

Paddlers pitch and yaw in kayak tuneup

By Tom Beer
staff writer

Sandy Gram can yack and yack about kayaks.

But he's much rather be tucked into one paddling down the Clinton River on his way to Mt. Clemens.

"Hey, I know a place along the Clinton just past I-75 and M-59. It's so pretty that I could show you a picture of it and you'd swear it was some stream in the Upper Peninsula."

Gram, who manages a downtown

Farmington store which sells equipment for outdoor enthusiasts, is high on kayaks, canoe-like craft with Eskimo origins in which paddler and boat seem to become one.

Kayaks, which weigh about 40 pounds and stretch 13 feet, 1 inch, are completely covered except for a hole in the center for the paddler. A nylon "skirt" worn around the paddler's waist spreads out to form (hopefully) a watertight seal around the opening.

"It's somewhat more forgiving than a canoe," Gram said. "You can take

water over the bow and still have a chance. If you get knocked over by a wave, or if you hit a rock and tip over, you could still roll back up."

Kayaking down a river like the Clinton (or a more rapid stream) is "an adventure, a thrill, an assumed-risk activity," in Gram's words. "You realize that you could get hurt, but you could get hurt driving your car, too."

Kayaks and kayaking have become popular, according to Gram, just as rafts and rafting caught on several years ago.

"We probably sold 30 (kayak) boats last year — and that's more than I sold during the last 12 years," Gram said. "Lots of people were doing white-water rafting, and a lot of the guides on these rafting trips would be in kayaks. They're so much more mobile than rafts."

MOST MODERN kayaks are made of tough materials called Marlex and Fiberglass. "We call them Tupperware, lovingly," Gram said. "Those materials we call bombproof. I've seen cars run over them with no damage."

Would-be kayakers can learn the basic skills by joining the Farmington Canoe and Kayak Club, sponsored by the Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Department.

The club conducts classes in kayaking on the calm waters of the Oakland Community College swimming pool.

"The first thing you learn to do is to get into it," said Gram, who assists the club. "It can be a little tippy sometimes because the center of gravity is so low."

One important thing for student to

learn is the Eskimo Roll, a method of righting the craft — and the paddler — once it's been tipped over. A combination of paddle work and a snapping of the hips is needed.

Instructor Jerry Huey demonstrated the roll for club members last Monday night at OCC.

"The classes are very important," Gram said. "You learn the basic strokes and how to hold your paddle. After the class, there's kind of an open pool for them to paddle in. Usually, it's

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Carol Ferguson (center) and her partner Sue Wedda prepare to do an Eskimo Roll while Instructor Jerry Huey supervises.



The boat tips over and the student positions the paddle to right the kayak.



With a twist of the hip, a push of the paddle and some help from a friend, the kayak stabilizes.



Dave Justus (left) of the Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Department demonstrates his paddling technique to student Mike Klopman. Jim Payne, an experienced paddler, looks on from behind.

memory lane

Memories, memories... have we got the memories. And we'd like to share them with you. Using local newspaper files, we're dishing up generous slices of life in the Farmington community from 40, 30, 20 and 10 years ago.

FEB. 17, 1944 —

"SAY FELLA, don't forget that the Ideas of March are fast approaching — all too fast," noted the Around the Block column. "And before that day our Uncle Sam would like to have a little report from each of us. If you're stuck, however, there's lots of help about Farmington with an income tax service open each evening and a 'revenue' coming to the bank."

"UNCLE SAM makes sure that our soldiers are well-fed," said an advertisement for the Farmington Bakery. "It's just as necessary that workers at home have nourishing, appetizing meals."

CLASSIFIED AD: "FOR SALE — Four does and one buck rabbit, 6 months old. 23018 Lakeway, Farmington."

SHORT ITEM: "Last year Germany drained large marsh areas in the Ukraine and recovered much peat." Another short item: "The ancient Egyptian cleaned his hands with sand."

"WHEN THE long distance circuits you want are crowded, the operator will say, 'Please limit your calls to five minutes,'" said an advertisement for the Michigan Bell Telephone Co. "That's a good idea for the war-busy days and nights. It helps everybody get better service."

