

# the Crosspost

news from the offside



**The Newsletter of the  
FreeStyle Committee of the  
American Canoe  
Association**

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Greetings from the new  
newsletter editor



Hi fellow FreeStylers! I have taken on the challenge of keeping the Crosspost newsletter alive. I will need all of your help to keep the newsletter exciting and informative. I welcome ideas, articles, news, events, experiences, travelogues and pictures. Please send materials for the future newsletters to [molly@freestylecanoeing.com](mailto:molly@freestylecanoeing.com).

Many thanks to those that have contributed to the current newsletter. As you can see, the new edition of the Crosspost has gone electronic. If you are more comfortable with the old style you may print this out. Also please feel free to forward this on to others that might be interested in FreeStyle Canoeing.

We also host a FreeStyle web site with updated information and contact information. Please visit us at [www.freestylecanoeing.com](http://www.freestylecanoeing.com).

The American Canoe Association (ACA) has a brand new web site which is still being developed. You can visit their site at: [www.americancanoe.org](http://www.americancanoe.org)

Thanks and happy paddling,  
Molly

**The FreeStyle Committee is a National Activity Committee of the American Canoe Association (ACA).**

**The purpose of the Committee is to:**

- promote FreeStyle canoeing as a convenient lifestyle sport and encourage its growth through the development of recreational and educational programs;
- foster the development of FreeStyle paddling skills through the establishment and maintenance of an instructional curriculum consistent with ACA Safety, Education and Instruction council (SEIC guidelines);
- develop an instructional format and train and certify instructors, consistent with SEIC guidelines, to provide interested students with information on FreeStyle technique; and
- develop competitive events stressing FreeStyle paddling skills and encourage participation.

**2009 ACA Touring/FreeStyle Committee Board of Directors**

**Divisional Representatives**

**Atlantic Division:** vacant

**Delaware Valley Division:** vacant

**Dixie Division:**

Brian Faulk, Thonotosassa, FL  
[nullifierx@yahoo.com](mailto:nullifierx@yahoo.com)

**Middle States Division:** vacant

Midwest Division:

Anita Lamour, South Lyon, MI  
[anita@mich.com](mailto:anita@mich.com)

**New England Division:**

Kim Gass, Raymond, ME  
[jgass1@maine.rr.com](mailto:jgass1@maine.rr.com)

**NorthernDiv/Canada:**

John Harvey, Richmond, ON  
[ehteam@rogers.com](mailto:ehteam@rogers.com)

**Northern NY Division:**

Jim Mandle, Lake Luzerne, NY  
[jim.mandle@jsmandleco.com](mailto:jim.mandle@jsmandleco.com)

**Ohio-Penn Division:**

Elaine Mravetz, Sharon Center, OH  
[rmravet@uakron.edu](mailto:rmravet@uakron.edu)

**Pacific Division:**

Gwen Nichols, Mountain Ranch, CA  
[onestrawhouse@mindspring.com](mailto:onestrawhouse@mindspring.com)

**Red River Division:**

Melanie Armstrong, Stillwater, OK  
[MGarmstrong@brightok.net](mailto:MGarmstrong@brightok.net)

**Rocky Mountain Division:**

Bob/Jill Stecker, Boulder, CO  
[C2BobJill@sbcglobal.net](mailto:C2BobJill@sbcglobal.net)

**Europe Division:**

Wouter Kieboom, The Netherlands  
[kieboom@xs4all.nl](mailto:kieboom@xs4all.nl)

