



# wake



whatcom association of kayak enthusiasts ▲ www.wakekayak.org ▲ April 2007 ▲ Vol. 26 Issue 4

## President's Message

by Dawn Groves



I approach paddling with the same attitude that I apply to other areas of my life: expect the best, prepare for the worst, and always have a fallback plan. It works with family gatherings, it works with my children,

and it works especially well for kayak camping trips.

The one event where I don't have a fallback plan is WAKE Demo Day. My eggs are all in one big Demo Day basket. The board and volunteers have worked very hard on this event. We've taken the foundation so ably laid by previous boards and attempted to build it into something bigger. A lot of this effort has been infrastructure: creating forms for vendors to use, updating the signage so that we have a stronger, more contemporary presentation, and expanding our vendor selection to include cycle boats, surfskis, and hopefully Werner Paddles as well.

We've also attempted to invite the community with an expanded effort at publicity. We're sending publicity ads to every free venue we can find, including those in Skagit County and Seattle. We're mailing flyers to recreational centers throughout the Whatcom, Skagit, and King counties. Much of this was done for previous Demo Days—we're just ramping it up.

If the weather is good, we'll probably have a strong showing of visitors. You'll see me breathing a sigh of relief. But if the winds blow hard and cold, there's no fallback. Sadly, there's no place we can move the vendors. If it rains, we're soggy toast.

Fortunately, kayakers are familiar with being soggy. We dry off, sit under a tarp, open a beer, and wait it out. We're good company when we're wet.

Do come to Demo Day. If it's dry, test out some boats. If it's wet, keep me company under the tarp. I'll be the one with the very large beer.

WAKE presents ...

## Wayne Horodowich on Learning and Practicing Good Judgement When Kayaking at the April 17th meeting

Downtown Bellingham Library

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

## Hope Island Day Paddle

by Tara McDonald

Intermittent sunshine, no rain, and light wind. Beautiful early spring day in the Northwest. Wanna paddle? Well, of course!

Even if the conditions hadn't been so perfect on Saturday, March 31st, the plans were already in motion to meet for a paddle west of LaConner. After a week of watching weather conditions, trip leader Ed Alm cancelled the three-day Yellow Island trip (now rescheduled to April 13-15) and offered this day paddle instead.

Nine WAKE paddlers met at 10 a.m. on the beach near Snee-Oosh: Ed Alm, Bonnie Alm, Mac Carter, Dave Church, Julie Whitacre, Jay VanAllen, Kathy McGee, Ted Ullman, and me. We took off into a light wind for a short crossing to Hope Island. As we approached the northeast point, we could see and hear some scary-looking rips. Our valiant trip leader redirected us around the south end of the island and up the wind-sheltered west side, where we had a wonderful up-close-and-personal visit with a mature bald eagle. Several of us played in the current around the northwest tip of the island, then we all turned around and landed for lunch.



After a little more paddling around Hope Island, we headed back to the put-in beach. Ed offered options: If we were done paddling, we could take out, or we could join him for a jaunt around Deadman's Island. After a crucial discussion about what kind of food we were going to get



after the paddle, all of us were happy to paddle some more. We headed downwind toward the island, then turned the corner into the wind to paddle back to the beach.

After loading our kayaks, six of us drove to LaConner for pizza, confirming once again that "no one ever goes hungry on a WAKE trip!"

## Georgia on My Mind: Paddling to the Republic with Gene Davis by John Groves



The route to Georgia started at Semiahmoo Spit, Sunday, March 18, at 9:30 a.m., where 21 kayakers suddenly blossomed like wildflowers on the tiny beach. Trip leaders John Groves and Sharon Lindsay were joined by WAKE members Gene Davis and Nadine Kaaland, Merv Davies, Norm Nielsen, Gerardo Andaluz, Richard and Jackie Cochinos, John Calvin, Mac and Penny Carter, Dan Moos and Pat Peacock, Mark Turner, Dave Harris and Mary Matyas, Dean and Calista Scott, Marianne Majerus, Dave Culver, and Kathy McGee. The last butt hit the seat at 10:25 a.m., and the Republic of Georgia Paddle was underway.

