

Paddler Profile: Ralph Heimlich*

by Bob Browning

Lives in: Laurel, Maryland

Real job: Retired from 31 years at US Dept. Of Agriculture, Economic Research Service and 13 years of private consulting practice.

Do you regularly attend a Piracy? Pirates of Arundell most regularly, but try to get to all of them occasionally.

Number of years paddling: Canoes since I was 10, but kayaks since 1998 or so.

How did you get involved in sea kayaking? Wife no longer wanted to canoe as much as I did, so I bought a 9' rec boat. Then I got Old Town to give me a small sea kayak (Castine, 12') and did the first Patuxent Sojourn in 2002. Dick Rock and Mike Hamilton were safety boaters for Atlantic Kayak and Dick said I'd like CPA. I said I wasn't an accountant and the rest is history.

What boats do you paddle? Go to boat is a 1997 CD Caribou that belonged to Vince Gerardi. Also paddle a WS Sparrow Hawk and a WS Arctic Hawk, the OT Castine, a Rost Sea Rover SOF I rebuilt that belonged to James Song, and a CLC Pax 19.5 that belonged to Peter Hertoft. My wife and I like a Malibu II SOT and we still paddle the OT Discovery 158 and an OT Pac Canoe.

Rudder or skeg? Mostly skeg or nothing.

Type paddle used: Very addicted to Greenland paddles.

Do you do any other type of paddling besides sea kayaking? See above.

Do you regularly do any other outdoor activities? I'm a 30-year maintainer of a section of the Appalachian Trail from Rt. 40A to Washington Monument in Maryland, but don't do much backpacking anymore. I lead XC ski trips for PATC-Ski Touring Section in the winter and have taken up snowshoeing again.

How often on average do you paddle between May and October? 2-3 times a week, with at least one kayak or car camper for kayaking each month during the season.

Do any winter paddling? I like to paddle in the winter, at least once a month, usually more often depending on the weather.

Favorite local paddling location? The Patuxent River is literally my back yard river (right over the ridge from where I live). I paddle there more often than anywhere, but have focused on the Potomac recently.

Favorite CPA trip you've ever been on and why The Potomac Passagemaker Series in 2015 was an attempt to paddle the entire Maryland shoreline of the Potomac from Washington to Point Lookout. We did it in 10 trips, some campers and most day trips. I'm pushing VA and MD to build paddle-in sites to let anyone kayak tour the entire Potomac with no more than 10-12 mile daily paddles.

Coollest paddling trip you've ever been on anywhere and why? Dave Isbell and I did a 155 mile canoe camping trip down the Connecti-



Cold Water Workshop 2015

Photo by Catriona Miller

cut Water Trail between Vermont and New Hampshire in 2014. That was probably the longest extended paddle trip I've ever done, to date.

Scariest/most dangerous trip/experience and why? I'm super cautious and don't ever remember being scared on any of my paddling trips. If you prepare well, you have little to fear. Age and experience give a certain perspective that a younger person may not have.

Future bucket list trip: I'd like to paddle the Missouri and parts of the Upper Mississippi and maybe the Great Lakes.

Three things you like most about paddling? The people, the places, and the pace.

What do you like about CPA? I owe a tremendous debt to CPA because it provides the support and the companions to do the kinds of trips I like, but would never do on my own.

One unusual, non-paddling thing other people find interesting about you? Henry Heimlich is a relative of mine and I met him once when he was returning from Europe on his internship. I was four at the time, so no anecdotes. ☺

* Yes, like the maneuver!

We would like to know about you!

Contact Bob Browning if you are interested in a being featured in the Paddler Profile or if you know of someone else he can contact. Contact Bob at:

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