

The MASIK

Quarterly Newsletter of QAJAQ USA

The American Chapter of the Qaannat Kattuffiat

www.qajaqusa.org



Editor's Corner

Bobby Curtis

Learning to roll has been a somewhat long and arduous path for me. My body and mind were not always in agreement whenever I capsized willingly. My mind immediately reacted by instructing my body to upright itself immediately while my body fought back to allow time for me to right myself with the rolling technique I was working on. My mind, however, more often gained the upper hand and I had to come out of my kayak. In time, though, and with a lot of help from many people, and many hours practicing alone, my mind finally lost its grip over my body most of the time. That loss is one I have come to be thankful for. Last September I made an appeal on the QAJAQ USA Greenland Kayaking Forum http://www.qajaqusa.org/cgi-bin/GreenlandTechniqueForum_config.pl/noframes/read/32675 for articles on how long and what it took to learn the basic, intermediate, and advanced Greenland rolls. I had only two responses to that request, but in conversations with many other paddlers I heard many accounts of what it took to learn to perform Greenland rolls with confidence. Hyok Lee was one respondent and has written an article about his first rolling experience of which I can directly relate and feel many others can also. Another article by Kate Hartland describes her learning to roll experience learning to roll at Walden Pond. I have never paddled at Walden Pond, but have come in contact with a few of the group of Walden paddlers who share their rolling expertise at many other different locations. From what I've gained from their guidance and mentoring my rolling ability has been expanded and become more fun rather than the arduous learning experience it once was. An article about Walden Pond by Dan Segal sheds some light on what goes on there. If any of you would like to share your learning experiences in the MASIK, I feel, it will benefit us all.

While learning Greenland rolls has its appeal for me, I spend more time designing and building kayaks as I do paddling them. In this issue there are three articles on self built kayaks. Each has a different personality, yet rooted in Greenland tradition. The Angatkuk built by Patrick Teasdale has an interesting history in that Patrick's entire venture into the Greenland-style paddling has rekindled his passion for kayaking. An article by Tom Milani on The Festival of Greenland, held at the Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. last May provides us some insights into kayaks being built by Maligiaq Padilla. I am conflicted about publishing the article on building a Sea Spirit by Wes Ostertag as I am the designer of the craft and also the editor of the MASIK. But, I'm also grateful that my designs based on West Greenland kayaks have been built by others.

Rounding out this issue is a recap of the year's highlights on the rope gymnastics that Dubside and Ed Zachowski took on the road throughout the USA.

MISSION

Qajaq USA is a non-profit membership organization that is officially recognized by [Qaannat Kattuffiat](http://www.qajaqusa.org) (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.

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<http://www.qajaqusa.org/QUSA/newsletter.html>

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Qajaq Talk

By Greg Stamer

I learned to roll from studying a book. Learning on your own is perhaps not the best way to learn rolling. Not only is it riskier, but doing so is usually involves a lot of trial and error. Practice makes permanent – even flawed practice. But learning this way does help you as a teacher one day, since you already experienced, and corrected, the most common errors that you are likely to see.

A good instructor can help make learning how to roll much less frustrating, and safer. He or she will help you to first be comfortable underwater, and depending on your familiarity with water sports, you may need to work at this stage for some time. Then you will likely move on to sculling, and perhaps learn a balance brace, and then perform your first standard roll.

Until quite recently, if you wanted to learn the Greenland rolls you probably had to tutor yourself from watching videos such as “Greenlanders at Kodiak” or “Rolling with Maligiaq”. There are now a growing number of grass roots events that are organized by Qajaq USA members. These events usually teach by mentoring – an informal mix of observation, play and sharing between teacher and student. Don’t make the mistake of thinking that this simple method can convey only simple topics. You can find a mentor to help you with skills ranging from a wet exit to the straight-jacket roll. I was first exposed to this manner of teaching kayaking in Greenland, at the 2000 Training Camp held on the island of Qoornoq, near the capital city of Nuuk. The Greenland students were very observant, and some sessions would go for many minutes, without a word being spoken. I was very impressed with the low stress-level of these sessions, even though we were training in water just above freezing. This style of instruction puts the burden of learning on the student – the student is fully active, rather than being passive. This means increased responsibility, but also increased freedom. For example, at many events the student can move from one “pod” of students/instructors to other pods, depending on the student’s interests and abilities.

