

The MASIK

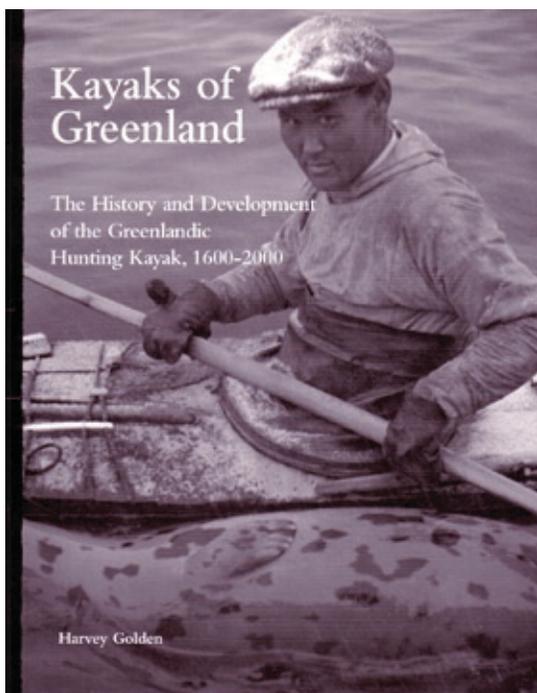


BOOK REVIEW

The Water Decides: Harvey Golden's *Kayaks of Greenland*

by Tom Milani

A GOOD BIBLIOGRAPHY OF NATIVE WATERCRAFT would include Adney and Chapelle's *The Bark Canoes and Skin Boats of North America*; David Zimmerly's *Qajaq: Kayaks of Siberia and Alaska*; Heath and Arima's *Eastern Arctic Kayaks: History, Design, Technique*; and H. C. Peterson's *Skinboats of Greenland*. To this canon must now be added Harvey Golden's



Kayaks of Greenland: The History and Development of the Greenlandic Hunting Kayak, 1600 – 2000 (White House Grocery Press, 2006, 580 pp., \$69.00).

The product of eight years of research, *Kayaks of Greenland* reports on 104 kayaks Harvey Golden has studied in museums or private collections, virtually all of which he has personally surveyed. To deepen his knowledge, he has built replicas of 18 of the surveyed kayaks. The result of this research into primary sources is a new typology, one which divides the Greenland kayaks into 13 distinct types. This typology is based on "details of form, construction,

deck line arrangements and fittings.... Geographical and temporal origins also play a crucial factor in [the] typology..." (p. 110).

The surveys of kayaks within this typology form the meat of the book, but before they appear, a brief history of the Greenland kayak is given to establish context for the kayak's importance: "Greenland kayaks represent a particular culture's answers to the question of survival—a compromise of thousands of possibilities, specific and random...the kayak of Greenlanders—in all its variations—is a critical tool and symbol of survival..." (p. 26). Historical photographs, line drawings and maps prepared by the author, and reproductions

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Read past Masik issues:
<http://www.qajaqusa.org/QUSA/newsletter.html>

MISSION

Qajaq USA is a non-profit membership organization that is officially recognized by Qaannat Kattuffiat (The Greenland Kayaking Association). Qajaq USA is committed to supporting Qaannat Kattuffiat and their efforts to preserve, study and promote the traditions and techniques of Greenland kayaking while seeking to further the appreciation and development of Greenland-style kayaking in the United States.

of engravings emphasize the human dimension. Tables recording the results of a kayak census are fascinating numerical evidence of the centrality of the kayak to Greenlanders.

Having offered a brief history of kayaks and some descriptions of their use, Harvey then provides details of their construction. If subsistence hunting means the designs that survive are only those that are effective, the variety is nonetheless impressive. For example, over a dozen line drawings testify to several variations of keelson and gunwale joints. A similar level of detail appears in descriptions of lashing methods for ribs and chines, deck beam-to-gunwale joints, and variations of deck stringer arrangements. Coaming scarfs range from a simple lap joint, in which one face of the coaming overlaps the other, to one that is “about as complex as a coaming joint can get: It is hook-scarfed with stopped ends—and these ends have birds-mouth joints carved into them to prevent splaying” (p. 85).

A section on repairs and modifications offers yet another glimpse into Greenlandic ingenuity and practicality, a combination of traits that reliably informs kayak design. During his stay here, Kamp Absalonsen, vice president of Qaannat Kattuffiat and chief Greenland competition judge, emphasized the individual and personal nature of the kayak: “Your kayak is for you. Your kayak, your paddle—everything—is for you.” Later, when talking about the shape of the kayak, he explained that environment determines form: “The water decides.”

Testament to these statements are the survey drawings and accompanying photographs, line drawings, and tracings of photographs of kayak interiors comprised in the typology. These reveal myriad ways of adapting to Arctic conditions and undoubtedly the needs of the kayaker for whom the kayak was built. The experience Harvey gained by building and paddling replicas of 18 of the surveyed kayaks only adds to our understanding.

Consider the 1789 West Greenland Kayak (plate 26). Here, a tracing of a photograph of the kayak’s interior shows, more clearly than the original photograph, dowels that

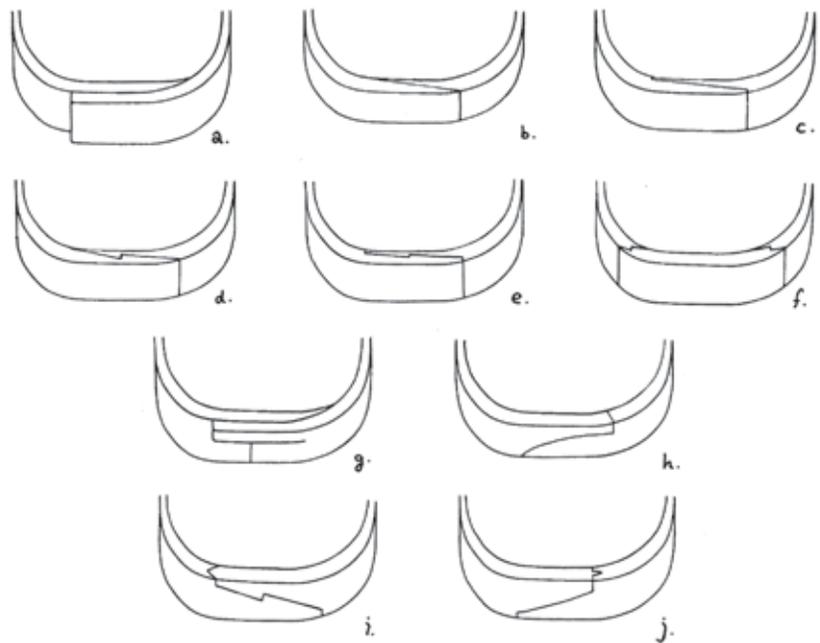


Figure 116: Types of kayak coaming scarfs. Examples a. through g. are scarfed on the coaming’s face; h., i., and j. are scarfed along the coaming’s edge.

help set the gunwale flare and small blocks to shim the deck stringers to the proper height. The extreme sheer in the aft section of the kayak “was quite a challenge and involved extensive shaping and scarfing—and even re-scarfing when things came out wrong” (p. 219). But the result “was a dream to paddle... Its balance of volume, stability, tracking, agility, rough water and wind handling, comfort, and ultimate seaworthiness is as perfect as I could imagine” (p. 220). Harvey acknowledges the subjectivity of his experience, but it is as close to interviewing the original owner of the kayak (an impossibility) as the reader could hope for.

