



## Editor's Corner

Bobby Curtis

Editing the first issue of the MASIK has been a worthwhile undertaking. I have discovered there exists within QAJAQ USA, a diverse source of individuals available to garner material for publication, as evidenced by the variety of material submitted for this first issue. The newsletter staff is a talented, and varied group, comprised of people from many different backgrounds and geographical regions of the USA. They are to be commended for donating their time and effort to this publication. Being spread out, as we are requires us to communicate electronically, and we are continuing to devise new methods of making our communication more effective. Tamara Hanks has created an excellent graphic design and newsletter layout. An editorial review board has been established (comprised of Greg Stamer, Harvey Golden and Vernon Doucette) to provide means of addressing issues of content and accuracy when they might occur. Other QAJAQ USA Board members have been busy gathering news that appears in the "Notes from the Regions" column. I'm grateful also, to all the people who submitted material.

The newsletter will be published electronically as a PDF file and can be downloaded and printed by the reader. It will also be made available in printed form at QAJAQ USA functions. We are experimenting with file size and photo quality in order to keep the download time reasonable over a 56kb phone line connection. At present we are expecting to publish the newsletter quarterly. If, however, we are overwhelmed with submissions, which would be fine with

Continued on page 3.

## Qajaq Talk

Greg Stamer

As President of Qajaq USA, I am extremely pleased to present this inaugural issue of the MASIK, Qajaq USA's electronic membership newsletter. I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to Bobby Curtis, the MASIK editor, Tamara Hanks, for design and layout (Tamara is the graphic designer who created our logo) and to all members of the Qajaq USA Publications team. Thanks also to the Qajaq USA members who generously contributed articles to make this issue possible.

What's the meaning behind the newsletter name? As you may know, the *masik* is a wide, curved kayak deck beam in a qajaq (Greenlandic kayak). It adds structural strength, lifts the cockpit high enough to allow the kayaker to enter, and also functions as the thigh/knee brace. Thus, the *masik* is a key component that provides an intimate link between the kayak and kayaker and enables the kayaker to transmit his or her efforts to the kayak and the sea. This newsletter is symbolically similar; it is poised to become

Continued on page 4.

**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.

Vol. 1, No. 1 • Spring 2003

## In this Issue

Page 2

### My Ningeq

Page 3

### Events Calendar

Page 4

### A Steam Box Just for Bending Ribs

Page 5

### The Boat in my Basement

Page 6

### How I got Into Kayaking

Page 7

### Up a Creek Without a Pump

Page 9

### Trees to Paddles

Page 9

### Notes from the Regions

## QAJAQ USA OFFICERS

President

**Greg Stamer**

[gstamer@qajaqusa.org](mailto:gstamer@qajaqusa.org)

Vice President

**Keith Attenborough**

[keith@qajaqusa.org](mailto:keith@qajaqusa.org)

Historical & Kayak Building Advisor

**Harvey Golden**

[harvey@qajaqusa.org](mailto:harvey@qajaqusa.org)

Membership

**David Braun**

[dave@qajaqusa.org](mailto:dave@qajaqusa.org)

[membership@qajaqusa.org](mailto:membership@qajaqusa.org)

PNW Regional Advisor

**Mike Hanks**

[mike@qajaqusa.org](mailto:mike@qajaqusa.org)

Forum Administrator

**Craig Bumgarner**

[craig@qajaqusa.org](mailto:craig@qajaqusa.org)

Advisor, Greenland Liaison

**Pavia Lumholt**

[pavia@qajaqusa.org](mailto:pavia@qajaqusa.org)

Events Advisor

**Cindy Cole**

[cindy@qajaqusa.org](mailto:cindy@qajaqusa.org)

Bylaws, Organization Structure Advisor,  
Public Relations Committee Chair

**Rita Romeu**

[rita@qajaqusa.org](mailto:rita@qajaqusa.org)

Newsletter Editor

**Bobby Curtis**

[bobby@qajaqusa.org](mailto:bobby@qajaqusa.org)

Events

**Robin Snow**

[robin@qajaqusa.org](mailto:robin@qajaqusa.org)

Archivist, Historical Advisor,  
Journal Editor

**Vernon Doucette**

[vernon@qajaqusa.org](mailto:vernon@qajaqusa.org)

[archivist@qajaqusa.org](mailto:archivist@qajaqusa.org)

Graphic Designer

**Tamara Hanks**

[tamara@qajaqusa.org](mailto:tamara@qajaqusa.org)



### Launched: August 9, 2002

- Length on deck: 17'6"
- Beam: 21"
- Weight: 38 lbs.

### FOREDECK



### Construction details:

- Air-dried Yellow Cedar frame, pegged and lashed with artificial sinew.
- Covered with 16oz ballistic nylon then sealed with 8 coats of oil based polyurethane and color pigment.
- Leather deck lashings with simulated Ivory (Micarta) toggles.
- Storm paddle made from Yellow Cedar armored with polyethylene (cutting board material).
- Full-length paddle made from vertical grain Douglas fir and also armored with polyethylene.

### SEAL EFFIGY TOGGLES



I used 8 coats of Varathane (Poly-Urethane) oil based, outdoor, clear satin, diamond wood finish to seal the skin first. When the 8th coat was almost dry, I combined 1 part of the Varathane with 1 part of Benjamin Moore #2134-10(night Horizon) and painted the entire kayak with that. Next I sponged on #2113-10(Chocolate Sunday) to create a faux sealskin look. The Benjamin Moore Paints are Urethane Alkyd Gloss Enamel. Sealing the ballistic nylon took a lot of patience because it's a process that can't be rushed. It needs constant attention so that you don't get any runs. The entire process takes about a week.

### MEASURING KEELSON DEPTH



### A TRADITIONAL ARCTIC DRILL



## RIB INSTALLATION



## PINNING THE COCKPIT RIM



The boat tracks well, and has good primary and secondary stability. It edges well and is easy to roll. It's also easy to control in the surf zone although on launching, the built-in skeg likes to anchor itself in the sand, which makes pushing off more effort till the boat floats.

### launching ceremony

I built my first kayak by means of the instruction of Robert Morris (author, boat builder) at his Brewery Creek Small Boat Shop in Vancouver, BC. When it was finished, Robert suggested I undertake a non-traditional naming and launching

ceremony based loosely on Native American and Inuit beliefs.

