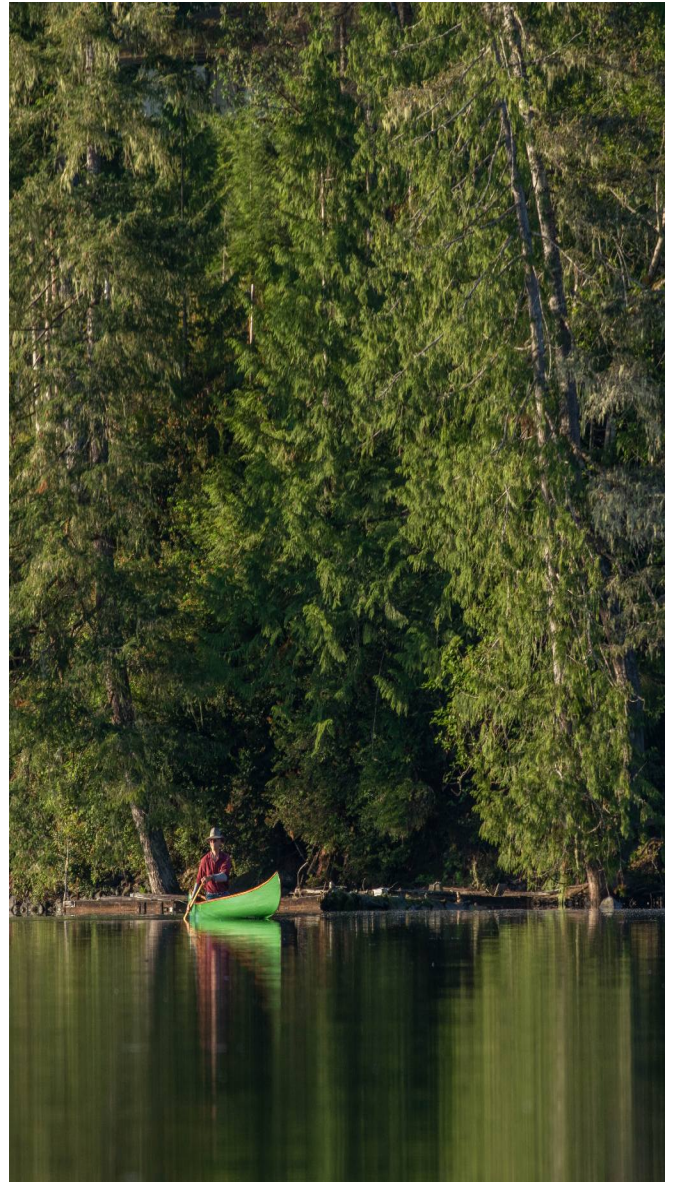
Dawn Patrol
English Gate practice
Lake Tour
Evening program: Phil Miller and the Willits Canoe Factory Update
Meals on your own.

Saturday: May 13

Dawn patrol
Morning: Meet the Canoes
Lunch on your own
1:00 pm Canoe House Dedication!
2:00 pm Canoe tours, War Canoe etc.
6:00 pm Potluck Salmon Dinner
Brief chapter meeting
Auction

Sunday: May 14

Dawn Patrol
Clean up and pack up.
Happy travels, happy boating! See you at Manning Park in September!



Pete Pride enjoys his Old Town 50# canoe. . Livdahl photo

Fall Meet: Manning Park, BC September 13–17. See you then!



Chip Asbury's Cheemaun canoe. Remember, the Chapter has the form for you to build this lovely canoe! 425 502 2050

WCHA Board News: by Colleen Hovey

Hello Northwest Chapter Members! It's been a while since I've updated you on what your WCHA Board of Directors has been working on. So here goes...

One of the main focuses right now is **Assembly 2023**. It has been hosted many times in the past at Paul Smiths College in New York, but we were told by the college they would no longer be hosting large groups such as ours. I'm happy to report that they've had a change of heart! Assembly 2023 will once again be held there, July 11 – 16.

The Assembly Committee has been very hard at work preparing for the event. Our theme this year will be "Carleton Canoes". Rob Stevens and his team have been finalizing presenters and working on details. I've had the chance to have a sneak peak at the content, and it's going to be excellent as usual! Preparing a week long conference for that many people is a huge undertaking, and Rob does an excellent job. If you are thinking about attending, just go! You'll be so glad you did. Registration opens April 24th. More information will be available on the website shortly.