**At-Large Members (by last year of term)**

2009 Donna Hammond,  
Alexandria Bay, NY  
[seeknsun@verizon.net](mailto:seeknsun@verizon.net)

2009 John Steib, Jackson, LA  
[jsteib@cox.net](mailto:jsteib@cox.net)

2009 Becky Molina, Fort Pierce, FL  
[beckmail66@aol.com](mailto:beckmail66@aol.com)

2010 Ray Halt, Erie, PA  
[res0iu3c@verizon.net](mailto:res0iu3c@verizon.net)

2010 Molly Gurien, Athens, OH  
[molly@freestylecanoeing.com](mailto:molly@freestylecanoeing.com)

2010 Anne Lindabury,  
Waynesboro, VA  
[tslindabury@gmail.com](mailto:tslindabury@gmail.com)

2011 Tom MacKenzie, Anderson, SC  
[Loonworks@sprynet.com](mailto:Loonworks@sprynet.com)

2011 Marc Ornstein, Honeoye Falls, NY  
[mornstein@frontiernet.net](mailto:mornstein@frontiernet.net)

2011 Jackie Peppe, Portland, ME  
[jpeppe@maine.rr.com](mailto:jpeppe@maine.rr.com)

**Chair:**

Tom MacKenzie 864-296-6051  
361 McFalls Circle  
Anderson, SC 29621  
[Loonworks@sprynet.com](mailto:Loonworks@sprynet.com)

**Immediate Past Chair:**

Charlie Wilson 518-523-9696  
Lake Placid, NY  
[charliewilson610@adelphia.net](mailto:charliewilson610@adelphia.net)

**Webmaster and Newsletter Editor:**

Molly Gurien  
[molly@freestylecanoeing.com](mailto:molly@freestylecanoeing.com)

# Dancing is not a substitute for paddling skill!

By Mark Molina

Since before Mike Galt put a boom box on the shore of a lake and played music for "Team Lotus" to enhance the demonstration of precise canoe handling, authentic Freestyle paddling has always been first and primarily a skill-intensive discipline. Paddling technique, the efficient maneuvering of a canoe, is the heart, the soul, and the essence of Freestyle paddling.

Certainly, the sound of emotive music, an interesting costume, and one or more bodies swaying, punctuated by flourishing arm and hand movements can be entertaining sometimes, even intriguing—but that, alone, is NOT Freestyle.

The combination of expert paddling skill and artistic, entertaining presentation is, of course, possible. It has been demonstrated in the past by many early Freestyle paddlers who were schooled in the arts of stroke, heel, pitch, placement, and hydrodynamics. The public image of Freestyle seems more involved with music and dance---than with expert paddling.

That fact doesn't make it right---or desirable.

Music and dance can be entertaining, fun, and most assuredly a crowd pleaser.

Is that what Freestyle wants to be?

When my wife Becky and I taught in The Netherlands a few years ago, students were not happy at first. They had expected us to teach them how to dance in the boat, instead of how to make **the boat dance**.

Becky and I insist on refinement of basic and advanced boat handling skills **BEFORE working on a creative overlay of skills**. This approach assures expert paddling, as well as, an exciting, pleasing presentation.



Many first and second generation Freestylers have drifted away from Freestyle. Health, other interests, personality conflict, and family issues are a few of the reasons. Another very significant reason for a dwindling number of early Freestyle paddlers in the sport is the apparent **shift away from paddling skills and a macabre twist toward simply dancing in the boat**.

The Freestyle movement in canoesport has been shrinking. Growing the sport requires a change of approach, a change of direction. The start of change requires that every Freestyler examines her or his **PADDLING SKILLS** and ask a question: "Are my paddling skills appropriate to the advanced nature of Freestyle paddling?"

Another question is in order:" Are my paddling skills at the level that they should be before I attempt to paddle to music?"



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## Cont. from p. 2

More specifically, try asking yourself the following questions:

- **Is my forward stroke efficient? Do I push water down at the catch or pull water up at the end of the stroke?**
- **Do I push water down during my static draw placements? ("Chicken wings" are frequently a symptom of this inefficient placement)**
- **Do I make my Christies dynamic instead of riding the low brace placement?**
- **Do I ride all of my placements to get the maximum turn?**
- **Is my placement effective? Is it an important element of my maneuvers, or is my initiation so strong that it makes my placements superfluous?**
- **Are my heels rock steady? Is the gunwale all the way down?**
- **Do I use a variety of kneeling positions to enhance performance?**
- **Are my placements in the appropriate quadrant?**
- **Have I mastered reverse travel? Do I push water down at the start of a reverse (back) stroke?**
- **Do I have erect posture?**

Obviously, other questions could be asked. The list above is not all-inclusive---just a start. It is hard to be honest at times. **NOW** is the time for candor. The future of Freestyle depends on it.

