

THREE RIVERS CHAPTER

Issue 140
February 2020

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Upcoming: February and March Chapter Events

Saturday, February 29

*Hosts Ruth and Mark Zalonis,
Alice and Bryce Brylawski*

First United Methodist Church
201 Market St.
Scottsdale, PA 15683

⊕ Time: 10:00 a.m.

⊕ Activities:

- Bryce’s wave table demo
- Ropes and knots
- Show and tell
- Door prize
- Lunch at restaurant afterwards

Saturday, March 28, 2020

(with optional Friday night
and/or Saturday night stayover)
*Hosts Diane McVey and Craig
Johnson*

Craig’s workshop at Shade Farm
Mailing address:

16291 Bucks Lake Road
Guysville, Ohio 45735

Location: Southeast of Athens
off State Route 33 toward
Pomeroy

- ⊕ Phones: 740-696-1000 (farm)
740-591-2226 (cell)
- ⊕ Time: 10:30 a.m.–12:00
approximately
- ⊕ Activities:
 - Tour of Craig’s latest
projects, finished and
unfinished
 - Show and tell
 - Door prize
 - Lunch afterwards to be
provided, extra dishes
welcome but not necessary

We realize that distance and weather might be of concern. We can offer a nice bedroom if you’d like to arrive Friday and/or stay over Saturday. We have a house at 83 Grosvenor Street in Athens where we host Airbnb guests but have reserved it for our own canoe friends. Additionally, we expect our furnished rental house next door at 81 Grosvenor Street to be empty. A total of seven bedrooms will be available for those who would like to reserve one and be our guest.

Friday night, March 27, we will plan on going out to dinner somewhere in Athens. There are two beautiful wineries where a group could go or, of course, many nice restaurants and breweries as well, depending on preferences. Let us know if

Only 621 Seliga canoes were built. This—combined with the cult-like following...—has made Seliga canoes much sought after.

we can help you plan a weekend adventure in our area while getting a great “canoe fix.” If weather is nice, throw a canoe on top, and I could show you a couple close-by places to paddle.

A Seliga canoe recently arrived at my shop for repairs. This will be a chance for you to get your hands on this rare and beautiful canoe. Joe Seliga, with his wife Nora, built canoes in Ely, Minnesota until 2005 when Joe passed away at age 93. They supplied fleet canoes for the area camps, notably Charles L. Sommers scout camp and Camp Widjiwagan.

Only 621 Seliga canoes were built. This—combined with the cult-like following of campers and guides who attended these camps over the years—has made Seliga canoes much sought after. Hopefully Mike Behnken, the owner of this canoe, will be in attendance to share his knowledge of this canoe and his experience as a guide at Charles L Sommers. ⊕

January Meeting

Chapter members gathered for our first winter meeting the last Saturday of January in Cadiz, Ohio. The centerpiece of the program was a video purchased from the Canadian Canoe Museum featuring treasured canoe builder Walter Walker. Some of you may recall a number of years ago (eleven to be exact) when the Assembly was near Peterborough. Walter, who was then more than 100 years old, came and did an evening program for the group.

The video is quite well done, with most of it consisting of Walter talking and demonstrating his building methods. Walter was exceptionally skilled at building the unusual basswood wide board canoe, as well as the ship lap narrow cedar strip canoe. Above is a photo of the latter. Unlike



An example of a **ship lap narrow cedar strip canoe**.

modern strip construction, these canoes were built with very narrow hardwood ribs and cedar strips that had small opposing rabbets on each edge.

This was before the days of fiberglass, and these canoes rely on a good coat of varnish to seal the tight seams made by the matching rabbets. Canoes such as



Chapter members gathered for the first winter meeting. Front and center is a **casting of Bill Mason paddling Little Thompson Rapids on the Petawawa**

this were built by firms in Peterborough Ontario and Lakefield Ontario. During his long career Walter worked for both concerns and eventually became responsible for supervising nearly a hundred workers trained in the various phases of this style of building.

After retirement at age 83, Walter continued to build a few canoes a year in his cramped basement workshop. Fortunately, Walter found Ron Squires a willing apprentice whom he has schooled in this unusual construction method.

The video contains segments chronicling times when Walter has received recognition for his skills in building canoes. He was recognized as the first Builder Emeritus by the Canadian Canoe Museum. He also was commissioned to build a strip canoe for Prince Andrew.

Walter is a great example of a life well lived. As he put it, "I just have an urge to build canoes I guess, and I like working with



Folding stoves and other items at the show and tell.

wood, so it's just a matter of something to do, and I like making a good job of it."

Mark Zalonis brought his collection of candle lanterns and traced the ... development of this handy camp item from the 1800s to modern day.