With a small group of my buddies in attendance, with sage I first smudged the kayak and my friends, and then the four cardinal directions. After I whispered the name "Ningeq" to the bow, I then said it aloud to everyone, with a translation. "Ningeq" or "Hunters Share" which I believe means that the hunter who lands the first harpoon in the animal will receive the choicest cut of meat to share with his family. With my personal ceremony completed, I introduced "Ningeq" to the sea.

*(Editor's Note: Qajaq USA takes the policy that 'launching ceremonies' are a personal affair and asks the reader to keep in mind that the one John relates in his article would hardly bear any resemblance to those that might have been practiced in the north. If practiced at all, Inuit rituals and beliefs centering around the completion and launching of a new kayak would have varied widely across the arctic, both temporally and geographically).*

*John grew up sailing "Star" class and traditional sloop boats. He has had extensive canoeing experience in the northeast. He has built a birch bark canoe with David Gidmark (author, builder) and his wife, Ernestine (Ojibway). A lover of Native American art and culture, John is passionate about conservation and wildlife issues. John and his wife live in Thousand Oaks, CA.*



## Editor's Corner

Continued from page 1.

me, it may be published more frequently. We are interested in receiving feedback, and in upcoming issues there will be a "Letters to the Editor" column for our readers' comments and concerns.

This newsletter aspires to afford club members and readers, the opportunity to publish their varied and interesting subjects related to traditional kayaking. I anticipate the newsletter will grow to be an important and valued resource for QAJAQ USA and our readers. 

## KAYAK EVENTS

Find them and post them in  
**The MASIK.**

Send your event information to:  
[bobby@qajaqusa.org](mailto:bobby@qajaqusa.org)

# EVENTS CALENDAR

## SSTIKS 2003 SOUTH SOUND TRADITIONAL INUIT KAYAK SYMPOSIUM

When: June 6-8, 2003  
Where: Twanoh State Park  
Belfair, WA  
Contact: Mike Hanks  
E-mail: [kayakbuilder@harbornet.com](mailto:kayakbuilder@harbornet.com)  
Web: [www.qajaqpnw.org](http://www.qajaqpnw.org)

## GREAT LAKES SEA KAYAK SYMPOSIUM

When: July 17-20, 2003  
Where: Grand Marais, Michigan  
Contact: Dave Braun  
E-mail: [dave@qajaqusa.org](mailto:dave@qajaqusa.org)  
Web: [www.premiumtechnology.com/mk/great.htm](http://www.premiumtechnology.com/mk/great.htm)

## QAJAQ TRAINING CAMP 2003

When: August 22-24, 2003  
Where: Frankfort, Michigan  
Contact: Dave Braun  
E-mail: [dave@qajaqusa.org](mailto:dave@qajaqusa.org)  
Web: [www.waterholic.net/qajaqtcl/](http://www.waterholic.net/qajaqtcl/)

## DELMARVA PADDLERS RETREAT #15

When: October 3-5, 2003  
Where: Lewes, Delaware  
(Rehobeth Bay)  
Contact: Robin Snow  
E-mail: [Anorak@comcat.com](mailto:Anorak@comcat.com)  
Web: [www.studiofurniture.com/delmarva/](http://www.studiofurniture.com/delmarva/)

# QAJAQ USA

## Patrons & Sustaining Members

### PATRONS

**Phil Ellis**  
Reading, PA

**Denis Gobeille**  
St. Charles, MO

**David Pickering**  
Herndon, VA

**QAJAQ PNW**  
Tacoma, WA

**Mark Starr**  
North Stonington, CT

**Michael H Morris**  
Eureka, CA

**Gabriel Romeu**  
Allentown, NJ

**Mark Molina**  
Ft. Pierce, FL

**Turner Wilson**  
Chelmsford, MA

### SUSTAINING MEMBERS

**David Miskell**  
Shelburne, VT

**Judy Kemmerer**  
Middlesex, NJ

**James Tibensky**  
Berwyn, IL

**Mark & Celeste Rogers**  
Whitelaw, WI

**Rob Gibbert**  
Gig Harbor, WA

**Ron Johnson**  
Linwood, NJ

**Matt Moskal**  
Middlesex, MNJ

## Qajaq Talk

Continued from page 1.

a key component of Qajaq USA that will provide an important link between members and increase the synergy of our efforts. The MASIK will enable members to share their knowledge, learn from others, and to discover what events are planned in the future. The MASIK enables Qajaq USA members to have an influential voice, and to help shape the direction of Qajaq USA. In addition to electronic distribution, the newsletter will also be printed and distributed at kayaking events and will enable us to reach kayakers who are not currently familiar with our website, forums, and other resources. And, of course, we hope that you will enjoy reading the MASIK, and find it a valuable and tangible benefit to you as a member of Qajaq USA.

In submitting material to the MASIK you are helping to support not only Qajaq USA but also the Qaannat Kattuffiat (the Greenland Kayak Association). The new president of the Qaannat Kattuffiat, Jenseeraq Amondson ("Jens"), has said that one of the best ways that we can help the Greenlanders preserve traditional kayaking is simply to practice it and promote it in the United States and abroad. Ultimately, Jens would also like to see more Americans and kayakers from other countries competing in Greenland (no matter their skill level). The Greenlanders are very proud of their kayaking heritage and outside interest in Greenlandic kayaking helps to reaffirm their convictions.

This newsletter is *your* newsletter and your voice. Sample submissions might include a narrative and pictures of a new kayak or paddle that you have recently built, trip reports, photos and a description of hitting your very first roll, or the straightjacket roll, news of traditional kayaking events in your area and other interesting topics. Please share your passion of traditional kayaking by contributing to the MASIK! 

[www.qajaqusa.org](http://www.qajaqusa.org)  
[www.qajaqusa.org/forums.shtml](http://www.qajaqusa.org/forums.shtml)

## A Steam Box Just for Bending Ribs Economical but effective

By Bob Kelim

I first encountered steam bending about 20 years ago when I was working in the boat shop at a cannery in Alaska. It seemed like nothing short of magic to take a 20' long 2X6 and twist it to fit the hole in a boat's bottom where we had pulled the garboard strake.

