

My Novice Experience....

The one word that best describes my first year paddling with Abreast In A Boat is INSPIRATIONAL!

It started with the first meeting of the Abreast at Rocky Point Crew for 2016. All the returning members were welcoming to us Novices and shared their experience and excitement for this Season. The room was filled with so much camaraderie and positive feelings, it took away some of the anxiety and fear surrounding this new adventure.



*Sandy Lockwood
2016 Novice Diarist
Abreast at Rocky Point*

The first practice came and I was asking myself, "Can I do this?". Between the amazing coaches, Deb Middleton and Brenda McQuade, and all the support from the other paddlers, it was a great first practice for this Novice.

By the end of week three and Kamini's minicamp, where we learned the coffee plunger drill, I knew I could do the 200 M race and contribute as a team member. Moreover, this was so much fun!!

May 14th Knockouts – the Season's first regatta came and we did it – we raced five 200 M races. It was absolutely amazing!

Now for the 500 M races. "Can I do this?" Again, with the great coaching and encouragement as a team, we did it on May 28th at the Women's Regatta, in the torrential rain. We were cold and soaked, but at the end of the day laughing our heads off, even on the car ride home. What a great memory! The flower ceremony was very emotional both personally and as a group as we sang, ". . . this is my fight song, take back my life song ...". We sang, we hugged, we cried ... sharing the common bond of breast cancer, and threw our flowers in the water for our someone(s) special.

It's what brought me to this team along with the encouragement of my best friend, Karen, who paddles for Abreast Up The Creek. We've been pals for 55 years and she said, "You can do this.". I signed up and I did it!

Funny enough one of the biggest challenges, besides everything we're supposed to remember while paddling, is what to wear to practice. We were lucky this year with the weather but being new to dragon boating, my fellow Novices and I have talked about this many times. We talked about having a Novice party the night before on what we're bringing for clothes and food. Dragon bites are a continual challenge but are getting better. At the practices out on the water I hear some of the other paddlers chatting about this and that...recipes for food and beverages or something about their day, etc. I'm thinking I hear it but couldn't possibly talk on the boat as I'm concentrating too hard on "dig, rotate, sit up...reach!!!" I know I will be more accomplished at paddling when I can have a chat on the boat, too.

Rocky Point is absolutely beautiful! At practice we see lots of seals, herons and an eagle or two at most practices. The Rocky Pointers stop for seals and eagles! One time, early in the season, we were paddling a 4-minute piece, which was hard, and somewhere after the 3-minute mark I heard, "let her run", the sweetest words in paddling, and "hold the boat", so we could all look at the eagle. I was very thankful for that eagle!

Well, next is the big Concord Pacific Vancouver Dragon Boat Festival in a few weeks. Paddling is a short season but in this time I've met incredible team mates and coaches, and it has been sooooo much fun, being a part of a team that is truly INSPIRATIONAL!!!

Thanks Ladies! Paddles Up!!

Sandy Lockwood, Abreast at Rocky Point Novice