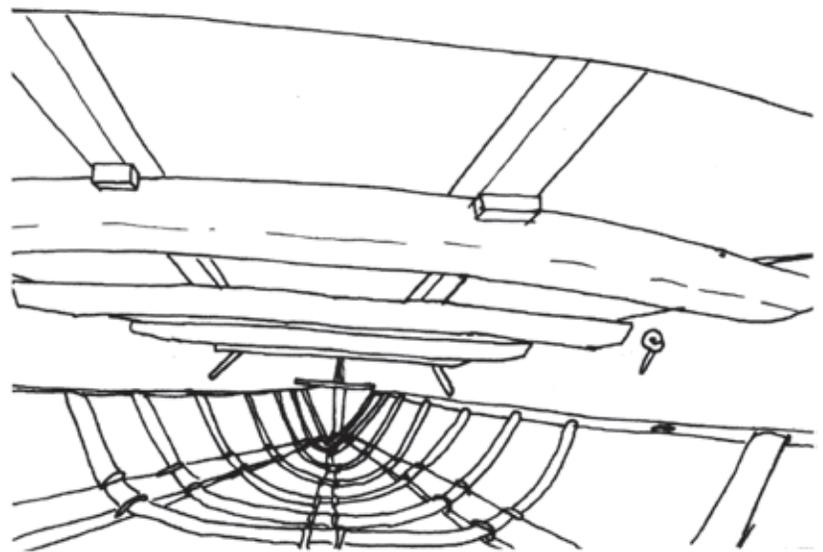


Figure 236: Forward interior view of the Hunterian Museum’s E.102.

A survey of 79 paddles follows the survey of kayaks, but the uncertain provenance of so many of the sample makes establishing a typology impossible. The detail is nonetheless fascinating. Those of us accustomed to thinking of paddles as having a bow-tie shape with a distinct loom may be surprised at the variety of end-shapes present. Variation in symmetry, armor, and loom shape further suggest the personal nature of each paddle.

The remainder of the book consists of a chapter of informed speculation on why Greenland kayaks developed as they did. Appendixes provide tables of ratios and proportions of the surveyed kayaks, conceptual interpretations of two medieval Greenland kayaks, a discussion of whether Greenlanders could have paddled kayaks to Europe, and a primer on taking offsets. A glossary and bibliography round things out.

Printed on quality paper and beautifully designed, *Kayaks of Greenland* is a singular achievement that will benefit students of the Greenland kayak for years to come. For builders of replicas, the survey drawings (updates of several can be found at www.traditionalkayaks.com/fixeddrawings.html) offer several years’ worth of kayaks to be built. For scholars, the typology will lead to more accurate identification of kayak specimens. And for anyone with an interest in Greenlandic culture, *Kayaks of Greenland* reveals, in ways large and small, the ingenuity, adaptability, and creativity of the people who have made the kayak so central to their lives.

Editor’s note: A drawing index appears on the Qajaq USA Web site at http://www.qajaqusa.org/Equipment/KOG_Index.html. This compilation by Ben Fuller provides a handy cross-reference to the kayak illustrations in Harvey’s work.

Editor's Letter

This issue begins with a review of Harvey Golden's *Kayaks of Greenland: The History and Development of the Greenland Hunting Kayak, 1600 – 2000*. The product of 8 years' research, *Kayaks of Greenland* will inform scholars, builders, and anyone with an interest in Greenland-style kayaking for decades to come. For scholars, *Kayaks of Greenland* offers a new, original typology of kayaks, one that logically categorizes these craft based on particular features. For replica builders the sheer number of surveys and line drawings — over 100 — and details about the construction and outfitting of the individual kayaks provides an abundance of choices. For anyone interested in the culture of Greenland, *Kayaks of Greenland* gives ample evidence of the innovation, creativity, and skill that informed the lives of the Inuit.

In this issue, we also feature reports from the 2006 incarnations of TAKS, the Traditional Arctic Kayak Symposium, and Qajaq Training Camp. Marcus Konen, one of the organizers of TAKS, offers his perspective on the event. For Qajaq Training Camp, three writers report. Keith Wikle gives his impressions of the camp and tells how it helped him focus on what's most important in his paddling life. Dick Silberman elaborates on the teaching methods and style found at the camp, relating them to his medical school education. And Diane Carr gives the history of the event. If the number of exclusively Greenland-style paddling symposiums is growing, the do-it-yourself tradition, which started with the first Inuit builders, continues unabated. Pat Slaven describes how to weave nylon and cotton yarn into rope to form deck lines, offering an alternative to latigo and commercial nylon or polyester line. And Marcel Rodriguez details his unique solution to traveling with Greenland paddles.

Peter Freuchen traveled to the Arctic as a young man. There, he experienced Inuit ways first hand and recorded his exploits in *Arctic Adventure*, reviewed in this issue.

This issue would not have been possible without the able proofreading of Bill Price, Wes Ostertag, Len Thunberg, and Jane Taylor. Special thanks to Ben Fuller for his technical insight into the review of *Kayaks of Greenland* and to Alison Sigethy for proofreading a draft of the review. Thanks again to Thomas Duncan for his artful layout and thoughtful design of the issue.

Tom Milani
December 2007

Share those happenings—publish your experiences in *The Masik*.

Any traditional kayaking related material is encouraged (e.g. baidarkas, etc.). On average articles would be one or two pages in length, but not limited to that. Just a few possible topics: Craftsmanship, Travel, Skills, Adventures, or Achievements. Material submitted doesn't have to be flawless. Grammar and spelling will be reviewed. Articles may be edited for length and clarity. Accompany your text with photos—JPEG format, color, best quality, minimum 2 megapixels or better. We can scan prints or slides if needed.

Send your material as e-mail attachments to Tom Milani. thomasm@qajaqusa.org.

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President's Letter

Minority Complex

The Qajaq USA Greenland forums are generally an excellent example of a polite, friendly and inviting electronic meeting place, where people share their views about traditional kayaking. However, human nature being what it is, every now and then



the forum becomes a “firestorm” of heated discussion. One of the most contentious threads of the year was discussion of Gordon Brown’s comments on Greenland-style kayaking in his book, *Sea Kayak: A Manual for Intermediate and Advanced Sea Kayakers* (Pesda Press, 2006). In it Gordon writes, *Inuit or Greenland style blades are a specialist part of sea*

kayaking. They are excellent for rolling using a variety of different methods, as they are generally unfeathered and sized in a way that allows them to be held anywhere. They were also very good as floating stabilizers when messing about with a harpoon and line. However they lack power and flutter easily without a sturdy forward stroke, which many people find disconcerting. They are not the choice of a majority on the oceans whether in tidal races or in big swells, they are however, very good for having a bit of fun. For serious sea kayaking it does matter what type of paddle you use. All of this “if it was good for the Inuit it is good enough for me” is going nowhere.