Another focus this past year was the WCHA store. Long time store manager, Jeanne Griffin-Greene, retired from her position and the decision was made to add store management to Annie Burke's long list of duties. Annie is amazing and does a great job!

The board has undertaken a number of initiatives over the past couple of years to secure the financial well-being of the organization. I am happy to report that we ended 2022 with a positive financial statement. Thank you to the members of Northwest Chapter. Your monetary donations were key in helping get the organization through the lean years and back on track financially.

WCHA Calendar sales were brisk again this year. They have sold out once again, even after we ordered another batch. Our calendar volunteers do an amazing job on this project every year. Consider submitting some of your own photos when the call goes out for the next one!

Some of the other key items we continue to work on are... how to improve our social media presence and attract young people to the organization, what other benefits we could offer our members aside from what we are already doing, how we can increase advertising revenue to help with cash flow, and



WOODEN CANOE HERITAGE ASSOCIATION
43rd ANNUAL ASSEMBLY
featuring
CARLETON CANOES



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Information: www.woodencanoe.org, or call 603-323-8992

how we can ensure that the records and knowledge of canoes, construction methods, etc are preserved for the future.

As always, I'm happy to take your suggestions and comments to the Board. We are now meeting quarterly (virtually), so there is plenty of opportunity. Feel free to reach out to me by email at:



Colleen Hovey Marlene Stein photo

colleen.hovey@gmail.com

or by mail at Colleen Hovey,
26260 Township Road 374,
Red Deer County, AB, T4E 1P3.

Hope to see you all soon! Happy canoeing!
Colleen Hovey
WCHA Vice President and proud Northwest Chapter member

Canoe Golf: Spring Meet 2018

Dick Howland photos



Frank and Janice Guinness tee off.



Dick Cross makes a long drive.



...and Pete Pride sinks the putt!

Friday Night Speaker! Phil Miller on Willits Brothers Canoes and Moving the Day Island Canoe Shop



Earl Willits (left) and Floyd Willits (right) help Jean Fuller (center) secure the Fuller family's new canoe in 1952, outside their Day Island shop.

Northwest Chapter members have long admired the beautiful canoes produced over 5 decades by brothers Earl and Floyd Willits, at their Day Island Canoe Shop. Meticulous craftsmen and innovative inventors, the brothers aimed for perfection in their canoes and in their processes. Earl manufactured the canoe parts, and Floyd assembled the canoes. After Floyd's death in 1962, Earl felt he could not complete the finished canoes to their high standards, and despite a waiting list of customers, closed the canoe shop in 1963. The 900-plus Willits canoes they produced have since become coveted finds for canoe collectors and restoration specialists, and great fun on the water for their appreciative owners.

Despite increasing interest, the canoe shop remained untouched and shuttered until last year, when the Willits family, including grand-nephew Kendall Willits and sister Cindy (Willits) Bejarano, decided to honor the Willits Brothers legacy by donating the canoe shop's build records and documents to the Tacoma Public Library, and the intact shop's contents to Tacoma's Foss Waterway Seaport museum. Willits canoe owner/enthusiast and Gig Harbor resident **Phil Miller** was instrumental, with others, in the extended process to carefully photograph, document and transition the shop contents—canoe parts, forms, wood, tools, machines invented by the brothers, all the contents of that magical place—to the Foss Waterway museum. Concurrently, Willits Brothers biographer, restoration specialist and NW Chapter member **Pat Chapman** was able to help facilitate the transfer of the shop's records to the Tacoma Public Library.

Join **Phil Miller** Friday evening to hear the first-hand story of the first visits to the shop, and the careful transfer of its contents!

Save the Dates: Willits Gathering and Regatta: August 25–27, 2023

Phil Miller is the organizer of this year's 2nd Willits Gathering and Regatta, a three-day event at the Gig Harbor airport. The specific agenda is still to be determined, but may include a Friday arrival and group dinner, canoe viewing and group paddle on Saturday, with a possible visit to the Foss Waterway Seaport Museum on Sunday. Last year's event featured 9 Willits canoes in the water, and 15 total for admiring, with more expected this year. The airport has facilities for washing the canoes after their salt water cruise. More information at the Meet or contact Phil at 253 651 4703 or seeeds@comcast.net