Millie Sass and Andy Hutjera brought along their folding wood burning camp stoves. Millie had found hers in an outdoor store in Germany and couldn't resist bringing it home. Mark Zalonis brought his collection of candle lanterns and traced the history of the development of this handy camp item from the 1800s to modern day. Also included was a modern miner's safety lamp that monitors and warns of dangerous gas conditions in the mine, thus eliminating the need for a canary.

The little statue is a casting of a sculpture by Ron Bayens of Bill Mason. Ron has issued this sculpture as a prototype of a life-size similar work that he plans to cast in bronze. As they say on NPR, learn more at: <http://www.ronaldbayens.com/author/ronbayens/> Ⓜ



Mark's **candle lantern collection** and a **sculpture of Bill Mason**.

What to Do When You Can't Canoe?

by Millie Sass

So here we are once more in the frigid season that prevents us from getting our canoes onto the water. I look longingly at mine hoisted up to the garage ceiling; they are waiting for spring, as am I. It is with an amount of guilt that I realize that each of them was in the water only once during the last paddling season. Should I admit that I talk to them and tell them that I will try to do better in 2020? I did purchase a new canoe trolley so I won't have the excuse that I am too weak to carry the canoes next season; the trolley will support most of the weight.

Now, maybe those of you who are doing canoe repair and restoration work don't experience the off-the-water doldrums that I do. You are out there in nice heated workshops solving problems: cutting, constructing, sanding, tacking, painting, varnishing, buffing—what a nice sense of accomplishment and how very wonderful to have this off-the-water season to get on with the projects that have been on the back burner all summer. You folks are great. *You obviously know what to do when you can't canoe.*

As a non-woodworker but simply a humble paddler awaiting the next water season, I have begun to compile a list of canoe and canoe-related tasks to

keep me busy and thinking “canoe” too.

At the recent WCHA Assembly, I purchased *Canoes: A Natural History of North America* by Mark Neuzil and Norman Sims. It is a lovely big “coffee table” book with loads of text and pictures. It is going to take me quite a few quiet evenings to read and digest that book, but I plan to find a comfortable chair, put on some canoe music, and dive in. There is a pile of other canoe-related books awaiting me too, but I am going to dig into the history book first. *Reading: something to do when you can't canoe.*

*Enough said about wool.
Wear it and you will
see how great it is.*

Besides reading, I will tackle my stash of wool to knit a cap or maybe even a cardigan. Believe it or not, knitting is canoe-related for me. It triggers thoughts of some early spring paddles. I wear a lot of wool when camping and canoeing—especially in the spring and fall. Although new synthetic fibers are great, you can't beat wool. It absorbs up to 30% of its weight in water—meaning that it is good for perspiration absorption in hot weather *and* for keeping a paddler warm if one ends up in cold water. So, it is pleasant to wear both in winter and summer. Did I mention that it is flame retardant too? Thus, it is rather safe to wear near the campfire,

unlike some synthetics. Enough said about wool. Wear it and you will see how great it is. *Knitting and other hobbies: something to do when you can't canoe.*

One additional point about wool: many folks think that they are allergic to it—they simply can't wear it. It is scratchy and irritates skin. In my wool-promoting opinion, I suspect that means that these folks have been exposed to nasty wool from some breed of sheep that has not been bred for the clothing market. Of course, wool does require care and attention; it's usually not good to throw wool garments into the washing machine, and one must keep the moths away. But I do those things and am happy for it. (as you can see, I am a bit of an enthusiast!)

I'm sure that I will find even more canoe-related chores and hobbies to keep me occupied this winter. You will too. And spring will soon be here; enjoy the change of pace for the moment. In the meantime, do anticipate the next paddling season—especially since our Three Rivers Chapter is going to explore some new paddling spots as well as return to some of our favorite water. But don't forget our winter gatherings. *That will be a great time to reconnect and think about all-things canoe, too:*

- ⊕ 29 February in Scottsdale PA
- ⊕ 28 March in Guysville Ohio.

Paddling starts again in April!

One last thing that I want to mention to river lovers. Did you get some of the Wild and Scenic River stamps that the U.S. Post Office issued in the summer?

They might still be available (https://store.usps.com/store/product/buy-stamps/wild-and-scenic-rivers-S_571504) The bottom right stamp is the Clarion River in Pennsylvania.

Remember to think “canoe” when you can’t canoe.

P.S. Please note that our chapter web site has been updated—both the Pictures and Events pages. The rest is the same.

(<http://threerivers.wcha.org>) ☎

How to Sell a Canoe

by Bob Ball

Just before the annual meeting at the Sylvan Canoe Club last fall, it had finally occurred to Martha and me that it was time to sell one of our wood and canvas canoes. It was time for this decision because one particular canoe had not been on the water in more than two years. The trouble was, this was the very first time we had ever thought of selling a canoe.