The weather forecast called for 15-25 knot winds and intermittent rain. But as often happens, Mother Nature smiled on WAKE and the weather was spectacular. Wind was less than five knots from the west, the sea was flat, with high clouds and occasional sun breaks. John Groves took the lead and headed



south along the coast toward Birch Point, his secret shortcut to nowhere. This proved to be a popular destination, and after about three and a half miles the group performed a ragged about-face and headed back. The total paddle covered seven and a half miles, and yielded several hours of easy exercise and a sociable get-together along the beautiful Semiahmoo shoreline.

The last kayak plowed the beach at 1:25 p.m. After the customary routine of strapping down boats and stuffing in gear, the whole group caravanned to the home of John and Susan Groves, the next station on this Georgian adventure. A pot-luck buffet quickly materialized, like a feast from the Arabian Nights—lasagna and chicken and chili and pasta and soup and salads and cookies and cakes, to name but a few. The WAKERS feasted like royalty, quaffed like Vikings, and reveled in the company of those who are wise enough pursue happiness in kayaks.

After lunch the group assembled to watch Gene Davis's slides from his year in the Georgia Republic. Gene's photos and narration painted a vivid portrait of a tiny democracy in a volatile region, full of

beautiful scenery, ancient ruins, and friendly, hospitable people who love the U.S. Gene put on a great show and left the audience wanting more. But alas, the party was over. The WAKERS headed for home in a heart-stirring mile-long caravan of kayak-bearing vehicles, which prompted Pat Peacock to observe, "No kayaker could ever ask for a better funeral procession."

## Lessons Learned by Ted Ullman

The wave that had rebounded off the nearby cliff picked me up, and smoothly, slowly, and powerfully swept me over. Being in a kayak with one's head pointed at the bottom of Bellingham Bay is a unique experience, especially at dusk out by Clark's Point. It was not where I wanted to be, and as I looked up at the surface of the water, I was unable to believe what had just happened. I went into the set-up position, and when I started to roll my confidence evaporated. All I wanted was air, and I blew the roll big time.

I've been kayaking for about eight years, and other than being thrashed around in the surf, I have never been knocked over by a wave. In my mind, we were just out for a casual evening paddle to Chuckanut Island, one I've done quite a few times before. Not so.

I popped out of the boat like a spit-out watermelon seed. Because I was only dressed in polypro, fleece, and a paddling jacket, I felt it necessary to get back in my boat quickly. I wasn't feeling especially cold as the adrenaline was coursing through my body, but I was thinking of everything cold saltwater can do to one's ability to function well. My immediate thought was to get back in the boat, which I did, but I was rolled over by the next wave.

By this time my partner, Tara, had paddled back and was holding onto my boat. I wasn't thinking too much about reentry technique—I just grabbed both boats and flopped into mine. Furiously pumping the water out helped keep me somewhat warm. I was happy the waves weren't washing over our boats and refilling my cockpit. With sprayskirt back on we hightailed it back to our Fairhaven launch.

So what were the lessons learned? First, I won't take any saltwater paddle casually as I have in the past. Though we're not best of friends, I will wear at least a wet suit or dry suit when paddling. I would have felt much more confident with one on, but the second lesson was that though the water was cold it was not instantly debilitating which was my fear when I went over. With the training we've had, the rescue went smoothly. Paddling the two miles back was not all that bad; keeping moving of course was the key.

In looking back I realize how important good practice and training are. I definitely am looking forward to the seminars and classes I will be taking this summer!

## Kayaker of the Month: Lisa Wallis Backpacking on the Water by Dawn Groves



Lisa Wallis is a charming, accomplished woman who held the position of WAKE president early in the millennium. Together with her husband, Andy, they form a

strong paddling duo. Lisa is busy with her career as a Cardiology Nurse Practitioner but I still managed to sit down with her for a beer at the Boundary Bay Brewery.

**Dawn:** Lisa, through my time at WAKE, I've heard people refer to your presidency in hushed tones. When Lisa was president ... they'd whisper.

**Lisa:** (Lisa laughs.) I was president 2001 through 2003 or somewhere thereabouts. I was on the board for three years and president for two of those years.

**Dawn:** Was there anything special during that time?

**Lisa:** We started the idea of Demo Day. WAKE already had an annual swap meet and it just seemed like a natural progression. Andy was in the business, and we had a relationship with Werner paddles. I think the only thing we didn't do was advertise it enough. It could have become quite an event with enough publicity.

**Dawn:** I'm excited about Demo Day. I'm especially pleased to have surfskis in the boat mix.

**Lisa:** Oh, I totally want to try a surfski. I've never been on one before.

**Dawn:** What do you paddle?

**Lisa:** They don't make it any more. I paddle an Arluk; the same model that John Janney uses. I like my boat, even in rough water. It does fine, I just have to brace more than in some boats.

