

## The 17th Annual Delmarva Paddlers' Retreat, 30 September–2 October 2005

by Ed Zachowski

*"Because I want to be with the people who are doing it..."*

THAT WAS THE SNIPPET OF ADVICE given to me by one of my mentors while I drafted the cover letter for my graduate school application. This professor advised me to tell the admissions board, "I want to be with the people who are doing it" ('it' was chemistry). "That's something they'll understand," he said.



*"In a break from the past, we instituted an innovative philosophical shift: the term 'instructor' was not used at Delmarva."*

Some 20 years later, that was exactly how I felt when I feverishly sent in the registration form for what would be my first Delmarva Paddlers' Retreat. I wanted to be with people who were doing it. I've always wanted to ask Robin Snow, the event's organizer, if I was the only one who had ever sent in his packet via Federal Express!

### DAY 1 — FRIDAY

Camp Arrowhead is located on Delaware's Rehoboth Bay on a beautiful 167-acre wooded reserve. A thick canopy of fragrant pine trees envelops the single-lane road to the dining hall, where participants received a complete registration packet, containing a map of the camp, cabin or camp site assignment, and a schedule of events. Participants also received name tags to be worn to meals.

In the hall, a multitude of activities were already in progress. To the right, our West Coast guest, Brian Schulz of Cape Falcon Kayaks demonstrated kayak skinning. That Friday he was re-skinning a kayak brought to the retreat by Qajaq USA board member Ben Fuller.

*Continued on pg. 5*

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<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.





## Editor's Letter

I am pleased to present this issue of *The Masik*, my first as editor. Boat-building can take many forms—skin on frame, stitch and glue, strip built—and inside you'll find an article on each. Pete Notman offers some details on the Yost folder he built and paddles in New Zealand. Brooks Martyn describes the extensive changes he made to his stitch-and-glue Chesapeake Light Craft *North Bay*. And Don Goss explains how he created a strip-built version of his skin-on-frame kayak. Scattered throughout this issue you'll find boat-building tips by Harvey Golden, Brian Nystrom, Brian Schulz, and Pete Strand, compiled by Tony Schmitz. These builders approach their tasks differently, yet all achieve seaworthy craft.

Also in this issue are Len Thunberg's review of *Greenland Paddles: Step-by-Step*, Brian Nystrom's paddle-making manual, along with reviews of *This Cold Heaven*, Gretel Ehrlich's account of her travels in Greenland, and *The Last Gentleman Adventurer*, Edward Beauclerk Maurice's memoir of his time in Arctic Canada as an employee of Hudson's Bay Company.

In an interview, Mark Starr, documentation specialist at Mystic Seaport, offers his thoughts on the evolution of Greenland-style kayaking in the United States, among other topics.

Those of you who attended last year's Delmarva Paddlers' Retreat will have those memories rekindled by Ed Zachowski's description of the event. If you haven't had a chance to go to Delmarva, Ed's writing will have you planning your trip.

This issue would not have been possible without the able proofreading of Bill Price, Jane Taylor, and Wes Ostertag. Art Director Thomas Duncan redesigned *The Masik*. His elegant masthead design takes its cues from the beam central to the qajaq, and the goal of his redesign is easier reading online.

Finally, and most important, I'd like to thank Bobby Curtis, *The Masik's* first editor. His generous assistance and encouragement have made for an easy transition. The high standards he set and maintained, evident in every past issue of *The Masik*, have been a challenge and inspiration to me. I hope to continue that tradition.

—Tom Milani

June 2006

**Lately there has been some talk** among board

members that, just perhaps, the attitude of some Greenland forum participants has changed somewhat. One opinion was that there has been a subtle shift from a “Greenland focus” to a “me,” or self-directed, focus. While I’m not sure that this is cor-

Greg Stamer

**Qajaq** 

rect, I’ll express my thoughts on the matter. This piece is based on a forum posting that I wrote in April.

It would be presumptuous to

assume that our activities, of paddling and qajaq building, make us a direct part of Greenlandic culture. Qajaq USA does not pretend to be, nor harbor the illusion of being, the guardians of Greenlandic culture; that is the sole responsibility of the Greenlanders themselves. It is necessary to acknowledge this to prevent undue self-importance and appropriation. We can never forget that Greenland is the center of Greenland kayaking. Likewise, we should realize that the growth of kayaking inside Greenland is mostly related to factors within Greenland itself and not due to outside influences. That said, we must acknowledge that cultures don’t exist in a vacuum. Like all human relationships, cultures share, interact and intertwine. Maligiaq Paddilla and others have shared some of their kayaking knowledge with us, and we are reaping the benefits of that sharing (and there is still much more to share). Likewise, simply paddling Greenland-style and being aware of, and being respectful of, its origins, is honoring that culture and it does make a difference.

Don’t believe me? When Kaleraq Bech first visited Delmarva, he was almost in tears to learn firsthand that Greenland kayaking had not been forgotten or dismissed — that it has been accepted by the world. It is one of Greenland’s great cultural contributions to the world and they are rightly proud of it. After witnessing

the popularity of Greenland-style kayaking at Delmarva, Kaleraq Bech (and Pavia Lumholt) returned home “feeling proud to be a Greenlander” (their words). The people Kaleraq observed were simply playing — learning new rolls and skills and trying new kayaks. They were just having fun, yet they had just changed someone’s life and perceptions. Kaleraq went back to Greenland to champion the creation of a new organization, and paved the way for what is now Qajaq USA.

Greenland kids learn that traditional kayaking is considered “cool” in the Western world, and foreigners travel to Greenland to learn and compete. Perhaps this influences whether some kids get involved in the sport or not, especially when they see that a top performer such as Maligiaq is invited to teach around the world. Whenever we ask Qaannat Kattuffiat officials what we can best do to help the Greenlanders, the response is often to simply have more kayakers visit and participate in the Greenland championships.

I firmly believe that our actions, even seemingly selfish ones, can have widespread “cultural” significance, and that we should acknowledge this. By building and paddling an SOF with a GP, posting to the forum, helping people learn how to paddle, and interacting with others, you are part of the movement to “further the appreciation and development of Greenland-style kayaking in the United States.” And you do make a difference.

—Greg Stamer



This particular kayak was constructed by Maligiaq in Greenland and shipped to the States. (Maligiaq also built kayaks for Dan Segal, Turner Wilson, and Greg Stamer.) People showed a great deal of interest in the construction details; many noted the drawing inside the cockpit, which is a trademark of Maligiaq's handiwork.

On the far left side of the hall, long tables held the items for the silent auction, white elephant sale, and the Qajaq USA merchandise station. Some folks previewed items of potential interest, others placed their donated items for auction along the table. Auction items are a primary means of subsidizing the costs of bringing in guest speakers and really help to keep registration costs for attendees to a minimum. Some items have been donated by gear manufacturers through solicitations prior to the event, but many retreat attendees have regularly donated items year after year. Some of these items become well-known and sought after souvenirs of the event.

Just outside, on the far end of the dining hall, Don Beale ran a paddle-making class. In this all-day session, students would complete their own paddles from blanks specially prepared and shipped to the camp by Don. The blanks are the highest quality, with special inserts at the paddle tips for added strength. Don and Marcel Rodriguez patiently coached each student. Later the same afternoon, Shawn Baker and his team conducted what must have been the largest neoprene Delmarva Paddlers' Retreat workshop ever, with 21 students.

On the way to cabins and camp sites, two ropes demonstration areas were set up, one outdoors, the other indoors. Demonstrations by Dubside and board member Wayne Gilchrest were ongoing during registration times, but classes for beginners and competition-level scoring sessions would



## ORIGINS Ed Zachowski

In 1988, Charlie and Cindy Cole started an annual gathering of paddlers on the western shore of Rehoboth Bay in Lewes, Delaware, to exchange paddling skills and knowledge. Ten years later, Maligiaq Padilla embarked on a tour of the United States and Canada. Few then might have realized the impact that tour, which began with a visit to the 10th Annual Delmarva Paddlers' Retreat, would have on the development of Greenland kayaking in America. But in August 2000, Cindy Cole joined Greg Stamer and Harvey Golden to compete in the first "open" Greenland National Championship. At the 2000 event in Greenland, and at the subsequent Qaannat Kattuffiat Board meeting, the seeds of an American chapter were planted, leading to the formation of Qajaq USA.

In 2001, the Delmarva Paddlers' Retreat quickly transformed to become the first all-Greenland, traditional paddling event of its kind in the United States. Since then, it has increasingly moved toward an extended gathering of Greenland enthusiasts sharing traditional skills, and conversing on topics ranging from the status of friends in Greenland, to traditional boat construction, to the implications of traditional origins on modern kayaking. Apart from its instructional elements, the event began to include distinguished invited speakers and world-class demonstrations and workshops.

