

Wooden Canoe Heritage Association

NORTHWEST CHAPTER

Northwest Chapter WCHA

Fall Newsletter

October 2023



Livdahl photo

Fall Meet September 13–17, 2023

Oh, Manning! Camping in a lovely place, with interesting and beautiful boats and good friends, creates a rare and special experience. Fall colors, loons, beavers, sunny weather and starry nights . . .oh, and canoe cookies . . . what more could one want? This fall's Northwest Chapter Meet at Manning Park, BC, seemed to have it all! Chapter members and friends enjoyed an extra day at Manning this year, giving time to explore the area, with leisure to hike, visit, try each other's boats, swim and savor the wonderful park. The Meet included several interesting programs, Meet the Canoes, a balloon race, the usual chapter fundraising auction, chapter meeting and potluck dinner, plus campfire discussions, music and stargazing. Plan now to come next year: **September 17–22, 2024!**

Basic Canoe Strokes: A Review notes on talk by Boudi Van Oldenborgh

The Chapter gathered Friday afternoon for an on-land discussion of basic canoe strokes by Boudi Van Oldenborgh, with helpful comments from other experienced group members.

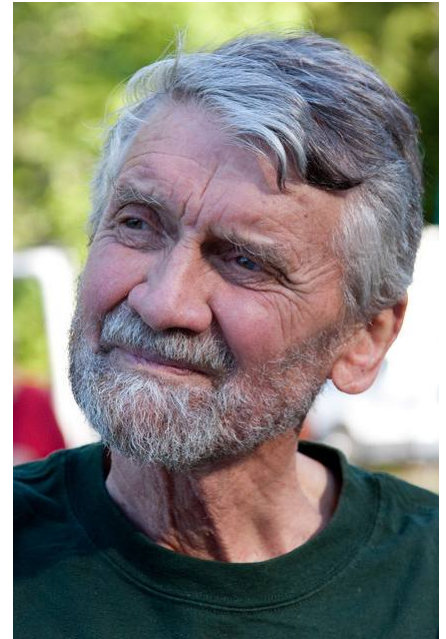
Recommended paddle length is to the paddler's throat. Mike Elliott noted that when sitting, the paddle shaft should reach from chin to waterline. Alternatively, the upside-down paddle shaft should reach from seat to forehead (blade not included).

Forward strokes should begin with the blade entering the water vertically. The paddler can lean forward slightly, and utilize a slight rotation from the hips to extent the reach, but the blade should be vertical. The power stroke should end at the hips. For the recovery, it's very important to feather the paddle blade to minimize wind resistance.

In the stern, several variations on the forward stroke help the canoe track in a straight line. The standard J stroke finishes the power stroke with a far-back flip of the paddle such that the stroke traces a "J", ending with the blade rotated so that it is parallel to the side of the canoe; the wrist of the grip hand rotates so that the thumb is down. The "goon" stroke ends the power stroke with a short pry to the outside to correct the course; the grip hand wrist is rotated so that the thumb is up. Mike Elliott mentioned the Canadian stroke, also called the "knifing J" in that the blade moves forward in the water as part of the recovery. The stealth stroke (Indian stroke) accomplishes the recovery completely underwater, and is a very quiet stroke, ideal for bird and animal watching.

Moving the canoe to the side utilizes draw strokes. In a standard draw, only reach out as far as the top/grip hand can go (blade parallel to the canoe) and stroke to the canoe. A quiet variation is to do the draw and use an underwater recovery. Another draw is the "sculling draw" where the blade is angled slightly to the canoe, and the angle alternated as the stroke is pulled.

While experienced canoeists contributed to the discussion, other members of the audience wished they had heard this talk some (many) years ago!



Livdahl photo



Quiet moment on Lightning Lake. McElroy photo

Coastal Paddling: Canoe Touring on the Pacific Northwest Coast notes on talk by Boudi Van Oldenborgh

Boudi began by asking the group, “Who has done salt-water coastal paddling?” Very few in the group had. It can be done safely, Boudi continued, and we in the Northwest have some of the greatest canoeing sites relatively close at hand. Canoes are as suited to coastal canoeing and camping as kayaks, and Boudi has enjoyed many trips exploring miles of coastal inland waters, alone and with Joyce Manary and/or Mike Monks.

