

# Keelhauler's Ka-news



**MARCH, 2018**



**Next Club Get-Together to be announced...**

Contact: John Banach if you have any questions . . . 330-606-5032

All meetings are open to guests. Invite a prospective member!

## **President's Message From John Banach**

No President's message this month.

## **Membership Report By John Kobak**

We finished 2017 with a record number of memberships = 334

As we go into 2018 we already have 270 paid members, which is 14 more at this point than 2017.

Our officers located in Summit County are bringing in all the new young members, assuring that the club will continue for another 50 years.

I thought it would be interesting to see what the club membership now looks like.

Couples – 164 =	328
Individual Men =	83
Individual Women =	23
Children =	115
<b>Total members =</b>	<b>549</b>

We have members located in 20 states. Take a look at our membership by location with this link: <http://keelhauler.org/khcc/memb/khcity.pdf> which requires a password with USER NAME: **dir**

## **Treasurer's Report By Sam Reynolds**

### **Keelhaulers' Canoe Club Monthly Treasurer's Report February 18, 2018**

CD 0402	\$2, 291.18
CD 1077	<u>\$2, 288.74</u>
CD'S (2)	\$4, 579.92
Checking	<u>\$17, 903.53</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>\$22, 483.45</u>

Yearbook Printing and Distribution=\$1980.32, Conservation Donations=\$2250.00, and Christmas Party Rental and Supplies=\$384.72.

The Keelhaulers healthy checking account balance was increased by \$9,293.68 due to the Cuyahoga River Cleanup directed by V.P. Don Howdysshell and facilitated by many Keelhauler volunteers. Kudos to Don and volunteers and thanks to the grant from the Summit County MetroParks.

### **Keel-Haulers Help To Protect U.S. Rivers**

Each year the Board of Trustees votes that the Keel-Hauler's Club support specific river conservation organizations. The following organizations were approved by the Trustees and checks were sent early in February:

American Whitewater-\$600  
Friends of the Cheat-\$500  
Friends of the Crooked River-\$300  
Grand Canyon Private Boater Association-\$150  
American Rivers-\$150  
West Virginia River Coalition-\$150  
River Network-\$100  
Nature Conservancy-\$150  
Mountain Watershed Association-Yough Defense Fund-\$150

Through our collective effort, \$2250.00 will be used to protect our rivers.

Thank you.

Sam Reynolds, Treasurer

**The 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Vermilion Cleanup  
and Race  
By Jon Reising**

**March 18th 2018** - Vermilion River Clean Up. We will meet at 10:00 at Schoepfle Gardens in Birmingham to paddle the river and check for strainers and such. I will not be able to paddle this year due to health issues. If no one else is able to paddle and assure me that the section of river that is used for the race from Birmingham to Mill Hollow is safe for novices to paddle then the race will be moved to Vermilion and held there no matter what the river level. I regret having to do this, but my body will not allow me to cut trees out of the river let alone paddle a kayak right now.

Jon Reising, 440-986-0822

**March 25th 2018** - 50th Annual Keel Haulers Vermilion River Canoe and Kayak Race and Registration opens at 9:00 am, first boat goes off at 10:30. Depending on conditions of the river we will have the race start in Birmingham Ohio at Schoepfle Gardens and finish at Mill Hollow park 7.8 miles downstream.

We hope many of the club members we have not seen in years come out and help us wish a very fond farewell to what has been a part of the canoe club since the second year of the club's existence. This will be the Last Year for the race as Hank Annable and I, Jon Reising, have accepted that we can no longer do this and no one else has stepped forward to take on the running of the race. We truly do hope to see dozens of those of you who have helped us in the past come and say hello.

Jon Reising, 440-986-0822

**2018 KHCC Yearbook**

Thank you to Jim Hunt for another great yearbook!