While Gordon’s words are certainly subject to debate and many “G-stylers” may strongly disagree, what interested me most wasn’t so much Gordon’s statements but the intense forum reaction to his statements. Would a similar reaction happen on a “mainstream” kayaking forum, if a traditional enthusiast broadly dismissed the capabilities of feathered paddles? While there might be hackles raised, I doubt if the reaction would have been as intense.

It wasn’t that many years ago that Greenland-style kayaking was largely dismissed by the “mainstream” sea kayaking community in the United States. Anyone who used a Greenland paddle 10 years ago, or more, will likely have plenty of memories of having to constantly defend their choice of equipment (or paddle alone). I know that I certainly did. Some confrontations ranged from humorous to outright hostile.

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Although you can still find similar attitudes in some areas, Greenland kayaking is generally not only respected these days, but is growing. That's good news, of course, but has past history, and our niche status, led the traditional kayaking community (or some of its members) to develop something of a "minority complex"?

An interesting article is "Getting Beyond a Minority Complex" (p. 9 of the July 2003 issue of *Dialogue*, <http://aeu.org/library/newsletters/200307dialogue.pdf>) by Dr. John Hoad of the American Ethical Union. While I don't equate Greenland-style paddling to religion, you might find a few of the following passages worth reflection:

I may take on certain characteristics of thinking conditioned by my minority status. This is not all bad, because to raise the status of the members of a minority and to achieve a level playing field for them, I may need to be more assertive on my group's behalf...There is such a thing as a "minority complex," marked by over-defensiveness, unnecessary bashing of opponents, and contentions that spring more from countering the old than from choosing the new...To dismiss their belief with a sneer or to call their motivation in question hardly shows the respect that we would like shown to our own beliefs. It comes across as negativity.

To prevent this pattern the author recommends:

- 1. Speak with respect of...others, even where we think them wrong...*
- 2. Avoid the argumentum ad hominem, that is, attacking the person rather than the philosophy of those who disagree with us.*
- 3. Avoid the cheap put-down that does not deal with the best representation of the other side.*
- 4. State disagreements with reasons.*
- 5. State our own [position] in positive terms.*
- 6. Hold fast to the worth of the persons we disagree with.*
- 7. Be open to the questioning of our own position.*

Whether or not the traditional kayaking community displays a minority complex, the seven recommendations listed above read like perfect guidelines (for the Greenland forum or otherwise) for any small minority or niche group that wants to be respected and heard and for dealing with "mainstream" viewpoints.

—Greg Stamer

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Traditional Arctic Kayak Symposium

by Marcus Koenen



Wolfgang Brinck

MAYBE IT'S THE IDEA OF BUILDING YOUR OWN KAYAK that piques your interest, maybe it's the ease with which you can move your boat with a Greenland paddle, maybe it's the cool rolling maneuvers—whatever the reason, more and more people are getting interested in traditional Arctic kayaks and paddling techniques. Several symposiums and workshops around the country focus solely on traditional skills including Delmarva on the East Coast, the South Sound Traditional Inuit Kayak Symposium (SSTIKS) in Washington, the Qajaq Training Camp in Michigan, and the Pacific Coast Traditional Inuit Kayak Symposium (PC-TIKS) in Oregon. Starting October of 2006, the Traditional Arctic Kayak Symposium (TAKS), in San Simeon, California, could be added to that list. San Simeon sits about halfway between San Francisco and Los Angeles, right near Hearst Castle.

TAKS was largely the result of John Petersen (www.shamankayaks.com/shaman) with organizational help from

Wolfgang Brinck (www.wolfgangbrinck.com/boats) and me (sorry, not organized enough to have a Web site). We modeled the event largely on SSTIKS. The sym-



Marcus Koenen



posium was a 3-day affair starting on a Friday afternoon and lasting through Sunday. Like the other symposiums, we offered group paddles, rolling and ropes demos, rolling instruction, harpoon throwing, evening presentations, evening campfires, and lots of opportunities to socialize with other paddlers passionate about the sport.

The turnout was about 40 people who came from all over. Our farthest visitor came from Michigan, and we very happy to have Mike Hanks from Washington attend and offer his insight from organizing SSTIKS. We had a few challenges, among them the logistics of having our campground several miles away from the beach. At the beach itself we had some surf, unusual for this time of year, which proved a bit intimidating to some beginners, but a thrill for many others.

To celebrate our first annual TAKS, we had some great photographs taken Saturday morning by Michael Powers, a member of the Tsunami Rangers and an adventure journalist and photographer. Among the exciting highlights was the presence of an umiak, courtesy of Randy Monge from Orca Island in Washington. The umiak is a large skin-on-frame canoe-like boat used to carry supplies. This one was big



Often crewed by the women of a community in the East Arctic, an *umiak* is commonly characterized as “the women’s boat.” Yet in the western reaches it was a hunting and war boat crewed by men.



The group comes together in a “sacred circle”



enough for a crew of six to eight. On Saturday afternoon, the women made a valiant attempt to take it out through the surf but were stopped instantly by a wall of waves. On the second attempt they timed it better, got through the surf and headed out for a short spin around the bay.

Another highlight included the kayak race. The kayaks were positioned near the water's edge and the racers were about 50 yards back, LeMans style. At the sound of the whistle, they took off, jumped into the kayaks, and had to get through the surf, out around a sailboat (about 1/2 mile),



Jake Stachovak and Duane Strosaker shoulder their kayaks and run to the finish line at the end of the race.

land safely on the beach, pick up their kayak and run to the finishing line. This year's first three finishers were Jake Stachovak, Duane Strosaker, and Ralph Johnson. Dubsided was there and helped tremendously. He gave an excellent rolling demo, starting out with all the easy ones that I proudly showed off the day before. But then he hit all the hard ones I can only dream about. The elbow roll, the straightjacket roll... and my favorite was the air sculling roll (imagine an upside down kayak, a paddle sticking straight up into the air sculling

back and forth and using leverage gained from the wind (not really) to roll back up. You really have to see this one to believe it. Dubsided also helped teach some of the classes and gave a ropes demo that enthralled the crowd.

Evening presentations included one by Dubsided about his experience competing in the annual Kayak Championship in Greenland, with photos and DVD courtesy of Tom Sharp. Wolfgang also gave a wonderful slideshow about the Aleutian Islands—the people, the history, and the baidarkas.

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On the last day, we had a silent auction. It was part fund-raiser for next year's event and part gear swap. All kinds of goodies were to be had, and there were some fierce bidding battles.

Everything from wine, to norsaqs, dry-tops, Harvey Golden's new book, Dubside's DVDs, paddles, and a couple of hand-crafted Greenland kayaks.

A round-table discussion on kayak building followed the auction. Everyone from novice to experienced builders got to share their thoughts and ask questions as well as provide answers. Questions ranged from where to get supplies to what kind of boat was the best to build. People

A round-table discussion on kayak building followed the auction.

more interested in paddling than talk headed back to the beach for just a little more time on the water.

By the end of the symposium, there were smiles all around. We received a lot of very positive feedback from participants and some ideas

on how to make things run more smoothly next year. For more pictures of this event and others, go to www.qajaqusa.org/gallery/. To receive further information about TAKS, just visit www.TAKScalifornia.com. This year's TAKS was held 19–21 October 2007.

Hope to see you there next year! 