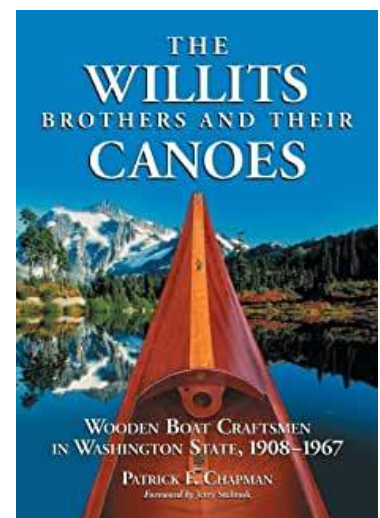


Nine Willits canoes ready to enjoy Wollochet Bay at the 2022 Willits Gathering and Regatta.

Willits Brothers biography: *The Willits Brothers and Their Canoes*

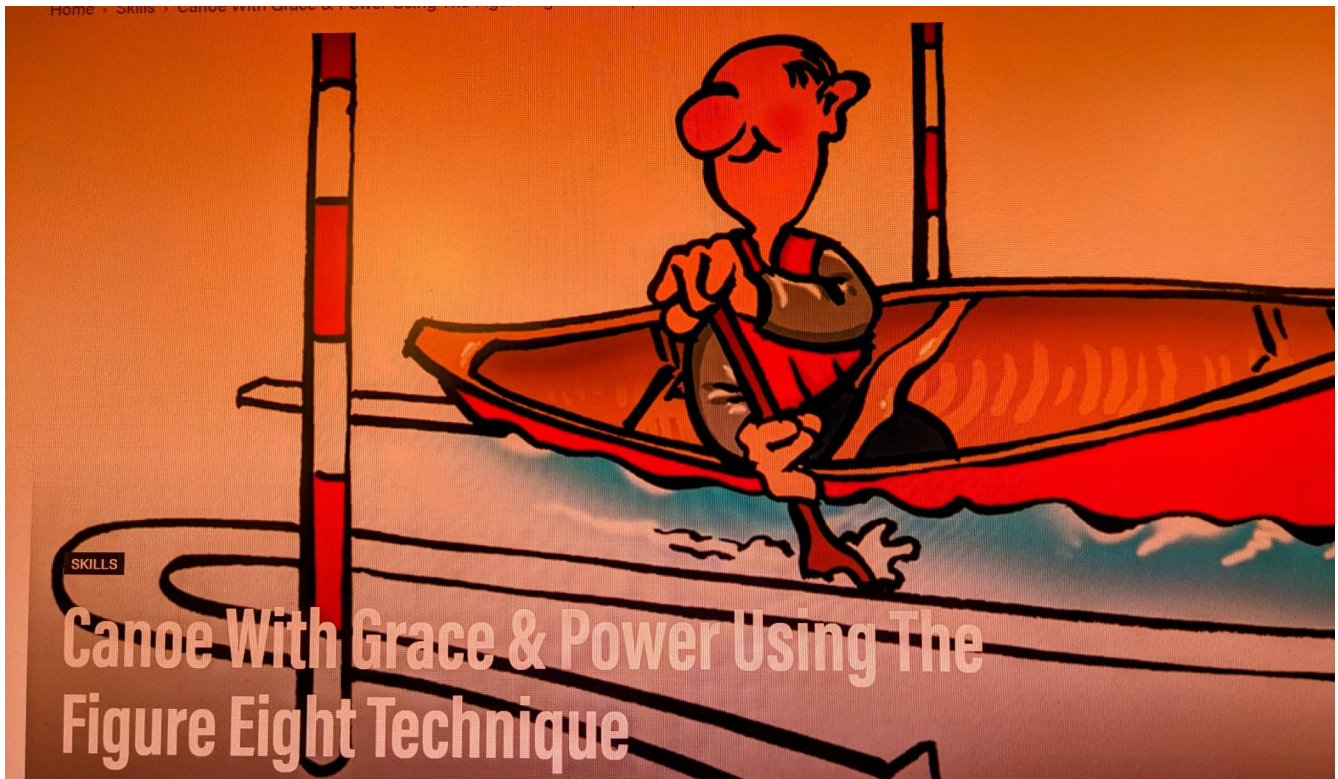
Pat Chapman's meticulously researched biography of Floyd and Earl Willits and their long partnership as craftsmen is the definitive work for those interested in northwest wooden canoes, and Willits canoes in particular.