The Qajaq USA board has recently been discussing our role with regards to helping other organizations that are teaching or wish to teach Greenland-style skills. The consensus among most board members is that sharing our knowledge with these organizations is well within the objectives of our mission, provided that we do not “endorse” or make the appearance of endorsing the organization’s programs. Hopefully, by literally being a “role model”, we can help to influence other paddling organizations through sharing and mentoring with them in the same informal but effective way that we continue to do with individual kayakers.

“Until quite recently, if you wanted to learn the Greenland rolls you probably had to tutor yourself...”

Self-Built Traditional Style Boats

A Regular MASIK Feature

Building the Sea Spirit

Completely built from scratch

By Wes Ostertag



NEALL IN HER NEW SEA SPIRIT

After making a strip-built Night Heron and a skin-on-frame kayak I had been looking around for a shorter, lower volume kayak to make for my wife, Neall. Jack Gilman mentioned that Bobby Curtis had designed a 17' version of his stitch-and-glue Sea Spirit – Jack built the 18' version and really liked it.

I met Bobby at Delmarva 2004 where he had brought both versions of his design. I immediately liked the lines of his boats – flat front and rear

decks, a cockpit that was incredibly easy to slide into (despite the fact that it was substantially lower than my Night Heron), and gracefully lifted bow and stern. Bobby offered to send me his plans, still somewhat on the drawing board, and that fall I took him up on his offer.

Unlike my Night Heron, this boat would be completely built from scratch – no kit, no book, just Bobby's plans (and advice) and the advice of people at the Kayak Building Bulletin Board <http://www.kayakforum.com/cgi-bin/Building/index.cgi> I started by scarfing 18' by 16" blanks of 3 mm Okoume plywood, and then lofting his numbers onto the panels at 6" intervals (it's surprisingly difficult to make a perfectly straight line 18' long).

LOFTING THE PANELS



Cutting out the panels and making mirror images went quickly, but gluing on the sheer strips was a chore because the sheer line has a dramatic upward bend at bow and stern. Eventually I got around to stitching the panels together but here's where I made what turned out to be several serious errors in judgment. The first was neglecting to make enough interior forms to define the shape of the hull; the second was failing to make sure the stitched hull had no bulges or hollows before I epoxied the seams. As it turned out, it had both bulges and hollows and a wobbly keel line (fortunately not left-right, but up-down).

I solved most of the problems by gluing on a 1/8" thick keel strip and planing down the high spots. There were still some dips in the keel line, so I glued on another strip and planed down the high spots again. Finally, I filled in the hollows and built up the hull to the level of the keel strips with fairing compound. This

EVENTS CALENDAR

BCU/GREENLAND WEEK AND SYMPOSIUM

The Sweetwater BCU week welcomes the addition of a week of Greenland instruction this year, with instruction from a number of Qajaq USA members including Cheri Perry, Turner Wilson, Greg Stamer, Freya Hoffmeister and more. Greenland skills will also be taught during the weekend symposium (02/24 - 02/26) as in past years. More details will be added soon.

When: February 21 - 26, 2006

Where: Fort Desoto Park
Saint Petersburg, Florida

E-mail theshop@sweetwaterkayaks.com

SSTIKS 2006 South South Traditional Inuit Kayak Symposium

"A weekend educational and cultural experience featuring the top Greenland-style paddlers".
Qajaq USA Event

When: June 2-4, 2005

Where: Twanoh State Park
Belfair, Washington

Contact: Mike Hanks

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Kayak Events

Find them
and post them in
The MASIK.

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occupied a couple weeks and added a few pounds to the boat. The long-term effect was a kayak with a bit more V and a bit less rocker than Bobby had designed, but a fair hull none-the-less.

