

Cameron County C&K Classic

- 17 [#21] Paul Rogers (54) – Solo-M2:03:41
- 18 [#4] Richard Maseto (54) – Solo-M2:04:48
- 19 [#173] Joe DeLucia (0) – Solo-M2:21:11

K1-SO Short Open Division (Age < 40) – Up to 14 foot. Awards, 1st to 3rd.

- 1 [#44] Brad Fridinger (28) – Solo-M1:40:22
- 2 [#42] Jon Sutton (32) – Solo-M1:44:22
- 3 [#142] Rodger Claar (32) – Solo-M1:44:31
- 4 [#41] Jason Englehart (35) – Solo-M1:47:58
- 5 [#29] Saul Solveson (29) – Solo-M1:48:12
- 6 [#79] Jason Detsch (25) – Solo-M1:50:30
- 7 [#132] CJ Miles (36) – Solo-M1:52:13
- 8 [#137] Todd Dodson (37) – Solo-M1:56:04
- 9 [#75] Barry Slater (29) – Solo-M1:56:16
- 10 [#39] Douglas F Wick (29) – Solo-M1:56:25
- 11 [#179] Ryan Wagner (29) – Solo-M1:56:38
- 12 [#40] William Coyle (30) – Solo-M1:58:42
- 13 [#27] Mike Egan (28) – Solo-M2:09:42
- 14 [#182] Sally Johnson / Denise Strittmatter (112) – Team-F2:19:22

K1-W Women – Awards, 1st to 3rd.

- 1 [#87] April Smoulder (38) – Solo-F1:54:00
- 2 [#117] Chloe Van EerdenIndiv-F1:54:31
- 3 [#53] Kristen Guelich (37) – Solo-F1:55:26
- 4 [#36] Niki Snyder (39) – Solo-F1:56:21
- 5 [#10] Erica Popho (25) – Solo-F2:01:17
- 6 [#11] Tierany Metzger (22) – Solo-F2:01:20
- 7 [#78] Amanda Cheatle (27) – Solo-F2:03:27
- 8 [#47] Sharon Gelwicks (30) – Solo-F2:14:26
- 9 [#26] Sarah Egan (23) – Solo-F2:27:09

K1-WM Women Master (40+) – Awards, 1st to 3rd.

- 1 [#61] Linda Volpe (58) – Solo-F1:37:25
- 2 [#57] Debra Witowski (53) – Solo-F1:41:53
- 3 [#30] Jane Bryndel (44) – Solo-F1:48:36
- 4 [#141] Onnie Byers (0) – Solo-F2:07:58
- 5 [#3] Ruthy Maseto (54) – Solo-F2:12:18

K1-WR Women Racing – Awards, 1st and 2nd.

- 1 [#131] Louann Cramer (44) – Solo-F1:32:20
- 2 [#2] Laura Michaels (31) – Solo-F1:54:05

