

Paddling a Submersible

by Iolanda Millar

I own a very old wood and canvas kayak (43 years and counting!), and in my heady pre-Jericho days I took it out for a spin with a friend I was introducing to the joys of the sport. It's really a kayak designed for lakes, but I refuse to give it up because my father built it for me when I was 4 years old, and under normal circumstances it's strangely unsinkable. I launched it one sunny evening from the boat ramp next to the Coast Guard, having safely ushered my friend into her kayak and out onto the water, and was merrily paddling along when I became aware of a very damp feeling all along the back of my legs. I look down at the bottom of the boat and not only is there a tear in the canvas, but it's big enough that sunlight is merrily reflecting through it from the water below. Not good. I hastily fling my bag of goodies and camera to my friend, and start paddling like a maniac for the boat ramp, as the kayak slowly but surely sinks into the water like a U-boat. In the meantime, I'm being watched with interest by 3 coastguards sitting out on the old station deck (the one that burnt down, if anyone remembers that). My friend is laughing so hard she can hardly speak, and as it's a clear and carrying laugh, people walking by to the Planetarium are slowing down to take a look. So, lesson # 1: kayak canvas rots in Vancouver (this boat spent most of its life in the dry BC Interior, so I'd never had to find this out before). Lesson # 2: Coast Guards will rescue you from drowning, but not from humiliating situations.