Recently I started building skin on frame kayaks, and I suddenly had a need for a steam box in order to make the ribs and coaming. My approach to this was to build the thing as cheaply as possible. The following is a photo outline of a smaller steam box I'm building just for ribs.

First the box itself, I don't want it air tight, and I don't want to spend any money. Someone's torn down an old house down the road from me. It was originally built using board and batten construction. From this, I salvaged a few wide boards with a cash outlay of \$0.00.

### SALVAGED WIDE BOARDS



I built this box about 4 ft. long and about 6-inch square. I wanted something that I could steam four or five ribs at once. It needed less interior volume than the 8 ft. box I use for steaming coamings.

I'll start by cutting four of the boards I salvaged to four-foot lengths.

Continued on page 12.



I spend a fair amount of time — well, an embarrassing amount of time — thinking about my fleet. A year-and-a-half ago I was taking stock of the boats in the basement and garage: the folding kayaks, the touring boat, the canoe, and the small sailboat. The problem area practically leaps out at you. No skin-on-frame kayak. I stewed privately before I broke the news to my wife. As I recall she rolled her eyes before turning back to her garden catalogues. Lucky for me she has some obsessions of her own.

I got plans from Sea Kayaker, then I went to the lumber yard to buy a few sticks of fir and oak — not even \$50 worth as it turned out — and hauled it down to the basement. My wife had no complaints throughout these early phases, when the table saw growled and yodeled, and the house filled with the smell of freshly ripped planks. Next came the tap-tap-tap of hammer on chisel. Hours of this, I admit, but it's a merry sound, like having a pack of fairy-tale cobblers working beneath your feet. I mentioned that it was cheaper than wasting my time in a bar. And if I might disappear for half the day, and feel that just an hour or so had passed, well, she seemed amused by the glint of enthusiasm — the term "mad glint" had not yet come into play — in my eye as I emerged from our cold, stone-lined cellar.

In fact, it wasn't until I was forced to manufacture a device to steam-bend oak staves that I noticed a change in the atmosphere. I bought a used pressure cooker at a junk shop and ripped the pressure release valve from the cover. I replaced the valve with a piece of pipe, which I then connected to a rubber hose. The rubber hose in turn connected to a length of stovepipe. The staves went into the pipe. Then, having brought the water

in my pressure cooker to a boil over a camp stove, I watched with satisfaction as steam poured through my Rube Goldberg set-up. The vapor plumes rose in my freezing workshop. I watched as they crept along the low ceiling, like clouds on an autumn eve.

### RUBE GOLDBERG STEAMER



I had not steam bent wood up until that point in my life. You can imagine my wonderment as I took these once-solid staves in gloved hand, applied a modest amount of pressure, and watched as they bent like taffy. I felt like the Man of Steel, reforming the world to my needs.

### THE RIBS INSTALLED



### My Wife's Tread Upon the Steps

When I heard my wife's tread upon the steps, I was excited to think that I

could put these apparently super-human powers on display for her. Because I had blocked off my workshop area with old sheets strung floor to ceiling, this to contain the mountains of sawdust, she could not at first see my steam bending device. "What's that smell?" she asked. It's true that if you soak a few dozen oak staves in water for a week, then bathe them in searing steam for 20 minutes, an interesting odor results.

At any rate, my wife parted the curtain and took in a scene that struck her, I guess, as odd. Steam roiling around the bare light bulbs. The pressure cooker with its crude coil of rubber. The roar of the camp stove, and the blue flames licking at the cooker. Not to mention her husband, gray beard stuck in all directions, stocking cap clamped down upon his head (as I've mentioned, my workshop is dungeon cold even when the door is not open for ventilation on a winter's day), large black leather gloves on his hands, that glint in his eye. "Watch this!" I said, and gave one of my oak staves a pretzel-like bend.

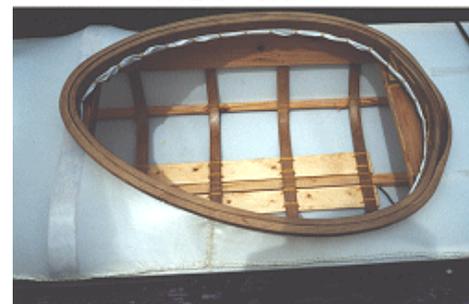
She replied, "You're nuts."

That's why we marry, I suppose: to provide some necessary perspective as we age and are afflicted by our increasingly idiosyncratic thoughts.

### Their Insolent Little Ears

It's been suggested by both family and friends that I don't need another boat, particularly not a type of boat once used for hunting seals in Greenland. I acknowledge that I have not hunted seal up to this moment in my life. Nor does it seem likely that that I will hunt seal, or any other creature, from a kayak in the foreseeable future. This owing not only to the lack of seals in the vicinity, but to the fact that both of my children are vegetarians, and would never speak to me again if I brought home a bloody seal carcass that I had managed, somehow, to harpoon.

### THE COCKPIT



Of course I was intrigued by the idea of a boat built to fit only me. I thought it poetic, in a way, that a boat could be made without a single metal screw or nail, and that it would not so much beat its way through the wave but work gracefully with them. Who would not appreciate the beauty in this, I have asked round my table. And, in the form of blank-eyed incomprehension, I've received a type of reply.

There are other considerations that have all but compelled me to build this boat. I come from line of putterers, people who spent hours doing things that made limited sense to anyone else. My relatives made wine and beer, knives and handsaws. They smoked their own meat and made crazy pieces of mosaic art. They were people who enjoyed saying they didn't have to buy it, they could make it on their own. And then they spent twice as much on tools and materials, not to mention time, in the effort to prove the point. Standing over my boat in my freezing basement, nose dripping and feet numb, I admit I am their heir.

#### VIEW FROM THE INSIDE



But never mind the tools I have broken and the wood I have butchered. Throughout that winter I saw myself on some wind-tossed body of water, in a boat that moves as if it's alive. Lacking such a pleasing picture, I might have found myself discouraged that the cat had begun to confuse those piles of sawdust in my workshop for her litter box. And I might have wondered if the children, who made their index fingers spin idly around their insolent little ears as I emerged from my cellar, were not right.