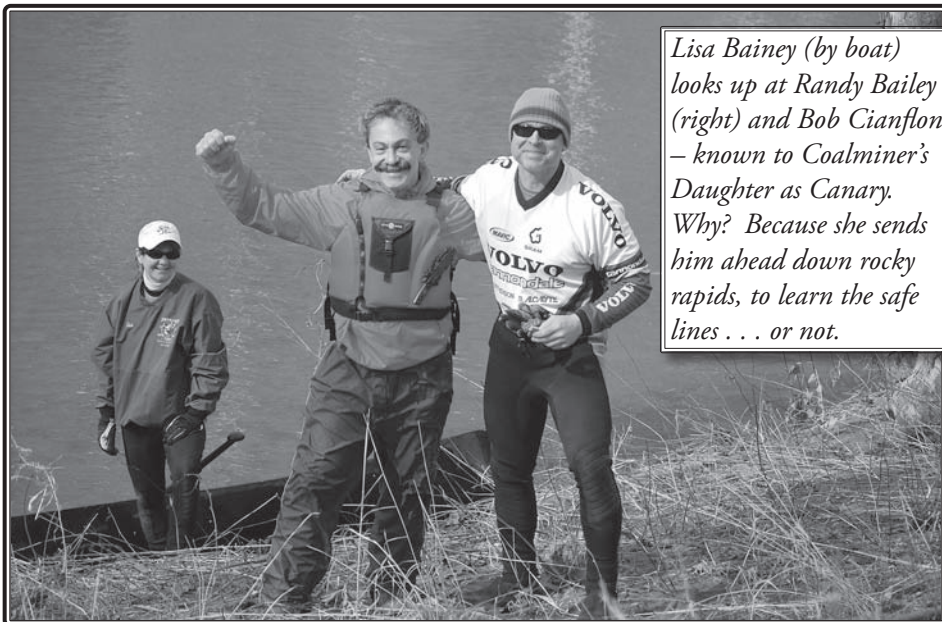
K2 Tandem Kayak – Awards, 1st to 3rd

- 1 [#70] Tom Dorsey / Jeremy Dorsey (83) – Team-Mx1:56:07
- 2 [#90] Tyler Bidwell / Louis Fragale (33) – Team-M1:58:03
- 3 [#69] Doug Keiper / Susan Williams – Team-Mx7:00:00

SP-Kids – A Special Class for Kids

- 1 [#144] Maddy Flament (12) – Solo-F0:16:26
- 2 [#143] Jacy Reickerd (12) – Solo-M0:16:36
- 3 [#149] Wesley Bancy (11) – Solo-M0:16:36
- 4 [#154] Tristan Reed (9) – Solo-M0:17:53
- 5 [#151] Nathan Reed (6) – Solo-M0:17:53
- 6 [#159] Joey Rankinen / Jeff Rankinen (58) – Team-M0:18:11
- 7 [#155] Brogan Lovett (14) – Solo-M0:18:12
- 8 [#152] Ethan Neely (7) – Solo-M0:19:47
- 9 [#160] Abigail Rowan (9) – Solo-F0:19:47
- 10 [#146] Bobby Fulton (13) – Solo-M0:21:03
- 11 [#157] Nikkole Gaberseck (8) – Solo-F 0:21:30
- 12 [#158] Paul Etchepare (12) – Solo-M0:22:26
- 13 [#147] Levi Michaels (5) – Solo-M0:22:33
- 14 [#145] Aiden Curry (5) – Solo-M0:22:33
- 15 [#156] Brooke Gaberseck (5) – Solo-F 0:22:40
- 16 [#153] Kyle Wall (13) – Solo-M0:22:47
- 17 [#150] Dalton Ball (8) – Solo-M0:22:54
- 18 [#148] Ryan Neff (12) – Solo-M0:22:58

Potomac Paddlers Scout the Sinnemahoning



Lisa Bainey (by boat) looks up at Randy Bailey (right) and Bob Cianflone – known to Coalminer’s Daughter as Canary. Why? Because she sends him ahead down rocky rapids, to learn the safe lines . . . or not.

Trip Report — Sinnemahoning Creek, PA

March 14, 2009

. . . Bob Cianflone, Potomac River Paddlers

Well, somehow, two of us from our paddling group did it. **Gayle aka Coalminer’s Daughter** and I, on Friday the 13th no less, headed north. I drove using the military technique of adopting the shortest geographical distance from Point A to Point B, and **Coalminer’s Daughter** traveled using modern highways. Albeit this sounds like a math problem, the results were that it took me 4 hours longer than her to get there, but I got there the night before she did. Go figure that one out.

My objective was to find the Borough of Driftwood. Being born and bred in Manhattan, I figured I would be familiar with boroughs. These mountain boroughs were a bit different, though.

The *Sinnemahoning Creek* whereon we paddled was located between two boroughs, the only two boroughs in Cameron County. One is Driftwood (population 103), and the other is Emporium (population 2,526).

Driftwood was incorporated a bit more than a century ago. That borough was once at the center of the lumber industry, and it was a boomtown, with three hotels, two banks, two churches, and other

places of business. It even had a weekly newspaper back then, called the *Driftwood Gazette*, which was run by **John Earl** (yes, he was an **Earl***).

The year 1872 was the peak of the timbering era in that area, when woodsmen cut the mighty white oak spars throughout Cameron County, and floated them down the *Sinnemahoning Creek* to Keating, and then on down the *Susquehanna River* to Lumbertown (now known as Williamsport).

Driftwood’s current name originates from the unclaimed timber that would drift down the water, and the driftwood would get hung up at the juncture of the two streams near where the famous Bucktail Volunteer Regiment departed for induction into battle for the Union cause, in the Civil War that is. A newly restored monument stands today in honor of those who so valiantly gave their lives on behalf of the preservation of the Union. We have a photo of that monument.