Importantly, in Canada, waterfront ownership ends at the high tide mark, making beaches public land. In the US, ownership continues to the low tide line, leaving essentially no public land along waterways. Most of the coastal areas Boudi described are sparsely populated, but beach ownership is an important consideration when camping. September is an ideal month for a trip, with fewer people, and often good weather.

Coastal paddlers need a strong sense of self-preservation and common sense. Wind, currents and tides must be considered. What is the shoreline like? Where can you pull out? What are things that can go wrong? You must always have a plan B! Some considerations are similar to hiking and backpacking: how can I be found if necessary? What will it take to get someone to an emergency room if needed? How can they be stabilized until then? Boudi recommends an emergency locator beacon such as “Inreach” (which does require a subscription for SOS capabilities).

However, if a hiker has a medical emergency, time for assessment and next-step planning is usually available. A canoe emergency can need a “right now” plan to avoid a capsize, and potential worst case scenarios must be considered in advance. A trip needs to plan to allow no-travel days if the weather prohibits paddling. A potentially dangerous channel crossing can be approached by stages: evaluate partway or halfway to continue or go back, depending on conditions. Always plan for immersions, based on water temperature.



Kurt Schmidt readies their Kennebec canoe. Livdahl photo



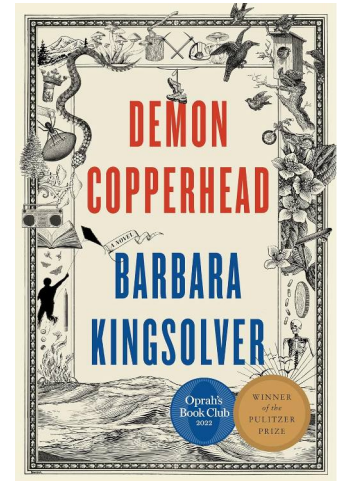
Boudi highly recommends four areas to consider for exceptional coastal canoeing: Desolation Sound, the Broughton island group, Clayoquot Sound, and the Queen Charlotte Islands/Haida Gwaii. All have areas of relatively protected waters, and his charts, marked with trips and camping sites, showed many intimate inlets and islands. Desolation Sound, on the eastern side of the Inland Passage, may be reached by ferry from Campbell River. The Broughton Group are part of the Broughton Archipelago Marine Provincial Park, in the Inland Passage near the northern tip of Vancouver Island. Clayoquot Sound, while on the ocean (west) side of Vancouver Island, is a protected area of multiple islands and multiple inlets offering more than three hundred miles of coastline. Farther north, Haida Gwaii/the Queen Charlotte Islands, accessible by ferry, offer a rugged coastline and deep rain forests, with many islands and inlets on the more protected east side.

Looking at the charts, and seeing the complexity of the northwest coast lines makes one imagine the wonderful possibilities there for paddling. Maybe someday!

NW Chapter Book Club

The Book Club started by several chapter members has languished over the Covid years, but will begin again at the Spring Meet for interested members. The book selected for the May 2024 Meet will be Barbara Kingsolver's new Pulitzer prize-winning *Demon Copperhead*, the story of a boy growing up in and out of foster care and difficult circumstances in modern-day Appalachia. Plan to read it, and come to the discussion in May!

For the Fall 2024 Meet, a biography of Northwest explorer and map-maker David Thompson will be chosen. Possible selections include *Epic Wanderer: David Thompson and the Mapping of the Canadian West*; *The Mapmaker's Eye: David Thompson on the Columbia Plateau*; and *Sources of the River: Tracking David Thompson across North America*. People familiar with any of these books, please advise as to which would be a good choice for our group.



For Sale: Old Town OTCA 17'

1950 17' Old Town OTCA. Completely restored in 2023: new canvas, paint, varnish, caned seats, by expert craftsman. Half rib construction; meticulous detailing. Ready for the water and new adventures. Eugene, Oregon. \$3,400 crosscuts357@gmail.com



On the beach at Manning . . .



