



## Peter Marcus

February 20, 1955 - January 11th, 2008

by Alex Matthews  
(with thanks to Alan Wilson for his comments on WaveLength history)

**P**eter Marcus, founder and co-owner of Gabriola Cycle and Kayak Outfitters, co-founder of WaveLength Magazine, founding member of the Sea Kayak Guides Alliance of BC, father, husband, brother, and friend to so many, died peacefully at home this January following a brief illness. He was 52.

Peter lived a remarkable life, rich with friends, family, travel, community and fun. Truly a one-of-a-kind original, Peter was a force of nature, a true mover and shaker, and above all else, a giver. At 6'7" tall he was a very big man, but he had an even bigger heart. He had so many friends and contacts everywhere, and he was always the man with the plan—in the midst of a tornado (often of his own creation) he was the calm at its center. He had many talents, but perhaps his most remarkable trait was his ability to make everyone feel truly welcome. Peter never booked clients on trips—he welcomed friends. This care to put people at their ease and to smooth their way through challenges was a hallmark of how he lived his life. His concern for others and his incredible grace of spirit extended to his last days. Even gravely ill, Peter took great care with those around him, instigating laughter, and bravely leading the way as always.

A few years ago, Peter was quoted in a local newspaper as saying the thing he was most proud of in his career was helping to launch WaveLength Magazine (in 1991). While the magazine was indeed a three-way effort, based on the expertise of partners Alan Wilson and Howard Stiff in computer layout and publishing, Peter brought start-up money to the table, as well as a wealth of contacts in the paddling industry. Above all, it was his "let's do it" attitude and the high regard in which he was held by his colleagues that ensured the successful launch and promotion of the project in the early years. And despite his increasing focus on his own business (Gabriola Cycle & Kayak) which soon took him away from the magazine, he was always quick to provide boats and guides for events—especially for another of his inspirations, the Ocean Kayak Festival, which for five years provided funds for the magazine. Peter's magnetic personality and gentle but commanding presence ensured that these projects grew and flourished even as they spun out of his immediate orbit. Like all prime movers, the effects of his work continue to this day.

When the terrible news of Peter's passing came, for some reason, one of my first reactions was to wonder what I could possibly think of when

I next heard the words "Gabriola Island." Peter was so synonymous with Gabriola for me, that I thought that I might simply fail to conjure anything at all. But then I realized the obvious truth: I would do what I've always done—think of Peter, and smile.

A gathering to celebrate Peter's life will be held on Gabriola Island June 14th 2008. To get future updates on the June celebration, go to [www.gck.ca/memorial.php](http://www.gck.ca/memorial.php) and add your email address to the update list.

GCK's 2008 bicycle tours to Mexico, Spain and France, and kayak tours to Gwaii Haanas will continue as scheduled according to Peter and his wife Ana's wishes.

Here's a sampling of the beautiful letters that came in from the kayak community for Peter as they learned of his illness.



WaveLength co-founders (left to right):  
Howard Stiff, Peter Marcus, Alan Wilson

From Peter Allen, Salt Spring Kayaking: *The first time I met you was when you corkscrewed out of an impossibly small tent in the dusty compound of the Villas de Loreto, camping under the bows of your trusty kayaks with your beautiful wife. I thought, "this guy's got it going on, living the dream." We made our luck, you and I, to paddle for a (modest) living in transcendent watery corners of the world. You are the most generous person, bar none, that I have ever met. You set a standard for wonderful, respectful treatment of friends and guests alike and staff too.*

From Cal Macdonald, University of Calgary: *You are an honest person who tried to look out for and give assistance to just about everyone. I made a few calls desperate for help, once with four hours to spare, and you managed to get a guide in place for me that night. Most people would have considered it as competition and would have been happy to see our trip cancel—not you.*

*You defended small companies many times when you were on the executive with the Sea Kayak Guides' Alliance, preventing walls from being built, and you built bridges.*

From one of his long-term guides: *Peter was a great great person. I know that I would not be the person I am or where I am today without having met and known him. Every day, I am incredibly thankful that I met Peter Marcus. He changed my life.*

As one of Peter's dearest friends remarked on his passing, "There goes Peter, scouting out another low-budget adventure route for the rest of us..."

Paddle on, Pedro. 📍