If you run into an old timer, say you are heading down to Second Fork, as that was the name of Driftwood many years

*Editor’s note: I asked **Bob**, “What does this reference to ‘being an Earl’ mean?” and he patiently explained: “Local joke. Way too many local guys are called **Earl** or **Bubba**. At times, we have to number the **Earls** to identify them . . . You’d have needed multiple *NASCAR* stickers on your vehicle to have got that joke.”

Potomac Paddlers Scout the Sinnemahoning

ago. I love places that are named in relation to rivers.

Then there was the train, along with the main road, that snakes along the creek. The Philadelphia and Erie Railroad's tracks and Route 120 parallel the *Sinnemahoning Creek*, so I felt right at home. The *Potomac River* is just a larger version of this creek.

The Borough of Emporium is the largest place in Cameron County. Emporium was named as early as 1785, when a land surveyor carved the word "Emporium" on a tree in his camp at the mouth of the *Portage River*.

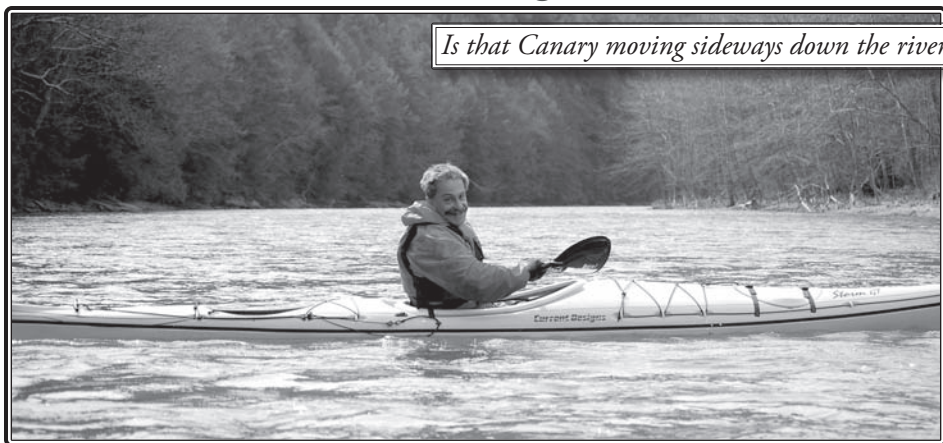
The community lies at an altitude of 1,031 feet, yet it rests in a valley of the *Allegheny Mountain* range in north central Pennsylvania. This is the land of "Endless Mountains" and it protects the valley and its immediate area from the severest weather conditions, as well as provides bountiful game and lumber. Emporium's town's name is most appropriate.

Indian paths and rivers were the only means of transportation, until the arrival of the railway. At Emporium, streams from four directions join to form the *West Branch of the Susquehanna River*. It is also the junction of highways and railroads, making it a gateway to the North, the East, the West, and the South. The best known of these roads is the *Bucktail Trail*, or State Route 120, which is right along next to the *Sinnemahoning Creek*.

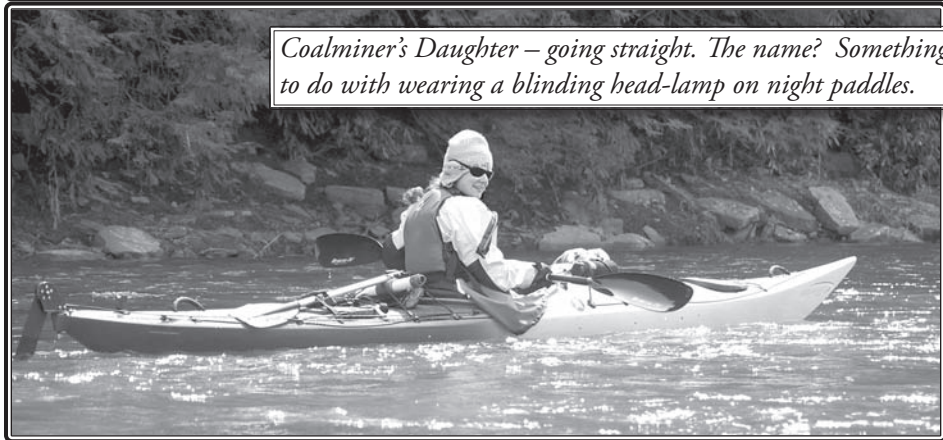
In Emporium, lumber was the main industry until dynamite factories took over for a period around WWI. It was also the home of Sylvania, which for many years was the dominant industry, employing so many young women during WWII that Emporium was once called Girls Town, USA.

