



President's Message

by Dawn Groves

Happy New Year from your new president!



WAKE decisions are made by board consensus, so in truth the president doesn't have more power than any of the other four board members. But at meet-

ings, the president is the mouthpiece and in that role, I'll do my best to plan for quality speakers, exceptional trainings, and great paddling trips.

At the next meeting, please come up and say hello. I enjoy kayaking and kayakers. If I forget your name, it's not personal – I can't remember anything unless it's blinking on a computer screen.

January is all about goals, and I'm big on setting them, especially goals around sports. (For the record, my goal was not to be the president of WAKE but here I am. Hmmm.) Seriously, in a frustrating, often discouraging world, sports can help keep us emotionally balanced, mentally sharp and physically healthy. If your sport is paddling – of course it is – then consider setting a sports goal to expand your paddling skill base. Skill development helps give life some structure, and sharing your skills with others gives life purpose.

I especially hope that some of you will expand into trip leadership. We're always looking to beef up the trip schedule. In particular, WAKE needs intermediate and advanced paddlers to lead more challenging ventures. Our club is heavy with accomplished paddlers but our trips are currently geared toward those with less experience. Training for the purpose of trip leadership makes you eligible for partial fee reimbursement. Talk to a board member if you're interested.

So here we are, in the middle of a particularly blustery winter. What to do? Set some goals and when you're ready, dig deep into your sport. First there's the skill, then there's finesse with it, and finally there's sharing it with others. Paddling is life. Life is paddling.

WAKE presents ...

Karen Neubauer and Bob Kandiko

**Paddling in Norway
at the January 16th meeting**

Downtown Bellingham Library

Doors open at 7p.m. • Meeting starts 7:30 p.m.

Adventures in Norway

By Bob Kandiko

"What is life, if not a daring adventure?"

Helen Keller's quote may be the inspiration that keeps Karen and I seeking new horizons. With Karen turning 50 years old, she got to choose the big destination in 2006, so off to Norway we went.

There are some places that conjure up a deep sigh and a mental vision of an postcard image of a spectacular setting that defies reality. Norway is one of those places: Deep emerald green fiords with glistening waterfalls cascading hundreds of feet off granite cliffs, fair-skinned, blond-haired, blue-eyed women, and fierce, horned Vikings.

Our plan was to spend a month in one of the most expensive countries in Europe, spend as little money as possible, seek the high adventure activities we always do, and avoid the tourist traps. After much research (always a fun prelude to a successful trip) we flew to Oslo, then continued on domestic flights north of the Arctic Circle to the Lofoten Islands which jut out into the North Atlantic like a pinky finger from a cup of tea.

Our group of four rented kayaks from the local guide, Jann, who provided us with invaluable local knowledge about probable campsites, currents, dangers, and noteworthy sights along our 60 mile path. Only at the end of our trip did Jann inform us that only two of 15 groups attempting our trip actually were successful!

The paddling was superb and uniquely different from the B.C. and Alaskan coast-

line we are accustomed to visiting. The sun never set but was always at a low angle that makes for magical lighting. There were no rivers nearby, and the water had a visibility exceeding 50 feet revealing sea urchins, fish, and jellyfish. With no trees other than scrub willows, the jagged granite coastline resembled northern Labrador.

Pullouts were hours apart and campsites were marginal in comfort. Quaint fishing villages were nestled under the steep cliffs and were immaculately preserved with colorful coats of red, yellow, and white paint. One could almost taste the purity in the air, as no population centers were within thousands of miles.

On top of all this, we experienced good weather with little wind or rain, and to our unexpected surprise, NO BUGS! The local Lofoten people were most cordial as were all the Norwegians we met. The law of the land is that camping is allowed beyond 150 meters of any dwelling and the home owners we met always welcomed us.

Our eight-day trip was one of the finest paddling trips we have experienced. The remainder of the trip took us to rookeries of 500,000 seabirds, the classic fiords, and through the high and scenic mountain parks. We achieved our goals though we gave up luxuries such as beer, fresh veggies, and fruit.

And yes, we saw many blond, blue-eyed women, but no fierce Vikings with those strange hats with horns.