Pat Chapman's **McFarland Lake Canoe** company specializes in the restoration and sale of Willits canoes and their accessories. Because of the unique construction of Willits canoes, experienced restoration is particularly important. Pat looks forward to the opportunity to study the soon-to-be available Willits shop materials further for a greater understanding of techniques and building details.



Canoe with Grace and Power using the Figure-Eight Technique, by Becky

Mason This article is from **Paddling Magazine's** archives, from predecessor magazine **Canoeroots** and **Family Camping Spring 2009**



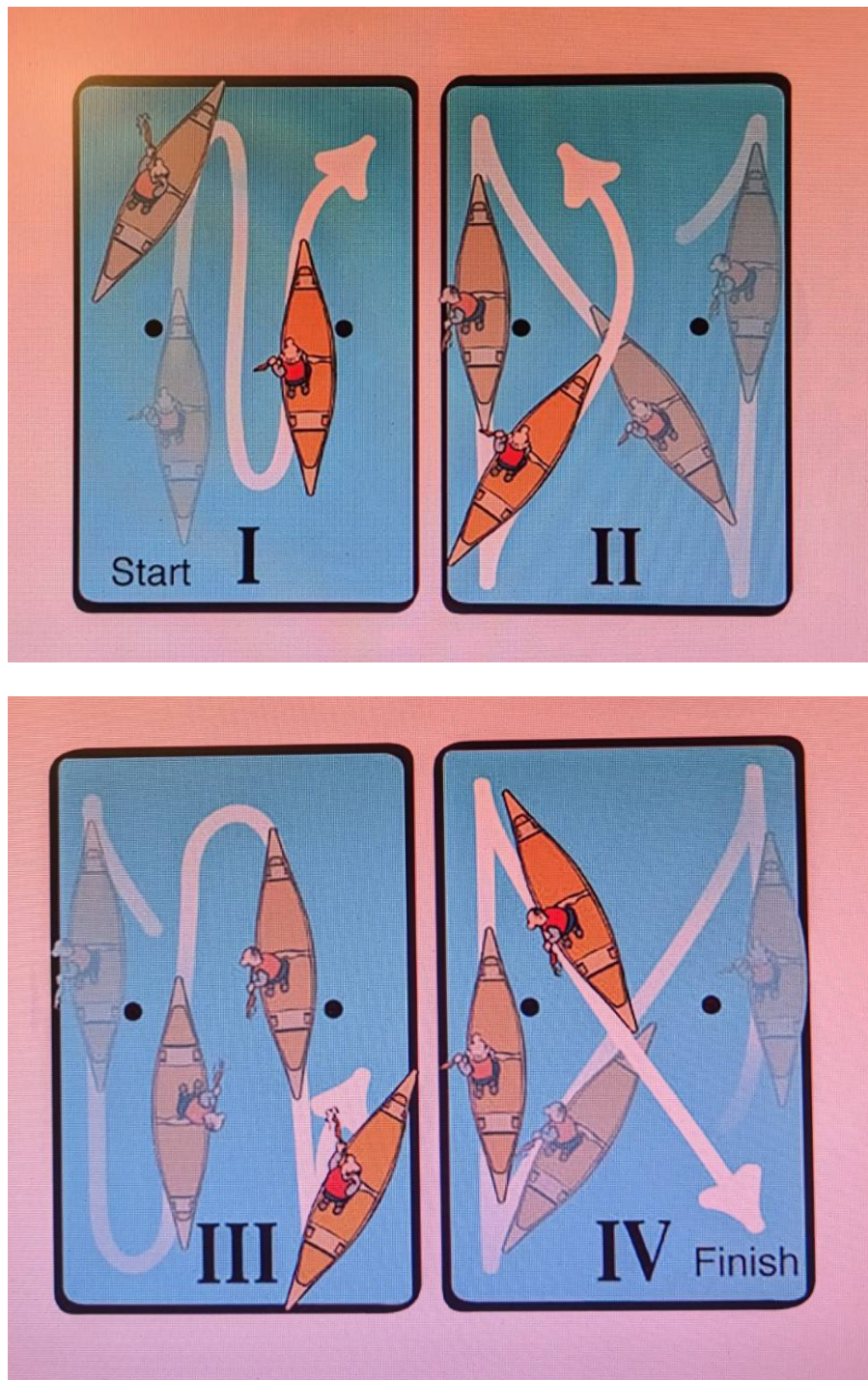
A few years ago while at a canoeing symposium I took a break to go for a solo paddle. As I passed the beach a stranger launched his canoe and joined me. We continued along the breakwater chatting and paddling until he pointed with obvious pride at two buoys spaced a few feet apart and asked what I thought of his English Gate.