Although Qajaq USA board members and advisors organize many events with a traditional focus, the Delmarva Paddlers' Retreat is currently the only official Qajaq USA event. As such, the Retreat is the site of the club's annual board meeting and club elections. Often, committees are established and objectives set for the next year.

*Delmarva, cont.*

be held on Saturday and Sunday, during scheduled blocks.

Camp Arrowhead has numerous camp site locations with roofed, raised platforms, recently upgraded with insect screening. Each platform can comfortably hold five or six people, and each site has about five platforms and running water. Some campers preferred to get closer to the beach where they could hear the sounds at the water's edge or be close to their boats, probably to get in an early morning paddle. Some have said that the wind rushing through the pines just sounds better closer to the beach. In any case, it does put them near the beer at Saturday night's bonfire—probably just a coincidence.

The experience for cabin dwellers is a little different—they do not get the privacy of the campers, but they do get the fringe benefits of roommates with whom they can share their daily experiences, compare notes, learn, and make friends. Cabins are fully screened, and we always allow for generous space allotments when filling the cabins, so participants are never crowded, and usually have one bunk for themselves and one for their gear.

The dining hall has a dinner bell which sounds regularly at 6 p.m.. One pretty consistent thing people have said about the event is that there is surprisingly good food for a camp environment. We make generous allotments for our vegetarians, which seem to amount to 10% of all attendees. And I know for a fact that sometimes the vegetarian fare looks so good, we have had a few people crossing over to that line—unauthorized mind you! But no worries, there always seems to be plenty of everything.

During the first meal, the Qajaq USA board and advisors were introduced, as were the event staff. General announcements and an outline of the next day's schedule followed. Just as all this wrapped up, everyone was asked to rearrange the dining hall chairs for our first featured speakers, Cheri Perry and Turner Wilson. Having recently returned from the 2005 Greenland National Kayaking Championships, Cheri and Turner shared their experiences, fantastic slides, wonderful details about individual Greenlandic participants, and their stories. It was so personable, and at times touching, that it really allowed us to identify with these people over the span of time and space.



## LOOKING AHEAD

Ed Zachowski

We look forward to this year's event; the dates are set for 6–8 October 2006. In an ongoing effort to provide improvements, we sent out an attendee survey and received a large number of responses. We know that attendees enrolled in both the paddle-making and neoprene workshops had a difficult time finishing both projects. We plan to address this scheduling issue next time around. Should a sufficient number of people should be interested, we are looking at broadening the neoprene class to full tuilik-making. There is a good possibility we will add an optional day prior to the usual Friday arrival to allow for the expanded schedule.

Keep a lookout on the Qajaq USA Web site link to the Delmarva Paddlers' Retreat for open registration. Although the number of attendees is always limited, we are doing what we can to add a dozen or so more slots this year, but be sure to get your registrations in as early as possible.

*Delmarva, cont.*

## DAY 2 — SATURDAY

The Delmarva Paddlers' Retreat breakfast bell rang at 7:30 a.m. But Cheri's yoga class, with the expert help of Jane Taylor, had been running since 6:30 a.m. I guess some of us deserved a little more breakfast than others. It was reported that a Yoda sighting was made at yoga class—which was taken as a sign that the Force was going to be with us for the remainder of the retreat.

After breakfast, to the kayaks! Greg Stamer provided some dry-land stroke instruction followed by on-water practice and evaluation. Dan Segal, board member and notable member of the Walden Qajaq Society, was our on-water team leader. Under Dan's direction, and in a break from the past, we instituted an innovative philosophical shift: the term "instructor" was not used at Delmarva. Dan put forth a principle that we are all learners; most of us therefore have knowledge we can share with other paddlers at some level, and classical distinctions should diminish in favor of a method of sharing the knowledge we possess with other paddlers. This method draws on the Greenlandic technique and culture of training—but the way we implemented it was somewhat of an experiment, given the time constraints of block scheduling.

The intent was to get people who were working on similar techniques together in one place at one time with others who had mastered those techniques. We deployed a color-coded flag system to form seven break-out groups, based on individuals' assessment of their abilities:

- (1) Strokes.
- (2) I want to learn the sculling brace, the balance brace, my first roll, my first offside roll; or I want to improve them.
- (3) I want to learn more advanced layback rolls with a paddle, such as armpit, crook-of-the-arm, behind the head, or spine rolls. I have a good layback roll.
- (4) I want to learn layback rolls with a norsaq or my hand or my elbow. I have a very good roll with a paddle.



The  
**MASIK**  
Newsletter of Qajaq USA

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*Delmarva, cont.*

(5) I want to learn forward-finishing techniques; chest scull, reverse sweep roll, or storm roll. I have a good roll.

(6) I want to learn forward-finishing norsaq or hand rolls, or a behind-the-back roll. I have a very good forward-finishing roll.

(7) I want to learn sculling rolls. I can scull and have a very good forward-finishing roll.

Groups met at the appropriate flag, and those same color-coded flags were on buoys on the water, so that people could switch groups easily or find groups if they came to the beach late. Although the on-water sessions were scheduled for over 2 hours, folks were encouraged to switch classes at least every hour. A staff member on the beach with a whistle assisted with timekeeping. The system seemed to work very well, and overall feedback from attendees was excellent. The lunch bell rang at 12 p.m. More on-water classes and another kayak dressage workshop followed lunch. Then at 3 p.m., on-water classes broke up and everyone lined up for the now famous

**At this Delmarva Paddlers' Retreat, Duncan was reunited with Ken Taylor, whom he has not seen in about 30 years!**

kayak games, run by the distinguished professor of fun, Jenny Plummer. At my first retreat, when competing to see how many rolls I could do in 30 seconds, I neglected to ask if it required staying in the kayak for all of them...

After all that activity, people got back to their base camp or cabin for a bit of cleaning up and drying off, as the dinner bell was bound to ring at 6 p.m.. After dinner, more announcements, the customary sale of raffle tickets, and then the introduction of our guest speaker—none other than Duncan Winning, OBE, a visiting professor from Scotland. Duncan had recently returned from a research expedition to West Greenland funded by

the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust. In Greenland, he paddled to Igdlorssuit (Illorsuit), and met some of the surviving relatives of Emanuel Kornelsen, who built the now famous Ken Taylor kayak.

The story goes back to 1959, when Ken Taylor, encouraged by Dr. Harald Drever, a Professor at St Andrew's University, undertook a trip to the west coast of Greenland. There, at Igdlorssuit, a kayak was constructed for Ken, which came with him when he returned to Scotland.

While Ken's attention turned back to his studies, the kayak passed into the hands of the late Joe Reid. Joe Reid and Duncan Winning undertook a project to measure the kayak—from which Duncan produced a survey drawing. Having followed the evolution of modern sea kayak design for some time, Duncan believes that there are over 30 kayaks based directly, or indirectly, on the Ken Taylor kayak.

Duncan discussed in great detail the Greenland influence in United Kingdom sea kayak development. He treated us to slides of his trip to that historic place and the details of the people involved. At this Delmarva Paddlers' Retreat, Duncan was reunited with Ken Taylor, whom he has not seen in about 30 years! Another notable historical reunion was that the actual "sister" kayak to Ken Taylor's kayak, which was built for John Heath by Emanuel Kornelsen, was present at the retreat. Ken said that he was thrilled to see it and it brought back many memories.

If that weren't enough, it was time to head down to the pool and see the amazing results of all

## QAJAQ USA PATRONS & SUSTAINING MEMBERS

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Osprey Tours  
Eastsound, WA

Turner Wilson  
Wallingford, CT

Edward J. Zachowski  
Brick, NJ



*Delmarva, cont.*

the kayak dressage practice. Man in black Dubside performed a lighthearted solo routine featuring dual norsaqs. Cheri Perry and Freya Hoffmeister put on a most elegant performance. Truly beauty in form and motion—we all loved it.