Traditions On The Storm

New Year's Day paddle was wet, windy, and WILD!

by John Groves



One of the oldest and most beloved of WAKE traditions is the New Year's Day paddle. Last year's paddle was in a wind-storm, and only a few of the hardiest members made it both ways, but the tradition was carried on. The 2007 paddle proved once again that WAKE traditions die hard.

Monday, January 1, 2007, 9:00 a.m.

Trip Leader Norm Nielsen and thirteen intrepid kayakers gathered at Squalicum Harbor for the paddle to Fairhaven. Wind was 20 knots from the south with two-to-three-foot waves. Gale warnings were expected by 10 a.m. There was a moment of hesitation at the boat launch, until John Janney and Merv Davies showed up in their kayaks, having launched from Fairhaven. As is often the case with a band of bold kayakers, when one dares to go, all go. Somebody was heard to say, "I hauled it all the way down here and I'm gonna use it."

Nielsen gathered the group for final instructions. He reviewed the weather report and made sure everybody could do a wet exit and assisted rescue. The end of the harbor was set as a point of final return, where anybody who was uncomfortable in the conditions could get an escort back.

At 9:25 a.m. the first paddles hit the water. There was momentary chaos as the group launched in the strong wind, but they were soon gathered in good order and headed for the bay. Past the breakwater the boats encountered a strong headwind, later estimated by Janney to be a sustained 20 knots with gusts to 25. Some might have disagreed, but according to Janney, "Kayakers always overestimate wind speed."

There was no argument that the wind increased as they left the shelter of the harbor. Waves rose to 1-2 feet, confused from rebounding off the breakwater. It was turning into a bumpy ride. The group passed the return point and nobody turned back.

The confused waves changed, due to unobstructed fetch from the southwest, to long rollers, averaging about two feet with some sets reaching three. A series of powerful gusts made it hard to gain headway. The gusts were visible on the water's surface, like great moving patches of boiling water, overtaking the boats and rattling them to the keels before moving on.

Unlike most WAKE paddles, there wasn't much chit-chat among the participants. The boats became somewhat strung out as each kayak danced its own tango with the elements. Some kayakers hugged the shoreline, where the conditions were milder. But many paddlers stayed on course, taking the wind at its fiercest and slamming down into the biggest troughs available.

The leaders headed for Boulevard Park pier, where all the kayakers collected in the



pier's sheltered swimming zone. The paddlers were able to catch their breath and gulp some water. Then back into the teeth of the wind. But the wind seemed tamer on this last stretch, and the waves gentler. The whole group stayed together, keeping close to shore, and soon hauled out at Fairhaven Boatworks.

Without any delay, paddlers were taken by car from the boat ramp to the Colophon Café. The shuttle service was provided by the event organizers, Dawn Groves, Dan Barrett, and Sharon Lindsay, who also stayed to guard the boats. The paddlers were joined by other members, for a total of 20 celebrants. The tradition of WAKE members paddling and eating the first breakfast of the New Year together was honored in grand style.

The group returned to Fairhaven, to find gale warnings posted and winds gusting at an estimated thirty to forty knots. During one gust a kayak was blown off its car rack. Nielsen regretfully cancelled the return paddle. A disappointment, but this tradition had been over-ridden by another famous WAKE tradition: safety first.

WAKE's Best Honored Emeritus Members Receive Awards

WAKE is indebted to highly skilled kayakers who continually support the club with their leadership and dedication to the sport. As a way of acknowledging these folks, we have created the Emeritus Membership Award. This award confers special recognition and status to longstanding WAKE members who have consistently contributed outstanding guidance, energy, and skill over a period of years.

At WAKE's 2006 Annual Holiday Potluck, Emeritus Membership Awards were presented to three of WAKE's best: Dave Peebles, Jim Graeser, and John Janney. Winners received a Certificate of Merit (drawn by ten-year-old Holly Barrett), permanent WAKE membership status, a gift certificate to Johnson Outdoors, and plenty of accolades from members present.

To learn more about these three sportsmen, check the Kayaker of the Month article in this month's newsletter; Dave and Jim are featured in January, and John will be featured in February. But perhaps most important, when you see them at a WAKE meeting, be sure to say thanks.