FEB. 18, 1954 —

WORK IS EXPECTED to begin soon on the first unit of the new Alta Loma subdivision in the southwest section of Farmington. A deposit for the installation of sewer and water lines has been filed with the city, according to City Manager James Tennant, and work will begin as soon as weather permits. The subdivision is bounded by the Cut-Off on the south, Gill road on the west, the extension of Alta Loma on the north and the extension of Cass on the east.

A RECENT WIND and rain storm interrupted service to 240 telephone customers in the Farmington exchange, according to Dean Simpson, manager of the local Michigan Bell office.

"DO YOU DOUBLE park or make U-turns in the center of the business district?" asked the Around the Block column. "If you do, the police may have a little communication for you. The City Council has asked the police department to keep a sharp eye peeled for such violators, especially on Farmington Road. So now you have been advised. Observing the law is always a lot safer and usually a lot cheaper."

CLASSIFIED AD: "1940 DODGE two-door sedan, in good running condition, four new tires. Farm

0133 before 10 a.m., all day Sunday." Another classified: "Ten-inch console model television, good condition, 22435 Tuck Road."

SHORT ITEM: "Mrs. Charles A. Armstrong of Mayfield Avenue was a luncheon guest of friends in Detroit last Tuesday. A beautiful cake honored her birthday."

FEB. 20, 1964 —

IN A BRIEF ceremony at the beginning of the last Farmington City Council meeting, the council making room in the new municipal building was officially dedicated to the memory of the late President John F. Kennedy. Monsignor Thomas Behan of Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church in Farmington gave a brief talk in tribute of the late president, as did Farmington Mayor Robert Lindbort.

FARMINGTON TOWNSHIP'S volunteer firefighters responded to a record 561 calls during 1963, according to the fire department's annual report. False alarms accounted for 15 of the runs. Township fire calls have nearly doubled since 1958.

DETROIT STREET Railway (DSR) bus runs from downtown Farmington to downtown Detroit will begin soon on a trial basis.

FARMINGTON TOWNSHIP ranked fifth in Oakland County in new residential dwelling starts in 1963 with 321, according to a report released by the county. Southfield led the county with 1,029 new housing starts. Bloomfield Township was next with 829, Waterford Township had 385 and West Bloomfield Township 325.

AN ADVERTISEMENT for Conroy's Super Market, 22534 Farmington Road, listed rib-end pork roast at 29 cents a pound and round steak at 89 cents a pound. Also advertised: Smucker's strawberry preserves at 49 cents for a 20-ounce jar.

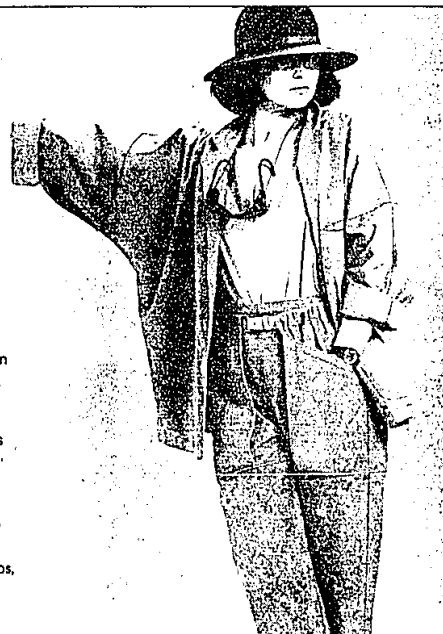
FEB. 15, 1974 —

FARMINGTON BOARD of Education trustees Elizabeth Brennan and Kathryn Stirling resigned last Wednesday. The two were the last remaining members of the conservative faction which had dominated the school board before the last election. Brennan cited the last board meeting, when she failed to get a motion on the floor, as one reason for her resignation. "I will not serve on a board that denies me my right to speak freely," she said. Stirling echoed many of Brennan's complaints. "My voice is not heard in legitimate school matters and is seemingly not necessary even in matters of extreme importance," she said.

THE SPECIAL education program at Farmington's Cloverdale School got a helping hand from the Farmington Police Officers Association recently. The organization donated \$300 for a new wheelchair for the school, which serves mentally and physically handicapped students.

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