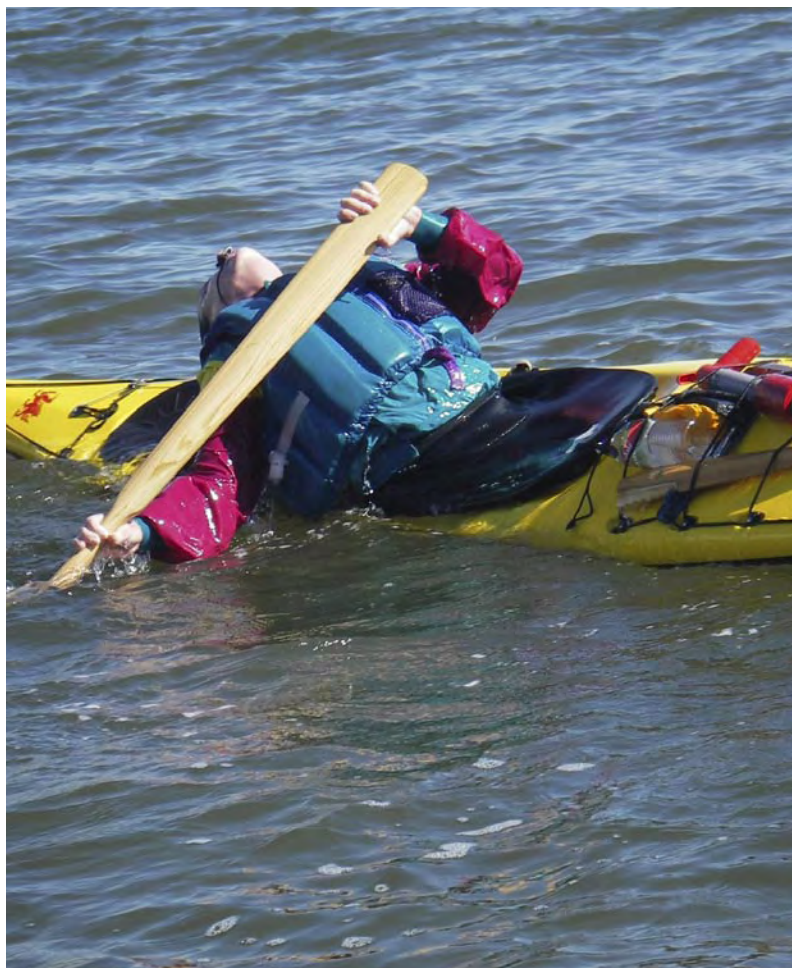
From there it was on to the traditional bonfire, with camaraderie and...did anyone say beer and wine? It was quite an end to a wonderful evening. Perhaps next year someone needs to announce that there are more on-water sessions the following morning!

### DAY 3 — SUNDAY

For those early risers with the proper flexibility, Yoga again began at 6:30 a.m.. For those who wanted to spend their morning dry, ropes classes were being held at 9 a.m. This year we had heavy canvas pants (XL) to be worn over participants' clothing and gloves on hand to avoid rope burns. Anyone who preferred water to ropes was certainly welcome to hit the beach immediately. Participants again lined up at their flag of choice and were soon on the water with their guides. An additional on-water bonus the last day was the kayak dressage jointly performed by Cheri and Turner—unique and looked like fun for the kids to practice!

We allot more time for lunch on the last day because we acknowledge those who have hit their first rolls, as well as those who have learned a new roll. The auction revived any tired folks, as they had to put their last bids on the items they had been watching now for three days. Finally time was called, and distribution of auction items made. The raffle winner was announced, and the cash prize divvied up.

We always end our last mealtime by thanking the event and camp staff. The kitchen staff was surprised to receive a deserved standing ovation for all its hard work.



### MEMBERS, *cont.*

#### Qajaq USA Sustaining Members:

Henry J. Coffey Jr.  
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Ben Fuller  
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Tom Milani  
Alexandria, VA

Matt Moskal  
Middlesex, NJ

Richard Silberman  
Glendale, WI

Steve Ulrich  
Houston, TX

*Delmarva, cont.*

Finally, it was time for goodbyes and farewells. Many grateful folks had made new friends and acquired new skills and deeper levels of confidence in their own abilities. 

### **KUDOS**

*Kudos to all that helped make Delmarva 2005. First, to Robin Snow, for making the last seven Delmarva Paddlers' Retreats possible and guiding me through organizing this one. Next, to the SSTIKS organizing committee, who helped tremendously through its support and practical knowledge in setting up a forum for planning communications, contributing to same, and then having some members come out and implement the plan. Also to our special guests, Duncan Winning and Ken Taylor, and the camp staff, especially Ric and Dina Hollingsworth, who again treated us all so graciously and were flexible in dealing with the needs of a group that had a lot of people who traveled long distances. Then to all the team members who worked so hard on this event, whom I will try to name here, in no particular order: Wes Ostertag, David Isbell, Joy and Dennis McNeil, Phil Ellis, Jane Taylor, Robin Morgan, Jenny Owen, Charles Ficca, Henry Coffey, Jed Luby, Dan Segal, Don Beale, Shawn Baker, Greg Stamer, Turner Wilson, Cheri Perry, Will Bigelow, Wayne Gilchrest, Dubside, Marcel Rodriguez, Pete Gengler, Jenny Plummer, Greg Welker, Matt Moskal, Freya Hoffmeister, Brian Scarborough, Brian Schulz, Vernon Doucette, Jack Gilman, Jennifer Torres, Bobby Curtis, Mimi Clifton, Keith Attenborough, Alison Sigethy, Tom Milani, Charlie Despres, Ben Fuller, Kevin Kehoe, Bob Kelim, and Richard Nonas. Apologies to any staff members or helpers mistakenly omitted, we thank you, too, and a big thank you to all attendees—you made this event a great memory for us all.*

**Ed Zachowski** lives in Brick, N.J., where he loves paddling his two West Greenland replicas, either for a morning commute to the office or for an early morning paddle into the local wildlife refuge. His favorite places for rolling practice are the Manasquan River or Metedeconk River. He enjoys paddling trips around Barnegat Bay. Ed is an analytical chemist and the owner of a small business that sells laboratory instrumentation for chemical analysis.

# Building Tips

by Tony Schmitz

ANY BUILDER WHO'S STARED AT THAT FIRST PARTIALLY COMPLETED SKIN-ON-FRAME KAYAK has had a version of this thought: There must be tricks that I don't know. Not long ago Oregon boat-builder Brian Schulz made an offhand observation in a Qajaq USA forum post. To make that complicated fit at the gunwale tips, he wrote, he grabs his power scroll saw and runs the blade between the gunwales. I tried it myself soon after and enjoyed one of those happy moments of discovery. What had been a frustrating exercise turned into a fast, satisfying piece of work.

Brian's tip raised an obvious question: What other advice might the forum's inveterate boat builders have stored up? I contacted several hard-core builders for their insight on how to make that next boat easier, faster, or more rewarding. The results appear throughout this issue, where you'll find tips from Pete Strand, Brian Schulz, Harvey Golden, and Brian Nystrom. They range from nuts-and bolts hints to thoughts on the gestalt of kayak-building. Look for more tips from others in future issues of *The Masik*.

“Be proficient with your equipment and techniques before you bet your life on them.”

## Building Tips I—Pete Strand

Every kayak is a compromise.

Kayak building is the means to an end; keep the end in mind.

Don't get hung up with perfection. If it makes or keeps the boat seaworthy and safe, do it. If the problem is aesthetic, work on the seaworthy part.

Don't cut corners on the quality of wood. Use clear wood. The miser pays twice. Be sure you can afford the true cost of poor quality.

Unless you are making a replica for a museum, build your boat to fit; don't build a boat that you love to hate.

Listen to your mind, not your ego.

Wear gloves when lashing.

Don't wear gloves when drilling.

Keep your tools sharp.

Use brad point and Forstner drill bits.

Go to a museum to look at and look into the boats. Don't get caught up with one person's interpretation of what the ancients really meant to do. They did exactly what they wanted to do and it worked for them.

The boat in the museum had a specific purpose for the builder; it may not be the same as yours.

Look at the techniques and try to understand why things were done the way they were done.

Listen politely to the advice and speculation offered by others from the comfort of their living room.

Take advice from experienced builders who have made a few mistakes and have learned from them.

Rib mortises are not always perpendicular to the gunwale edge.

Some boats have 24 ribs, some boats have 9 ribs, some have none, and they are all fulfilling their purpose. Determine the purpose and use your judgment.

A glue-filled gap is not as strong as a close-fitted glued joint.

If it isn't successful, cut the skin off and rebuild the boat.

Make small changes from proven designs. You will then know what you need to do to fine tune your boat.

Be proficient with your equipment and techniques before you bet your life on them.

The owners of unsuccessful arctic boats often starved or drowned. What remains today has passed the test; there is likely little room for improvement.

Play "Happy Birthday" on the lashing of your new boat.

*Pete Strand, a Uncasville, Connecticut, manufacturing engineer has built 44 boats.*

## **Building Tips II—Brian Schulz**

After wrapping the mortised gunwales around the spreaders, I kerf and seize the ends. This allows

**"I feel it's important not to aggressively round the edges of the keel, stringers and stems."**

me to add the deck beams to a much more stable framework by forcing the gunwales apart and dropping deck beams in as I go.