Meeting the canoes 2023. Livdahl photo



Des Winterbottom and Kurt Schmidt discuss Des's Greenwood canoe. Livdahl photo

Restoring a Sailing Canoe with Sponsons: notes on talk by Mike Elliott

Mike Elliott, of Kettle River Canoes in Grand Forks, BC, and author of the 2016 book *This Old Canoe*, shared a detailed look at the work involved in restoring a 1967 Old Town OTCA 18' sailing canoe which he has recently completed. The canoe is part of the wooden canoe fleet at Camp Fire Camp Sweyolaken on Lake Coeur d'Alene in Idaho, and the restoration will be part of the information included in Mike's new book soon to be released, *This Fancy Old Canoe*. Mike will also be the keynote speaker at next summer's WCHA Assembly at Paul Smith's College in New York. This restoration was partially funded by a 4-generation Camp Sweyolaken family as a 75th birthday gift by the children in honor of their mother!



Mike Elliott in his shop. Livdahl photo



Mahogany outwales and rub rails on the sponsons contrast with the glossy new paint and decals. Mike Elliott photo

Many steps were involved in the restoration of this beautiful canoe. New rib tops, and new stem tops were carefully spliced in. The OTCA's upswept ends required new pre-bent decks and tapered inwales be made on forms built to compensate for the wood's springback. The decks were soaked for three days, steamed for one hour, then placed in the deck form and let dry for one week.

The sponsons, taken apart, are air-filled, canvas covered box-like wooden structures with solid ends, attached to the canoe via 5 screws at each end. The canoe is canvased, and the sponsons canvased separately with tacks like the canoe canvas, then the sponsons are attached to the canoe. New steam-bent ash external stems were made, and beveled to match the new keel. A cove was cut into the keel bottom via parallel jigs such that the keel could be run through the table saw at an angle to create the curved cove. The stems and keel were sealed and attached, seated with a marine bedding compound. Because the canoe is a sailing canoe, screws from the mast step also go into the keel.



Water trials at Christina Lake near Grand Forks, before transfer to Camp Sweyolaken. Mike Elliott photo



Mahogany rubrails on the sponsons enhance the sailboat appearance of the sailing canoe. Mike Elliott photo

Sailing fittings were returned to the canoe: gudgeons for the rudder pintals were attached to the stern external stem via large copper nails peened with a hammer. The leeboards were fitted and maneuvered for proper travel. Mahogany rubrails on the sponsons cover the sponson's canvas seams. Seats were recaned and seats and thwarts installed.

New Old Town decals were applied. Mike's decal trick is to have a spray bottle with some dish soap in water handy to lightly spray the surface where the decal is to go, before placing the decal. That way the decal (having been soaked for 30 seconds) can be moved slightly for precise placing, after it is applied to the surface. Then gently squeegee the excess water, dab dry carefully, and let sit overnight.

The name on the boat, "Frel" (to honor canoe donors Fred and Ellen Menzel) was created in the font and size desired via computer. A seamstress's "pounce wheel" is used to prick the outline of the letters, and the design is taped in place on the boat. Tapping the pricked design with a baby-powder-filled sock transfers the outline to the boat in powder, and this can be then traced with a grease pencil onto the boat. Mike uses a maul—long dowel with a padded end—as a wrist-rest when actually painting and outlining the letters, using sign painter's brushes.

The finished canoe is a beautiful craft, ready to fly across the water of Lake Coeur d'Alene! How heavy is an 18' canoe, with sponsons, and sailing gear? "Pretty heavy!" Fortunately many hands will help ease it in and out of the water at Camp Sweyolaken!



Meet the Canoes!

As usual, an interesting variety of canoes were displayed on the Lightning Lake beach during the Meet.

Mike Livdahl and Nancy Douglas brought Mike's newly varnished Old Town OTCA, recently recovered again in ballistic nylon. With the nylon securely sewed and sealed down the stems, Mike did not replace external stem bands on the boat. Mary Norton and Joe McElroy showed their mystery canoe, the raffle canoe of several years ago. While donated to the chapter as a 1942 Peterborough, the 16' canoe shows characteristics of a Chestnut and a Peterborough, and opinions on its lineage vary. Found by the previous/donating owners stored in a tree in the Boundary Waters back country, and used by them for many years, its actual origins now are likely to remain a mystery—but it is a lovely and smooth paddling canoe.

Steve and Joan Ellsworth brought their first wood-canvas canoe, their 1923 Old Town Charles River, with mahogany seats and thwarts. At this Meet, the canoe, now a century old, leaked a bit of water, and there was concern that the canvas under the keel might be leaking. The distinctive patina and delicate pinstriping of its (likely) original canvas makes recanvassing the boat an unattractive option at present. Kurt and Laura Stangel Schmidt brought their century canoe, the 1917 Kennebec Kurt's father had purchased while in college. Looking new after a many year restoration that began with Kurt's dad, and involved a cross-country move, the canoe now has wood trim in maple from Kurt's grandfather's farm, and wood from their own Whidbey Island home.