## 2009 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### **KRINGELFIEBER**

APRIL 29-MAY 3

The Annual European FreeStyle and Canadian Style Paddling Event

<http://www.open-canoe-journal.de/kringelfieber2009.htm>

### **Southwest Pennsylvania Solo Canoe Rendezvous**

June 12-14

FreeStyle Demonstrations

[www.wpascr.org](http://www.wpascr.org)

### **ADIRONDACK FREESTYLE SYMPOSIUM**

STAR LAKE, NEW YORK

JULY 19-23

FreeStyle classes and Exhibition

[http://www.freestylecanoeing.com/AFS0602\\_information.htm](http://www.freestylecanoeing.com/AFS0602_information.htm)

### **MIDWEST FREESTYLE SYMPOSIUM**

PENINSULA, OHIO

SEPTEMBER 11-13

FreeStyle Classes, Exhibition and National Competition

[www.freestylecanoeing.com](http://www.freestylecanoeing.com)

## Padding with the Wind

by

The Nimble Gimbles

Beth Macvittie, Tim Burris and Kathleen Pichola

Performed at the

2008 Adirondack FreeStyle Symposium

Sung to the music of "Blowing in the Wind"

How many strokes will it take til we learn

Just the right heel to turn?

Yes and how many tries will it take til we pry

without leaving a churn?

Yes and how many high kneels away from the keel

until our thighs no longer burn?

The answer my friend is at AFS

The key to success is AFS.

Just what is a vertical shaft

And what does it do to the craft?

Yes and just what is a compound back

And is it forward or aft?

Yes and what is a strong j, a sideslip, a draw?

It's enough to make someone daft.

The answer my friend is at AFS

The key to success is AFS.

How do we know when to sit when to kneel?

And how far should we heel?

Yes and how do we know when to post or to pitch?

And does this boat have a keel?

Yes and how do we know when to wedge Christie's

craft?

And isn't it time for our next meal?

The answer my friend is at AFS

The key to success is AFS.



## Feelin' Groovy

By Tim Burris

This fall, I leaped forward in my Freestyle with the help of music. I am just an FS I student, having attended the Adirondack Freestyle Symposium. After AFS, I continued practicing what I learned from the great instructors. At Raystown in October, Ray Halt and Marc Ornstein helped me review and offered pointers.

A week or two later, I received a waterproof case for my Ipod and decided to try paddling with music. I realized I was probably jumping ahead of my skill level, but I wanted to experience paddling with music. I resolved to unplug if the music got in the way of a good practice session.

I turned on some easy folk music and started with sweeps, Christies and axels. I wasn't trying to do anything in time with the music; just listening while I worked. I soon noticed that bobbling had been reduced, and my turns were smoother and relaxed.

Here is how the Ipod helped my maneuvers:

- 1) With the ear plugs, I couldn't hear the water coming over the gunwales. So, instead of *thinking* about where the rail was, I *felt* the boat through the maneuver. (I was also wearing a dry suit, so didn't feel the water in the canoe.) Because I didn't know if water was coming over the rail, I didn't try to correct something that didn't need correcting. That really helped smooth out the bobbles.
- 2) The music slowed me down. I have a tendency to muscle through maneuvers, but the music freed me to let the turn play out.
- 3) I had been working on linkage, and the music smoothed the transitions from one maneuver to the next.