I feel it's important not to aggressively round the edges of the keel, stringers and stems. This prevents rocks and sand from crawling under rounded chines, making bumps that wear the skin out quickly.

To make a coaming mold I use 3/4-inch dowels sticking 1-1/2 inches out of a piece of 3/4-inch plywood, set 3 inches apart in an egg shape. This simple form makes clamping the piece and securing the scarf much easier, plus it reduces the time you'll spend fighting the wood while bending.

*Brian Schulz teaches paddling skills and runs kayak-building classes as owner of Cape Falcon Kayaks in Manzanita, Oregon.*

## **Building Tips III—Harvey Golden**

Every kayak I build is different than the last one I built—sometimes fundamentally so. Each has different problems (and solutions) and construction methods, so I'm sort of an eternal beginner in the sense that each kayak is "new" to me. So...tips and tricks don't readily come to mind.

Some tips I would have for folks building replicas is to draw out the kayak full-size on butcher paper—it is much easier to work from full-size drawings than small ones. Also, stems and other "flat" pieces can be scribed through the drawing directly onto boards.

To the beginner (not building a replica) I would say: Diversify your methods and techniques—



especially on your first kayak. Peg some joints, lash others, nail a few. Shallow-mortise deck beams, through mortise them, and butt-join them. Use and become comfortable with as many methods

**“Most importantly: as you can from as many sources as you can. Challenge yourself to attempt daunting joints and methods. Buy short lumber and scarf it to length—even if its just one chine. Trust your eyes and then double-check; you’ll discover how often your eyes are “right.” Be creative. Your first kayak is not your last kayak—it is the one that teaches you how to build more kayaks. Most importantly: make mistakes, and revel in them—this is the real learning. Your**

mouth may be saying “D’oh!” but your brain is saying “Aha!”

Hope this helps; I’m terribly un-innovative.

*Harvey Golden, a Portland, Oregon, writer and researcher, is finishing up a book on the history and development of Greenland kayaks.*

## Building Tips IV—Brian Nystrom

Holding a deck beam in place while drilling holes for pegs can be difficult, as the drill bit can cause the beam to move. So rather than drilling the 15/64-inch holes in one shot, I drill 3/32-inch holes—which don’t cause the deck beam to shift—and insert 6d finishing nails in the holes to hold the beam in place. From there, it’s a simple matter to remove the nails one at a time, drill the larger hole and drive in the peg.

In addition to the deck beams, I install pieces of dowel at the bow and stern that function as pulleys for getting float bags in and out of the boat. The photo shows the dowel and how the pulley cord is rigged. (Figure 1)

I round over the edges of my coaming stock before steam bending it. It’s much easier to do it before than after bending. I only round three edges, leaving a square edge where the lip will be attached later.

(Figure 2)

I make coamings in two pieces, rather than one. I cut scarfs on the pieces before steam bending them. This provides several advantages:

- It allows me to use stock that fits into a 4-foot steam box.
- Bending each piece is faster, so there’s less likelihood of the stock cooling off too much while being wrapped around the bending form.
- The shorter stock is easier to handle and I don’t need much room around the bending form.
- If the stock fails at one of the bend, I can replace the one piece rather than having to replace the entire coaming. I use the same method for the coaming lip pieces.



**Figure 1**  
Pieces of dowel at the bow and stern provide a way to rig a pulley cord for float bags.

For sewing a straight center seam, I clamp a piece of 1/8-inch × 3/4-inch × 8-foot aluminum strapping to the deck beams to serve as a cutting surface and sewing guide. When the stitching reaches the breasthook, I trace the edges of the strapping onto the wood, then remove the strapping. The lines on the breast hook serve the same purpose as the strapping did, for the remainder of the seam.

When installing bow and stern loops, rather than tying them in place while skinning and having to work around them, I install them after the fact and tie the ends off on the opposite sides of a wooden bead. This also make them easier to replace when they wear out. (Figure 3)

Supporting a kayak for finishing both the deck and the hull can be challenging. What I do is to drill the holes for the bow and stern loops before finishing and insert 20d nails in the holes. To my sawhorses, I clamp support blocks that have grooves in them to accept the nails. After coating the hull, I grab the boat by the coaming and flip it over, setting the nails back in the grooves, then coat the deck. Using deeper grooves than shown in the photo would make it easier to reposition the boat. (Figure 4)

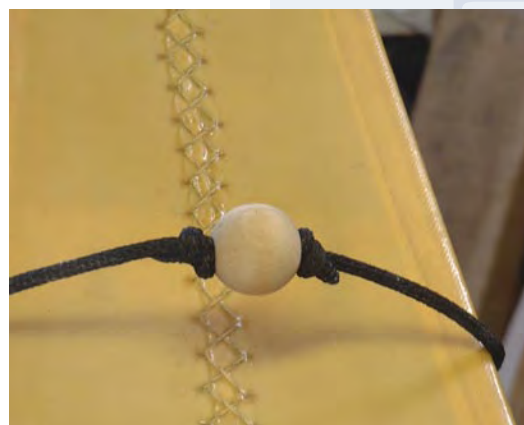
For applying polyurethane, I use the same method that's commonly used when painting wooden boats. It's called "roll and tip." I use a thin epoxy roller cut to fit a 3-inch roller frame and roll the polyurethane onto the skin. A foam brush is then played across the wet surface to tip out any bubbles. This results in a smooth, even finish. 🛶

**Brian Nystrom**, a Nashua, New Hampshire, software engineer, brings an engineer's tinkering perspective to kayak-building. Among the clever tools he's developed is a rib-bending jig, which can be seen at <http://community.webshots.com/album/112980693POfEUe>

**Tony Schmitz** lives with his wife and daughter in St. Paul, Minn. He and his wife own a small health care consulting firm. He's built a few boats—well, okay, eight—but has sold or given away enough so that those that remain fit in the garage.



**Figure 2**  
It is easier to round over the edges of coaming stock prior to bending it. Leave the lip edge square.



**Figure 3**  
Install bow and stern loops last to make skinning and replacement easier.



**Figure 4**  
Supporting the kayak for finishing with nails temporarily inserted into drilled bow and stern loop holes in the gunwales.



# Yost in Paradise

## A Maiden Voyage

by Pete Notman

KAYAKS ARE EMINENTLY MOBILE at the best of times. All you really need is a handy car roof rack and your kayak can be whisked to the nearest open water and adventure. But then, having a folding kayak that could fit onto aircraft would infinitely expand the possibilities.

Having got the kayak-building bug a few years ago, Tom Yost's (<http://yostwerks.com/MainMenu.html>) collapsing kayak designs and system caught my attention and imagination. The idea of building a folding kayak appealed to me, and more and more I found myself with the thought, "If only I had a Tom Yost folder with me now."

The final excuse that I needed to start a build was the commitment I made to go to SSTIKS 2005

in Seattle. But alas, I was my own worst enemy, literally squandering several precious weeks deliberating over which of Tom's many designs to build, finally settling on the low-volume, Inuit replica SOF the *Sea Raider*.

The construction, using aluminium poles with inserts and rivets, snap-fitted to HDPE (high-density polyethylene) frames was novel to me. But the build was easy and relatively quick (by my own standards). Still, "interruptions," like a dive trip to the spectacular Kaikoura peninsula, resulted in my putting the final touches on the Yost folder project with less than an hour to report at the airport. Not wanting to pay excess-weight fees (\$200 each way) and not having time to repack, I made a snap decision to leave my Yost folder behind—something I regretted immediately after I sat on the plane. (I'm happy to say that I did have an absolutely fabulous adventure in Puget Sound without my *Sea Raider*, but that will be another story.)

Meanwhile, back in New Zealand, a diving trip to the relatively remote Stewart Island (the southern most, smallest, and least populated of the three islands that make up New Zealand, (<http://www.stewartisland.co.nz/>) finally provided an opportunity for a full flight and sea trial of my Yost *Sea Raider*. A snowboard cover bag contained the stringers (broken down to 4 ft long lengths, like tent poles), frames, and cockpit floorboards; a second bag held my Cunningham tuilik, buoyancy vest, floatation bag, seat, and the *Sea Raider* skin. My 8-foot long Greenland paddle was wrapped in bubble wrap. The flight down to Invercargill was straightforward, and all my gear was waiting there at the airport.

"The idea of building a folding kayak appealed to me, and more and more I found myself with the thought, 'If only I had a Tom Yost folder with me now.'"



Pete happily launched at Stewart Island.