LAMINATED DECK BEAMS

Meanwhile, I built two arched deck beams from laminations of 4" wide layers of plywood sandwiched around fiberglass. After fiber-glassing the hull I built a series of flat deck beams and supports for the hatches. The deck actually goes on in 6 pieces – 4 pieces in front of the cockpit (to handle fairly radical bending along two axes), one piece in the cockpit area and one long piece for the entire rear deck. To avoid using screws or nails to hold the pieces in place while the epoxy set, I used a combination of clamps, compression straps and bags of water softener salt (all ideas gleaned from endlessly perusing Bobby's website). At one point, I had to race out on a Sunday afternoon with wet epoxy on the rear deck to buy more bags of salt.

CLAMPING THE DECK

Once the deck was in place, the rest of the construction was more-or-less routine. Although I had been planning on painting the hull to hide the fairing compound, my wife insisted she wanted varnished wood. So the fairing compound and some original pencil marks are visible, but I kind of like having a record of the construction process all right there.

I used strap-down hatches and loops of 1/8" cord through the deck to hold the deck-lines in place. I also put in front and rear loops of 1/4" bungee to hold the end of a spare Greenland paddle.

The final dimensions of the boat are 17' long, 20 1/2" wide, 5 3/4" high at the back of the cockpit, and 9 3/4" at the front. It weighs in at just under 40 pounds.

ALMOST FINISHED

The Sea Spirit has very sexy lines – my daughter Molly says it's the most beautiful boat I've built. It's easy to roll and balance brace. It holds course extremely well allowing virtually no weather cocking and is reasonably easy to turn (despite the reduced rocker from my initial mistakes). I had been afraid that my wife would find the low volume and ocean cockpit intimidating, but she and our 14-year old daughter both felt comfortable in it almost right away.

They both liked it so much that I hardly got to paddle it this summer while on vacation. I've been out in the Sea Spirit a fair bit this fall. I took the boat to Delmarva where I finally got a norsaq roll, due in no small part to being able to slide my head on and off the wonderfully low rear deck. Other than not having quite enough room for my feet, I really like it, too.

Wes Ostertag teaches mathematics at Dutchess Community College in Poughkeepsie, NY. He's been paddling for more than 10 years, the last 5 with a Greenland paddle. During the academic year he paddles mostly on the Hudson River, during the summers mostly in Nova Scotia.

Editor's Note: Bobby Curtis is the designer of the Sea Spirit as well as the editor of the MASIK newsletter.

Angatkuk

The Shaman

By Patrick Teasdale

As soon as that thing was in my hand, I knew my paddling would never be the same again. It felt warm, light and so organic. I dare say, sensuous. This fellow kayaker whom I had never met before, and whom I have never seen again, explained that it was a Greenland paddle. It had been carved out of a red cedar 2X4. The entire concept of Greenland-style paddling was totally unknown to me at the time but after trying it I wanted to own such a paddle.

I used the paddle for less than two minutes and realized there was a new microcosm that I had just entered. There was no turning back! I researched the entire Web and became acquainted with this universe that I now share with you all: Greenland-style paddling.

That was three years ago. I have since built my own SOF and three GPs. I made a pattern for a tulilik that my wife has sewn for me. The entire venture into the Greenland-style paddling has rekindled my passion for kayaking. So much so that I no longer do any kayaking; only *qajaqing*! Here in Montréal, I found Nicolas, Benoît, Éric and several other skin-heads (well, you know which type I am referring to) like me. They have all contributed to my Greenlandic education (i.e. rolling, etc). As much as I can, I try modestly to return

"As soon as that thing was in my hand, I knew my paddling would never be the same again."

the kindness to other novices.

My qajaq is a Cunninghamham-inspired sorcerer of a boat hence it's Inuktitut name, Angatkuk, meaning shaman.