With the closing of Sylvania, however, the employment slack was taken up by a number of powdered metal plants and diversified small industries, and, of course, lumbering, which has made a comeback and is an integral part of the local economy.

The area is well known to hunters and fishermen, who converge here at the beginning of trout season, and again in



Is that Canary moving sideways down the river?



Coalminer's Daughter – going straight. The name? Something to do with wearing a blinding head-lamp on night paddles.

the fall for small game, wild turkey, deer, and bear. The area also boasts large herds of elk.

I was also amazed that many Italians lived up here. When I looked at the list of Emporium's elected officials, from the Mayor on down, it read like the cast of *The Sopranos*. And wherever you find Italians, you find the Irish.

Incidentally, Emporium is also where the cellular towers are located (you get no wireless reception anywhere else in the valley), so the teens and travelers make their ritualistic journey to Emporium to check their voicemail and text messages. It is like heading to a modern day Western Union office, to pick up one's telegrams.

The *Sinnemahoning Creek*, one realizes, has a Native American etymological root, meaning "Licking Stones" – which is precisely what a paddler will do if he falls out of his boat.

Since I have never been in this part of the country before, I asked the race organizer, **Randy Bailey**, if I could stay at his place, and he said, "Sure." **Randy** is one of the most altruistic guys you will meet. And he is also very serious about paddling.

Randy lives right behind St. James Roman Catholic Church, in Driftwood. We have a picture of the church. Saturday evening Masses are still held there, from April to December.

Prior to the building of that church, the first Mass was said in the Borough at the home of **John Mahoney** at "Goosetown" during the Civil War. Goosetown is a section at the west end of Driftwood, and it was called that because many of the Irish immigrants who settled there had lots of geese that they raised for meat and feathers. Today, you still occasionally hear some old timer call it Goosetown.

There was just one other church built in Driftwood, the Union Methodist Church, erected 135 years ago. It was destroyed by fire in 1936 (the year of the Great Flood), and it was rebuilt and rededicated in January 1937. The Church is no longer used today, and the building is used as a hunting camp. Hunting is clearly the prime religion in Pennsylvania. Incidentally, we also have an old photo of the 1936 Driftwood flood. One will remember that the year 1936 was also the year of the *Potomac River's* greatest flood, when the river reached the steps

of the US Capitol.

And so, I stayed overnight at **Randy's** abode on the hill, along with his Golden Retriever **Stella**, while **Coalminer's Daughter** stayed at one of those fancy places with bright lights over their carports with a lobby that has big mirrors on all its sides. The only lobby up where I was, it should be noted, was when the local *NRA* life members engaged in a letter-writing campaign to make hunting legal year-round.

Another positive part of the trip, for me, was entering Sheetz territory [*Sheetz is a convenience store / restaurant / gas stop chain – Ed*], whereby each exit on the road was marked by a red glow and an MTO (“Made to Order”) sign.

After staying in Driftwood overnight through the kindness of **Randy**, and then my making an obligatory stop at the Emporium Sheetz, we met at 9 AM on Saturday along Route 120 at the creek – which looked like a river to me – right in front of the Emporium Country Club. Which is not in Emporium. Emporium is 18 miles from Driftwood, but the aquatic journey that starts at the put-in in front of the Emporium Country Club is actually 12 miles from the take-out in Driftwood. So that means that the put-in that is Emporium is 6 miles south of Emporium. You learn a lot when you go into the mountains.

There is, moreover, a white sign upstream that denotes a town called Portage, and then there is a white sign downstream that has the word Portage in it denoting that a portage is to take place there. It is all done for a purpose. This adds to all the excitement for the paddlers, and provides ample entertainment for the locals.