### Boat ride into Stewart Island, NZ





(left to right)  
A Stewart Island blind creek, stunning coastal scenery, and a reflecting lagoon were all photo-worthy moments on this Yost *Sea Raider's* shakedown run.

So far, so good. We boarded our boat and immediately set sail for picturesque Stewart Island, which, these days, is mostly National Park. It was cold and raining for the first few days, so I didn't assemble my *Sea Raider* straight away. But when I did make a start, my construction site was the side-deck of our charter boat, which was a bit cramped for space. Nonetheless, I made good progress with the assembly.


Unfortunately, a rush of blood to the head inspired me to attempt to balance my incomplete frame across the bow railings of the charter boat. I figured that this would make it easy for me to attach the chines. However, as I struggled to put my half assembled frame across the bow, I tripped, warping the framework, which released some of the frames. What happened next was a few bits of the frame starting to drop off with the rest of the frame more or less exploding into a clattering of component parts, some falling onto the deck, but quite a few, including the stern section and two frames, falling into the water with a splash.

It was certainly one of those "well he didn't expect that" sort of moments. Fortunately, we had divers in the water at that very instant and they were easily able to recover the errant parts. Firmly resigned to the now much more appealing and safe confines of the side-decks, I assembled the frame without further ado and with less difficulty than I had anticipated. Later, I stretched on the pre-made skin, zipped and sealed the ends, and my Yost *Sea Raider* was ready for its first outing in Stewart Island waters.

Paddling was as good as I had ever imagined. The crystal clear water and the superb scenery were distracting for me: I didn't know whether to look up or down and pretty much settled for both. I explored the coastline and a few lagoons, even venturing a ways up a rapid.

My paddling and motivation for bringing my *Sea Raider* was also influenced by the need to get a workout before a 100-mile cycle race around Lake Taupo a week later.

But it was tough to go hard in such beautiful scenery, and I spent quite a lot of time chatting to some hunters and backpackers that were interested in my kayak and what I was doing. Fun though, and the inaugural sea trial was a fabulous success.

So...have Yost, will travel, and maybe next time, my *Sea Raider* will make it all the way to SSTIKS 2006/7. 

**Pete Notman** lives in Wellington, New Zealand, where he is a research diver for NIWA (National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research). Pete's fascination with traditional kayaking techniques and equipment has seen him build most of the accessories in Chris Cunningham's *Building the Greenland Kayak: A Manual for Its Construction and Use*. A trip to SSTIKS 2005 was a good excuse to build his first skin-on-frame kayak—a Yost *Sea Raider*. You can e-mail Pete at [piratepete@clear.net.nz](mailto:piratepete@clear.net.nz)

“What happened next was a few bits of the frame starting to drop off with the rest of the frame more or less exploding into a clattering of component parts...”





# CEDAR STRIP REPLICA

by Don Goss

**OVER THE PAST YEAR IT HAS BEEN FUN PADDLING** a low-volume skin-on-frame kayak that was made to fit me like a glove and had the handling characteristics I liked. The SOF kayak has proven to be pretty durable and dependable, but I thought it would be nice to have a kayak of the same dimensions in a hard shell with bulkheads and a foot pump. I did a lot of searching for a process that would help me duplicate my SOF, but had little success. I did find a Web site by Bobby Curtis (<http://www.seaspiritkayaks.com/>), where he describes building a wood strip, hard-chined kayak, called the Sea Spirit. This Web site and others gave me some great information to help with the building process.

To duplicate the hull of my SOF, I needed to get the dimensions of the keel line rocker and make some forms from the hull to apply strips to. The first step in getting the rocker dimensions was to flip the kayak upside

**“All in all, I am very pleased with the end result—a lightweight day-paddling kayak.”**

down and draw a mark every 12 inches along the keel line. Next, I placed a piece of taut string above the keel line and recorded the distances from the marks on the hull to the string. These measurements would be used when I attached the forms to the strongback. The next step was to make external forms from the hull. I trimmed cardboard to fit the hull at each mark along the hull. I traced these external forms onto a piece of plywood to make the

internal forms that the wood strips would be fastened to. The plywood forms were then attached to the strongback every 12 inches at the recorded rocker heights.



**Making temporary external forms from the SOF hull**

Since this was the first wood-strip kayak that I built, I wasn't sure how well the strips would hold their shape after they were all glued together and the staples were removed, but everything kept its shape perfectly.

“The only dimension of the deck I needed to alter was the footrest area.”

After the hull was completed, I hot glued the same forms inside the hull for stripping the deck. The only dimension of the deck I needed to alter was the footrest area. In my SOF kayak my toes could push up into the deck and my heels could push down into the hull to get the fit they needed. To

get the proper foot room in a hard-shell replica, I would need to have the deck a little bit higher in this area. I played around with the forms until I got the room I needed. At the front coaming area I used a form that was the same height as the masik.

I used western red cedar for the strips and was pleased at how nice cedar was to work with. The kayak was covered in 4-ounce fiberglass inside and out and came to a final weight of 30 lbs. Since I've only had a couple opportunities this spring to paddle the replica on open water, I can't draw



Western red cedar strips laminated with 4-ounce fiberglass resulted in a final weight of 30 pounds.

any strong conclusions on the handling differences between the two kayaks. From these first couple of outings, however, the replica seems to track a little stronger and the initial stability seems more tender than the SOF. I'm still playing around with the seating in the replica, and think I'll try it without any seat to get an initial stability similar to the SOF. All in all, I am very pleased with the end result—a lightweight day-paddling kayak. If anyone is interested in more information about the building process, I put together a Webshots album that can viewed at <http://community.webshots.com/user/dongoss100>.



*Don Goss lives in Marquette, Michigan, and spends most of his time paddling on Lake Superior. He enjoys the diversity that building and paddling kayaks have to offer.*



Attaching plywood forms to the strong-back, matching the rocker measurements recorded earlier



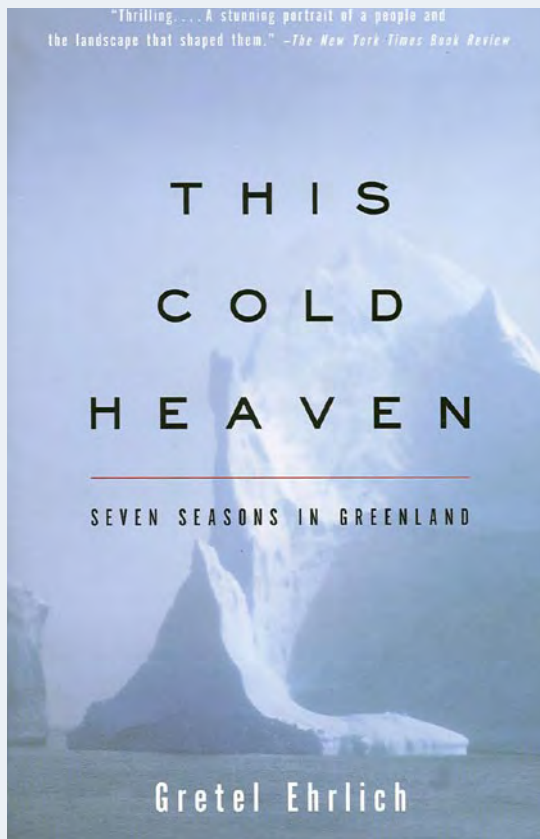
Don paddles his replica along the Pictures Rock's National Lakeshore in Munising, Michigan.

## Book Reviews

by Tom Milani

GRETEL EHRLICH FIRST TRAVELED TO GREENLAND IN 1993 for health reasons: She had been struck by lightning and found her health improved at higher altitudes. The same proved true for greater latitudes, hence, Greenland.

Part travelogue, part meditation, part history, *This Cold Heaven: Seven Seasons in Greenland* is the story of several journeys—Ehrlich's own travels to Greenland, Knud Rasmussen's Polar expeditions,



Gretel Ehrlich, *This Cold Heaven: Seven Seasons in Greenland*, Vintage Books, 2003, 377 pp, \$14 (paperback)

and the journey Greenland itself is taking as it struggles with modernity.

Ehrlich tells her story in parallel narratives, beginning with her visit to Uummannaq in 1995 and ending in 1999 on a dogsled. Interspersed, she also recounts explorer Knud Rasmussen's journeys across Greenland, Northern Canada, and Alaska to Siberia. Among these parallel stories are snippets of artist Rockwell Kent's life.