In about 1995, we joined WCHA, in part, to honor our appreciation of the unrestored 1914 Old Town “Ideal” Canoe, given to us by my father. At the time, the condition of that canoe did not encourage its use.

Shortly after joining WCHA, an issue of *Wooden Canoe* arrived noting our new membership status. Days later I received a phone call from a young guy from Wheeling, West Virginia who was trying to find a buyer for his almost fully restored 17-foot Old Town “HW” canoe, originally built in 1910.



U.S. postage “forever” stamps: Wild and Scenic Rivers. The bottom right stamp is the Clarion River in Pennsylvania.

After carefully explaining that I did not need another wood and canvas canoe, I made arrangements to “see” the canoe. A week later, just before I left on a Saturday morning, Martha and I watched me put the roof rack in the trunk of the car and the check book in my pocket, just in case.

I could describe to you the canoe as I first saw it that morning, from the new well-applied closed gunwales to the well-rounded hull characteristic of the HW. But the best summary is that I brought it home. Big surprise. Martha was not surprised.

In the years that followed, we paddled the green Old Town HW on the Allegheny, many Pennsylvania lakes, and Adirondack lakes, including those near the WCHA Assembly at Paul Smith’s. That canoe paddled like no other. Its secondary stability, speed, and maneuverability were unmatched.

Last fall at the annual meeting at Sylvan, we met Brad Fisher, who had learned that we were selling our green canoe. He explained that a great friend of his, who that day was visiting some property just across the river, was interested in coming

over to see the canoe. "Great!" was my response.

He arrived and inspected the canoe. I recall not saying very much. He agreed to the price and said that he would soon call to arrange for picking up our green canoe.

About a week later we met at Sylvan for the handoff. I was not well. As we loaded the canoe into his box truck, I suddenly had a lot to say. "This canoe is in excellent condition." "It has great stability in rough water." "Those gunwales are authentic and beautifully built." (Having had a long career in industrial sales and marketing, I realized that this was the time to say nothing.) I continued: "With two paddlers, this canoe moves quickly through the water and is responsive to any effort to steer." I noticed that he seemed only mildly interested in all this. He paid for the canoe. We shook hands, and he left with our beautiful canoe, unseen, in that truck.

As we loaded the canoe into his box truck, I suddenly had a lot to say.

Again, because of my affliction, I wanted to call him, weeks later, and ask if his life had been transformed by his newly acquired canoe. I shared this thought with a good friend of ours who loves canoes and is a Sylvan Canoe Club member. He wisely discouraged me from making this call, adding that the new owner may have purchased

our treasured canoe, only to sell it for a lot more than he paid.

Since then, through a conversation with Brad Fisher, he confirms that the canoe is now resting comfortably at a lake house in New Hampshire. Far more important, the buyer is delighted with the green canoe.

That helps, but I'm still not well. ☩



Book Review

by Mark Zalonis

Once Around Algonquin, by Kevin Callan

Kevin Callan is no stranger to the world of canoeists. He has published many books on canoe camping, cooking, canoe routes, and winter camping under the cognomen of the Happy Camper. Known for his wacky sense of humor, he also has embraced the internet with many videos as KCHappyCamper. *Once Around Algonquin: An Epic Canoe Journey* is a tribute to one of his favorite places to canoe camp: Algonquin Provincial Park in Ontario.

The vehicle for this book is a 20-day, 350-kilometer loop around the park known as the Meanest Link. There are 93 portages ranging from 50 meters to 5 kilometers, and the route crosses some of the largest lakes and six rivers—half of them upstream. According to Kevin, the route was conceived by two Algonquin Outfitters staffers, Gord Baker and Alex Hurley, in 2004.

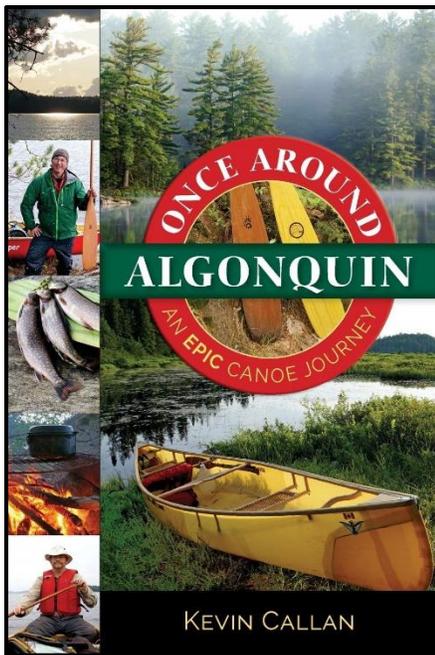
Apparently, there are rules for completing the Meanest Link. Among them: You must start at one of Algonquin Outfitters' four stores and travel either direction using the same boat, paddling as fast or slow as you wish, and paddling either a section at a time or the entire route. It is not intended as a race, but a lot of the type "A" personalities think of it that way.