Michael Powers takes photos of the lineup



John Peterson of Shaman Kayaks

Do It Yourself: kayak Rope



by Pat Slaven | Yonkers, NY | YPRC

So you made a boat, why buy rope?

I make a lot of stuff from scratch. My spinning, knitting, and weaving friends accuse me of ignoring them to hang out with a bunch of smelly guys who build the boats they paddle. My boat-building buddies (who really aren't smelly) marvel at what I can do with dyestuff and fabric. For me, building skin-on-frame (SOF) kayaks is another extension of my love of textiles. An Inuit kayak is a wood frame lashed together and pegged. Originally covered with sealskin, many SOF kayaks today are covered using white nylon skin stretched over the frame and sewn tight. The white nylon begs to be dyed with wash-fast acid dye (e.g., jacquard), and I am happily part of the contingent that dyes boats rather than painting them. Yes, but there is something that still seems to be missing. True

Every boat yard had a ropewalk, and yes, they made the rope, sails, and rigging for those commercial sailing ships literally from scratch — or rather, fiber.

replica kayaks use spiral-cut sealskin (or at least leather) for straps and rigging. Those of us who meticulously carve the fittings from deer antlers or wood often end up using commercial rope for the deck straps and rigging. I thought I could do one better by making my own rope.

I have one of the original Schacht Spindle Incredible Rope Machines. Well, maybe it's not quite original, but the date on the box is 1977. I tell a few of the boat guys about this and watch their eyes light up. "You mean you can use anything to make rope? You could add reflective thread, make it any color, and use pretty much any twine, yarn, or thread?" I start



Schacht Spindle Incredible Rope Machine



Diane Hickok

Setup: lining component yarns

telling them about the all the hemp fiber that got spun up into component yarn to make ropes, sails, and rigging for Christopher Columbus's ships. Everyone's mothers, aunts, and sisters spun an awful lot of yarn (we estimate it at somewhere well north of 100,000 miles) to make all those sails, rigging and rope. Every boat yard had a ropewalk, and yes, they made the rope, sails, and rigging for those commercial sailing ships literally from scratch — or rather, fiber. Remember, this was before the industrial revolution.

Making the rope

So I set out to make rope. This is easiest done with at least three people. The best place to start is at my hand-spinning guild's annual retreat in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. I hope to get one or two people interested in making rope with me rather than knitting yarn.

I set up the rope maker and a rope walk in a (long) spare meeting room. Before 15 minutes pass I have a group gathered watching and I quickly enlist their help. We start walking off yards and yards of the component yarns — we use over a quarter mile of yarn for a 20-foot finished length of stout rope.

Once you have multiple passes of yarn and it looks thick enough, it's time to begin up-twisting the individual plies using the rope-maker's crank.

One person turns the crank, another keeps the three component parts separated. The third assists and is most important when the lay-up begins to make the actual rope. Once there is enough twist in the three sections, the overall length decreases by about one-third (30 feet have



Diane Hickok

Twisting individual plies with a rope-maker's crank



Pat Slavén

Keeping component parts separated



Diane Hickok

Lay-up and moving glide



Diane Hickok

Finished rope and craft rope-maker

contracted to about 20 feet). The person at the far end (away from the crank) starts to lay up the rope by moving a two-pronged glide slowly forward toward the crank.

The extra person keeps tension on the newly formed rope and twists it in the opposite direction so that the new rope doesn't kink. A true rope-maker has a rotary hook in addition to the crank, but a simple craft rope kit lacks this.

I bring a few cones of old cotton weaving yarn in creams, browns, and black to practice — “guy colors” to placate the fellows I'm building kayaks with. My guild colleagues bring over bits of hand-spun yarn to spike the color. We adjust the amount of twist and the angle of winding the rope, making hard rope for halters and kayak rigging and thick soft rope for dog and horse leads.

My deck rigging

I use nylon and cotton yarn for making my actual rigging, as it will spend a bit too much time wet and needs more strength than wool or acrylic yarn would provide. Hemp was the original fiber used for making rope and canvas (the word is derived from “cannabis”). Hemp is exceedingly rot resistant, hence it had a common use in rope and canvas even 60 years ago in the United States. It is still grown in China and Russia for commercial rope making. Although it is illegal to grow hemp in the United States, hemp yarn is available at a premium price. Linen, which is made from flax, is also quite rot resistant. Flax is legal to grow, but has lost most of its market share to inexpensive cotton. We priced out hemp and linen base yarn for our kayak rigging. However common these fibers once were, they are both now very expensive yarns. Cotton and nylon component yarn are much more cost effective for our purposes, but they have neither the panache nor the rot resistances of hemp and flax. Still, they make good, serviceable rope.

To get the idea of the breaking load for this hand-made rope, I ran a few breaking loads on an Instron Tensile Tester. The 1/4-inch diameter rope I made had a breaking load of almost 400 pounds. It is not as strong as, say, nylon climbing rope, but it's definitely strong enough for my uses.

I use nylon and cotton yarn for making my actual rigging, as it will spend a bit too much time wet and needs more strength than wool or acrylic yarn would provide.

In 2006, I made *Marilynd*, a hybrid stitch-and-glue Sea Spirit designed by Bobby Curtis. It is my first kayak outfitted with handmade rope, and I enjoy knowing that I have done even this detail by hand. Somehow it now feels like I have closed the circle and been part of each process to modify every component part of the boat. I am making another SOF. She does not have a name yet, but I already have flax to spin into component yarn for her rigging. Why should I have to buy the yarn?

To make real rope, consider pooling a few buddies and buying a high-quality rope maker with a chain drive, such as those available from Dragon Fly Farm (<http://pweb.jps.net/~gaustad/>). Thirty years later, Schacht Co. (<http://www.schachtspindle.com/>) continues to sell The Incredible Rope Machine, which is suited to light-duty rope. 🚣

To make real rope, consider pooling a few buddies and buying a high-quality rope maker with a chain drive.



Hand-made declines aboard *Marilynd*, Pat's kayak.

Pat Slaven

Origins

by Diane Carr

QAJAQ TRAINING CAMP, QAJAQ TC, WAS THE IDEA OF DAVE BRAUN. In 2001–2002 there was a convergence of ideas and events ignited by Greenland and sparking across the US from coast to coast. On the East Coast, the Delmarva Paddlers Retreat was becoming an all-Greenland forum, on the West Coast, SSTIKS (South Sound Traditional Inuit Kayaking Symposium) was forming, and in the Midwest, Dave was creating Qajaq TC. Excitement was generated by an unofficial Web site based on Qaannat Kattufiat, the Greenland kayak club formed in 1983 to keep traditional kayak

He knew that the key to a strong Qajaq USA would be local events where people came together to train, share skills, and build boats and paddles — a mentoring system.

skills alive. Plans were underway to create Qajaq USA, which would become an official chapter of Qaannat Kattufiat.

Dave had been reading about Greenland traditions and kayaking, and when he met Greg Stamer at the WMCKA (Western Michigan Coastal Kayakers Association) Symposium in 2000, his interest was cemented. Greg and Dave became friends through discussions on the launching and organization of Qajaq USA. Dave helped out by becoming membership director.