Des Winterbottom's restored Greenwood canoe has no name or serial number; it was sold as a kit, and Greenwood did not put his name on canoes he did not personally build. Fiberglassed and with corroded steel screws when Des began the restoration, the bright yellow canoe now has new screws on the rails, paracord seats, and mahogany outwales that contrast with lighter spruce inwales—a beauty!

Dick and Sue Cross brought Dick's first canoe, a 1920's Old Town OTCA. Dick had sold the boat at a garage sale, then attempted to track it down 10 years later via a newspaper ad that was picked up on TV news—and resulted in finding the purchaser! Beautifully restored and with signature pinstripes, the red canoe is a pleasure to see.

Dwight Jacobson and Jennifer Carlyle brought Dwight's 1960's Old Town OTCA, set up for sailing. Dwight has also used it with a sliding seat rowing rig. The canoe sailed beautifully when the wind came up on the lake!

Mike Elliott brought a client's Peterborough canoe--likely the oldest boat at the Meet-- a cedar strip boat needing restoration because of damaged planking. In 1859, Sir John Stephenson of Peterborough was building canoes using cedar over solid wooden forms, and patenting his innovative methods. By 1883, he patented his third innovation-- a longitudinal strip plank method, as used on this canoe. Mike went to Peterborough to study these boats prior to beginning the repairs.

Multiple planks were damaged, and the tapered, ship-lapped planks with rebates (rabbets) were removed with difficulty. Each plank has one pre-drilled copper nail per rock-elm rib, dubbed after the boat is removed from its form. Scarf joints of the planks are attached with three copper nails. As with other boats of Stephenson's methods, construction begins with a notched keelson. What a treat to see this interesting, rare boat!



Des Winterbottom's Greenwood canoe, with new contrasting gunwales. Norton photo



Dwight Jacobson waits for the wind in his Old Town. Norton photo



The Peterborough canoe shows off its unique construction. Livdahl photo

The boats likely getting the most attention and admiration from other Manning Park visitors as they passed by the beach were the canoe and kayak brought by Patra and Bob Moore, both built by Greg and Steve Morely of Swan Lake, Montana. Both are as much art objects as they are functional watercraft!

Patra's strip kayak, long, sleek and glossy, is personalized with both her name, and an inlaid grizzly bear graphic design.

Bob's sturgeon nose Kootenai canoe is unique in many ways. The distinctive shape has been utilized by the Sinixt, Ktunaxa (Kootenai) and Kalispel peoples of British Columbia and Washington for centuries. Explorer David Thompson wrote about the unusual canoes when exploring the area in the winter of 1806–1807. The long waterline, he was told, helped the canoes track better, and the lower prow and sterns reduced windage on the large lakes of the area and perhaps helped the canoes to penetrate reeds and rushes on the lakeshores.

The canoes were typically built from inner pine bark, collected when the sap was running, with cedar or birch ribs. The upper section of the canoe "skin" was often birchbark, more easily replaced when damaged by the rib ends rubbing on it. Interestingly, canoes of this style were also discovered in the 19th century, used by people of the Amur River region of Siberia. Was this a response to similar water conditions? The Amur has long open-water areas likely to have lots of wind. The Amur area is in Siberia between Mongolia and Japan, a long way south of a Bering Strait possible migration route.

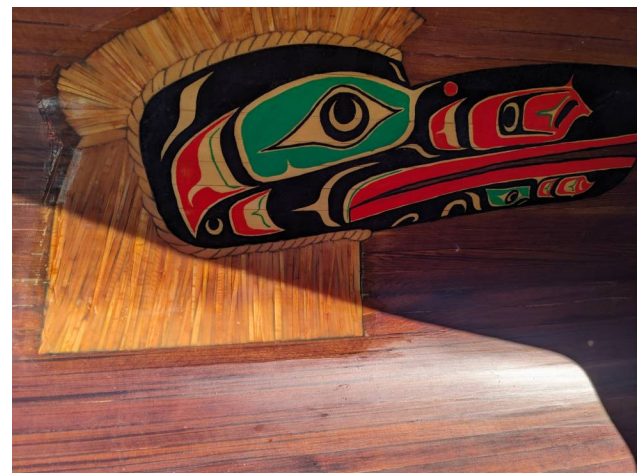
Bob's canoe also has custom graphics, including a stunning raven mask design inside the hull, based on a Haida raven mask owned by Dick Cross, obtained from the maker by Barb Dobree. The canoe has a grizzly track graphic, to remind Bob to keep his bear bell at hand! And the dappled geometric pattern along the sides of the canoe mimic the lateral markings of a sturgeon.