I didn't know what to say, because I didn't know what it was.

It turns out it's a simple but wildly effective skill-testing drill for flatwater and whitewater canoeists. He insisted he demonstrate it, and I watched bewildered as he blazed through the gate. His canoe slid forward and back, backward and sideways in precise movements close to, but not touching the buoys. The English Gate, I learned, is a routine made up of four phases or patterns that you follow through the buoys. By seeing how quickly and cleanly you can put the canoe through the phases you will get an immediate assessment of your skill as a paddler. Not only does it demonstrate your weaknesses and strengths, but it rewards you with evidence of quicker and cleaner paddling as you repeat the drill and improve.

After a few botched runs I had it figured out and realized that it's really a fancy figure-eight with a few flourishes thrown in to keep you honest. Sometimes when you pass a buoy you stop and paddle backwards, sometimes you spin the canoe and continue. The diagrams explain the patterns to follow. They seem a little simpler when you realize the fourth phase is the same as the second, just reversed.

Keep the following in mind to speed your progress: You need strong, quick strokes on the straights to build momentum to carry you through the turns. Before each pivot, shift your weight toward your paddling side for snappy turns. By keeping your speed up and paddling as close to the buoys as possible without touching, you will hone your control and efficiency. Paddle the gate often, and you'll notice yourself becoming more graceful and powerful in all your paddling. By Becky Mason

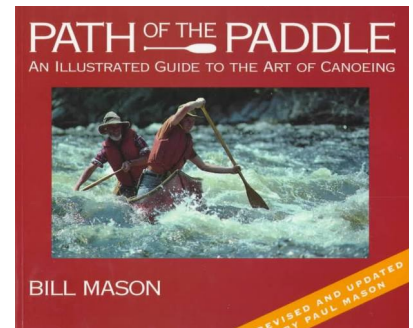


This English Gate pattern looks complicated, but can be broken down into simpler steps.

Top 5 Great Sources: The Best of Instruction and Scholarship.

compiled by Kevin Callan, Bruce Hodgins, Gwyneth Hoyle et.al.

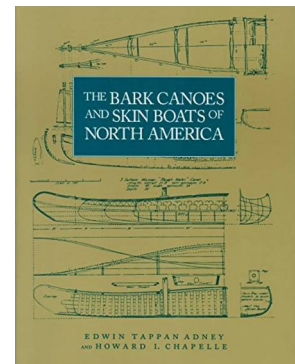
Behind the scenes: “Our panel—comprising scholars, authors, historians, adventurers, instructors, guides and retailers—helped us to create a master list of over 100 books about or related to canoeing in Canada. Each person selected and scored their favorite titles. Our winners represent the most widely read and highly regarded titles.” From **Canoeeroots and Family Camping** magazine, 2004 Annual.



1. **Path of the Paddle**, by Bill Mason

The definitive Canadian canoe manual since its publication, *Path of the Paddle* doesn't just tell us how to canoe, *Path of the Paddle* tells us why. The book is imbued with a philosophy—in Mason's case, more of a spirituality—stated front and center in the introduction. The slower you go, the more you see. For Mason, the canoe is the vehicle for a distinctly Canadian land ethic and way of life. Packed with instructional parables and photos from classic canoe destinations, like the Nahanni, the Petawawa River and Lake Superior—it's the Swiss Army knife of canoe books. Wally Schaber: “I lived beside Mason, listening to draft after draft of this book, and knowing what a perfectionist he was. I know how superior this book was to anything that preceded it. It is still very relevant 20 years later.” The latest edition has been revised and updated by Bill Mason's son Paul.

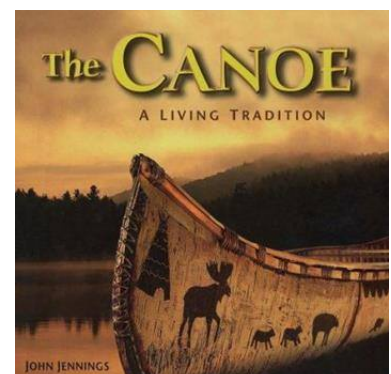
2. **The Complete Wilderness Paddler**, by James West Davidson and John Rugge. A comprehensive how-to book of wilderness canoeing, but also an account of one of the earliest recreational canoe trips down the Moise River, when the Quebec government considered the river too dangerous. The illustrations are wonderful, the writing is urbane and witty. Always an enjoyable read.