Like many who develop the contagious kayak fever, Dave began to study the video “Rolling with Maligiaq.” Friends in Michigan began meeting to learn and practice — a mini training camp.



Diane Carr and student

So, wishing to promote the new Qajaq USA by bringing Greg to Michigan, and wanting to share kayak skills, Dave saw that there was one thing to do — create a training camp. He knew that the key to a strong Qajaq USA would be local events where people came together to train, share skills, and build boats and paddles — a mentoring system. He chose the name “Qajaq Training Camp” because of the training camps in Greenland (see video “Qajaq Klubben”), where small groups of competitors in the Greenland National Kayaking Championships would travel to an isolated location and practice. Also, he lived and kayaked in Traverse City, a few miles north of his planned camp.

With this kind of energy, Qajaq TC fell naturally into place. While talking to kayak guide Michael Gray, Dave learned about the ideal camp location, a camp bordering a small lake as well as Lake Michigan, and Michael offered to serve his gourmet cooking. Perfect!

After six years, the same founding spirit exists — a system, led by highly skilled mentors, that encourages sharing of traditional kayak skills in a beautiful, isolated setting with good food. Training is fun! The hope is that participants go home to their communities and create their own local training camps, and this is happening everywhere. 🌊



**Dave Braun and
Father Christmas**



Photography Note: I've taken the liberty of using a mix of '06 and '07 images from the Qajaq USA galleries to illustrate these Qajaq Training Camp articles, and captioned them where possible per the gallery captions. Copyright resides with the photographer. —Thomas Duncan, layout



Will helping Tanya

See one, do one, teach one

by Dick Silberman



EDUCATION HAS ALWAYS BEEN HIGHLY VALUED BY MY FAMILY. As a child, and through my teenage years, it was clear to me that my job was to get an education. So it was with great anticipation that I entered college, which was to be the first of many steps to becoming a physician. During those years of study I experienced many teachers and many teaching techniques and, in the years that followed, became a teacher with my own methods. As with everything I do, including my medical practice, I can see the influence of each of my teachers—I've taken a little from this one and a little from that one... To this day, I hold all who have taught me—and those who teach me now—in high esteem. To me, there is no higher calling.

I remember well when, during my first year of college, a classmate addressed our professor as “Doctor.” After all, the man had a Ph.D. and was entitled to the title. His response to my classmate has remained with me all these decades. He told us to address him as “Mister” and said that he would address us in the same way. He told us that we were all there to learn and that we would learn from each other. In so saying, he identified himself as a student, just one further along than ourselves. That, in turn, created an atmosphere in which we were comfortable expressing our ideas and eager to get his feedback. It was an excellent class, and I took on his model as that of the ideal teacher. Jump ahead four or five decades to South Herring Lake in Michigan, a small lake adjacent to Lake Michigan.

There, in a cramped and sandy parking area, cars of all models and with license plates from different states are gathering for the annual QajaqTC camp. Men and women of all ages radiate a certain energy and sense of anticipation as they step out of their cars. Many have come a long way, and each is anxious to meet the goals they've set for the weekend and themselves.

Boats of various designs, many skin on frame, come off the cars and are lovingly placed at the beach's edge. So far, it appears that we have a group of optimistic kayakers getting together for an outing. Then, out come the paddles. Some are wooden, some carbon fiber, but all exhibit a com-



monality: they have traditional Greenland-style form. And, with their appearance, a sense of tradition wells up only to be reinforced as many don the tuilik, the poncho-like garment of the Inuit hunter.

Smiles are everywhere as people embrace old friends and readily meet new ones.

This is my second year

attending, and I happily recognize some of the others. As I watch them all, so full of positive energy, I realize that I cannot tell who is a first-timer and who is a veteran. I also have no idea who is a beginner and who is there to master a hand roll. Most of all, I cannot tell who are the students and which of them (with exceptions of the ones I recognize) are instructors. And right there, the tone of the weekend is set. No one is going to be addressed as "Mister," let alone "Professor"—not in this group.

During the paddle to the camp site, there is chatter about what each of us wants to learn and what we've been working on. By time we land and meet the amiable staff, we are already classmates, friends, and I still cannot tell who among us is an instructor. Finally, during the main briefing, instructors are introduced, and we learn a little about them and their personalities. Each of us is already forming a connection with the instructors we perceive to be a good match. Early the next day everyone is out on the water and, without so much as a "Ready, get set, go," dozens of boats are rolling. Happy

Most of all, I cannot tell who are the students and which of them... are instructors. And right there, the tone of the weekend is set.

Scott sets up for for his first "shotgun" roll.



chatter drifts across the lake as students and instructors share stories, and self-effacing laughter is heard as students miss a roll and try again.

Over there, an instructor in a boat is demonstrating a technique, then holding onto the student's boat as he or she tries to mimic the move. All around, instructors in wet suits stand for hours in waist-high water as they guide students' paddles, hulls, and torsos through a roll. Here and there two or three or more students cluster around a teacher whose guidance they value and are willing to wait for. And each instructor gives them all the attention they need, assigns them something to practice, and then works with another. Everyone is active. Everyone is into it. Everyone is learning and, as it turns out, almost everyone is teaching.

As the day goes on, and into the next, students who have gained a skill eagerly share it with a classmate or two, and soon there are a lot more teachers in and on the water. It reminds me of the old saying we had on the surgical service: "See one, do one, teach one." That supposedly was how one learned to do surgery and, in a way, it really is. Today, that is exactly how the learning is being done, by experiential sharing. And as skills are acquired, confidences are bolstered, the best in each of us is brought out.

By the end of the weekend, I realize that there is camaraderie among all on site. It is one born of a shared love of tradition, an eagerness to learn, the willingness to look foolish while learning, and the ability to share in a cooperative manner. In my judgment, much of our success is due to the instructors (the official ones) who do not see themselves as professor, but rather as a colleague who is further along than most and who is still willing—and wanting—to learn.

As we leave for our home towns, all of us are more alike than different. We are all lifelong students who share a passion for a traditional sport and find equal delight in succeeding and helping our colleagues to do the same.

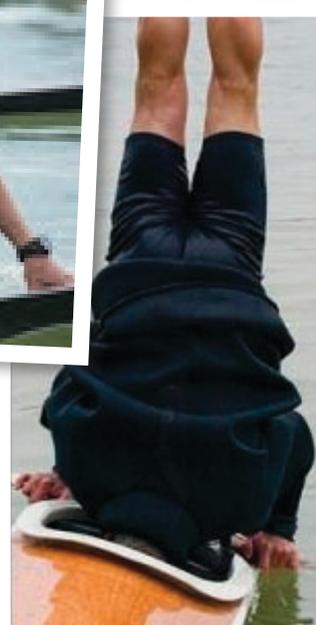
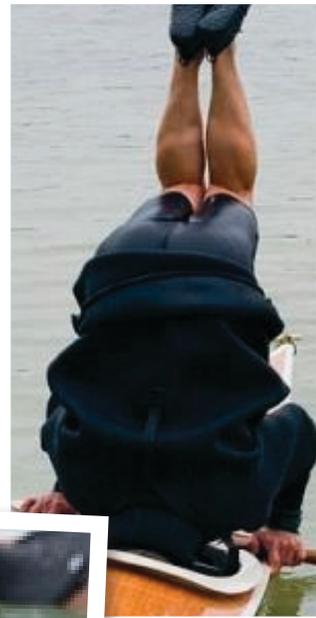
Sitting here, months after the weekend, I realize that I have many new instructors to hold in high regard. I realize, too, that many of them had arrived at the weekend like me—as a student. 🇺🇸

Richard E. Silberman, MD

Dick Silberman, a retired cardiologist, was an F-105 flight surgeon during the Vietnam War. Married 30 years, he has two adult children and a grandchild on the way. He's a musician, a fine arts photographer, certified SCUBA diver, marathon runner, sailor, and holds a black belt in Judo. He is an ACA-certified instructor with a passion for traditional paddling.