## Style By Louis Geltman

For participants in a sport where peeling out at the top of a rapid almost inevitably results in arriving at the bottom, kayakers seem surprisingly indifferent to matters of style. Things can go pretty badly awry, and onlookers might roll their eyes at a particularly bad line, but someone would have to be radically over his head before anyone would be likely to say anything about it. In other sports, this is not the case. Compare surfing: at the world's stoutest breaks, a surfer with only a few months or even a few years of experience would have virtually no chance of catching and making a wave. Nevertheless, even a surfer with all the skills to ride waves at Hawaii's Pipeline would be blocked from catching waves, mocked, maybe beaten, if he were surfing with bad style or acting in a way that put other people at risk. For kayakers, though, bucking up to run something huge, even if it isn't done with much grace, is a lot more likely to get attention and praise than putting down a pretty line on some anonymous class III. Kayaking is not surfing, and few people, if any, would want to see aggressive, territorial behavior find its way onto the river. But is that behavior meeting some social needs in surfing that are going unmet in kayaking?

If there is a place where kayaking's collective lack of social controls is being tested, it might be the Green River in North Carolina. For how steep it is, the Green is an unbelievably forgiving run. But that forgiveness is routinely being tested by huge crowds of paddlers, some seemingly lacking the basic skills to run any river safely. In June, a [video](#) was posted on YouTube showing some gut wrenching lines on the Narrows: one paddler takes a header off Gorilla, another misses the eddy on the lip of Sunshine (a class III move at most) and drops off the center backwards, another paddler swims in the class III runout. Two of the Southeast's best (and best known) paddlers, Isaac Levinson and Pat Keller, posted comments, in a discussion that meandered from Facebook to [BoaterTalk](#) to the YouTube [comment section](#), calling out the video as an example of dangerous and unacceptable behavior. The callout was unusual, but it was the reactions that were perhaps more telling in what they reveal about attitudes in the sport, as well as the mentality that our collective indifference to matters of style, technique, and safety have helped to bring about with regard to how a paddler progresses in the sport.

One paddler in the YouTube comments section wrote, "I don't know who died and made Pat and Isaac god, but they sure are a bunch of dumb shits!!! Tell me that they came out of the womb paddling class 5. Everyone has to start somewhere..." Much has been made about how advances in equipment and technique now enable paddlers to run whitewater in a season or so that once might have taken a career to achieve, but for paddlers who took up the sport in an earlier era, the implications of comments like that are jaw dropping: for some portion of the paddling population, the Green is now regarded as a place to start, and taking hair raising crashes as a stepping stone. That

mentality has serious implications, though, for everyone's safety and for the ability of new boaters to progress in the sport.

It is often suggested that the genesis of surfing's aggressive attitude towards loose behavior in the lineup is the fight for scarce resources in an inherently dangerous environment, and it may be that changes in the sport of kayaking are pushing toward a similar dynamic. While growth in kayaking participation overall has largely plateaued, creeking is gaining in popularity, and moderately difficult runs like the Green are starting to see crowds that wouldn't have existed a decade ago. But while a crowd of marginal paddlers at your local playspot is annoying, crowds on class V whitewater are undeniably dangerous.

That danger manifests itself in a way that is perhaps unique to kayaking, and in a way that might account for some antagonism toward boaters insistent on paddling over their heads. In kayaking, there are a lot of ways that things can go wrong. Most of them, though, lead to a brief and urgent window during which another boater can step in and potentially save someone's life. A pin, a swimmer being recirculated, a long swim threatening a flush drowning... in all these situations, urgent action can be the difference between life and death. And in all these situations, too, that urgent action is likely to call on someone else to immediately put his own life at risk. In the surf, outside of the unique dynamic of tow-in surfing, someone getting beat down is basically on his own. If someone falls climbing, there's either someone standing at the end of the rope, or there isn't. But in kayaking, when someone is in trouble, someone has to act, boldly, and immediately.

One of the most admirable characteristics of the kayaking community is this: when someone is in trouble, anyone present will step up and in an instant put his or her own life at risk to save a complete stranger. On a more pedestrian level, paddlers are almost always there for each other when it comes time to help someone who's swam or unpin a boat, even if it isn't a life threatening situation. When someone is paddling over his head, he undercuts that dynamic, both by being much more likely to need help and by himself probably lacking the necessary skills to help someone else. Even when it doesn't entail undue risk, stopping for an hour to deal with unpinning a boat or helping a swimmer across the river interrupts the flow of the run and of the day; nevertheless, most kayakers value being a part of a community where helping out is the norm and wouldn't want to see the river become an environment where people callously blow by other boaters who could use a hand. If kayakers have to choose between preserving the all-for-one safety ethos on the river or preserving the everybody-come-along vibe in the parking lot, I think most people would unquestionably pick the former.