At 17' 6" with an 18" beam it measures 6" at the back rest. It weighs approximately 32 pounds. It has very little rocker and a mere inch of freeboard. I used 12-oz ballistic nylon that I varnished with 5 coats of interior-grade polyurethane which seems to have more elasticity than exterior-grade. It shows no sign of fatigue or any crack. It is sewn along the edge and I had to seal the seam with two additional coats of varnish and extra seam-sealer. I used clear pine for the deck beams, stems, and each *apummaq*; the ribs, the coaming and the masik (laminated) are ash. I didn't install floorboards thus ensuring a low center of gravity. The rib just under me is annoyingly resting against my tail bone. It needs to be moved 2 inches forward.

PATRICK, TRYING TO FIND THE PERFECT BALANCE BETWEEN SERENDIPITY AND MASTERY.



I resolved the issue without surgery; I sit on a piece of blue foam pad that continues upwards behind my back where I sandwich it between the aft end of the coaming and the aft deck stringers. Comfy and warm! My 7 year-old daughter Kyra painted a wonderful Inuit hunting scene on the fore deck. I'll bet you that polar bear mother does not stand a chance against the young hunter throwing his harpoon at her!

I designed and built my qajaq for rolling and for the ultimate agility. I got what I wanted! It still challenges me a great deal after more than 30 trips on the water and it will continue, I suspect, to do it for a long time. But roll it does and yet it is so stable within its own squirrely personality! With its translucent skin revealing its skeleton it does magic and wonders with Man and Water. My *Angatkuk* could not have been more aptly christened.

Angatkuk was the first wooden thing I ever built. There will be more!

I am a 45 year-old teacher, former Principal and lover of all things adventurous. I live and roll in St-Lazare, Québec, near Montréal. In an ideal world I would paddle every day and not have to pay taxes. In the meanwhile, I try and strike a balance between my family and other outdoors passions (rock climbing and telemarking). As for taxes, well...



THERE SHE LIES IN ALL HER PLAYFULNESS!

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continued on next page.

Maligiaq's visit to Washington, D.C.

Building a beautiful craft

By Tom Milani



The Festival of Greenland, held at the Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C., from 20–22 May 2005 featured exhibits from Greenland artists and crafts people, performances of folk dancers and a choir, and a demonstration of kayak building by a master kayak builder. That builder was Maligiaq Padilla, whom many from QAJAQ USA know as a kayak champion. If he's more famous for his prowess on the water, that's probably because fewer people have actually seen him working with wood.

Maligiaq arrived in Washington on the 19th, delayed two days by weather. Fortunately, he'd shipped a partially completed frame some two months earlier—it had arrived on 13 May, the Friday before the demonstration was to begin.

The good folks at the Smithsonian set aside an area on the second floor of the Museum of Natural History for Maligiaq. He brought hand tools, and the museum provided him with a small, rolling cart on which to work.

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ADJUSTING THE CHINES



The frame consisted of the gunwales, 11 cross beams, masik, and deck stringers. The chines, keelson, and coaming had not been installed. Maligiaq used Douglas fir and other wood for the frame; the ribs were white oak and ash. At the bow, three pegs and a lashing secured the gunwales; at the stern, two pegs and a lashing. The four forward most and four rearward most cross beams were through-mortised and pegged. The masik, cross beam knee support, and cross beam back support were through-mortised and lashed. All lashings, whether for gunwales or cross beams, were recessed. Finally, the gunwales had mortises for 19 ribs and oblong holes for the deck lines. The kayak was 49 cm at its widest point.

RIB SPACER



Maligiaq said that this was the 33rd kayak he'd built. Later on, he'd have a copy of each of H.C. Peterson's books on display. The copy of "Instruction in Kayak Building" had been annotated, and the basic construction of the kayak was similar to that described in Peterson. For example, the gunwales were tapered fore and aft, and each end piece was made out of two boards lashed together. Maligiaq explained that this would have been done traditionally because larger pieces of wood were harder to find, and he noted that each piece had a name: *usuuaq* for the upper piece and *niutaaq* for the lower.