#### Finally, Afloat

I'd like to say that I put the boat in the water last spring and was instantly besotted. In fact I was grateful that I didn't immediately capsize. I had never been in a boat with a 20-inch beam. I paddled gingerly onto the St. Croix River. From the first stroke I sensed that the wind on that windless day was blowing me off to starboard. It took a while to realize that I had either jolted the stern stem piece out of whack, or never installed it properly. Soon enough I was ripping the skin off, cutting the stem out, setting it straight and putting the boat back together again. The second time around, it paddled in a straight line.

The trouble now was what the boat revealed about my paddling skills. I hadn't needed to do much more than flail at the water in my big old plastic tub. Now every time I went out I was reminded that I had a shaky grasp of bracing, and a pathetic roll. I paddled more cautiously

than joyfully. Not that I admitted it to anyone in my home, but I wondered if I had created a light, translucent monster.

I was rescued by an accidental encounter. Paddling a canoe across a Minneapolis lake one Sunday, I spotted gray-bearded kayaker churning at the water with a Greenland paddle. He did a balance brace, hand rolls, rolls with a throwing stick — things I hadn't known were possible. This was Dennis Asmussen, a member of Qajaq USA.

We chatted and later made a deal. I'd give him a few tips on building a boat — inasmuch as a builder who made a boat that didn't go straight could be trusted. He would help me learn a reliable roll and bracing skills. He has more than kept up his end of the bargain. I am, at last, comfortable in my boat. Dennis, meanwhile, has a boat in his basement that lacks only for a few coats of varnish.

My wife and children still think I'm nuts, but they've lived with that for years.

*Tony Schmitz lives in St. Paul, MN, with his wife and two daughters. His most recent novel is *Darkest Desire: The Wolf's Own Tale*.*



<http://www.healthadvocates.info/kayak/cover.html>

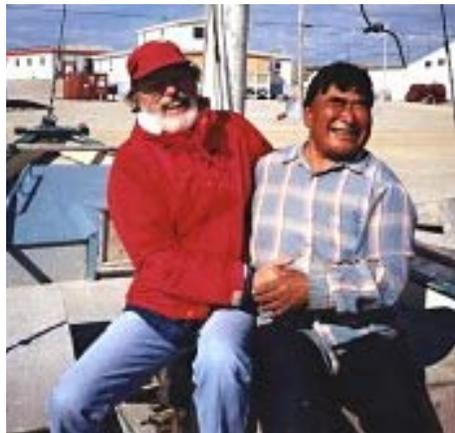
## I Fancied I Would Love to Return by Boat Or How I got into Kayaking

By Michael Bradley

My picture site on the Web <http://community.webshots.com/user/abckayaker> has three sections loosely based on how I got into kayaking.

About 30 years ago, when living in the Igloolik area of northern Canada, I fancied that I would love to return by boat. After I left, I got into sailing and eventually bought a boat large enough to consider sailing it back to Igloolik. However, that plan turned out to be a bit too romantic. Then, suddenly, my interests changed quite dramatically while in a local outdoor shop. I rented a fiberglass kayak and went out for a little paddle.

#### RETURNING AFTER 30 YEARS



Within minutes of leaving the dock I realized I would be paddling back to Igloolik and the first set of pictures - and a Seakayaker magazine article - chronicles that trip made in 1998. One of the shots shows me laughing with Enuki Kunnuk, the father of the film director Zacharisi Kunnuk of Atanarjuat fame. I had met Enuki years ago when Zach was only 6 years old and living with his family in a one-room house next to Enuki's dog team and hunting shack.

Shortly after joining the PaddleWise list I responded to a request to host a

Continued on page 7.

Continued from page 6.

young fellow named Maligiaq Padilla from Greenland. He wanted to enter a kayak race across the St Lawrence River from Forestville to Rimouski, a distance of about 35 miles. It seemed like a simple request at the time, but once again events took over and changed my life. It soon turned out that Maligiaq's two-week stay with my family and I would open up a whole world of traditional kayak building and paddling.

### MALIGIAQ



I thought that traditional kayaking had died even before I had arrived in Igloolik in the late '60s. As the photos show on the site above, while the race itself was done in modern boats, three Greenlanders

brought over their SOF boats and put on demonstrations in Montreal and elsewhere. Watching them perform various maneuvers including the famous 'walrus pull' and hearing Maligiaq talk about how these boats could perform led soon afterwards to the last set of pictures: the making my first SOF.

### MY SOF AMONG IT'S FRIENDS



Like anyone who has built their own boat, the building and subsequent paddling of it have changed me. While I still own my yellow Boreal which I took to Baffin, I usually take out my 'real' kayak and use the Boreal as a loaner when friends or children come along.

### HALL BEACH CAMP



My design for a second SOF is lingering in the back of my mind and will no doubt be the subject of another set of pictures before too long. Perhaps an Igloolik-style boat would be interesting. I wonder if Harvey has some extra plans lying around

*Michael Bradley is a primary school teacher in Hartley, Quebec. He worked in Arctic Canada as a researcher and teacher for seven years. He is currently working to re-establish the use of the kayak among the Inuit of northern Canada.*



## Dewatering and Self-Rescue in a Skin-on-Frame Boat: Or, Up a Creek Without a Pump

By Peter Strand

One of the questions that has haunted me since I swamped my first skin boat 40 years ago is "How am I going to get the water of this thing and get back in?" The boat that I paddle today will hold about 600 pounds of water when fully flooded. This brings on a quantum increase in the degree of difficulty that conventional, assisted or solo, rescues require. At worst a rescue that involves bringing any part of my boat over another boat and dewatering it is probably impossible. If you manage to do so, something or someone is going to break. At best several gallons of water will rush from end to end and never drain out.

I have demonstrated the inadequacy of re-entry and roll in skin boats at rescue clinics. A re-entry into a small cockpit skin boat must be done inverted. Wriggling into the cockpit, fighting the buoyancy of floatation gear while holding onto the paddle all the while holding your breath makes for a little too interesting adventure. As soon as the cockpit rim is dipped partially under water the boat rapidly begins to fill up. Until now, my

only solutions were to swim the boat to shore and dewatered it there, or dewater it with 2 people pumping.