Linking these stories are lyrical prose, keen observation, and a love of the land and its people:

The past is fiction, the future is dream. I stopped trying to establish a firm flow under myself where there was none. We might die or we might live. Both were good. But I felt lost, like an eye that had flown out of a head, falling through the world, wondering would it would see. Was this constant gliding and falling a beginning or an end? (p. 182)

These words describe balancing on weak sea ice, but they may be a metaphor for Arctic life. "The Inuit have always been clever...A hunter just can't make a mistake or he'll be dead," Torben Diklev, a museum curator Ehrlich meets and becomes friends with, tells her. "On the other hand, no one in the world is better at communal living" (p. 276).

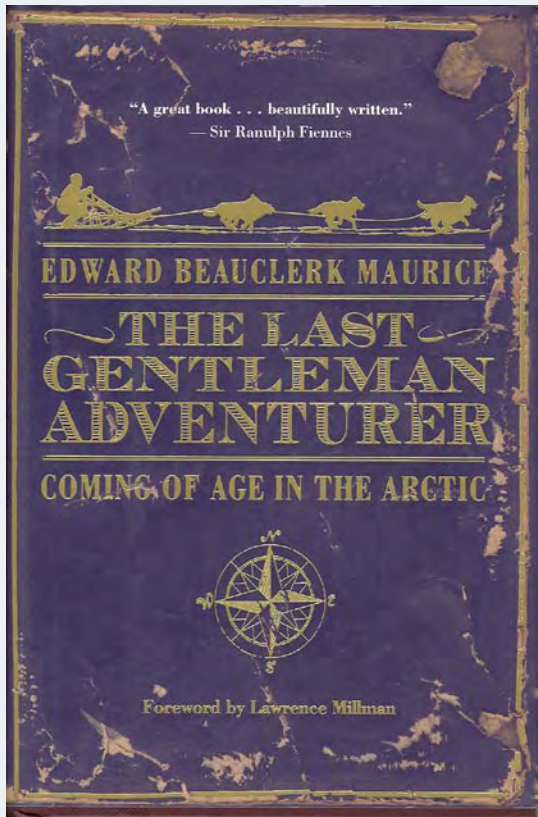
But outsiders have put those adaptive skills to the test. The ban on the sale of seal skins outside Greenland has forced the price down; one result is that hunters cannot earn enough from hunting



Reviews, cont.

to sustain a family. They or their family members must take jobs. The welfare state means that failure of a hunt is not as catastrophic as it might have been in years past. But Jens Danielsen, a friend of Ehrlich's, sees it as a threat to the culture:

Jens hated deskwork, but by necessity, he had become a political man in order to preserve his tradition. It took a lot of work and a tolerance for paradox: "I'm not asking for money, a new house, or food," he said. "I only want to be able to go out on the ice with my family to hunt. Everything we need is right here. We're asking, almost, to be allowed to be poor. You would think the world would be glad to have us. No handouts, no snowmobiles, no petrol" (p. 245).



Edward Beauclerk Maurice, *The Last Gentleman Adventurer: Coming of Age in the Arctic*, Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005, 392 pp., \$25 (hardback)

Although Ehrlich's narrative is linear, it's possible to open to a chapter at random and begin reading. She is captivated by the place, its people, and their history. Her insights and knowledge range widely. In one chapter she describes a polar bear hunt with pathos; in another, she writes of images sent from Soho, a spacecraft orbiting the sun. A glance at the contents or index might suggest a hopeless hodgepodge of writing, but somehow Ehrlich makes it all work. Reading *This Cold Heaven* made me appreciate Greenland in ways I hadn't expected. I learned the appeal of the dark months, which become times of great socializing, and I learned that an existence so dependent on the environment never lacks for meaning.

Edward Beauclerk Maurice, author of *The Last Gentleman Adventurer: Coming of Age in the Arctic*, left his home in England to live in the Arctic for reasons different, but no less compelling, than Ehrlich's. Six weeks before Maurice was born, his father died of a gunshot wound to the head,

which may have been self-inflicted, and his family was forced to move in with his grandmother. His mother was 23. At this point, his life took a positively Dickensian turn:

This was how my family came to live in a large, cold Victorian house in a small township on the north Somersetshire coast. My mother brought with her all that she possessed in the world. A few items of bedroom furniture. A dressing table and a little jewellery, a few books and a Colt revolver with six rounds of ammunition. What desperate resolve prompted her to bring these last two items I do not know, nor did I ever inquire. (p. 5)



Reviews, cont.

That was 1913. Flash-forward some 17 years to January 1930 where Maurice's life again takes him to a new home. Two of his older brothers had gone to work on farms in New Zealand, and the rest of the family was planning to join them as soon as Maurice finished school. But the life of a farm worker had lost its appeal, and after much looking for alternatives, he attended a presentation by an archdeacon in charge of Arctic missionaries. A film that the archdeacon showed featured

“Maurice does something rare in an autobiography: He manages to capture his innocence without irony or self-consciousness.”

Hudson's Bay Company, “[i]ncorporated by Charles II in 1670 as the ‘Gentlemen Adventurers trading into Hudson's Bay...’” (p. 8). Maurice applied to be an apprentice to the company, and after a crash course in bookkeeping and typing at a girls' college, he at last headed to the Arctic.

*The Last Gentleman Adventurer* is divided into two parts: “The Boy” and “Issumatak.” In the first part, his survival is in doubt—an early trek in the woods finds him literally hanging by a root to a cliff face before being rescued—and “boy” is what his Inuit neighbors in Pangnirtung called him. But by the end, he has learned the language and successfully confronts an *angekok*, or shaman, over his treatment of a family. When Maurice is transferred from Pangnirtung to Frobisher Bay, he leaves with the name “Issumatak,” which means “one who thinks.”

Maurice does something rare in an autobiography: He manages to capture his innocence without irony or self-consciousness. Humble without being falsely modest, he presents his failings and successes equally. Many times I simply found myself happy to be reading the book. Maurice tells his story with good humor and it moves like a well-paced novel. He appreciates Inuit culture and he remarks more than once on the superiority the Inuit feel toward his own. And if he is circumspect about the more intimate details of his life, he accepts the different mores of the Inuit toward marriage and family, understanding that they are a function of survival. While Maurice can vividly portray the adventure he experienced, he is equally adept at dealing with tragedy, and it's hard to read of his departure from Frobisher Bay without a lump in your throat.

Two very different books, but a shared culture, and are worthwhile reads both. 

## Mark Starr Interview

by Tom Milani

**MASIK:** How long have you been kayaking and what got you started?

**STARR:** I started kayaking about 15 or 16 years ago. I had been interested in the idea of getting out on the water in a minimalist boat, but unfortunately, I have always been terrified of the water. I love being on it, but not in it, and had religiously avoided getting wet. I kick myself now for not having gotten into it in high school, where a teacher had an early whitewater mold and you could make your own fiberglass boat for \$100. If only I had started then! The drive to try out a kayak eventually won over my trepidation, and once I got into one I was hooked. It has, by the way, helped tremendously with my fear of water as well. My first kayak building project was the George Putz kayak from the book *Wood and Canvas Kayak Building* as I didn't think I should spend the money on a store-bought kayak. However, just before the boat was finished, I ended up buying a plastic sea kayak

“The advice I give to first time builders every time is to simply start building.”

as I couldn't stand waiting anymore. As it turned out, the Putz boat was completely unsuited for ocean work, and would have, I am sure, broken apart in any serious water. My first small boat was actually a canoe that we bought when our children were little, and we wanted to take them out with us. I found that I was quickly bored with flat rivers and lakes, and I started to take the canoe out on the ocean, despite knowing that it

wasn't the smartest thing to do. It turned out that it was hard to find someone else dumb enough to go out with me, and I needed to find an alternative solution to ocean paddling. The kayak, of course, became the perfect vehicle.

**MASIK:** What is your most memorable kayaking experience?

**STARR:** Over the years I have had many experiences that stick out as memorable (mostly due to sheer terror!) but there are two times in a kayak that strike me today as magical now as it was at the time. Both of them took place in a double kayak with a partner. The first was a 98-mile crossing from Stonington Connecticut to Nantucket in the early spring. We had paddled all day on a dead calm sea (annoyingly enough the VHF radio issued dire small craft warnings all day long, promising a tail wind that would have hurled us towards our destination and allowed us to use a sail we had). We reached the western tip of Martha's Vineyard just as the sun set behind us. As it was still early in the season, there were few lights on the island, and around 11 pm the full moon came up and illuminated our path. We just ghosted down the coast, a mere 100 feet from shore, each of us encapsulated warmly in our cockpits and our hooded jackets, not saying a word to each other as we paddled the length of the island. It really felt as though you were a disembodied visitor from another planet passing a completely deserted Earth in a space capsule, with nothing but the beauty of the scene and our own thoughts to occupy our minds. Unfortunately the magic ended at the far

*Editor's note: Mark Starr is the Supervisor, Shipyard Documentation Office, at Mystic Seaport.*

*This interview was conducted 12–13 April 2006.*

*Interview, cont.*

end of the island with a very tough slog to Nantucket against cross currents that race through the very shallow waters between the two islands, but the magic of those earlier hours still remains.