**Dawn:** Where did you live before you and Andy moved to Bellingham?

**Lisa:** We lived in Billings, Montana. That's where Andy and I got married. Andy went to Billings on a ski scholarship. We got married in the mountains. Camped out the night before. Had a great little outdoor wedding.

I'm from Williston, North Dakota, originally. Real close to Canada. Ten miles from Montana. At the confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers. I grew up on rivers.

**Dawn:** Did you paddle them?

**Lisa:** No. I didn't start kayaking until I met Andy. I swam and floated on them. I started paddling at age 32. I'd been in canoes and inner tubes but not kayaks. Andy was paddling and skiing since he was a little kid. He got me started. We bought a couple of Seaward kayaks. A lot people don't realize that you can use your sea kayak in Montana on lakes and rivers. There's Yellowstone Lake, Lake Mary, Devils Canyon in Wyoming, and the Green River. Lots of places. I've done the Yellowstone River all the way from the headwaters to down to Billings. So many beautiful places to go.

**Dawn:** How often do you get on the water these days?

**Lisa:** Andy and I average about 30 nights a year tent kayaking, not always together because of schedules. Last year I went on a nice long trip with friends because of schedule conflicts.

I've done the Green River trip three times. You can be 95 years old and practically blind and do that. The worst that happens is you get stuck in the mud. Then you put your hands down, push, and get started again. It was funny on the Green River because you're an ocean kayaker and you land and haul your boats up the beach because of the tides. But there's no tide in the river. Other people just left their boats at the water. We wondered why we kept pulling them way up. We came up with reasons like concerns about the wind but it was just comical. We're so conditioned.

**Dawn:** Why do you enjoy kayaking so much?

**Lisa:** I'm not an adrenaline junkie. I do it to backpack on the water. Fresh air. Nature. Andy does it to surf and challenge himself. I don't do that.

**Dawn:** How did you end up in Bellingham?

**Lisa:** I finished grad school. Andy is a 4th generation Puget Sound boy so we moved back this direction, and I love it here. Andy's family is huge. There's no shortage of Wallis relatives in the Puget Sound area. I'm not a big city girl although I love Seattle. I just don't want to live there. And Bellingham had a great job opportunity.

**Dawn:** Not many people speak the words "great job opportunity" and "Bellingham" in the same sentence.

**Lisa:** I was a new graduate nurse practitioner. I went into nephrology. It was the most intense internal medicine experience I could hope for.

I was there for five years.

**Dawn:** What made you decide to change to cardiology?

**Lisa:** It's a bit happier. You can have a heart attack and still go on a cruise in a week. Nephrology is sad. But I loved it. I loved the patients. I cried when I left. I was in nephrology when I was president of WAKE, and I had a lot more free time than I do now.

**Dawn:** Did you do Andy's Saddlebag paddle a couple of months ago?

**Lisa:** No, I was at the opera. I'm an opera girl. I love opera. I go to every opera in Seattle. I make a day of it, doing the Seattle Art Museum, this and that, and then attending the opera.

*For the rest of Lisa Wallis' interview, visit the website, [www.wakekayak.org](http://www.wakekayak.org)*

## Memorable Mentor by David Harris

Lisa Wallis was the trip leader on my first WAKE paddle. I had very little paddling experience since I acquired my kayak only three weeks prior to the event. I didn't know a soul that knew how to paddle.

The trip was from Gooseberry to the DNR site for an overnighter. I remember calling Lisa to see if she would let me go. I was upfront regarding my inexperience, but indicated it's not like I paddle in circles when I try to go in a straight line. After more questioning, she agreed to allow me to go along. Lisa was very supportive.

I had nightmares about the trip a week before the launch since I knew how rough Hale Passage can get. I was the first one on the beach the morning of the launch. A second vehicle with a kayak on top arrived. A man got out and surveyed the weather, water and me. When I asked him if he was an experienced kayaker, he just said, "I've paddled some." He said his name was John, and he advised me to place my kayak parallel to the shoreline so it wouldn't slide into the water. I learned a couple months later he was John Janney.