Before we get to far, let me say that the only way that I have ever fully flooded a SOF boat is to do it deliberately. A typical Greenland size cockpit admits very little water in a capsized. Try rolling with your skirt removed from the rim of a Greenland or Ocean size cockpit sometime. Even Derek Hutchinson was surprised at how little water comes into the boat during a layback roll. Derek commented that he would seal the cockpit with his belly and not admit any water if he were doing it. No BCU stars for me.

To dewater a flooded boat, I retrieve my inflatable paddle float and secure it under the deck lines (not elastic bungee cords) in front of the Masik and fully inflate it. I position myself at the backrest and roll the boat to 90 degrees of heel. Water will start flowing out very rapidly. Keep rolling the boat over until it is fully inverted, supporting it with your buoyancy and the paddle float. Water will continue to flow out as long as you keep

an even keel. Be sure to check that water is flowing from both ends of the boat and, out of the cockpit. When the boat is as empty as you can get it, flip it back upright.

### BOAT-FLOODED-INFLATE FLOAT



### ROTATING BOAT DEWATERING



### CONTINUING ROTATION



## DEWATERED



To prepare for re-entry, take your paddles and slide one of them, pointing away from you, under the aft deck rigging and cinch it down, the other paddle is then cinched under the fore deck rigging, pointing out on the same side that you are on. The paddles now act as outriggers and give incredible stability, especially with low flat decks.

## SECURING PADDLES



## SECURE SECOND PADDLE



Now do a Sea Lion re-entry, pulling yourself over the cockpit, swing your legs to each side of the hull, sit on the aft deck, get your skirt under control, slide your legs into the cockpit and re-enter. I leave the paddle float under the deck lines. With practice you can do all this with only one paddle. Leave the paddles as outriggers while you gather yourself up and fasten your skirt.

## OVER COCKPIT



## SLIDING IN



## READY TO PADDLE



When you are sitting on the aft deck preparing for re-entry your center of gravity is about 15 inches aft of where it is in the paddling position. Any water in the boat will run aft and move the overall center of gravity even further aft. If you have several gallons flowing around, expect three things to happen. First: it will be very difficult to pump out water that has flowed to the stern. Second: you will be a passenger on Cleopatra's Needle as the stern sinks and the bow rises to vertical. Third: the boat will be very unstable. Get out as much water as you can before reentering.

This dewatering procedure depends on the buoyancy of the paddler to support the aft of the boat. If you are not wearing additional flotation, such as a PFD or Tulik, the process will take longer and may not be possible at all.

I have totally flooded my boat, and then in two minutes, dewatered, and re-entered. Now, I know that some people can do five rescues in two minutes with partitioned boats. These rescues are with skilled participants and "ready, set, go" classroom conditions. What happens when the hatch comes off, or a bulkhead fails, or the boat only has one bulkhead, or no assistance is available, or there is inadequate strength or skill to do a Tee rescue and a shakeout? Then, to quote Sherlock Holmes, "The game's afoot."

The last time that I had to wet exit, I tried to pump the boat out but gave up and opted to swim the boat 100 yards to shore, dewater, portage over the railroad embankment, paddle ¼ mile across the cove, load up and go home. It was late May, I was wearing a lightweight wet suit and a PFD, the air was 65 degrees, the ocean was 50 degrees. The water was 5 feet deep and there was a 2-foot swell. My immersion time was 15 minutes. I had become so fatigued; that back at the put in I capsized again getting out of my boat. I shivered for 4 hours after I arrived home. Time is of the essence; hypothermia kills. Bobbing around in cold water will soon sap reason from your mind and strength

and coordination from your muscles. Two minutes is better than fifteen in the water, far better than the rest of your life. If I had known how to dewater and re-enter this way I probably would have decided to catch up with the group and enjoy the outing that evening.

The question that I am sure you are asking is: In how rough of conditions can this be done? I cannot answer that for you. As with any self-rescue, only practice will answer that question and the answer will be different for everyone.

A Skin on Frame boat possesses some wonderful traits and some difficult problems. Dewatering is one of those problems. Try this technique on your own boat regardless of construction, whether it be custom made or store bought. Take what works for you and make it part of your arsenal. Improve upon it as you wish and hope that you never have to use it. Spread the word. Practice this and other self-rescues, especially the three second ones... rolling.

*(Editors Note: A rescue that involves bailing out of the kayak should generally be the action of last resort. It's important to realize that a flooded low volume skin-on-frame kayak will probably remain afloat, but not, however, with you seated in the cockpit. Ample flotation, secured in each end of the kayak, backed up with a sea-sock (a waterproof bag that fits around the coaming and provides room for your legs), will greatly reduce the volume of water that can enter the kayak. Experiment with how your kayak reacts when flooded, in safe, controlled conditions so that you are not surprised in an emergency. We look forward to experimenting with Peter's innovative dewatering technique. You can never have too many rescue options.)*

*Pete lives in Connecticut. He started kayaking as a tender 8th grader after building a SOF from Mechanics Illustrated plans. At present, he has built over two dozen "traditional" boats. Some of Pete's™ qajaqs can be seen on his website <http://qajaqsofpeters.com/>. Pete's wife, Rhonda, took the photos.*

# Trees to Paddles

## Carving Greenland Paddles From Split Wood

By Shawn Baker



Your favorite music plays in the background, or maybe you prefer silence and only the sound of a finely honed edge slicing through a fresh piece of clean smelling spruce or cedar. The paddle comes alive in your hands.

I find it much more refreshing to carve my paddles with hand tools and leave the power saws out of the process. We often run down to the local lumberyard and dig through an entire unit of choice lumber only to find a couple two-bys that are even worthy of continuing life as a paddle. Most of them are knotty, pithy, have poor grain orientation, or worst yet, have a great deal of grain runout. Using split wood for paddles saves all these headaches, and gives one a blank that is a true pleasure to carve.

If you don't have access to a chainsaw or standing lumber, check with your local firewood dealer, and explain to them that you're looking for a relatively clear 8' or 9' long spruce or cedar log that is 18-24" in diameter, and are willing to pay \$40 or 50 for it. For a dealer who might only make \$100 a cord (unit of wood 4' x 4' x 8'), this is a great deal for both of you. Keep in mind that you can possibly get 18 or 20 usable paddle blanks out of a 24" diameter log.