The second time was a 108-mile crossing from Stonington to Chatham, Cape Cod. Although the path was largely the same as the earlier trip, the conditions were entirely different. A friend had come up from New York, and we were hoping to ride the winds of the tail end of a hurricane to see how far we could get in 24 hours on the water. Again we brought the sail, but as with the first trip,

“It really felt as though you were a disembodied visitor from another planet passing a completely deserted Earth in a space capsule, with nothing but the beauty of the scene and our own thoughts to occupy our minds.”

we ended up paddling all the way to Martha’s Vineyard with nothing but fitful winds. As the sun sank that day, however, the storm began to reach us, and the sail began to fill. The night set black as pitch this time, and we were grateful for lights on the coast to help guide us along. By the time we began our turn up the coast of Cape Cod, the storm began to really howl. It had begun to rain, and the seas on our beam were breaking in torrents of white. Although I knew we were in the same water as the breaking seas off to our starboard, I couldn’t shake the feeling in looking at the waves upwind of us that they were somehow much worse and were going to flip us. Although I knew we were fine, I finally had to stop looking to windward or risk losing my perspective altogether. Although we were not moving all that fast across the water, the illusion of speed in the dark of a stormy night really was tremendous. I was steering as I was in the rear cockpit, and despite the liveliness of the situation, I kept falling asleep, and my partner would have to shout to wake me up. By the time we reached Chatham we were dead tired and longing to get out of the boat, but due to poor charts (OK—we didn’t really plan on getting that

far so we didn’t have anything but a rudimentary Xerox of the area) we couldn’t find the entrance to the harbor, and not knowing what the beach was like, we didn’t want to risk a landing where we couldn’t see. The sun would not rise for a few more hours, and we finally decided to risk an attempt and ended up finding the entrance to the well protected harbor. It seemed as though it was one of the wildest rides I had had in a kayak, not doubt accentuated by weariness and the darkness of the night.

**MASIK:** Tell me about your work at Mystic Seaport

**STARR:** Although my job at Mystic Seaport is in running the documentation office in the shipyard end of the museum, my interest in kayaks has allowed me to rather shamelessly start a kayak building class and a paddle making class. Although I would prefer to, we do not build strict reproductions of Greenland kayaks in the class due to time constraints and the fact that many of the people who take the class have never been in a kayak before. This was not what we had expected, and so we modified the traditional kayak to suit our customers’ needs. We now get many more advanced paddlers who are looking for more traditional boats, and I have to find a way to accom-

*Interview, cont.*

modate them if I can. The kayaks are skin-on-frame boats, with mortise-and-tenon construction, all lashed together. Although the students start with pre-dimensioned stock, they do almost all of the construction with a few simple hand tools, as one of our goals is to show them that they can build these boats at home without a fully equipped shop. Indeed, many of our students have gone on to build other boats at home, knowing that these boats are well within their abilities. The class runs for six days, with half of the students generally finishing their boat on the fifth day, regardless of the skill sets they bring with them. It is very satisfying to see people who have never touched a wood-working tool walk out of the class with a finished kayak. I think my first woodworking project was

“We now get many more advanced paddlers who are looking for more traditional boats, and I have to find a way to accommodate them if I can.”

napkin holder...


The paddle-making class is a one-day class, and although the students use a band saw to rough out the blank, the rest of the shaping is still done with hand tools. Many people end up taking both classes, often the paddle making first to see if they should attempt the boat itself. We have built around 130 kayaks so far in the class, and countless hundreds of paddles.

**MASIK:** How do you see Greenland-style kayaking evolving in the United States?

**MASIK:** I am amazed at how quickly Greenland-style kayaking has taken off on this coast. When I began there were no practitioners in the area, and I very clearly remember seeing my first Greenland paddle on the

water. At the time I thought the person wielding that thin stick (in a high-tech carbon-fiber kayak!) was a lunatic. Now, some 10 years later, it seems as though half of the Connecticut Kayakers Club are using them, and even the skin-on-frame kayak is becoming just something you see on the water on a typical weekend. I think that it will continue to spread, and I think it has made a real difference in the skill levels we see around here. As people become intrigued by the rolling they see, they seem to get more interested themselves, and so we see an attendant rise in the skills that many people now have. This once small offshoot is becoming almost mainstream, and I think this trend will continue to grow.

**MASIK:** Do you have any advice for first-time kayak builders?

**STARR:** The advice I give to first time builders every time is to simply start building. They always have a million worries, and I try to convince them there is not enough time left to cover them all, so just forget them. Each step in the construction is quite simple, and it is a matter of just connecting the steps. Look at the first boat as a learning process. It may not be the perfect boat (I still have yet to see one of those), but it will teach you a lot, and you will have fun doing it. There are a number of books on the process of building a Greenland kayak, and as long as they don't stray too far from the average boat, they will end up with a perfectly workable kayak. Just be aware, however, that it is an addictive process, and who knows how many kayaks they will end up with? There are, however, worse problems in life than a garage full of kayaks! 





# NORTH BAY REDEMPTION

by Brooks Martyn

A laminated mahogany sea cockpit is a nice touch. Placing the joints on the sides allows for fair curves fore and aft.

**“You can easily replicate our modifications and create a beautiful straight-tracking boat that makes the acquisition of West Greenland skills a snap.”**

THE LATEST ISSUE OF THE CHESAPEAKE LIGHT CRAFT CATALOG confirmed the rumors that I had heard: CLC has taken the *North Bay* kayak out of production and no longer offers plans for sale. This boat, introduced in 1998 as a “historical Greenland reproduction,” quickly earned

the reputation for being a weathervane. A panic telephone call to the designer after my first paddle in one on a windy day confirmed that the boat indeed did weathercock due to a deep, high bow and a shallow stem area. To resolve this problem my paddle pal, Bill Whitcomb, took CLC’s advice and retrofitted his *North Bay* with a retractable skeg. As I did not like the clutter of the skeg and its attendant lines on the rear deck, I decided to build a *North Bay* with a fixed skeg. Bill, who later designed and built the stellar Stealth boat in which rolling maven Cheri Perry trained, mentored me in the conversion of the *North Bay* design into a lean, ultra-low-volume rolling machine. If you are rolling-challenged and lucky enough to get your hands on a set of plans, you can easily replicate our modifica-

tions and create a beautiful straight-tracking boat that makes the acquisition of West Greenland skills a snap. These boats are a joy to build, and laying out the panels from the dimensions given on the plans is just another fun step that enables you to customize the design. I have grouped the major changes that we made into general categories, thus eliminating many measurements and details that would not be of interest to the general reader. Our overall objectives in this project were to eliminate weathercocking and reduce hull volume and weight.

## Cutting the Panels

The hull panels were cut from 4 mm Okoume plywood, the deck from 3 mm Okoume. The bottom panels are cut as shown on the plans. It is necessary to cut the blanks for the side panels oversize, as changing the lofting points on the side panels makes the boat slightly higher and longer than shown on the plans. The short stern piece on the bottom panel was redrawn to incorporate the lines of an attractive skeg. This skeg is only a few square inches larger than the original piece and is sanded to final shape after the boat is assembled.

## Laying Out the Side Panels

Stations 1 and 18 were raised 1 inch and 3/4 inch on the top edge, respectively. Since I favor using a closed-cell foam pad instead of foot pegs, I positioned the forward bulkhead 3 inches more than my seated, legs-extended and slightly bent, measurement. To lower the rear deck to facilitate layback, the plan height at the aft edge of the cockpit was marked on the blank. We then subtracted the amount by which we desired to lower the sheer line and marked the panel; I lowered mine by 2 inches. With my 190-pound weight this leaves the boat with about 1-1/2 inches of freeboard just behind the cockpit. The new sheer line was drawn by taking a long fairing batten and, using the station 1 mark, the lowered mark aft of the cockpit, and the station 18 mark, tracing out a fair line. I forced the sheer line forward of the cockpit slightly high out of fair to allow for foot room. I later built another *North Bay* with a truly fair line that made for a beautiful boat with less foot room and a lower front deck. That boat had a depth of 8-1/2 inches at the front of the cockpit and 5-1/2 inches at the back of the cockpit, approaching that of a skin-on-frame boat.