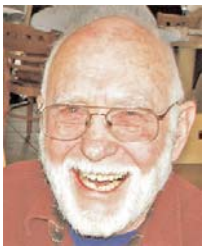
Kayakers of the Month: Jim Graeser and Dave Peebles

by Dawn Groves

Jim Graeser and Dave Peebles are WAKE mentors, Emeritus Award winners, and longtime kayaking partners. Jim paddles a Nimbus Telkwa Sport; Dave paddles a Pygmy Coho single and Seaward Passat tandem with his wife, Mary.

These two men have contributed countless hours helping build WAKE into a strong organization and then supporting it by serving as board members, instructors, and trip leaders.

I spent an hour with them at the WAKE home office (Sehome Starbucks) chatting about the past. My biggest mistake was limiting the time. These guys have a ton of great stories and I barely scratched the surface.



Jim Graeser



Dave Peebles

Dawn: Tell me about WAKE in the beginning.

Dave: It was 1984. There were maybe five people who got together. Nobody knew anything. We read John Dowd's book and then just went out on the water.

Jim: We made a lot of dumb mistakes. (He laughs.) But we learned. There really wasn't any organized kayak training until recent years.

Dave: It took us a long time to learn how to paddle correctly and a lot involved unlearning. Nowadays people can get really good training and learn correct paddling techniques right from the start. I see some new kayaker learning skills in one season that it took me much longer to perfect – it's extremely annoying.

Jim: It's one thing to learn how to kayak. Then we had to learn how to teach it. Mercia Sixta – she started the Thetis Island Symposiums – made all the difference. Gene Davis was the first person to connect with her. Gene, John Janney, and Chris Mitchell took training from Mercia in 1996.

Jim: When we trained with Mercia we

drilled and drilled. But we always started out by assuming the rescue was real. Mercia set us up and we'd try to anticipate what was going to happen next. It's very useful for students to do that.

Dave: You have to learn to imagine what might happen. You have to assume that everyone is going to wet exit.

Jim: You have to learn how to react.

Dave: We had a lot of fun learning how to teach. Ask John Janney to tell you about the time he was teaching in the pool and demonstrated what not to do. (Dave and Jim laugh.)

Jim: Cape Flattery was a turning point for the club. (See trip report Makah Madness, www.wakekayak.com/node/60). After that trip, we knew we had to get real serious about safety and practicing rescues.

Dawn: What's the biggest difference between kayaking then and kayaking now?

Dave: Training.

Jim: Yes, the training is much better and more available. The boats have always been good. It's the training and the gear.

Dawn: What advice would you offer someone new to the sport?

Dave: Take classes so you don't have to waste time.

Jim: Paddling is like driving a car. You have to spend time doing it to get really good at it. The time spent in the cockpit is important.

Dave: Become an efficient paddler. If you don't know what you're doing, you might be a danger to rest of the group.

Jim: And practice the basics over and over until they become automatic.

Dawn: What's your favorite place to paddle in the Pacific Northwest?

Dave: That's easy. It's the Coast.

Jim: The Sound has some beautiful spots but you often run into people. On the coast you can go places where you won't see a soul. The beaches are truly wild.

Dave: It's not as dangerous as people think. Just big waves. A heavily loaded boat has great stability. (Both men laugh.)

Dave: Waves are always shorter than they look. You have to learn to accept the wave. Don't make eye contact with it or

you'll tense up. Then it's all over.

Jim: No really, the coast is more predictable than the Sound. You don't have problems with the tides and currents. And it's incredibly beautiful.

Dave: The coast isn't benign but if you have outdoor experience, it's safe for a paddling trip. It's only dangerous because it is remote. You have to monitor your VHF radio.

Many other topics were covered during our hour together; way too much to include in this short article. Suffice it to say that Jim and Dave are true kayaking adventurers. If you have a chance to paddle with them, don't ever pass it up.

Belize Navidad

By Bob Kandiko

Palm trees decorated with ornaments sway in the trade winds as the crash of waves on the reef soothes the soul. Frigate birds caress the wind as pelicans cruise through on their breakfast flight plan. I lie swinging in the hammock watching Karen doing her Tai Chi on the spit while I sip my Starbucks drip coffee as the sun sears through the tropical cumulus. Truly this is Belize Navidad.

Eight days on one of four western hemisphere atolls on the edge of the Caribbean Sea was the perfect way to end 2006. We paddled rented kayaks north and south inside the reef in waters of dreamy aquamarine clarity while gazing down on the multicolored coral heads.