Once home with the log, you'll need to round up log splitting tools. A single-bitted axe, a large hammer, and 4 or 5 hardwood wedges will do nicely. For wedges, I've found that chunks of maple salvaged out of old pallets and run through the table saw are cheap and readily available! Inspect the log for prominent natural cracks—you'll want to use these for your first split. Find a large edge-to-center crack (if there is one), and running from the center to the edge opposite where it started, extend it using light taps with the axe and hammer. Once you've weakened the log across its diameter, drive the axe right into the middle of the solidest

part of the split you defined. With a few more blows from the hammer, the split should have opened up enough to start driving wedges. Place the wedges 2 or 3 inches apart in the split across the end of the log. Alternate blows between each wedge until the log starts to split open. As you drive the wedges further, nearby wedges will loosen and fall out—place these in the split at the side of the log, and follow them to the other end. Using the same technique, split your log into quarters, then eighths, always splitting the piece exactly in half—trying to split a narrower piece will result in the split running crookedly toward the narrow side.

### SPLITTING THE LOG



### FINALLY SOME BLANKS



# Notes from the Regions

## THE NORTHEAST

*Filed By: Keith Attenborough  
QAJAQ USA Vice President*

### Nicolas Bertrand of

Montreal built two Greenland kayaks, one SOF and one S&G. He finds Greenland paddling particularly well suited to winter paddling in Quebec, and has published several articles on the subject.

### Juan Ochoa of Harvard, MA

(the town, not the school) has been busy. He's been teaching rolling at the Harvard Ridge Pool in Boxborough every other Wed evening. He tries to emphasize Greenland techniques with the attendees — earlier this year one of the participants went from never having rolled to her first roll in 45 min. On a personal note, Juan managed his first throwing stick roll with the help of another enthusiastic Qajaq USA member, Tony Biscotti. Tony is one of the members of the infamous Walden Qajaq Society. I wonder what Henry David Thoreau would have thought? Juan has also been working on both paddles and boats. He's currently working on a SOF baidarka.

**Wayne Smith** filed this report for Connecticut: Greg Stamer, President of Qajaq USA, spent the weekend of Sept 7-9 with ConnYak. He did a skills demo and taught a class in Greenland technique at Bluff Point park in Groton, CT, and also gave a talk and slide presentation on the Greenland championships. Over the course of the weekend, approximately 100 people attended the event. Photos can be found at [www.connyak.org](http://www.connyak.org)

**Wayne Gilcrest** of Hyde Park, NY sent in this report from the Norrie Point Rolling crew: Wayne himself is building Greenland paddles and norsaqs. He's working his way through the rolling and rope gymnastics list with a fair amount of success and intends to build a SOF this spring and go to Delmarva in October. He also teaches rolling classes through Pack and Paddle Adventures ([packpaddleadventu](http://packpaddleadventu)

Continued on page 11.

By the time you have eighths of your log, the inside of the log will likely be “paddle-sized”. Split the eighth into half its width, this time with the annual growth rings. If you had an 18” diameter log, this will give you a 4.5” wide paddle blank, which gives you plenty of room for adjustment in carving. Then, split the outer part of the wedge into two pieces, again across the growth rings. By splitting each eighth into 3 pieces, you will have 24 pieces of wood. Some of these may have knots that make them unsuitable for full-length paddles. Use them for storm paddles or firewood—remember, you still have 15-18 paddle blanks that maybe cost you \$3 apiece. It’s great to keep waste to a minimum, and you’re still wasting less than if the log had been sawn into lumber.

Eye your split blank and find any knots or grain irregularities that may become apparent after splitting—unlike sawn wood, you can see the way the grain works at the surface of the paddle right away. Lay the wood across your workbench, and use a wedge or two to prop it so the surface is relatively level to your work surface. Note that many natural trees have some upward spiral growth, so you might find that opposite sides look like high spots on either end of the paddle. Block the paddle so these high spots are relatively equal. Using a straightedge against your work surface (or a small torpedo level if your work surface is uneven), scribe a line on either end of the blank. Since we are not carving the paddle from sawn wood, these “level lines” will serve as the guidelines to keep the faces parallel and the paddle straight throughout the carving process.

I will assume that the reader has already read, or preferably built a paddle or three from Chuck Holst’s excellent plans. They are available online at: <http://www.qajaqusa.org/QK/makegreen2.pdf>

Clamp the wood down, and “hog” down the high spots on both faces and both ends of the blank until the blank is roughly rectangular. Technically, we are introducing a tiny amount of grain runout, but it’s when the grain runs back “in”, that we actually have a weak spot.

Use a chalkline (blue chalk is less staining!), snap a line down either

edge of the blank from one level line to the other. These will be your paddle edges. Make sure both chalklines are located roughly in the center of the blank (especially in the loom area). If the lines are not centered, move the level line up or down on one end until you like the “fit”. If you have the chalklines running toward opposite faces, look again at the blank and determine whether you should rotate both level lines, or if more “hogging” will make the blank fit the lines better.

This done, pick the center of each level line, and using a small square, draw perpendicular lines to each face. Connect these perpendicular lines with the chalkline. Shift the perpendicular lines sideways if necessary to avoid knots, or keep the loom in a thicker part of the blank.

Now the fun begins! Using a drawknife, hog the entire blank into a diamond. This differs slightly from Mr. Holst’s popular paddle carving instructions, in that it immediately deviates from the rectangular, but since our paddles are mostly diamond or oval-shaped, it more quickly highlights any problems. Peel down to the center face chalklines and to within 1/8” of either side of the edge chalklines.

### ROUGH DIAMOND SHAPE



Snap the centerlines again. Measure ½ the width of the paddle from either side of the perpendicular end line. Snap these lines on both faces of the paddle. Find the center of the blank and lay out the loom. I like to use a 20” loom for roughing-out purposes, as either shoulder is 10” from the center. So, if my blank is 98” long, I mark the center at 49”, and shoulders at 39” and 59”. Mark ½ the loom thickness on either side of the face centerline at the shoulders, and connect these measurements with a pencil and straight-line or the chalkline again. Now use the chalkline to snap out the blade tapers from tip to shoulder, or to mid-loom for unshouldered paddles. Use the drawknife to shave out the “bowtie” shape. A Japanese pull saw with a ripping blade

also makes quick, accurate, enjoyable work of this task.