With the canoe, Bob showed his new Tlingit-style cedar paddle with a distinctive hand grip, also by Steve Morley. Curved perfectly to fit Bob's hand, the grip is made from birch, which was entwined with honeysuckle so tightly the wood is essentially carved. The wood is collected purposely by Morely for handgrips.

Honeysuckle pattern in Birch. Morely photo



Custom grizzly bear and mountain graphic on the bow deck of Patra's Morely kayak. Norton photo



Haida raven mask motif with cedar bark hair inside Bob's Kootenai canoe. Norton photo



Morely Kootenai canoe showing grizzly track, sturgeon lateral markings, and spruce root lashings. Livdahl photo



Bob Moore enjoys his Morely Kootenai canoe. Native Columbia Plateau canoes were unique to this area, and to the Amur River area of Siberia, and built in a variety of lengths. Bob's photo courtesy of Mike Livdahl



photo courtesy of University of Idaho



photo courtesy of legend logos



Upper Arrow Lake. photo courtesy of Arrow Lake Historical Society



photo courtesy of squidink.ca

Campfire War Canoe Restored and Returned

The 25' 1960's Old Town War Canoe rescued from Campfire Camp Kirby, of the Samish Council, by Michael Davidson and Ginger Fortier, has returned to the Camp. As it turned out, the Camp Fire Council did not really want to part with "Heart's Desire", the canoe, but it had planking, rib and corrosion damage, and needed restoration which the council could not afford. Vern Heikkila volunteered to take on the restoration work, and the canoe was transferred by Vern to his shop in Westport. The finished, newly painted, like- new War Canoe was returned to the Camp September 8, ready for new generations of Camp Fire Boys and Girls to enjoy. Thank you, Vern and Janet, for a major effort!



Ready to return to Camp, "Heart's Desire" waits on the trailer. Standing behind the canoe, Vern Heikkila, Janet Heikkila and helping friends from Port Townsend and Camp. Heikkila photo



Completely refurbished with new fastenings, rib and planking repairs, new canvas and paint, the canoe is ready for more happy campers. Heikkila photo

Fall Meet: Friday Lunch Cruise

Friday morning a group of paddlers enjoyed a trip to the end of the Lightning Lakes chain for lunch on the gravel bar there. Low lake levels involved an actual portage under the Rainbow Bridge! Highlights of the trip included a new, active beaver lodge along the third lake's northern shore, with fresh plastering of mud on its walls. Also seen were an adult and two young loons: the teen-age loons were almost the size of the parent, but still mostly gray, lacking the flashy black and white coloration of the adult. It's always exciting to hear a loon call!



A beaver cruises past a flock of young Mergansers (?) on Lightning Lake. Livdahl photo



Joan, Steve and Ryder Ellsworth enjoy their Old Town Charles River. Livdahl photo



Kurt and Laura Schmidt in their Kennebec canoe. Livdahl photo



Sue Cross enjoys the warm Fall weather at Lightning Lake. Livdahl photo



The young loons were a soft gray with black heads, without the distinctive markings of this adult. Livdahl photo

Fall Meet: Saturday: Boudi's Balloon Race!



Lining up for the race. Livdahl photo



The balloons are out! The race is on! Livdahl photo



Returning to the judges for the final balloon count . . . Livdahl photo



And the winners are Steve Ellsworth, Khore Phoenix, Sue Cross, Dick Cross, Laura Schmidt (with chocolate bar prize!) and Kurt Schmidt. Livdahl photo

Fall Meet: Chapter Meeting, Auction and Potluck!

President Mike Livdahl held a brief Chapter Meeting Saturday afternoon. We will need to evaluate board member terms at the May Meet, as Covid has extended many people's terms. We will also need to elect a new president.