3. **The Bark Canoes and Skin Boats of North America**, by Edwin Tappan Adney and Howard Chapelle. Chapelle presents the previously unpublished research of the late Adney (1868–1950). Adney recorded the many intricacies of bark canoes and their construction, amassing volumes of notes, beautifully detailed sketches, and an incredible collection of scale models. Chapelle adds his own notes on the construction of skin-on-frame kayaks and umiaks.

4. **Canoeing North into the Unknown: A Record of River Travel, 1874 to 1974** by Bruce Hodgins and Gwyneth Hoyle. (This) documents northern river travel from the end of the commercial fur trade era to the time when wilderness tripping became common. Typical of mountaineering scholarwhip, but unlike anything else in canoe-dom. Makes sense of what was an individual and isolated patchwork of adventures, providing fascinating context for today and the future.

5. **The Canoe: A Living Tradition**, edited by John Jennings. A magnificent, complex and beautiful book about the North American canoe in all its diversity, art and uses down through the last five centuries. With contributions by many of the most important authorities on “the canoe”. Presented in a coffee-table format, it is so much more than a coffee-table book.



[CAMPCRAFT]

K9 Canoeing

HOW TO TURN YOUR BEST FRIEND INTO A CERTIFIED DOGGY PADDLER

Venturing off into the wild unknown with furry best friend in tow is a dream for many paddlers. Often, the reality falls somewhat short. Untrained, a canine canoe tripper is likely to disrupt your tranquil experience by barking during wildlife observations, dashing after chipmunks along portage trails and anxiously awaiting the return to shore.

Dogs aren't born to act like stalwart Lassie, but you can train this behavior. A patient, controllable and confident dog will complement any on-water adventure. All that's necessary to prepare a dog for canoeing is a bit of specialized training and a proper introduction to the activity.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

To ensure your dog is ready to board a canoe, ask yourself whether your student can sit patiently and quietly for more than 10 minutes while you sit beside the dog. Often sitting down beside your dog results in a happy and playful response, which will be unwelcome afloat.

With both you and your dog sitting on the ground, provide distractions. Toss balls, have children run about, move a paddle side to side and then pass it over the dog's head. Distractions will appear while paddling and your dog must ignore them. This stillness without restraint will take practice.

If your dog is easily excited by simple distractions, spend more time working on foundational obedience skills before paddling together. If your dog is able to remain quiet and calm, you're ready to introduce the canoe.

WHEN HAIRY MET SALLY

Start by introducing the craft on land. Stabilize the canoe and teach the dog to confidently enter and exit on command. Many dogs won't want to lie down in the craft and limit their field of vision until they feel more comfortable, and that's okay.

Next, sit down in your boat with the dog and mimic paddle strokes. Tilt the canoe side to side to simulate movement. Exit the canoe and walk away,

ensuring your canine pal stays in the boat. The dog should not exit until told to do so. Consider where the dog will sit to distribute weight properly with passengers and gear and teach the dog that this is his place. Have your dog repeat entering, exiting and waiting in the boat several times over different training sessions before moving to the water.

WATER WORK

Move the lessons to shallow water and repeat entry and exit etiquette. Sit in the canoe, rock it gently and pass your paddle over the dog's head. Add more movement by stepping out and gliding the canoe by hand around in the shallows. Dogs often react when the canoe hits a rock or the shore so practice pulling ashore while encouraging the dog to remain still as everyone exits. Reward good behavior verbally and with an occasional treat. You want the dog to associate the canoe with positive experiences.

After a few training sessions in the shallows, you can take to the water with a confident dog. Paddle on calm water before venturing too far from shore. Enter current only with sufficient river skills—a capsize in whitewater could easily turn a dog off of water adventures for life.

EXTRA TIPS

Some canines are not brilliant swimmers and even the best have limited endurance, so put a PFD on your dog. Never leave a loose-fitting slip collar or a long lead on a dog on the water because a capsize could result in the dog becoming entangled in gear or debris. Also, condition your dog to swim alongside the craft as if at heel. In an emergency situation the dog should be accustomed to staying with the canoe even if swimming is required.