In retrospect, I think removing one of my senses (hearing) required me to feel the boat better. Completely ignoring the gunwale was that leap of faith that allowed me to trust myself and my boat, and then focus on the maneuver. It was very liberating. I realize ignoring the rail is elementary for seasoned Freestylers, but for beginners it is easier said than done. Ear plugs and music helped me overcome that mental hurdle.

# Adieu LaLou,

By Marc Ornstein

For many of us La Lou had become a rite of spring. It was an event that we looked forward to all winter. By the time we had grown weary of the snow and cold it was time to start planning our spring pilgrimage to warm, sunny Louisiana. It was the light at the end of a long cold tunnel.



Arriving at LaLou meant a warm welcome from John and Sue Steib. It was a family reunion of sorts where we would join our friends who we'd not seen since MFS, AFS or perhaps since the last LaLou. It was fine Acadian cuisine, prepared by John and Sue, enhanced with a brief lesson in Acadian history and culture. It was a Freestyle Symposium with a character all its own.

For me, LaLou has special meaning. Some years ago, when I was first getting my feet wet (often the rest of me as well) in freestyle, I came down to Louisiana early for some private instruction with Mark and Becky Molina. I spent a few days with them on a nearby pond, next to a beautiful home belonging to Becky's dad. My goal was to learn how to better link strokes, improve my form and experiment with paddling to music. When I arrived I had no thought whatsoever of exhibiting. I had never performed in public. The mere thought of doing so was terrifying. After several days of instruction, Mark somehow convinced me to go for it and two days later, at LaLou, I did my first exhibition to Louis Armstrong's Wonderful World. Last spring, at LaLou I had the privilege of instructing Becky and Mark's son Joe.

LaLou began long before my involvement with Freestyle. I'm told that John took over the event from a previous organizer, but that was before my time. To me LaLou and its connection with John and Sue are inseparable. I'm sure I speak for each and every one of us in saying to both of them, thanks for the memories. Thanks for all of your hard work. Thanks for bringing many of us together to form friendships that might otherwise never have been. Thank you both for being LaLou. It was indeed a Wonderful World



## FS 2008, by Elaine Mravetz

On a crisp early September weekend, enthusiasts both young and old gathered for the last FreeStyle Canoeing gathering of the season at Camp Butler, near Peninsula, Ohio. It was an opportunity for old friends to catch up and for new friendships to be formed.

For anyone who has never been to the Midwest FreeStyle Canoe Symposium, the weekend event offers classes in FreeStyle canoeing at all levels—novice to advanced, tandem and solo, adult classes and kids' classes. For the past several years MFS has also been the venue for the National Interpretive FreeStyle Canoeing Championships.

From a coordinators' perspective, we always spend months ahead of MFS planning meals with our superb caterer, Diane Turner (also known as the "Church Lady," and yes, there is a story behind that handle), managing the administrative paperwork, arranging for, counting and recounting boats, paddles, kneeling pads. We do a lot of counting—everything from how many instructors, how many students in which classes, to types and amounts of gear, to how many sticks of butter, pounds of potatoes, eggs, bunches of lettuce, cucumbers, batches of buttermilk pancakes will be needed, how many t-shirts to order, how many are tenting or using the dorm rooms, and on and on. Bob and buddy Jim (the garlic guys) even calculate their garden plantings and harvest to maximize fresh veggies availability for MFS. We have lists for about everything that can be imagined.

About two weeks before the event we are glued to the weather reports and fret about the possibility of rain during competition or storms during classes. Oh yes, and let's not forget hurricane tracking (think Katrina, Hannah, Ike, etc., who, not to be left out, made their appearances in conjunction with the dates of MFS—thus impacting potential instructor and student numbers---more counting and recounting!).

Each year we proclaim, "This MFS was the best ever!" but it was particularly so this year. Attendees had a brand NEW (we were the first to use it) dorm with new bunks, much improved restroom facilities, and a new roomy, bright and open kitchen area (Diane is no longer hidden in a dark corner).

