

NEW TECHNOLOGY PROVIDING SOME EXCITING NEW SPORTS

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As I write this the Moose River is afloat with kayakers in their sleek, colorful watercrafts. They have imbued the locality with their exuberance and I echo the older gentleman in the ongoing computer ad who says if he was younger and more on the ball he would buy one.

They are a joy and a sight to behold as they jauntily bob past our home here on the Middle Branch. It's a sport I would have loved to be a part of when I was younger.

Unfortunately, it like many other popular outdoor sports was not possible when I was younger. It was that thought crossing my mind that sparked the idea for this article. The basic reason for this, simply put, is because recent technology has provided the means to make it possible.

None of the technology, materials or means were available to create this and many other recent sporting opportunities and the industries that spawned them. All of this has particularly benefited areas such as ours where recreation has become the major business enterprise.

When I bought my first snowmobile in 1961 there were no immediate area dealers. Caretakers and trappers, a perception that was quickly replaced by the present use as utility sport vehicles initially considered them a utility vehicle. There is no need to point out the prominent role they play in the local economy.

The kayakers and snowmobilers may be somewhat transient in nature, but their effects are becoming evermore evident. Local businesses catering to both are well established and flourishing. One of the best examples of this that one may not be immediately aware of is a local successful trailer sales business. One would be hard pressed to find a local business or resident that has not benefited from not only the two aforementioned activities, but also the many other recreational activities the area is known for.

I was remiss in not mentioning the all terrain four-wheel-drive vehicle (ATV) earlier. It is a latecomer to the recreation scene that unfortunately leaves more permanent evidence on the landscape than the snowmobile. Their popularity is bound to dictate a demand for trail systems and maintenance of them as we are seeing currently with their winter counterparts.

Technology has enhanced and made participation in any sport one might mention more enjoyable and safer. In fact, it has been hard to keep up with the advances in much the same manner one sees in today's computers that makes them obsolete on the same day they are purchased. A good example is the necessity of purchasing new and improved equipment and clothing every year for your children to remain current on the ski slopes. That's hard for a guy from the barrel stave era to comprehend.

The most graphic illustration of what I have been trying to point out is in a field I once prided myself on being well versed in – fishing.

When I was a young tad the bamboo fly rod and hexagon telescoping steel rod were state of the art equipment. There was black silk casting line, no monofilament. Snelled hooks were made with catgut – that's right, catgut. There were no fish finders or sonar depth finders. Automatic fly reels were the latest things and spinning reels were not even dreamed of.

I still love to fish, but I am a real novice when it comes to keeping abreast of the latest techniques and equipment. Further, I am not financially prepared or able to meet that challenge. It already costs me somewhere near \$50 a pound for the few fish I catch!

The one conclusion I have arrived at after reflecting on all this is that for the first time in my life I may feel I was born 40 years too soon. This kayak thing has real potential.

The whole family can participate. It has thrills, has to be exhilarating and takes exceptional skill. It's a clean sport that takes little from the environment. Best of all, some models of kayaks are even designed with the fisherman in mind.

The real clincher is the demeanor and enthusiasm exhibited by the participants. It has to be enjoyable.