4th Annual Lower Columbia Roundup
August, 2010

By Sue Hughes

The Lower Columbia Roundup is also known as LoCo, but you may have heard me call it "kayak camp". I've driven to Ginni Callahan's Slow Boat Farm in Cathlamet, Washington, for the past four summers to hang out, cook and take lessons from the coaches she brings from around the world. Most of the training is designed for people much farther up the BCU hierarchy than I am, but I've always learned a lot and enjoyed myself.

This year I took a three-day workshop called *Introduction to Sea Paddling* that was wonderful, but when I found out that we were going over to Ilwaco, at the mouth of the Columbia River, I almost quit; it's where the really good 4* paddlers have done their training in the past.

Ilwaco, before we got out to Buoy 9 where the big waves were

It was intense; we had 6' swells with intervals that made them seem extra steep, with some pretty snappy wind waves on top of that. My form went out the window—no efficient steering strokes and little edging—and when I got back to Ginni's I was mentally exhausted. Someone said those are common reactions to a person's first big waves; they attributed it to "sensory overload". That made me feel better.

The next day we stayed closer to shore and practiced backing into caves and steering while waves were bashing us against the rocks. We talked about safe practices in that environment and worked on some new twists to rescues I already knew. We came in through crashing waves for lunch on a protected beach.

Dead Man's Cove

Navigation Class with Karl Andersson

The third day we drove farther down the coast to Cannon Beach in Oregon and were introduced to the rudiments of dealing with waves breaking on the beach and surfing.

It was uncanny: I'd stood on the cliff over that exact spot watching some guys surfing their kayaks four years earlier when I was a camp-host in Oregon and said, "I want to do that," and I there I was.

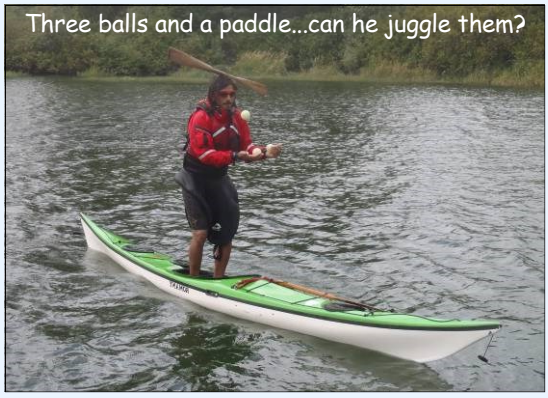
I also took another class called *Introduction to Navigation*. We talked about reading charts, forecasting the weather, how tides work, what causes currents and interpreting tide and current tables. Ooof, there is so much for a mountain dweller to learn.

Other people at LoCo were being examined on their qualifications as kayak guides (BCU 4*) or their abilities as coaches, so there were lots of good paddlers around. There was extra paddling on the Columbia River, evening programs about teaching in Greenland and kayaking in Baja, cello music by a local kayaker who also gave talks about Lewis and Clark and the geology and history of the area, the annual Greenland rolling competition which wasn't a competition this year because two of the best Greenland rollers in the world (they've competed in Greenland itself) were there, and plenty of hi-jinks, good food and good friends.

Lunch along the Columbia River

Andrew Emlen played Bach sonatas

Greenland Demonstration, 2010, with rollers Helen Wilson and Cheri Perry


Three balls and a paddle...can he juggle them?

Seven on a kayak...can they sink it?

Noodle jousting...how good is your balance?

How good is your cornbread?

Photos:
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Adrian Clayton
and
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