## Changing Rocker

Small changes in surface area and shape make for big results below the waterline. I found that the set of datum points given on the plans did not allow the bow and especially the stern bottom panels to mate up properly with the side panels. To correct for this and to modify the rocker slightly, I drew a straight line on the bottom of the side panel for the first and last three stations. It was necessary to redraw the bow overhang since the height of the bow and stem had been increased. Since the stern bottom and side panels still did not mate up properly I glued in cheater wedges to close the gap. This effectively increased the stern area and lowered the skeg a bit more. Remember, we were trying to get less surface area in the bow and more in the stern. To increase rocker I also planed and sanded off a small amount in the bow area along the keel line after joining the bottom and side panels together.

“These boats are a joy to build, and laying out the panels from the dimensions given on the plans is just another fun step that enables you to customize the design.”



Top, Brooks' first *North Bay* shows an un-fair sheer line, while his second (bottom) is smooth and fair.

## Weight Reduction


I was able to decrease the boat weight from 45 pounds to 40 pounds by reducing the size of certain non-critical parts, removing the wire stitches, and minimizing the size of fillets, etc. Weight is saved

“Don’t even think about going camping with one of these boats: the lack of storage space and back support relegates them to short day trips and rolling practice.”

in ounces by doing a lot of little things. For instance, I reduced the size of the sheer clamp from 3/4 inch × 1-1/4 inch to 1/2 inch × 3/4 inch. The two carlines aft of the cockpit and the center stringer, which only runs 2/3 of the way to the stem, were likewise reduced in size to 5/8 inches square. These members are supported under the deck by half-frames made of 6 mm plywood. Instead of the end pours recommended by the designer, I inserted a tapered, wedge-shaped piece of scrap between the side panels in the stems, and then spatulated thickened epoxy over these assemblies. I did not use a hatch on the rear deck, as the volume under it is too small to stow much of anything. Ventilation of the rear compartment is by a small plastic screw-out hatch in the bulkhead behind the seat. The lightest and most watertight plywood front hatch that I have built is a flush mount with internal bungee cords. I also reduced the thickness of the

front deck beam to four laminations of 3 mm plywood. To eliminate the weight of the nails used to fasten the deck to the hull, Bill and I devised a method of applying gluing pressure by wrapping the boat with tightly stretched bungee cords.

## Cockpit

My *North Bays* all have small sea cockpits with coamings laminated out of 1/16-inch thick mahogany veneer. To achieve a smooth, fair curve, I put the joints for the coaming halves on the side instead of along the center-line as is commonly done. The changes that I have summarized above are applicable to both the 20-inch and the 22-inch beam *North Bays*, the former being just a bit twitchier than the latter and both being sweet boats to paddle and roll. Don’t even think about going camping with one of these boats: the lack of storage space and back support relegates them to short day trips and rolling practice. The paddle club to which I belong, Connecticut Sea Kayakers, is a well-spring of talented West Greenland paddlers and innovative low-volume kayak builders. To view our boats, go to <http://connyak.org/Boatbuilders/Yakboatbuildersframe.htm>, and feast your eyes. 

*Brooks Martyn has paddled for over a decade and admits to being rolling-challenged for much of that time. His introduction to the “cheater boats,” boats that practically roll by themselves, solved that problem instantly!*

## 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. Longer articles would be acceptable. Best if composed with a word processor.

Just a few possible topics:

*Craftsmanship*  
*Travel*  
*Skills*  
*Adventures*  
*Achievements*

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.

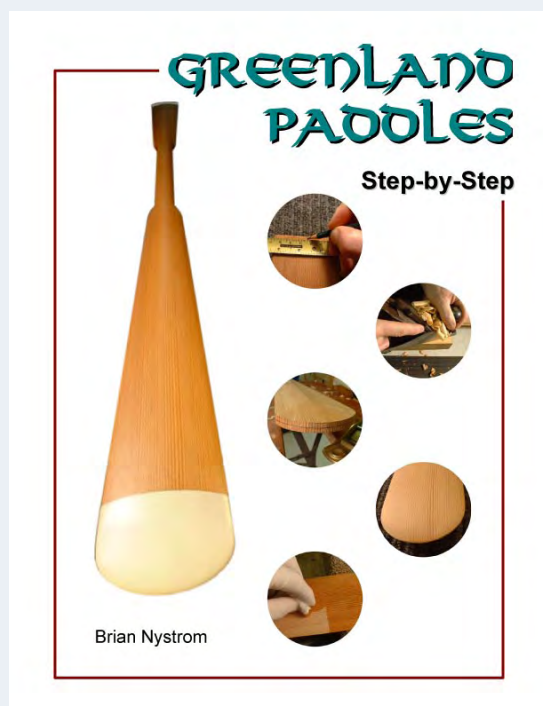
Send your material as e-mail attachments to Tom Milani. [thomasm@qajaqusa.org](mailto:thomasm@qajaqusa.org).



## Book Review

by Len Thunberg

**HAVE YOU EVER TOYED WITH THE IDEA** of making your own Greenland paddle, but were too intimidated by your lack of woodworking experience to take the risk? Have you downloaded Chuck Holst's highly informative article and still thought you needed some more encouragement to release the beautiful Greenland paddle hidden in that 2 × 4 board? If so, Brian Nystrom's new book, "Greenland Paddles Step-by-Step," should be just the added incentive you need.



**Brian Nystrom, *Greenland Paddles, Step-by-Step*, self-published, 2006, 48 pp, \$19.95 (spiral-bound paperback). Available directly from the author: 337 Broad Street, Nashua, NH 03063**

minimum group of hand tools that will produce a paddle to the power tools that a crazed woodworker would drool over. This book enables a beginning paddle maker to produce a fine paddle with a minimum investment in tools. If the woodworker then succumbs to Greenland paddle-making addiction, he might choose to acquire some of the time-saving power tools that Brian recommends. I particularly liked Brian's suggestion of using a portable clamping-style workbench as a perfectly serviceable support for the paddle. This enables someone without a shop or permanent work-

The term "book" may seem a bit expansive for such a small tome (46 pages), but it provides the reluctant carver with precisely the kind of step-by-step direction one needs to produce a successful first paddle (or a better second or third — paddle making is addictive).

Using over eighty photographs and drawings, this manual guides the reader through all phases of the paddle-making process: selecting tools and materials, designing the paddle to fit the user, layout, shaping, and finishing. The book is geared primarily for the beginning woodworker, but I found it to contain helpful tips that would also be useful for a seasoned paddle builder.

The spiral binding makes it easy to lay the manual flat on a workbench as an easy reference while working on the paddle. Checklist-style chapters allow readers to stop at any point in the process and quickly pick up where they left off.

The chapter on selecting tools and supplies covers everything from the bare-bones mini-



bench to work on the paddle anywhere and stow the portable bench when finished. I was very pleased with using one of these benches in making my own paddles.

Wood selection is given an entire chapter and provides all the information a builder needs to choose a type of wood and dig out a suitable piece from the pile at the lumberyard. The clear photographs of several examples of good grain orientation should avoid any confusion as to what grain is acceptable.

The chapter on size and shape has clear photographs of different styles of shouldered paddles as well as one shoulderless example. Photographs also ably demonstrate methods of determining


blade width, and loom length, width, and thickness.

The layout lines described in this book are a bit simpler than those of the Holst article and tend to produce a more buoyant paddle. Brian presents a very simple method of using thread to establish centerlines. Perhaps this is a common woodworker's tip, but it certainly beats my flailing attempts to do it with only a straight edge. Brian is very careful to emphasize that preferences in Greenland paddle shapes are highly individual and encourages the reader to experiment.

The chapters on establishing basic shape and contouring show the use of various hand and power tools that can be employed, with welcome

emphasis on safety considerations.

I was particularly impressed with the amount of text devoted to the finishing process. Brian covers everything from no finish, to the simple oil finishes, to an epoxy-encapsulated approach protected by varnish. His treatise on protecting the tips with epoxy (to accompany an oil finish) is about as detailed as one could wish.

Brian's clearly written and beautifully illustrated manual will not make Holst's instructions obsolete, but it should all but eliminate any hesitation an aspiring Greenland paddler might have about venturing into this highly satisfying experience of crafting one's own customized paddle. I sure wish I had the benefit of both when I made my first paddle. 

“Using over eighty photographs and drawings, this manual guides the reader through all phases of the paddle-making process...”

***Lennert (Len) Thunberg** is a retired naval architect who kayaks, bicycles, and tricycles in the vicinity of the Potomac River near Washington, DC. He has assisted Nelson Labbe and others in teaching three Greenland paddle-making classes in the DC area and has built one skin-on-frame West Greenland style kayak in a workshop.*

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