As we began to paddle we encountered some current and, at one spot, a pretty good rip. I didn't know it at the time but Lisa really had my safety in mind. She included Andy Wallis, John Janney, and Merv Davies in the group, and later I was to learn Lisa had instructed them to keep a close eye on me. I count Lisa as one of many mentors who have taken me under their wing and helped me grow as a kayaker, although Lisa is a most special mentor as she was the first.

## Mad Dogs and Kayakers

Saturday, March 31, 2007. It is a cold, gray morning at Gooseberry Point, as WAKE members Andy Wallis, John Janney, Dave Harris, John Calvin, Dan Barrett, and John Groves meet with their kayaks and camping gear. The wind is about 10-15 knots from the southwest, stirring up waves one to two feet high. Rain and hail are predicted for later. A good day to sip hot chocolate in front of a warm TV. But this gang proposes to cross Hale's Passage and camp at Lummi DNR.

Paddles hit the water at 10:10 a.m. The kayakers have the tide in their favor, but must head into the wind. They ferry across the bumpy channel and stay close to the island as they paddle south. Thus riding the ebb tide, sheltered from the worst of the wind and waves, they make good time and arrive at Lummi DNR at 11:58 a.m. After setting up camp, John Janney and Dave Harris discover a newly-repaired stairway still lacking a handrail. Since WAKE sponsors this campsite, WAKers have a strong proprietary interest in keeping things shipshape. John and Dave construct a driftwood tree limb railing, using a stone for a hammer and two salvaged spikes. All inspect the finished job and find it to be as solid as the Pyramids.

Useful work being done, cocktail hour starts early and never ends. Serious and meaningful conversation soon degenerates into a joke-fest, where everybody tells every joke they can think of, even some clean ones. John Janney, who collects jokes the way old ladies collect packaged condiments, is the hands-down winner. Excessive laughter causes time itself to slow down, and supper stretches out to a couple of hours.

About 9:00 p.m., long after dark, six more campers arrive, five in kayaks, one in a dory. Among them are Todd and Heather Elsworth, accompanied by their dog Nellie, a labrador/great dane mix. The dog came over on a sit-on-top kayak, towed by Todd. It is the first time most can remember camping with a kayaking dog. There is some muted concern among the WAKers as to the dog's situation tomorrow, when the weather is supposed to deteriorate. But currently the sky is clear and the full moon lights up the forest. Like fresh fuel on a bonfire, the congenial newcomers revive the party. People are still finding things to laugh about at 1:30 AM. Those who forsake the fire and turn in early are rewarded with temperatures in the low thirties, which forces some reevaluation of sleeping bags.

Morning is overcast, wind 10 knots from the south. The weather is not promising, so the WAKers pack out earlier than planned, and are on the water by 9:45 a.m. Wind is about 15 knots, and the pod stays close to the island, ducking into the shelter of Inati Bay, then crossing against the tide with quartering seas of two to three feet. As the last kayak hits the beach at Gooseberry Point the wind picks up, beating Hale's Passage into froth. The dog's fate is on everybody's minds, and they are relieved to learn later that Nellie was towed through rough seas to Portage Island, then ran the length of the island to Lummi Shores Drive, where she was reunited with her owners. Thus concludes this Lummi DNR camping adventure, on a happy note and a mild hangover.

### Mark your calendars!

For more info, go to [www.wakekayak.org](http://www.wakekayak.org).

**Sunday, April 29**

**Maneuvering Your Kayak with Wayne Horodowich**

**Saturday, May 5**

**WAKE Demo Day and Swap Meet**

**Sunday, May 6**

**Edging beyond the cockpit with Wayne Horodowich**

**Tuesday, May 15**

**May Meeting with Chris Mitchell**

**Saturday, May 19 and Sunday, May 20**

**Lummi Island Overnighter**

**Saturday June 9 and Sunday, June 10**

**Surfing Lessons at Neah Bay**

**Saturday, June 23rd**

**WAKE's 3rd Annual Symposium**

**Saturday, July 7**

**Scenarios Training with Chris Mitchell**

**Sunday, July 8**

**Currents class at Deception Pass with Chris Mitchell**



## Coming up ... Chris Mitchell in May!

Chris Mitchell is a BCU 5 Star paddler as well as an ACA Advanced Open Water and Coastal Kayak Instructor Trainer. He was director of Sea kayak Instruction at Eddyline Water Sports Center in Anacortes. Chris was also the Executive Director of the Trade Association of Paddlesports and producer of the West Coast Sea Kayak Symposium in Port Townsend. He owns Secondwind Sports.

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