

Kayaking

By David Allen

Water LIFE Kayaking

Everyone who kayaks in southwest Florida, and well beyond, has heard of Dick Pfaff. Dick has done more to advance kayaking and to introduce more Floridians to kayaking than anyone I know.

From his workplace at Economy Tackle in Sarasota, Dick has ranged far and wide, teaching beginners to paddle correctly, advising them on the various types of kayaks to purchase, helping organize local kayak clubs, and he always makes himself available to help solve an especially knotty problem. He regularly joins our local club on picnics or special outings and is an enjoyable paddling companion.

The Kayak and Wildlife Festival, held annually at Port Charlotte Beach Park, is one of his passions. This year he received the Eco-Tourism Award from the Visitors Bureau for his outstanding effort. But



while many of us know the "kayak side" of Dick, most of us are unaware of his other talents and accomplishments.

Dick was born in Toledo, Ohio and grew up in the surrounding suburbs. His first love was photography, and as a young adult, he moved to Dallas, Texas and enrolled in a local college to pursue that career. To support himself through college, he worked as an auto parts salesman, a second career he followed for a number of years. After graduating from college with a degree in photography, he moved to Colorado and worked as a photographer and also in auto parts.

Dick left Colorado, returning to his home in Toledo for three years, then he moved to Sarasota in 1991. He continued in photography and selling auto parts, but his life took a new direction when he bought his first kayak; a used, 16 foot

Romany.

Dick started to work part time at Economy Tackle selling kayaks and equipment and holding Kayak Demo's. As he got more into kayaking, Dick improved his own kayaking skills taking British Canoe Union (BCU) training courses which are among the most challenging in the sport. He eventually attained a very high 4 Star Ranking in kayaking and instruction. He also took instructions from Derek Hutchinson, a world-class kayaker from Britain, and is certified as an open-water instructor by the American Canoe Association.

With these credentials, Dick was now working full time at Economy Tackle and photography was merely a sideline. He has helped build the kayak business at Economy Tackle from a relatively small operation to one of the best and most knowledgeable shops in Florida. His friendly demeanor and willingness to help others has made him a special friend to many kayakers. He always says that his main interest is getting people interested in kayaking and helping them get the right equipment to further their enjoyment of the sport.

As I mentioned earlier, Dick is a regular visitor to the Port Charlotte Kayakers picnic, moonlight paddles, occasional meeting and many other events. We always enjoy having him join us whenever his busy schedule permits. *The Port Charlotte Kayakers meet each Wednesday evening at Port Charlotte Beach Park at 5:30 PM. All are welcome. For more information, contact me at 941-235-2588 or email to: dlaa@comcast.net. You can check out our upcoming paddles and events at: pckayakers.org. Then come join us!*



HOW LOW WAS IT? As T.S. Fay moved south and east of Punta Gorda the wind shifted around and came out of the north, blowing the water out of the harbor. Seen here is Ponce De Leon inlet an hour before the low tide that morning.



HOW HIGH WAS IT? We saw these JetSkiers launch at Lettuce Lake and then caught up with them here at Hwy 760 bridge. They were headed up the Peace River to Zolfo Springs. "There is enough water for us to make it all the way," one skier told us. "I hope it rains like hell," he added and it did. The river was at 12 feet above normal that day, almost at flood stage. Of interest was the SkiDoo to the right which was a supercharged model capable of 70 mph. Only problem is, the owner said, "it burns 16 gallons per hour at high speed." That's similar fuel consumption to a 200 HP outboard on a 20 foot fishing boat!

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