Mike Stewart is one of the most sought-after dog trainers and breeders of sporting Labrador retrievers in North America. www.uklabs.com

President's Message

Nancy and I have been out in Minnesota and North Dakota for the winter. We've been visiting family while Nancy has been working Travel Nursing jobs. But after spending the end of winter battling blizzards, -20F's, and covid out in Bismarck North Dakota, I am really looking forward to getting back to water you can't walk on, skinning and finishing my old canoe, and catching up with all of you folks at the spring meet.

In the 10 years of use and neglect since her last refit, my old canoe's seeps had turned into leaks, her varnish had vanished, and the only compliments she was getting were from the folks paddling rentals along the Bow River in Banf.

Getting her fixed up has reminded me how these boats hold old memories and create connections. Nancy could not believe that the boat had ever looked good, so I found her some photos from when she was in fresh varnish along the Hanford Reach on a trip I took with my best friend Mike a year or so before he passed. Hunting for tacks and planking, I reconnected with Eric Harman and got a tour of his shop up in Arlington. Looking to show Nancy how canoes were skinned, I ran across Bill Paine's Youtube video on canvassing a canoe. Of course I called him up to congratulate him on his movie star status. At least a couple messages were exchanged with Mike Elliott on oiling planking.

Best of all, I got to reconnect with my cousin Julie and her family as I spent a couple weeks stripping and varnishing in her backyard and garage. (We live about 8 blocks from each other, but only seem to meet up at my parents in Minneapolis) Right now, the boat is bundled up in Julie's backyard, ready for a new skin and final coats of varnish... Who knows, if you have a heated shop, we may be "connecting" in April :-)

Happy Paddling

Mike Livdahl



Mike Livdahl at work with his camera.

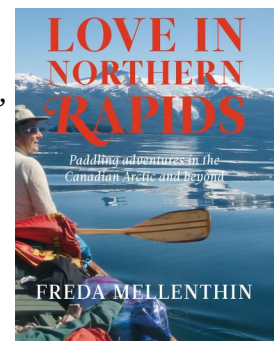
Dick Howland photo



Sunny weather, good friends and beautiful boats. Come to the Spring Meet! Tim Coglan photo

Freda Mellenthin Book

Remember, the family of the late Freda Mellenthin has generously donated a number of copies of her exciting and interesting memoir, *Love in Northern Rapids*, to the chapter for our auction. The book is an inspiring story of summer-long trips taken by Freda and Ted down a number of northwest rivers. Freda had not canoed until she met Ted at age 65, but became an intrepid wilderness camper and canoeist. Be sure to get your copy at our fundraising auction! Thank you to Freda's family for their thoughtful donation to the NW Chapter.



Northwest.wcha.org

Joan Ellsworth	<i>Treasurer</i>	Bellingham, WA	(360) 756-7577	lakesamishfarm@gmail.com
Colleen Hovey	<i>WCHA board rep</i>	Elnora, Alberta	(403) 357 4645	colleen.hovey@gmail.com
Claude Delisle		Elnora, Alberta	(587) 679 2456	cdn.claude@gmail.com
Joe McElroy	<i>Newsletter</i>	Snoqualmie, WA	(425) 502 2050	maryjoe4813@gmail.com
Geoff Harvey		Hayden Lakes, Id	(208) 449-3185	whitefish48@yahoo.com
Martin Ferwerda	<i>Webmaster</i>	Brightwood, OR	(503) 622-6031	mferwerda111@frontier.com
Mary Norton	<i>Sect'y/Newsletter</i>	Snoqualmie, WA	(425) 443 1417	maryjoe4813@gmail.com
Michael Davidson		Port Townsend, WA	(253) 820 5973	mdexvotos@gmail.com
Ginger Fortier		Port Townsend, WA		gingerfortier@hotmail.com
Kurt Schmidt		Langley, WA		lkschmidt@sbcglobal.net
Laura Schmidt		Langley, WA		lkschmidt@sbcglobal.net
Craig Dupler	<i>Past President</i>	Snohomish, WA		craig_dupler@gmail.com
Patra Moore		Carnation, WA	(425) 333 4246	bpmb@live.com
Mike Livdahl	<i>President</i>	Seattle, WA		michael.livdahl@gmail.com