It is becoming more and more difficult to schedule Manning for our Meets, as the site is very popular. However, Manning is confirmed for 2024, **September 17–22, 2024**. We will again have extra days, as that is helpful in the reservation process. A slight increase in camping fees will be instituted to cover the Meet costs. We are confirmed for Camp Bishop, Shelton, WA, for **May 9–12, 2024**.

The Willits canoe #459 sold at a donation price to the Chapter by Red Galvin has been purchased by Dwight Jacobson. The group is anticipated to be able to fund some strategic donations, to be discussed at the Spring Meet. Thank you, Red, Dwight and Joan and Steve, for caring for the canoe and expediting the sale!

The chapter auction, with returning auctioneers Dwight Jacobson and Kurt Schmidt, successfully raised \$440 for the Chapter. Highlights included distinctive wines, canoe-related books, multiple copies of Freda Mellenthin's inspirational book *Love in Northern Rapids* (donated to the Chapter by Freda's family), and various pieces of canoe and outdoor equipment. Some items were retained for a broader audience at Camp Bishop in May.

Following the auction, the traditional potluck was enjoyed by all, with chili cooked by President Mike Livdahl, fresh corn brought by Nancy Douglas, and a luscious array of salmon, salads and desserts from other members. Nancy's canoe cookies frosted to match individual chapter canoes were a big hit: did you find your own?!



Canoe cookies by Nancy Douglas were a campfire treat. Livdahl photo



Auctioneers Dwight Jacobson and Kurt Schmidt at work. Livdahl photo



The group enjoys a (propane) campfire despite the burn ban, provided by President Mike. Livdahl photo

Camp Sweyolaken Canoe Team News from Eileen Mathews

(Campfire Camp Sweyolaken, on Idaho's Lake Coeur d'Alene, uses only wood/canvas canoes in its programs. A volunteer restoration team has worked for the past 12 summers—and some winters—to accomplish restoration of the camp's canoe fleet, including the creation of a wood shop at camp, and learning needed restoration techniques.)

This past year, we have continued to make progress in the restoration of Sweyolakan Canoes. To date, all seven war canoes have been completely restored and returned to service. The last war canoe completed (and first boat purchased for the camp), the Sweyolakan ("sigh of the pines"), was returned to service in 2022, just in time for the camp's 100th birthday celebration. This canoe sports a special paint job that pleased everyone.

A total of seven small canoes have also been completed. They include: one 18 foot Square End Paddler, one 17 foot Otca, one 15 foot 50 pounder, one 17 foot Thompson and one 16 foot Thompson.

In addition, two canoes just arrived back from Mike Elliott's shop this past month: one Willits, "Wohsumee" ("Shining") and one 18 foot Otca with sail rigging, "Frel" (named to honor the canoe's donors, Fred and Ellen Menzel.)

This past summer was mainly spent on touch ups and maintenance of the canoes already restored as this was our twelfth summer of restoration. Most of the canoes needed sanding and new varnish on gunwales and other exposed surfaces; some the inside as well. At least one small and one war canoe required re-painting of the exterior and several canoes required touch-up paint on scrapes and worn areas as well. Gunwales were repaired, new outer stems and a keel were also replaced.

At this point one 17 foot Otca was taken into town to be worked on over the winter. Of the five remaining canoes, one will be completed next summer and the remaining four will await their turn.



"Sweyolaken" the canoe, with custom paint work, was the last of the war canoes restored by the team, just in time for Camp Sweyolaken's 100th birthday celebration in July, 2022. E. Mathews photo



Northwest Chapter Fall Meet 2023: front row: Bob Moore, Patra Moore, Joan Ellsworth with Ryder, Steve Ellsworth, Mary Norton with Duff, Joe McElroy with Sean. Back row: Sue Cross, Boudi Van Oldenborg, Nancy Douglas, Dwight Jacobson, Jennifer Carlyle, Kurt Schmidt, Laura Schmidt, Mike Elliott, Khore Phoenix, Des Winterbottom, Mike Livdahl, Dick Cross. Livdahl photo

Mark Your Calendars Now! Join Us for Canoe Fun!

Spring Meet: Camp Bishop, Shelton, WA, May 9–12, 2024

WCHA Assembly: Paul Smith's College, NY, July 16–21, 2024

Fall Meet: Manning Park, BC, September 17-22, 2024

Northwest.wcha.org

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