It seems at times, as well, that the community's willingness to accept a high level of carnage as normal has led to some mistaken ideas about how paddlers progress in the sport. Contrary to YouTube commenter opinion, most top kayakers did not start kayaking on the Green River Narrows. "I started kayaking when I was 10, and I started paddling more frequently when I was about 13," Rush Sturges explained to me. "I ran my first real Class V when I was 14 years old. Leading up to that run (it was Cherry Creek Proper) I was running a LOT of Class IV. I ran the local grade IV section on the Cal

Salmon many times that Spring and Summer to prepare. I was very nervous before putting on the river. I had certainly hyped up what Class V was going to be like, and when I finished the run, I walked away with a smile on my face. Rather than being at the edge of my limits on the run, I was actually super solid and didn't miss a single boof.... I personally am thankful I spent as much time and effort [as] I did on Grade III and IV before finally stepping my game up. I was super fortunate to grow up around competent kayakers, and I think that had a lot to do with it. I didn't even have a swim until I was 20 years old on Upper Cherry Creek. I'm not trying to brag by saying that, just pointing out that time spent preparing on easier stuff is time well spent when you decide to raise the bar."

The best athletes in any sport are often those that started young, but consider this possibility: maybe in addition to all the other benefits of beginning at a young age, kayakers who start early turn into better boaters because they are often forced by someone—a parent, an older mentor—to paddle easy whitewater longer than they might want to or really need to. As John Weld put it, "When you're 13 years old, you're going to the Lower Yough whether you like it or not." It truly is a common experience of the best paddlers that, whether through the influence of an older mentor, a lack of good or consistent whitewater, slalom racing, or some other factor, these paddlers have put in a lot of time working on hard moves on easy water.

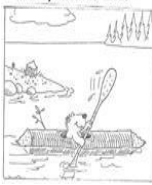
More than just putting in time on easy whitewater, learning new skills requires pushing it hard on easy whitewater all the time, and it may be that this is an easier mindset to adopt for younger paddlers (**for example**). It isn't just a matter of "feeling comfortable" on easier water before taking the next step; it's about consistently pushing it on easier water—taking the hardest lines, catching the smallest eddies, boofing every rock; learning to make judgments about what moves are makeable and which aren't; and learning to deal with the repercussions of missed judgments in whitewater with less consequence than in class V. That sort of learning is hard to achieve in a setting where a paddler is basically hanging on for his life. Pat Keller explained the steps he took to get better when he was starting in the sport this way: "[C]linics clinics clinics, slalom, clinics clinics clinics, foamies.... freestyle freestyle freestyle, clinics clinics clinics (you get the picture).... Every step on the way up that ladder is important. Take time to know with each one if you are ready to proceed. Willing is easy, knowing is what's hard." Runs like the Green are undoubtedly a key step towards becoming a solid boater, but there are surely quite a few steps to be taken before a new boater gets there. "[T]he Green has become the Mecca of honing the skills to become a solid creek boater," Pat says. "More and more paddlers are climbing that ladder of skill, and the Green is certainly a cherished step for all those who take it. But it must be climbed to with much respect for the dangers along the way."

All of this is a lot less sexy than just "firing it up," though. Your Facebook friends are going to be a lot less impressed with that attainment it took you a month to finally make on the Lower Yough than they are with a picture of you rolling over the lip on Metlako. But paddling better, not just paddling harder water, is something that takes time. And taking beatings on difficult whitewater in the hope that one day the beatings will stop is not, for most paddlers, a viable path to success.

For most paddlers who've been in the sport for a while, the advantages of encouraging new boaters to progress incrementally seem obvious: fewer incidents to deal with, better safety on the water for everyone, fewer risks to access because of events on the river leading to negative attention or calls to search & rescue, a stronger sense of community. The less obvious issue is how, as a community, to achieve that. Most paddlers are understandably (and commendably) reluctant to insert themselves into other people's risk taking decisions. As Rush puts it, "My gut feeling is that if someone is putting on the river with you, it's his or her responsibility to know if that run is suitable for them. However, I am not afraid to tell someone that they should evaluate their skills before putting on a run, or ask them what types of similar runs they've done previous. Ultimately, kayaking is up to the individual and there is NO ego when it comes to making sure you are as safe as possible on Class V."

