

Sea Kayaking

Channel Islands National Park

Anacapa Island

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Rock 'n' rescue

Marlin Miller came to Anacapa Island from Sun Valley, Idaho, last weekend to do some fishing.

Little did the 46-year-old know that he and his friends would reel in their biggest catch ever -- two kayakers stranded on some sharp rocks surrounded by a rapidly rising tide.

Frank Cain and his son, Shawn, of Reseda, were on a kayaking excursion for Father's Day at the eastern end of Anacapa Island when they hit rough waters. Paddling back to their boat, Shawn, 18, was overpowered by a wave and his kayak capsized.

"It was on the way back that the waves were almost 10 feet but I was doing OK," Shawn told the News-Press by phone on Wednesday. "When I was riding my boat, all the waves were pushing and this one wave completely knocked me over. . . I tried to turn my kayak over and when I turned it over, I momentarily let it go and it just pushed away from me."

With nothing to hold on to, Shawn tread water and floated with his life-jacket for what he said was more than an hour and a half waiting for his dad to steer closer to him.

"The current was so strong that it was pushing him away from me," said Shawn. "I lost my water shoes, it was just me and a life-jacket."

When his dad finally arrived, he jumped off the boat and tied his yellow kayak to some seaweed on a rock, and swam out and grabbed Shawn.

Now father and son were in the choppy water and Frank's kayak was unable to sustain both of them, filling up with water as soon as the men climbed on. In desperation, they scrambled onto nearby rocks that made up the base of the arch near the Anacapa Lighthouse.

Over the next 30 minutes they fought hypothermia, starvation and the loss of hope until Mr. Miller and his friends came along.

"I caught a glimpse of somebody waving a paddle by the base of the rocks," said Mr. Miller. "I called up to my buddy and we turned back and it was a father and son that were stranded on the rocks. They only had about two feet of rocks to sit on. We knew they were in trouble. You can tell when someone is in trouble."



Frank Cain and son Shawn Cain wait for a group of fishermen to rescue them after they were stranded on rocks.



According to Mr. Miller, he steered his boat as close to the rocks as was safe and then told the Cains to jump from the rocks to the water and swim to the boat.

Frank was the first to comply. Shawn would not move, being far too cold and cut up by the jagged rocks to risk a jump into the frigid waters.

Nor could he stay where he was forever. There were 8-foot swells hitting into the rocks, the tide was rising and it was nearing nightfall.

"Finally he gave up his fight to stay on that rock and he jumped back into the water," said Mr. Miller, "We dragged him around the back of the boat. He didn't have any strength to even get on, so I grabbed his arm."

After taking Shawn's father to the north side of the island where his boat was anchored, the two vessels headed back to Channel Islands Harbor.

Shawn recalled Mr. Miller and his friends saying the waves had grown from 10 feet at the time of the rescue to 15 feet.

"If they didn't come we would have probably been gone," said Shawn.

Back at the harbor in Oxnard, the Coast Guard was waiting. Shawn was transported to St. John's Regional Medical Center and treated for cuts to his hands arms and feet.

Looking back on the incident, Shawn said, "I don't want to say I won't ever go back to the ocean again, but I just don't want to do that again."