We had the largest number of students ever taking



classes, and vibrant tandem classes. All of the youth chose to take adult level classes, and also served admirably as basic maneuver exhibitors at the Saturday evening Competition and Exhibition to the adulation of all observers! Someone also has a marvelous snapshot of all of the "kids" seated at one of the dorm's long tables and working diligently on their schoolwork late on Saturday evening! Our instructor corps was, as usual, enthusiastic and dedicated, and great about being flexible for a few last minute shifts in class numbers.

The weather was pretty cooperative, and the Saturday evening Competition and Exhibition went smoothly, in spite of windy conditions, with a combined class of solo competitors, and a separate tandem class. Over 70 meals were served at Saturday's supper (largest number yet), and all day and evening on Saturday a production crew from Discovery Channel (yes—the TV one!) filmed and interviewed various MFS attendees, which was in itself an interesting process to observe. Anyone taking photos of the competition probably has one of Marc Ornstein and Jim Lewis in a Mad River Explorer, paddling one of the Discovery camera crew to the back side of the lake where he could film the performances from an at-water-level

And who can forget the encore appearance of the Nimble Gimbles after Saturday's supper, leading the group in a rousing rendition of their signature song to much applause!

Many thanks to all who were so gracious and picked up various duties that allowed me to attend to pressing family responsibilities on Sunday. To all who attended MFS '08, we hope to see you back next to see you back next September for MFS '09. And for those who were not with us, we sure hope that you are able to join us in '09. Yes, it was a pretty good end of the FreeStyle season party. Good food, good classes, good friends, good times! See you next year!

## The 2008 National Interpretive Freestyle Canoe Competition

The 2008 National Interpretive Freestyle Canoe Competition was held last year at the Midwest FreeStyle Canoeing Symposium in Peninsula, Ohio. The Men's and women's solo classes were combined into one class, and there was a tandem canoe class. The results of the competitions are as follows:

### Combined men and women solo:

**Gold Medal – Jonathan Hammond, New York**  
**Silver Medal – Marc Ornstein, New York**  
**Bronze Medal – Anita Lamour, Michigan**



### Tandem:

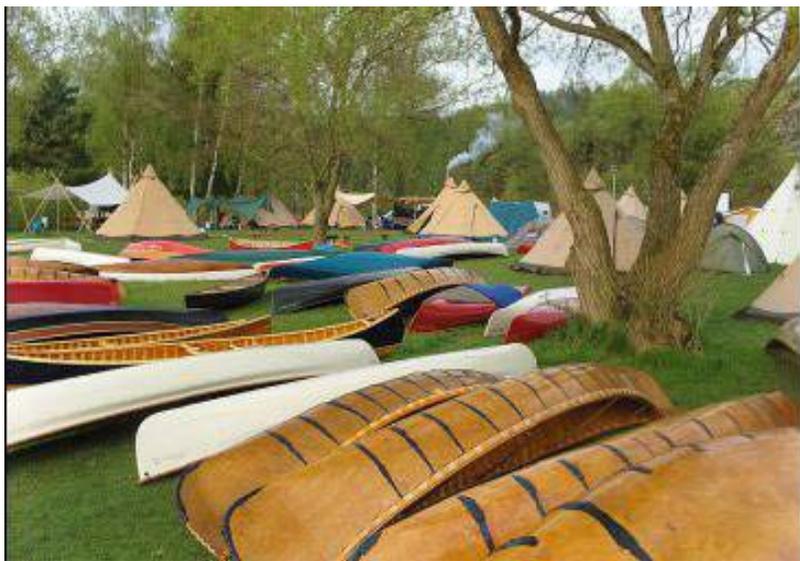
**Gold Medal – Bob and Elaine Mravetz, Ohio**  
**Silver Medal – Roy and Peg Ivey, South Carolina**  
**Bronze Medal – Jonathan Hammond and Sarah Ornstein, both of New York.**



**\*\* Life jackets (PFD's) are not required  
for competition \*\***

## The European Canoe Meeting, Kringelfieber 2008

The tripod set up, the battery charged and the camera loaded with a fresh video tape. It is Saturday, just past 6 pm and the show is about to begin. Glancing over my shoulder I look into many eager faces, most of them are familiar, some are new. I recall Silke saying a few days before Christmas: "This will only be small, but it will be excellent." By then just very few registrations had come in. Four months later, 50 paddlers assembled on the bank! Someone took the effort to count boats: There were 71, and still some on the water.