There were four of us heading on those cold winter waters: **Coalminer's Daughter**, me, **Randy**, and **Lisa Baine**y. **Lisa** manages a state park nearby, and she is an avid paddler. Thus, under **Randy's** guidance, we all scouted the most interesting parts of the *Sinnemahoning Creek*. The word “interesting” had different meanings to each of us. There were parts that had solid standing waves. There was one part with rapid water heading into a fallen tree that would split you in half

unless you quickly portaged around it as the tree had fallen across the creek from bank to bank. There were parts that had boulders and concrete ledges just barely below the churning surface of the water. There were whirlpools and hydraulics and reverse currents and all kinds of other . . . interesting . . . things.

We did a shuttle trip, leaving our vehicles under the watchful eye of the Bucktail Volunteer Regiment statue. We had two sea kayaks, while **Randy** with **Lisa** were on a two-person racing canoe.

When we got to the put-in, I and **Coalminer's Daughter** put on our PFDs and strapped on our knives. We were just about ready to grab our helmets and get our throw ropes, when I saw that **Randy** and **Lisa** were not wearing PFDs. And no helmets. **Randy** looked like he was going to do laps in a heated indoor pool. I also found out that safety ropes and throw bags along with expandable T-Paddles were not needed in these rugged parts.

I wondered if we would be bringing our paddles, or just using our bare hands as I am sure our prehistoric ancestors once did. I felt reassured, however, when I saw that paddles were okay.

I noticed that my kayak seat was very shiny. When I touched it I realized that it was one piece of ice. I took out my weather radio, and heard that we had a wind chill factor making it 5 degrees colder than the actual freezing temperature, but I was sternly reminded that the wind chill factor does not apply to Pennsylvania mountains. I, as well as **Coalminer's Daughter**, wore our wet-suits. I could not even call my next of kin to tell them where my amended will was buried, as cell phones did not work here.

We were either doomed or about to have the time of our lives, depending on one's viewpoint.

The water discharge rate on Saturday was 1,000 cubic feet per second on the creek. It was a clear, sunny day. The temperature was below freezing in the early morning, reading at 26°F at 9 AM, with a real-feel temperature of 21°F, but it would warm up considerably during

the day, to a high of 51°F. There was a WSW daytime wind of approximately 8 MPH, set to lower to 2 MPH.

When we finally got into the water, **Randy** and **Lisa** took off downstream, **Coalminer's Daughter** took off downstream, and then I took off downstream. And then there were only two of us on the water. The canoe that **Randy** and **Lisa** were in had a hole in its bow. Of course, **Coalminer's Daughter** had squirreled her safety bag in her kayak, so she had duct tape, and the canoe was quickly repaired, albeit the colors now clashed. If **Randy** was on the *Potomac River*, and was seen in a holey boat, he would have gotten the Rural Family of the Week Award hands down.

We went around several bends, met with standing and ever growing waves, and thankfully did not go at racing speed, so that gave us enough time to see where the rocks were hidden and we negotiated around them.

One area had to be thoroughly scouted, as there were a dual set of trees down, and we all agreed to go river left around the trees, so we portaged around it and took off downstream again. We got a picture of that area as well.

One huge uprooted tree was completely in the river and the bottom of that uprooted tree was facing upstream. You just saw a tangle of roots that were twenty feet across.

There were rapids, boils, rapids, swirls, rapids, eddies, rapids, whirlpools, rapids, frozen waterfalls, rapids, standing waves, rapids, and then flatwater. And also rapids, in case I did not mention them.

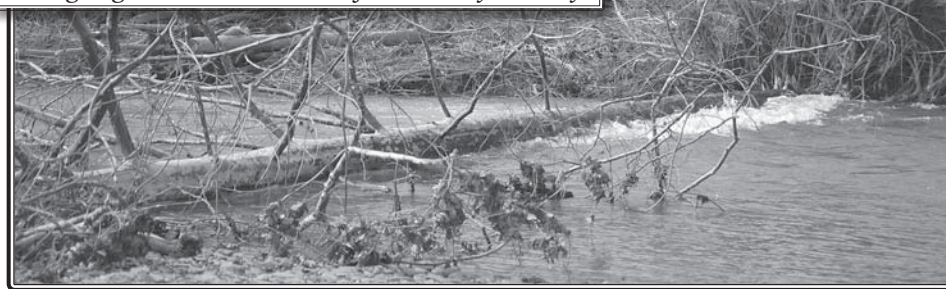
The sea kayak I was in was a Current Designs, similar in design to **Coalminer's Daughter's** Perception, both at 17 feet, with a long bow built to ride over the waves. So we went up and down. If I had brought my QCC racer, with its surf-ski-type bow that cuts straight through the water, I would have gone under the water surface and become a submariner. There were some waves that were deep enough so that I could not see the other paddlers while I was inside them.