Cheri provides insightful mentoring



You just gotta believe...

by Keith Wikle

Editor's note: This article was adapted from Keith Wikle's Web site (www.keithwikle.com), where it first appeared in different form.

ARRIVING

I ARRIVED RIGHT AT DUSK ON LOWER HERRING LAKE, a small inland lake just east of Lake Michigan. I was told the camp could only be reached by boat. So I came prepared to paddle in with all my gear in dry bags. I loaded my kayak with the little remaining daylight. I launched my Silhouette and began scanning the shoreline for Camp Lookout. Mist settled over the sur-



face of the lake. It seemed a perfect beginning to the weekend. It seemed like my dream of a summer camp from childhood — a place to go where all the other kids wanted to play the sort of games I wanted to play. It is a Lost-Boy's-like camp separated from civilization, insulated for a time from problems.

Lights were on in the lodge and I heard shouting and cheering. I pulled in and unloaded my kit. I walked up a winding set of tree-fort-like steps to the lodge. I stepped in, and I was greeted by a few friendly faces. Alex Pak, Henry Davies, Barb Osbon, Diane Carr, and Nancy Thornton.

Nancy was good enough to show me up some more windy steps to my cabin, the Eagle's Nest. She quickly gave me the lay of the land. I changed and headed back down to the lodge for pie.

The events of the first evening entailed a presentation from Dubsided, which focused entirely on



the Greenland competitions. He also retold a bit of the story of Maligiaq Padilla who did not compete this year due to a boat accident. Dubsided seemed to idolize him in a way that a lot of kids do other sports stars. Maligiaq, for all intents and purposes, is the Pele or Zinedane Zidane of paddling; he is the first star of paddling. But I think I learned more about Dubsided from that presentation than I did Maligiaq. I wasn't sure what to think at first. He is really small, like Bono. He's shorter than you think. He was very quiet, very polite, didn't drink, didn't eat a whole lot, and didn't speak until spoken to — unless it was about ropes or rolls.

Saturday morning I tried out a few skin-on-frame boats with minimal success. A few of the skin boats that folks brought are rolling specific. The paddler is expected to hyperextend his knees in reverse to gain entry. When I first tried Alex Pak's Pete Strand rolling kayak, I didn't think I could get in, and Alex in his casual way says, "You just gotta believe." With a little further faith in my body's elasticity I wedged in. Aft laybacks were easy as pie, but forward recovery with my hamstrings being as tight as they are was an impossible dream. The Harvey Golden East Greenland replica was by far my favorite. The upsweep on the stern really makes it turn easily into the wind, most likely to aid in hunting. Yes, apparently seals can smell. I really enjoyed paddling this boat as it seemed like I was really experiencing the kayak as its owner from hundreds of years ago would have. The other rolling kayaks I've been in don't feel this way.



Some of Harvey's replicas

INSTRUCTORS

I worked through the morning excitedly with increasing success on my forward-recovery hand roll. A tuilik loaned to me by Will Bigelow really helped loosen me up. After some thunderstorms in the midmorning, I watched Harvey Golden sew a skin on the De Rijn kayak. By the afternoon, we were back on the water, and I was getting a lot of help from Cheri Perry. Her main message about my rolling is getting the core torso and abdominal muscles working. Relying on the arms is a weakness that limits rolling. Although she said it in a nice way, it is a common failing of men to rely on their arms. As a result, teaching core muscle activity is easier with women — they just "get it." I took her lesson to heart, and pretty quickly I was rolling up in a forward tuck, nose to the deck with one arm wrapped around the hull. The forward-forward roll sensation went from my earlier one of a floundering, hopeful slap, hip snap, and twist to one of a fluid sweep, crunch, and tuck.

Dubsided watched me on Saturday while I was in the water with Cheri. About every five minutes he would yell to me to come over to the dock where he sat with his camera to give me a few pointers — all of them helpful. I'm not sure I saw anyone else getting that help, so I am not sure if I piqued his interest because of my Silhouette, which is larger than the skin boats and the majority of the home-



Dubsided in the commando kayak



Harvey goes to work re-skinning the DeRijn

Keith, under 'glass



built boats, or what. But nonetheless, I appreciated the help.

Dan Segal whom I did not have much of an opportunity to work with, also seemed great on the water with students. He listened attentively, despite numerous interruptions and bizarre arguments from one student, and managed to get the student started on what he needed to work on. His handling of the situation seemed so effortless and so direct that I recognized what I lack as an instructor at times, which is a total focus on the other person and what his or her needs might be. I asked him later about the situation, and he said, "I don't even hear the words really, just the need."

FAMILY

Saturday night was a gas. I spent a lot of time with Will from Massachusetts. We talked a lot about family. We talked about being young parents and how isolating it feels at times, all your friends are still out drinking, partying, cavorting, spending money on what they like, when they want, traveling, etc.; while we go to jobs, have mortgages, and lose sleep over stress, kids, and life. The paddling community is particularly hard on marriage, based on my limited observations. There are quite a few divorces. It's an engrossing hobby with a lot to offer. But at a certain point some folks



Tanya experiences her first QTC and SOF

state boundaries. They say, "Well, this is as far as I can go without pushing the wife/husband over the edge." Others might cave in and deduce that the husband or wife is the problem, get divorced, and then discover the whole cycle starts over. Others perhaps really do find happiness with spouses that share all their hobbies. I don't know; certainly I'm not placing any judgment on people who get



Will Bigelow

divorced, but I think I recognize that I push Laura pretty hard at times due to paddling. Will told me (perhaps idle flattery and speculation) that he sees someone in me who could easily be as good as anyone, if I had the time to spend — but that I can't or won't invest the time. Maybe that's true; certainly my wife would disagree with both. I am not that good, and I have certainly put in a lot of time already. We shared some single-malt scotch. We enjoyed an excellent dinner prepared by Michael Gray and Nancy.

I managed to spend a lot of time talking with Harvey Golden. Harvey is as smart as he seems, if not smarter — he is the pocket genius of the Qajaq USA crowd, someone who really has spent way more time than you can even think about looking at, drawing, and just speculating on traditional kayaks. We had a great discussion about the Norse in Greenland, Jared Diamond's book *Collapse* and its failings, and then a lot of trivial smart-alecky jabberwocky. Due to our similarity in height, weight, and lack of hair, I had a lot of people coming up to me and asking very good, detailed kayak history questions. It took all of my willpower not to mislead them with the information I do have about U-boat types and Napoleonic Age of Sail information. Harvey told me later that I really should have explained to every person that all kayaks were originally designed to have a conning tower with a periscope made of sea ice.