It was a fabulous meeting, with Freestyle canoeists from the Netherlands, Austria, the United States and Germany having a great time together at, on, and sometimes in the water!



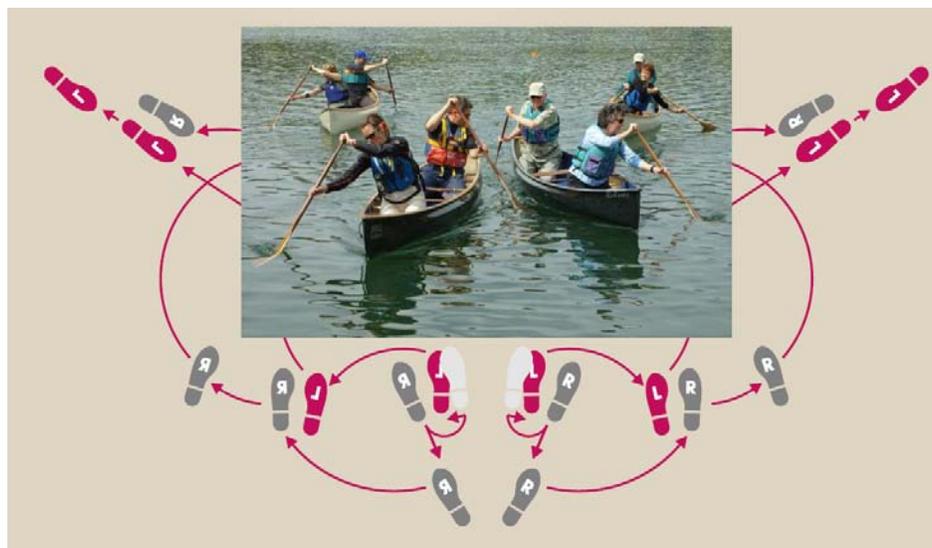
## MEMORIES FROM KRINGELFIEBER THROUGH THE EYES OF ROY AND PEG IVEY, JONATHAN AND DONNA HAMMOND, ELAINE AND BOB MRAVETZ , WRITTEN BY JOSEPH ROBBIE, (BOB'S PEN NAME)

It was a trip of a lifetime, and we want to share some of the more memorable moments. First of all, the European FreeStyle and Canadian Style paddling community is enthusiastic and vibrant, and combine Canadian style paddling with what they refer to as American FreeStyle in their "Canoe Meeting", with most paddlers participating in both types of paddling!

There were classes in Canadian, solo and tandem freestyle, and children's classes. The atmosphere was very relaxed and unhurried. There was much time for people simply to hang out and talk, or just paddle. The boats were by the water, and if you wanted to try out a canoe, you just got in and paddled it. The kids were enthusiastic (all of them learned solo paddling), and there was much interest in Canadian style paddling. With the exception of Hans-Georg's canoes (hand crafted, beautifully made and paddled just as good) , most of the hulls were American or Canadian manufactured canoes which many of us here in the States own and paddle. We soon adapted to Kringelfieber's more relaxed time schedule and had ample time to adjust to the canoes we were to paddle for the exhibition.