It felt jittery to me to have some waves

Randy Bailey in bow & Lisa Bainey.



Who's going to remove this tree before race day? Randy.



at eye level, as the long boat dipped up and down on the swells. When an island popped up in front of you, you had to make a choice: The rapids on the right, or the rapids on the left. Both would prove interesting.

There were some beautiful waterfalls with icecicles on the river right, but we were going down too fast on too many waves to take any good pictures of them, as we kept our paddles in a death grip. We nonetheless got some photos of smaller frozen waterfalls where the area was calm (that is, with smaller rapids). Actually, **Coalminer's Daughter** got all the pictures for our trip.

Both I and **Coalminer's Daughter** used our rudders on this trip, as we zigzagged down the creek. There were several embankments that we headed towards, and a combination of hard paddling with rudder work got us away from them.

The flared bows of our kayaks were made to ride over swells, and they did their job just fine. Still, when I went over some large waves, the sides would wash over the boat and some water entered the cockpit. That water was very cold.

The bridge was another section to watch out for. That, too, was a very interesting section. You had to pick a place to go through and to stay away from the abutments. There was an old metal wall inside the creek built around the side abut-

ments that was discernable barely above water level. It looked like a hunter's trap. And then there were some ledges to stay away from, by the railroad bridges. Then we had more waves. And rapids.

Many places looked like a huge pot of pasta being boiled *al dente*. There were a number of "V" formations we had to go through, ensuring that we did not end up sideways, and then there were more hidden boulders to watch out for. Then the wave trains came.

When we finally reached a calm area, we took a coffee break. Literally. **Coalminer's Daughter** holds the title of floating barista, among many other duties. So we had coffee with real milk on river right, and some snacks. Fruit that was liberated the previous night from some fancy hotel lobby was also passed around.

We then passed by a trailer park, and the residents all waved at us and for some reason did not shoot us.

When we saw the final bridge up ahead, we were relieved, and we all went river left and made it safely on land. None of us either took a spill or swam, so we had a fine 12-mile paddle.

That evening, at the behest of Lisa, we all ate at Amore Restaurant in Emporium. The food therein was delicious, at very reasonable prices. That night we checked out the Borough of Emporium, and

it was interesting that the whole town was out walking up and down the main street, which was Route 120 – next to the creek and the railroad tracks.

We stayed at the Buttonwood Motel in Emporium on Saturday night, as we were too tired to drive. There was one other Motel in the Borough, the Prospect.

The Buttonwood had plenty of space, and at \$38 it was a bargain. When I asked for a room, the proprietor stared at me and said he had economy rooms by the highway available without a bathtub. When **Coalminer's Daughter** asked for a room, he sheepishly looked down and told her that they have nothing fancy here but it's clean and she can stay in their high-end room with bathtubs by the restaurant.

That evening, I cranked up the heat to 90 °F, as it was going to be well below freezing again.

Late that night, actually early the next morning, at about 3 AM, there was a drag race in front of the motel. In multi-colored pickup trucks. They were redneck transformers. Never before had I seen two trucks that were assembled from five models and six makes. Some guy fell out of one of them, and he must not have been that important to the contestants since they did not come back for him.

On Sunday, after a hearty breakfast at the "world-renowned" Buttonwood restaurant, we took off. After one more stop at Sheetz, of course. I went straight home, and **Coalminer's Daughter** was last seen heading into an area state park south of the creek.

After a few hours, the Mason Dixon Line looked real good, as that signaled my being close to home, but I must admit that it was a fantastic adventure.

Our paddle, in *Potomac River* terms, was equivalent in distance as going from Dam Number Four to Shepherdstown. But it was nowhere near the calm and placid waters we were used to. Still, it was quite an adventure and a thorough learning experience. We did good up in those mountains, and we had a great time.

Photos by **Coalminer's Daughter** are in a Photo Album entitled "Sinnemahoning Creek, 3-14-2009" on http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Potomac_River_Paddlers.