Sunday I spent trying to further perfect some of my other rolls. I tried a few more skin boats, too. I sat in on a few lessons with Turner on the continuous storm roll. I managed to give a real bow rescue to one student who got very disoriented during continuous capsizes.

PADDLING

Pretty soon I was waterlogged and wanted to really paddle. I needed to go somewhere and see something. So I managed to find some folks from Yonkers who wanted to paddle Lake Michigan. Four of us went out to the lake. As we crossed out of the stream from Lower Herring Lake into Lake



**Nancy and Michael
serve in the kitchen**

Michigan, we were presented with a beautiful panoramic view of the lake: bright blue water with a fresh breeze that pushed small whitecaps along the surface. A small swell was building from the north. Along the dunes, hang gliders were launching from the peaks. I immediately went into a strong forward stroke. I felt all my muscles thanking me for pushing forward, and my kayak glided over the water and slapped down the back of the waves. I quickly separated from the crowd and had to hold myself back. The others really weren't up for the ride into the wind and decided to turn around. I pushed on until I could feel myself sweating from the effort as my legs pumped like pistons inside the cockpit. I had made it about halfway to Frankfort in pretty short order. I looked at my watch and turned around. I was rewarded with a beautiful gliding ride back to the beach, interspersed with brief, intense sprints to catch waves, then edging hard to keep from broaching, coming back online with the wave, and then sprinting again until the nose started spilling water perfectly down wave. I realized how much I love paddling and that rolling is really more about a means to an end for me. I love the skill building and the challenge of learning all the rolls, but what I really love is paddling. I like having the wind in my face and the open lake in front of me with no one telling me which way to go. 🚣



**Will and Kathie
paddle off into
the sunset**



Traveling *with* Greenland Paddles

by Marcel Rodriguez

The Plan

We had been planning the trip—paddling through the fiords of Pumalin Park in Chile’s Patagonia region—for about a year. Once we had the tickets purchased, the guide selected, and the route planned (with much help from fellow paddler Reg Lake), our thoughts turned to gear. While my wife and I had paddled with Euro blades in the past, it had been several years since either of us had spent any time with them. Our 10 year-old daughter, McKinley, had never really paddled with anything but a Greenland paddle. Our obvious preference for such a majestic trip was to use our GPs. We contacted our guide, Juan Federico Zuazo (Juanfe), of Yak Expediciones <http://www.yakexpediciones.cl/eng/Home.asp> to see if by chance he had any GPs. No such luck. He had seen them in the United States, but did not have any.

We had been planning the trip—paddling through the fiords of Pumalin Park in Chile’s Patagonia region—for about a year.

Plan B

We decided to bring our own paddles, but quickly realized that hauling three paddles, with the longest almost 7-1/2 feet, would become a real pain. It would also cost us a fair bit as oversized baggage on an international flight. I looked at the possibility of adding carbon ferrules to our paddles, but the cost was quite high, and the strength questionable. I decided instead to look at cutting down our paddles and gluing them back together at our destination. I bounced the idea off of Don Beale, <http://www.bealepaddles.com>, and he thought it might work. I have been



Happy to have our GPs in conditions
Photo by J.F. Zuazo

fortunate to be able to teach (i.e., Don teaches, I help) paddle-making with Don over the past couple of years, so I have become pretty quick at carving paddles. I decided that since I planned on leaving the paddles in Chile, I would carve up new ones for my wife and daughter and use one of my older paddles for myself. After a marathon 5-hour carving session, I had two new paddles ready to go at a total cost of \$20 in wood.

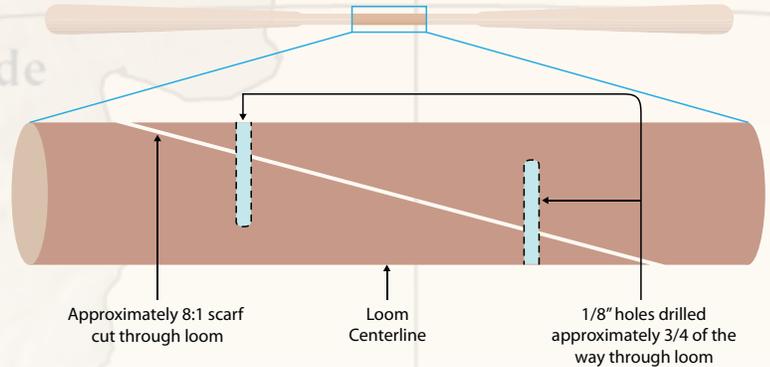


Figure 1: Loom Cutting and Drilling Details (not to scale)

The Cut

I knew that I would need maximum surface area to be able to adequately glue the paddles back together. I also wanted to avoid any seams in the shoulder area of the loom, as that would likely be irritating while paddling. I decided to use an 8:1 (approximate) scarf joint across the center line of the loom. I also knew that the two halves of the loom had to align perfectly, or it would cause problems. I decided to use 1/8-inch dowels to pin the halves in place. Now that I had my theory, it was time to get to work.



(L) Cutting a scarf

(R) One, down, one to go!

I marked the center line on each paddle loom. I then marked a point 4-1/2 inches from the center line on each side and drew a line for the scarf across the height of the loom (that is, scarf cut with paddle blades perpendicular to the saw table). I cut the paddle this way mostly because of the shape of the loom (the flat part rested on the saw table). I also wanted to scarf along the thickest part of the loom. I next marked a point 1-1/2 inches from the center line on the top and bottom of the loom (see Figure 1). I started by drilling a 1/8-inch hole approximately three-quarters of the way through the loom on the top of one side and the bottom of the other. I then cut the scarf line on a bandsaw. I found that the scarf didn't have to be perfectly straight, as the two halves were going back together in the same way.

Once the paddles were cut (a slightly unnerving process), it was time to pack them up.

Checked Baggage

I decided to pack the paddles in a cardboard concrete form. These come in many diameters and lengths and are available at most home-improvement stores. I chose a 4-foot length of 6-inch diameter tube. It fit three paddles (six halves) perfectly. I took each paddle and put the pieces blade-to-loom to protect the sharp ends of the scarfs. I wrapped each blade pair with plastic wrap to keep the blades together and slid them into the tube. I put a small plug of foam in each end to pad the ends of the paddles during shipping. I also put the supplies for reassembly in the tube. I had a small tube of Loctite Sumo glue (a foaming, waterproof, polyurethane glue), some long strips cut from an inner tube, a 6-foot piece of 3/4-inch wide rubber band, 18 inches of 1/8-inch hardwood dowel, and a piece of 220 grit sandpaper. Just for good measure, I sewed a simple sleeve bag of ballistic nylon (a scrap from my last boat) to fit over the tube. A drawstring at the top completed the package. It went on the airplane as checked baggage.



The paddles, ready to go.



Reassembly

We made it to our destination with the paddles intact after a wild ride that included clearing immigration and customs in Chile with 14 minutes to go before our connecting flight left from the other side of the airport. We were quite glad to not have oversized luggage with which to contend. The paddles were fine, despite having been opened and inspected by the Transportation Security Administration in Portland.

