

## Greetings from Baja Canada

Dear Fellow Canoeists and Kayakers of the Great Frozen North,

This is a universally understood truth: Canadians paddle way too fast. If you pass an American paddler on the street and he or she does not speak, do not think us rude. We only recognize you from the back. But rest assured we have been at work the past few months with a massive project in the Gulf of Mexico that promises to make our boats slide across the water faster than ever.

Americans envy your paddling skills. And we envy your CanMas. There is no sporting event anywhere to match it. It offers great competition from the starter's gun to the finish line and great camaraderie everywhere else. All ages and all skill levels are welcome and respected.

At twenty-five years of age, CanMas has matured and stood the test of time. If CanMas were an American, it would now be old enough to serve in our Congress. It would be four years beyond the age when it could legally toast its success with Champagne. It would have been old enough to vote and serve in our various wars seven years ago and old enough to buy a gun in Texas by the time of CanMas IV. And, unlike most of us who attend masters events, CanMas just gets better every year.

Canadians have always made paddlers from the United States feel welcome at CanMas and we are happy to return this hospitality when you venture south. The citizens of the United States are well aware that north of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel all of the rivers are frozen solid and all of the lands are covered by a deep white blanket a full 11 ½ months of the year. By contrast, simply stepping over the imaginary line that divides our two countries will bring you to a land where it is almost always 75 degrees, sunny, and the rivers are eager to greet the touch of a paddle with a soft embrace all year long.

While your fellow citizens are slapping each other with hockey sticks this coming October, you are cordially invited to spend your Thanksgiving Holiday on the nearly tropical banks of the beautiful Potomac. Our annual Masters Regatta at the Washington Canoe Club is as old as your CanMas. We traditionally bring clubs from Canada and the eastern seaboard of the United States together for a day of racing and feasting on turkey and all the trimmings necessary for a day of thanks. If you come a day early, you can also take part in our Middle States Regatta.

You may be aware that our Club has been under attack by the political forces of our nation's capital the past few years. Georgetown University wishes to build a five story boathouse where the elite of Washington might be entertained with cocktail parties and fundraisers. Our 106 year-old club house stands in the way of this project and Georgetown alumni in Congress have pressured the federal bureaucracy to make us disappear. Despite support from

environmental and other outdoor groups, we have lost our daily parking privileges on grounds. We have seen our rent to the National Parks Service raised by a thousand percent and the ownership of the Clubhouse we built and maintained for more than a century questioned. We have had to move our fences to within a few feet from the walls of our building and, just this summer, we have been ordered to remove ourselves and our boats from the building because of safety concerns. The government's concern for our safety even extends to our furniture and trophies, which also had to be removed for their own good..

You might think that these obstacles would deter us. But the Potomac is still open to us, and we still have our docks. We have been outside racks for our boats and sheds for our paddles. We will acquire parking permits for the October regattas and do what is necessary to make the racing and the feasting as pleasurable as ever. Please join us on October 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> for these events, and on October 30<sup>th</sup> for the Frank Havens 10 K Standard Canoe Challenge.

CanMas is a wonderful regatta. I know you will enjoy yourselves in Regina and I invite you to spend some balmy days in October with us in Washington.

***Jim McClellan***  
**Former US Sprint Racing Committee Vice Chair**  
**Washington Canoe Club Master**