It was decided that we would do an International four tandem canoe program, so our international tandem teams worked on it Friday and Saturday afternoons. Everyone was using straight shaft paddles except Bob and Elaine, who quickly switched to straights. Slowly the program came together, but not without many misfires and adjustments. With Jonathan and Donna coaching and giving feedback on Saturday afternoon, the program really started to develop, and the four tandem teams adjusted to each other's paddling styles. Everything went well until we got to the ending. We wanted to finish next to each other after side slips and somehow join hands. We tried placing our paddles in our canoes, and then tried just dropping the paddles into the water so we could join hands. The only constant in these attempted endings was the deafening sound of paddles crashing into the canoes! But, thankfully Donna and Jonathan quickly devised a way that we could join hands and paddles. The audience was very appreciative of the performance, and all eight of us had grins from ear to ear and thought, "Wow! The first time for a four tandem canoe program, and an International one at that!"

### An International four tandem canoe program



**Music grows into movement, it bears analogy to dancing. Music and choreography turns canadian and freestyle paddling into a form of expression with almost boundless possibilities.**

Saturday was sunny and clear, although with some wind that remained during the late afternoon exhibition. The exhibition was superb and exciting with 14 different presentations. Mark Maier was wonderful as master of ceremonies, announcing in English, German, and Flemish. He translated our note of thanks to our European hosts along with the explanation that we were sharing our custom (of American Interpretive FreeStylers) to dress in costumes to reflect the music selections to which we would be paddling. (The Europeans do not at this time paddle in costume.) We learned that it is the norm for Europeans to applaud after, but not during the performances, but it did not take the huge crowd long to deviate from this tradition!!

The opening number, "Flight of the Bumble Bee", combined freestyle and Canadian paddling at the same time and was put together by Hans-Georg using his boats. Jonathan and Andreas, sporting umbrella bumblebee hats, did the freestyle segment while surrounded by the Canadian style paddlers who performed precision group maneuvers. The crowd roared its approval!! Roy and Peg were next. There was boisterous cheering for Peg's one handed stern post, and the audience cheered and clapped loudly at the conclusion of their performance. Elaine, was, well Elaine, and the audience responded throughout her program. The Duet/Duet received rousing applause though out, and especially after the first stern posts--when Roy and Bob got a little closer than they liked. By their best estimate the canoes cleared easily with 3.2 cm (1 ½ ") to spare! (They hoped that Elaine's "Oh ##@%\*&" look on her face did not show up on the DVD!). During Bob and Elaine's tandem, the crowd got into her animations and facial expressions and cheered loudly when she "caught the ball"! Jonathan was superb, and the crowd loved not only the performance but the costume and burst into applause many times.

Our European FreeStyle friends gave exciting performances and received accolades from the crowd! Wouter and Annemieke's tandem routine was powerful along with being unique--Wouter was the bow paddler! (Ok guys, now you have no excuse not to make up a tandem team!). Andreas and Silke were wonderful as they started and ended their program with a tandem Hidden Harold along with Silke doing a 360 degree axle. Hans-Georg and Katrin paddled superbly in his handmade boats, and Joerg Wagner was smooth as silk with his incredibly graceful Canadian Paddling program.

The exhibition was breathtaking from start to finish. The ending was the four tandem canoe routine, and summed up the spirit of the entire event. Words cannot express the feeling that the eight of us had as we all held hands and paddles together, and an appreciative audience cheered and whistled loudly.

Sunday as everyone packed up, there were many tears as all of us hugged and shared the remaining time together. We all left with the feeling that we had made many friends, and that FreeStyle and Canadian style paddling is alive and well and flourishing in Europe. It is our hope that in 2009 some of our European FreeStyle friends may be able to come to the US for a FreeStyle event. We left with mixed emotions and on a tremendous high--Grateful that we were able to have this experience, and that we had made some new lifelong paddling friends. Sad, because of the realization that Kringelfieber was over, and that we might never get to paddle with some of our new friends again.



Tschuss.... Roy, Peg, Donna, Jonathan, Elaine and Bob

### **FreeStyle Canoeing on National Television!**

FreeStyle Canoeing was featured on the Discovery Channel's program Wreckreation Nation this past winter. It was a short but well done segment that nicely showcased our sport! Thanks to all who participated and helped to make it a success!