### MARK PADDLE SHAPE



### PADDLE OUTLINE



Again snap the edge centerlines. I’ve found that a quick stroke of the pull saw across the end at the level line makes a great notch to hook the chalkline into when repeatedly snapping these lines.

At this point, get down at eye level to the workpiece, and sight from the end of the blade to the loom at each face. You want to define the blade taper at this point. If you see big “mountains”, plane them down. The tip should be about ½” thick (1/4” above the level line on either side), tapering in a straight line to the end of the loom at the shoulder area.

The loom should be centered at the edge chalkline. If it is still too thick, plane to an equal distance on either side of the chalkline—I like it about 1 3/8” deep, so I aim for about ¾” on either side—which leaves a little room for finish planning. Recheck the blade tapers if you made the loom area significantly thinner.

Snap the center face chalklines again, and re-establish your “diamond”. Use the drawknife for all rough thickness work, and a block plane as you near your goal.

If you don’t trust your “eye”, snap another pair of lines at each edge to define the thickness of the edge. Plane to these. I prefer to simply plane them down by feel and look. When all alignment is done, and the paddle is shaped exactly as you like it, the block plane can be used to round the tips (erasing the level lines).

A spokeshave is excellent for shaping the shoulders and rounding the loom.

## SPOKESHAVE SHAPING



## CUTTING THE SHOULDERS



## PLANE TO SHAPE



If you've used sharp cutting tools, you may now find the finish is much smoother than you could ever have achieved with sandpaper, in which case, go out and enjoy your new split wood paddle! If not, running over the paddle with \*GASP!\* a random orbital sander with a 120 grit disc will eliminate most of the plane marks. Use 150 or 180 grit by hand to further smooth the paddle and go use it. After about two uses and dryings-out, use 200 grit by hand to knock down the "fuzzies". This results in a silky-smooth, oil-less finish. You'll also have a paddle that is probably a little tougher than one from a 2x4 containing the grain runouts caused by the whims of the sawmill operator.

While Greenlanders 200 years ago didn't have as sophisticated of hand tools or Japanese pull saws as we have today, it's fun to think that one can build a

paddle a little more traditionally and with a little more "spirit" than one built with bandsaws, jointers, and AC power.

## FINISHED PADDLES



*Shawn Baker is an ACA certified Open Water Coastal Kayak Instructor. and kayak builder from Kalispell, Montana. Web site: <http://www.geocities.com/shawnkayak/>*

## Notes from the Regions

Continued from page 9.

res.com). Another member of the crew, Mike DiGiacomio, also of Hyde Park, NY built a "Skinny Walrus" SOF in Nov-Dec. He's paddled several times before the Hudson River froze over and reports that he's currently playing with gymnastics and having more success with rolling. Finally, Gordon Adams of Pawling, NY built a Schade/Shearwater Merganser. He learned to roll this summer with Sanjay (a southern MA member of Qajaq USA), did lots of practice this fall in the Hudson and recently finished a laminated Greenland paddle.

*If you're in the Northeast, feel free to send in more tidbits for the next issue. [keith@qajaqusa.org](mailto:keith@qajaqusa.org)*

## FROM THE NORTHWEST

*Filed By: Mike Hanks*

*QAJAQ USA PNW Regional Advisor*

**Paul Lalonde** has been sponsoring a weekly SOF (mostly Greenland) pool session at Lord Byng pool from 7:00-8:00 on Sundays. He's been asking people for a \$100 commitment at the start of each block of 5 nights to cover the pool rentals, and charging drop-ins \$15-20, which gets thrown into the pot for extra nights at the end. They have 6 regulars, and usually a couple of drop-ins.

His wife Shona went up to Pelly Bay this summer with Rob Morris and Mark Reuten to build Netsilikmeot qajaqs in an elder-youth program there. Her qajaq has finally made it here, and it's a beaut.

He built a new Greenland-style qajaq this fall, 18" wide, 18' long, and 8" high at the masik. He is finally starting to be its master rather than the other way around, and learning to sit \*really\* flat-legged.

**Paul Lalonde and Mark Reuten** are planning a little harpoon-building spree in the next few weeks so we can start practicing. They've also started working on the rope gymnastics, although with much less success than their paddling.

Continued on page 12.

## Notes from the Regions

Continued from page 11.

**Ken Lister**, head of anthropology at the Royal Ontario Museum, gave a lecture on the history of the qajaq in the arctic, with a bent on the qajaq as a key material artifact of the Inuit culture.

If you want to be informed of more of these activities drop Paul an email at [plalonde@telus.net](mailto:plalonde@telus.net) and he'll add you to his qajaq-friends list.

**Don Beale** has been selling a nice selection of Greenland paddles at Alder Creek. He has also completed a strip-built version of the Walrus.

**Val Wann:** Members of the Bay Area Sea Kayakers club (San Francisco area) had a Native Paddle-Making workshop Saturday and Sunday, 3/1 & 2. Several neophyte paddle builders and novice woodworkers gathered to share tools and mutual encouragement. Most worked on Greenland paddles, but there was one single-blade and one double-blade Aleut style paddle carved as well. Adzes and table saws, draw knives and power grinders were all employed to create lots of shavings and sawdust while about 10 men and women learned about the joys of carving their own native-style paddle. The event was organized by Hal Beilan and hosted by Mike Higgins.

**David Raynalds** just completed a baidarka last year. His web site is <http://www.spiritone.com/~raynalds/baidarka.htm>

**Shawn Baker** hosted a 5-week paddle carving class in Kalispell, Montana last October, and plans to put on a Greenland paddling class in June after SSTIKS 2003.

**Shawn Baker, Bill Price,** and **Mike Hanks** also spent weekends in June and September paddling with skinny sticks! Shawn gave a rolling demo to people at the camp while Mike narrated. Shawn learned to roll with a brick, and tried the walrus pull with Bill and Mike pulling.

**Mike Hanks** has built some new paddles and organized a rolling session at the University of Puget Sound pool.

**Tim Mattson** plans to offer Greenland paddling instruction through local kayak shops. He has a couple paddles from Shawn. But needs to get 4 more and then he'll be ready to go.

Continued on page 13

## A Steam Box Just for Bending Ribs

Continued from page 4.