Snorkeling was exceptional with sharks, rays, octopus, and barracuda catching our attention while dozens of fish with kaleidoscopes of color danced between the intricate coral shapes.

Fresh lobster and fish supplemented our meals from home while lemonade and whiskey sharpened the glow of the brilliant sunsets. Stars scored the heavens as the moon waxed. We pinched ourselves at times to accept that such a cay of paradise could actually exist and at such a reasonable price. Glover's Reef Atoll was indeed a place to savor.

New Board on Board

At the December Annual Meeting, the following board members were elected:

Dawn Groves	President	dawn@wakekayak.org
Ted Ullman	Vice President, Speakers/Training	ted@wakekayak.org
Roger Lamb	Vice President, Trip Coordinator	roger@wakekayak.org
Ed Alm	Membership	ed@wakekayak.org
Donna Vandergrind	New member liaison	donna@wakekayak.org

Additional key volunteers include:

Lisa Wallis	Lummi DNR campsite liaison	lisa@wakekayak.org
Dan Barrett	Webmaster	dan@wakekayak.org
Kathy McGee	Newsletter Editor	kathy@wakekayak.org
Sharon Lindsay	Librarian	sharon@wakekayak.org

Note: We are currently in urgent need of a treasurer and a secretary. If you'd like to volunteer for either of these positions, please email any board member. Board meetings are typically short and held on a weeknight early in the month.

Coming Up ...

Chris Duff in February!

We are fortunate to welcome one of sea kayaking's legends, Chris Duff, as WAKE's featured speaker in February. Duff has traveled more than 15,000 miles



by sea kayak since 1983, when he paddled 8,000 miles around the eastern third of the United States and Canada. With the completion of his Irish expedition in 1996, he became

the only person to have soloed the entire British Isles. In 2000, Duff completed the second ever 1,700-mile solo paddle around New Zealand's South Island. In 2003 he circumnavigated Iceland.

Duff's first book, *On Celtic Tides*, was published by St. Martin's Press in 2000. His second book, *Southern Exposure: A Solo Sea Kayaking Journey Around New Zealand's South Island*, was published by Falcon in 2003. He has been featured in newspaper articles, radio talk shows, and television. Duff teaches sea kayaking and continues to be a sought after public speaker for many national and international sea kayaking symposiums. He lives quietly in Port Angeles, Wash.

This is a very special opportunity to connect with a very special man. We'll have a book table at the meeting and Chris will sign his books afterwards. Please join us at 7:30 p.m., February 20th.

Late Breaking News

Join the WAKE listserv. It's the best way to keep up with monthly news, scheduled paddles, last minute invitations, and occasional kayak chitchat. If you're not on the listserv, you're missing out big time.

It's easy to sign up! Visit the website at www.wakekayak.com/listserv for easy-to-follow instructions. Do it now!

WAKE's Mission Statement

To further the enjoyment, knowledge, and safety of kayaking by providing training and a wide variety of trips and social events to our members and the general public.

"No one goes hungry on a WAKE trip."

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Time to Renew!

Please renew your WAKE membership ASAP. Membership confers many advantages, not the least of which is the right to participate in all WAKE events.

Visit www.wakekayak.com/docs/membership_form.doc and print the form for mailing. Be sure to select your preferred newsletter delivery option. We encourage you to choose email — besides saving trees, your membership is only \$25 per household. If you prefer to have your newsletter delivered by surface mail, membership is \$30 per household to cover mailing and printing costs.

New DVDs in the Library

The WAKE DVD library has expanded with several new training titles.

Our DVD librarian, Sharon Lindsay (sharon@wakekayak.org), will make them available at each monthly meeting. There is a \$2 fee to check out any number of DVDs for one month. Fees are used to expand the library and fines will be levied for late returns.

Visit the website to read the list of titles. www.wakekayak.com/library. Watching a kayak DVD is a great way to inspire yourself and to improve your skills.

Thank you, Norm!

Norm Nielsen is leaving the WAKE board. After several years of service and tireless effort on behalf of WAKE, he has decided to let us pilot our ship without him. He'll still be part of WAKE, but no longer a board member. Thanks for everything, Norm. We'll miss you.