Kevin lists several other "rules" but states that it was not his intention to follow all such rules. Instead, the Meanest Link was to be a route for him to travel a large portion of his favorite park. Persuading his friend, Andy Baxter, to join him, they set out. Their intention was to travel the Meanest Link as turtles, not race it as hares.

Andy and Kevin had recently turned 50 years old and, although Kevin did not consider 50 years to be old (I don't either from my perspective), they decided to do the trip before they got any older.

"No Country for Old Men" is the title of the first chapter. Each chapter consists of two parts. One is about the particular leg of the trip, and the second is either an historical perspective or musing about a particular subject dear to Kevin's heart such as "Canoeing is not dead" or "the Whiskey was stolen."

I won't spoil the book by describing chapter by chapter all the many subjects Kevin covers while traveling the Meanest Link. It makes interesting reading beyond describing high waters, long portages, and pesky bugs. Kevin describes the history of the park from the logging days



to its current heavy use for canoeing. His description of the logging huts boggles the mind, describing them as 6 logs high and 40 square feet. Doing the math, that calculates as being only 4 by 10 feet! They must have been very close friends! He obviously meant 40 feet square, a more reasonable size for a logging crew.

From advice on what to do during lightning storms to hanging food stores and portaging etiquette, Kevin covers a lot of subjects that would make fun reading during the winter canoeing hiatus or around the campfire on a trip. Also recommended is the video Kevin made about the trip on his youtube video site as KCHappyCamper.

The book was self-published in 2019 and is available new. Have a happy read from the Happy Camper, Kevin Callan. ☞

Schedule of Events

- ☞ **February 29**— Details on p. 1.
- ☞ **March 28**—Details on p. 1.
- ☞ **April 25**—hosts **Aleta Grubish and Fred Capenos**, Moraine State Park, Pa., Cabin #11
 - Saturday paddle on Lake Arthur
 - Sunday too, weather permitting
 - Potluck lunch on Saturday (hot dogs and hamburgers, club supplied)
- ☞ **May 16**—hosts **Scott Johnson and Patty Muskingham**, River lock-through adventure
 - Details to follow
 - Potential of booking rooms in mill at Stockport, Ohio
- ☞ **June 6**—host **Solo Paddling Rendezvous**, Coopers Lake, Pa. (near Lake Arthur)
 - A great gathering of paddlers and builders
- ☞ **June 27**—hosts **Ruth and Mark Zalonis**, Big Run State Park, Swanton, Md.
 - Main paddle on Saturday
 - Possibility of Sunday too
 - Camping available
- ☞ **July 14–19**—**WCHA Annual Assembly**, Paul Smith's College, N.Y.
- ☞ **July 25**—hosts **Betsy and Gary Gaillot**, Prince Gallitzin State Park, Pa.
 - Details coming later
- ☞ **August 8 or 22**—hosts **Ohio chapter members Mark Stevenson and Craig Johnson**
 - This will be at Dillon State Park, or possibly Salt Fork
 - Details forthcoming
- ☞ **September 20 (Sunday)**—hosts **Martha and Bob Ball**, Sylvan Canoe Club, Verona, Pa.
 - Paddle on the Allegheny River
 - Potluck dinner
 - Annual meeting
- ☞ **October 9–11**—**Mini Assembly**, Gifford Pinchot State Park, Pa.
 - Jointly held with three other chapters: Susquehanna, Delaware Valley, and Upper Chesapeake
 - Camping available ☞

Tentative Chapter Newsletter Contributors

- ⊕ March—Betsy and Gary Gaillot
- ⊕ April—Diane McVey and Craig Johnson
- ⊕ May—Lee Grubish and Fred Capenos
- ⊕ June—Jackie and Andy Hutyera
- ⊕ July—Assembly report by attendees
- ⊕ August—Scott Johnson
- ⊕ September—Anita and Bruce Kemp

New Members

We are pleased to welcome the following new chapter members:

- ⊕ Mike Marcum,
Baltimore, Ohio
- ⊕ Greg Dongilli, Bethel
Park, Pa.
- ⊕ Doug Roberts,
Moundsville, W.V.
- ⊕ Dave Zielinski,
Saltsburg, Pa.

Dues Are Due

Reminder: Dues are \$20 per year per family. Please send to our treasurer:

Fred Capenos
P.O. Box 227
Chalk Hill PA 15421