### BOARDS CUT TO FOUR-FEET



I'll then lay out a grid for support dowels to hold the rib stock when I'm steaming them

### SUPPORT GRID

Next I'll close the box up. In one of the ends I'll drill a 3/4" hole.

### 3/4-INCH HOLE



I'll next get a 3/4-inch floor flange from the local hardware store and use a section of 3/4-inch pipe to fit the 1-inch radiator hose from my boiler to the Steam box

### FLANGE AND HOSE



For my boiler I'm using a discarded pressure tank from a shallow well I got from my local plumber. Don was glad to have me haul it off; he didn't have to pay re cycle fees. For my heat source I'm

using a crab cooker that I got a garage sale 10 years ago for five dollars.

I'm using 1' radiator hose because it fits over the 3/4-inch pipe I'm using. I got it from the local hardware store, I have about four feet I paid in the neighborhood of \$1.00 a foot \$2.16 for the floor flanges; pipe free, more scrounged stuff. With steam to it the box looks like this.

Well that's a nice picture of my long box, but I think I'll hook up the new one to the boiler and steam some pieces for the frame I have under construction.

### RIB STEAMING IN BOX



Next I'll pull a rib out and bend it into place.

### BENDING A RIB



### PLACING THE RIB



For pieces of wood I know to be difficult to bend I'll use an old rifle sling as a backing strip, an old leather belt would work as well.

## BOB KELIM



Several people have recommended wallpaper steamers as a source of steam. Consider; if you use the heat source I have for it's intended purpose you'll be in the back yard cooking clams or crab and drinking cold beer. I don't think any of you want to use a wallpaper steamer for its intended use.

As a final word I'd like to caution against using wallpaper steamers as a source of steam. If you get one of them,

you'll likely find yourself in a home remodel project, you don't want that, you want to build boats.



*Bob Kelim  
Me; I live in Nahcotta, small village on Willapa Bay in SW Washington State. I've been playing or working on the water my entire life. Would like to get my hands on some camouflage neoprene so I could make a tuiq for duck hunting out of my boats. I make my living as a Land surveyor. Used to be a commercial fisherman, cannery worker, bolt cutter, and surf bum.* 

## Notes from the Regions

Continued from page 12.

**Chris Cunningham's** book, which was released last December, is going into a second printing.

**Harvey Golden** has been building, researching, and writing. Harvey led a class in the fall at Rivers West in Portland. 5 SOF boats were built, generally following 17th century West Greenland construction techniques. Henry Romer built one of them.

Harvey also gave a rolling demo, but it wasn't in the NW; it was on the Hudson River in Manhattan.

*If you're in the Northwest, feel free to send in more tidbits for the next issue.*

[mike@qajaqusa.org](mailto:mike@qajaqusa.org)

## THE GREAT LAKES AREA

*Filed By: David Braun  
QAJAQ USA Membership*

**Cold Temperatures:** The recent record cold temperatures in the Great Lakes Region has turned the usual open water winter paddling areas into solid skating rinks forcing many of us to turn to rivers and the confinement of local swimming pools to hone our Greenland techniques. The good news is that there has been plenty of time to hold up in that heated garage or basement workshop and make a few new paddles, or even finish that long over due skin boat.

**Kevin Parmenter:** Traverse City, Michigan local Greenland-style enthusiast Kevin Parmenter has been invited by some of the areas elementary schools to display his skin boat, traditional hunting tools and give a lecture about their history and use. Kevin has told me that the kids have shown a genuine interest and that he hopes to get a few of them out paddling, Greenland-style, this summer.

**Upcoming Events:** Looking to the upcoming paddling season there are two events worth noting for Greenland-style kayakers. "The Great Lakes Sea Kayak Symposium" held annually in Grand Marais, Michigan July 17-20, and "Qajaq Training Camp 03" August 22-24, in Frankfort, Michigan. Both events will feature Qajaq USA president Greg Stamer.

*If you're in the Great Lakes Area, feel free to send in more tidbits for the next issue.* [dave@qajaqusa.org](mailto:dave@qajaqusa.org)

## 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 – two pages in length.

Longer articles would be acceptable.

Best if composed with a word processor

CRAFTSMANSHIP • TRAVEL  
SKILLS • ADVENTURES  
ACHIEVEMENTS • OTHER

### Accompany Your Text With Photos

The optimal format: JPEG, 300DPI color, 4-6 inches wide.

Material submitted doesn't have to be flawless.

Grammar and spelling will be reviewed.

**Typos will be corrected.**

Changes deemed necessary will be made only upon approval from author.

A draft will be available to the author for review prior to publication.

Send your material as email attachments to:

[bobby@qajaqusa.org](mailto:bobby@qajaqusa.org)



# QAJAQ USA

## Membership Application



We welcome members outside of the US, and overseas.  
Please print your information and send in form with payment.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**Type of Membership:** Please make check or money-order, in U.S. Funds, payable to **Qajaq USA, Inc.**

- Subscribing \$35     Supporting \$50     Sustaining \$100     Patron \$150

Corporate members please consider sustaining or patron membership. Sustaining and Patron members will be recognized in newsletter.

- Member Items:**
- Subscribing** (two logo stickers)
  - Supporting** (two logo stickers + embroidered patch)
  - Sustaining** (two logo stickers + embroidered patch + Qajaq USA T-shirt)
  - Patron** (Sustaining perks + Signed Kayak Survey Drawing by Harvey Golden)

Qajaq USA silk-screened cotton T-shirts are available for \$15 each. (One shirt is complementary with Sustaining and Patron memberships)

**T-Shirts:** Quantity/Size:    \_\_\_ Small    \_\_\_ Medium    \_\_\_ Large    \_\_\_ Xtra Large

**I'd Like to Help with:**     Events     Newsletter     Membership     Publicity

**I am Interested In:**     Kayak Building     Paddle Making     Rolling & Other skills     Instruction  
 Racing & Competition     Meeting Greenland-style paddlers in my area

**Please tell us about yourself.** Comments, other interests, or short bio.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Thank You for your interest and support of Qajaq USA! [www.qajaqusa.org](http://www.qajaqusa.org)

**Please mail to:**  
**QAJAQ USA, P.O. Box 5851, Traverse City, MI 49696**