It may be that the changes the community needs are as simple as recognizing your friends when they draw creative lines on the river or paddle well rather than just "going big." Inclusion in the Rider of the Year competition of a "Best Line" category, recognizing "styled lines" alongside categories like Drop of the Year could be a step in that direction. A few less high-fives for surviving sketchy lines and being willing to encourage friends to take a step back when needed probably wouldn't hurt, either.

In the end, the idea is to encourage community by cutting down on the sort of behavior that makes stronger boaters want to abandon weaker ones to fend for themselves or discourages new boaters from sticking with the sport. Hopefully we can all encourage up and coming boaters to progress in the sport safely and incrementally without resorting to slashing tires in the parking lot. Then again, maybe surf-style aggression is on the way, whether we like it or not.

<b>March</b>	For More Trips - Check our <a href="#">Message Board</a>			
3/3,17	<a href="#">KH Roll Session</a> at <b>Orange</b> pool - 4:00-6:00 PM		<a href="#">Jimi Gaddis</a>	567-215-1390
3/4,11,18	<a href="#">KH Roll Session</a> at <b>Meyers Lake YMCA</b> pool - 8:45 - 10:45 AM		<a href="#">John Banach</a>	330-606-5032
3/10	<a href="#">KH Roll Session</a> at <b>Lakewood</b> pool - 3:00-5:00 pm		<a href="#">Matt Demaline</a>	216-529-4081
3/10,11	<b>(3)</b> Slippery Rock Creek (PA)	13-19	<a href="#">Brent Hendren</a>	330-414-2063
3/10-18	Southern Rivers - TN, NC OR if there is good water in WV we can go there.	22-32	<a href="#">Dave Herron</a>	513-681-4075
3/18	<b>(1)</b> Vermilion River Cleanup (OH)	SK/FW	<a href="#">Jon Reising</a>	440-967-9507
3/25	<b>(1)</b> <a href="#">Vermilion Race (OH)</a> Sunday March 25 <sup>th</sup> 2018  Click picture for poster -- Alternate Date 4/8	SK/FW	<a href="#">Jon Reising</a>	440-967-9507

**Please contact Our Trip Organizer to add, correct, or volunteer to lead any trips listed. [Joe Boyd](#) . . . . 740-632-6725**

## 2018 Club Officers

**President:** John Banach 330-606-5032  
**VP:** Don Howdysshell 330-671-0825  
**Secretary:** Rob Kirby 330-322-6634  
**Treasurer:** Sam Reynolds 330-962-5501

Meeting Place: Middleburg Heights Recreation Center, 15700 Bagley Rd, second Tuesday of each month. Doors open at 7:00 P.M., meeting starts at 7:30 P.M. Sometimes changes, so please check website.

Membership: \$20 per year. New memberships, renewals, change in address or phone, send directly to:

**Membership Chairman:** John Kobak  
440-871-1758  
1649 Allen Dr.  
Westlake, OH 44145

Any opinions, views or recommendations expressed in the articles in this Newsletter are those of the article's author. Printing these articles in no way implies approval or advocacy of any of the opinions, views or recommendations by the Keel-Haulers Canoe Club or any of its Officers, editor, or members. Water sports are a potentially dangerous activity. Keel-Haulers Canoe Club recommends and encourages all of its members and others to abide by all laws, regulations and recommended practices when engaging in such activity. Each member is responsible for assessing her/his own abilities and for not engaging in activities which are beyond those limits. Members assume any and all risk when choosing to participate in any activity and the Keel-Haulers Canoe Club is not responsible for any damages resulting from such participation. KHCC WEB PAGE URL: [www.keelhauler.org](http://www.keelhauler.org)

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Non- Commercial advertising is free to all members. To place an ad, send the information the way you want it to appear. Please write or call when item is sold. It will appear for 2 months unless canceled. Commercial ads may be submitted by club member's owned businesses four times each year with a maximum of four lines of copy per ad.

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**Please consider writing a trip report or article for the next newsletter! The deadline for the APRIL, 2018 issue of the newsletter is 3/23/18. Please send articles and/or pictures to: Kelly Miller (Laubaugh) at [peetzaguy@aol.com](mailto:peetzaguy@aol.com).**

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