Once in our hotel, I set about the work of putting the paddles back together. I first inserted a length of dowel into each hole, and then applied the glue. After slipping the dowels into their corresponding alignment holes, my wife wrapped the loom with one of the rubber straps while I held it in place. We repeated this with the other paddles, laid them on the bathroom floor to dry, and went out to explore. When we returned, the glue was dry. We removed the straps, scraped the excess glue off with the blade of a knife, and then sanded the looms smooth.

(L) Two paddles glued and wrapped

(R) The glued looms ready for scraping and sanding

The Trip

The trip was fantastic. The fiords of Pumalin Park provide some of the most spectacular paddling in the world. We experienced 500-foot waterfalls plunging into the sea, dolphins swimming around us, and remote hot springs. We also encountered some strenuous paddling conditions (25+ knot winds, current, and one 36 km day). In all we paddled over 100 km in 6 days. The paddles held up perfectly throughout, with no signs of weakness. At the end of our trip, we gave the paddles to our guide, Juanfe. McKinley gave her paddle to Juanfe's daughter, Bernardita, an aspiring paddler. Juanfe has used his paddle on subsequent trips and reports it is still going strong.

Conclusion

Paddling in a far-off exotic location doesn't mean having to settle for a paddle with which you are not comfortable, nor does it mean having to pay excessive fees for oversize luggage. With a little planning, you can have the equipment you want in a manageable package. 

Happy paddlers in Pumalin with
our GPs - November 2006

Photo by J.F. Zuazo



Book Review

by Tom Milani

EXPLORER PETER FREUCHEN DIDN'T SUFFER AS MUCH AS JOB, but few people have endured torments as he did and lived to write about them. In *Arctic Adventure: My Life in the Frozen North*, Freuchen explains how his leg was impaled by a harpoon tip as he descended a glacier, tells of amputating his own gangrenous toes with pliers and a hammer, and reports on going hungry and without sleep for days at a time.

Such suffering is dramatic and characteristic—at least during Freuchen's time — of life in Arctic Greenland and Canada, and it informs much of the narrative. Nevertheless, it is not a grim book, but one that bristles with life.

Freuchen begins his narrative with a moral dilemma. He and two companions were traveling in north-east Greenland, learning the landscape and collecting geological specimens. They planned to replenish their

supplies at a cache, but when they reached it, a bear had been there first, and no food was to be found. Their only choice was to keep walking to the next cache. After five days without food, Freuchen goes off to hunt and kills a rabbit. As he heads back to his companions, he wrestles with temptation, alternately resolving to eat some (or all) of the rabbit and sharing it all with his companions. In the end, he does the right thing, but hates himself for nearly giving in to his impulses.

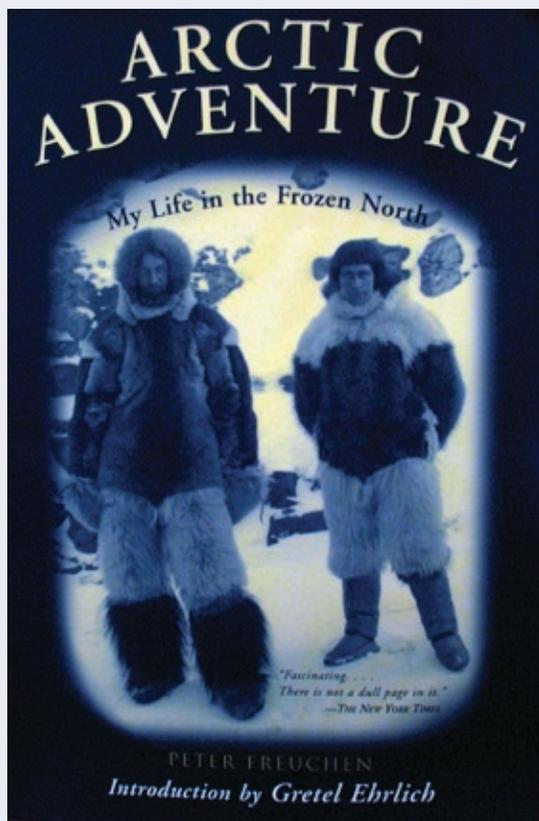
That Freuchen chose to begin the book with this anecdote tells us that he is a moral man with flaws, that he is strong-willed, and that he is honest. It takes a little while longer for his dry sense of humor to be revealed, and it comes a few pages later in a story about a square dance where Freuchen had to open a trapdoor in a workshop ceiling to keep from hitting his head while he danced with his native companion.

Freuchen's best friend was Knud Rasmussen, and the memoir documents their travels together. A larger than life figure, Rasmussen is literally the life of the party and several times appears, as if by magic, at just the right moment.

Freuchen learned the language of the natives and eventually married an Inuit woman. In doing so, he became more than simply a keen observer of the cultures he encountered—he became a part of those cultures. He respected the Inuit, often pointing out the faults of various Europeans that they encountered, but he was quick to acknowledge that not every native was brave or even well

suited to Arctic life. He points out ignorance where it exists, but also accepts the essential truth behind what seem to be superstitions.

Some of the richest parts of the book are the details of his marriage to Navarana. Their marriage was a true partnership: both benefited from the other, and both grew to become better people. *Arctic Adventure* is a vivid portrait of life in the Arctic, the hazards of exploring, and the Inuit people. Told with honesty, self-deprecation, and dry humor, the story is an essential read for anyone wanting insight into Arctic life. 🐾



Peter Freuchen, *Arctic Adventure: My Life in the Frozen North*, The Lyons Press, 2002, 400 pp, \$17.95 (paperback)



Cindy Cole

It is with great sadness that I bring you the news that Cindy Cole passed away shortly after the beginning of the New Year, succumbing to a long battle with cancer. Cindy brought to her life and her kayaking a sparkling spirit, humble yet strong. Many of us in the traditional kayaking community, and those of us who were lucky enough to have been her friend, have been strongly influenced and touched by her life.

Cindy, along with her husband Charlie, founded the Delmarva Paddler's Retreat. In addition to kayaking extensively around the Delmarva Peninsula area, Cindy enjoyed major kayak excursions to the islands of the Pacific Rim in British Columbia, the fiords of Greenland, Glacier Bay in Alaska, and the Mingan Islands in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Cindy was very influential in building interest in Greenland-style kayaking in the northeastern U.S., and she was among the "first wave" of kayakers who eagerly began learning, practicing, and later teaching Greenland technique as John Heath's videotapes became available in the late eighties and early nineties.

Cindy joined John Heath to attend the Greenland Kayaking Championships as a spectator the year that John Petersen won the event. In 2000 Cindy herself competed in the Championship, the first year that the competition was opened to outsiders. She brought home a first-place in rolling, a first-place in the short-distance race, and a second-place in the long-distance race for her age group. Cindy earned enough points to put her in first place overall, for her age group. It was during this visit that she forged a close friendship with Kamp Absalonsen, the chief competition judge.



**Cindy and Kamp
at Delmarva 2007**

Cindy was a founding board member of Qajaq USA (she was Qajaq USA member number four) and she served on the board for several years helping to shape the new organization.

The 2007 Delmarva Paddler's Retreat was special for many things, but for me the highlight was that it brought together Cindy and Kamp, for one last time, at the event that she helped create.

—Greg Stamer, January 2008

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