STRETCHING THE NYLON

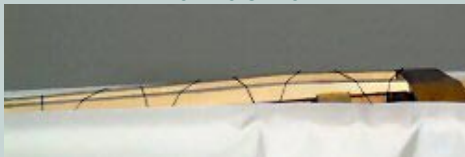


Because the ribs had been affected by humidity in storage, Maligiaq had to add spacers between some of the ribs and the chines. At the bow and stern, he shaved the chines so that they mated flush with the stem pieces. When positioning the keel, he ran a piece of lashing line from bow to stern, using it as a guide for alignment. He snapped it like a chalk line.

The skin for the kayak was 12.75 oz nylon filter cloth—the same material used in classes at Mystic Seaport. Maligiaq, who had only used canvas for the kayaks he built, was interested in trying a new fabric. He began by draping it over the kayak. He lashed it to the bow and made marks along the center. He sprayed it with water and pulled it toward the stern. Maligiaq's method of stretching the fabric was simple: with the kayak upside down, resting on a plastic storage bin, he lay on the floor, his feet braced on a deck beam,

and pulled. Again, he lashed the fabric at the stern. He then trimmed the excess cloth.

ZIG-ZAG STITCH



Sewing began with a zig-zag stitch of lashing line, which he'd used for the kayak frame. He ran the lashing like a shoelace, repeatedly wetting the skin and tightening the line, going back four or five times. When he was satisfied with the tension, he began the actual sewing, using Dacron flyline backing. The stitch was simple. One side of the fabric was folded over, the other was left ragged. The folded fabric overlapped the ragged edge. Beginning at the cockpit, he ran the line from the ragged edge into the fold and back out. When sewing the last bit at the bow and stern, he untied the skin and secured it with a nail.

To paint the fabric, Maligiaq used three quarts of Duratuff urethane and one tube of lampblack oil paint. He and Cheri Perry carried the kayak through the streets of D.C. to his hotel, where he applied the urethane. The second coat was applied outside the museum. Lacking sawhorses didn't prove to be an obstacle; he simply used the chain fencing on the Mall as a support.

To finish the kayak, Maligiaq installed the deck lines and added a seal figure at the bow and stern. Fitting his grandfather's harpoon line holder and harpoon to the deck completed the work. On the last day of the festival, the kayak was donated to the museum, a more than fitting end for such a beautiful craft.

KAYAK BOW



KAYAK STERN



Tom Milani is a boat builder living in Alexandria, Virginia. He built his first kayak in a class at Mystic Seaport in September 2003, and he is planning to modify that boat this fall. He completed his second kayak just before this year's Delmarva retreat. Future projects include a Brinck-style baidarka and a Yost folder. Tom works full time as a technical editor for a federally funded research and development center.

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First Time Rolling

I felt butterflies in my stomach.

By Hyok Lee

The moment of truth had come. I just completed my first kayak, a Greenland qajaq I built using guidance from Chris Cunningham's book, "Building the Greenland Kayak: A Manual for Its Construction and Use". Not only was it the first skin-on-frame kayak I have ever built, it was my first kayak, period. I was nervous about how to use it. I felt like Dr. Frankenstein who had created an uncontrollable monster. Having experienced my first wet exit the week prior, I wanted to learn how to roll, before I made it too far from shore.

Being the independent type that I am, I decided that I would teach myself. But, I wanted to do it without ending up on the headlines of the local papers. So, I made sure I had all the safety precautions:

- Life vest.
- Plan to stay in waist-deep water.
- Couple of friends to rescue me.
- Healthy dose of caution.
- Several days spent studying the DVD "The Kayak Roll."
- Practicing the roll over and over in my head, sometimes lying awake at night, making sweeping motions while pretending to be upside down.
- Yellow *tuilik* I made using Shawn Baker's pattern.

OKAY, I HAD TO WET ESCAPE



On a bright Saturday morning, I met my good friends, Steve and Rich, out at Lake Perris, in Southern California. I put on my life vest, snapped on my spray skirt, strapped myself into the kayak and made my way out into the shallows.

The first mishap occurred in two feet of water. I capsized to my right; and, in spite of digging my paddle deep into the



muck below, I could not right myself. Each effort to raise my head above water made the matters worse. To exacerbate the situation, my "friends" could not help me. Their efforts to turn me upright felt like feeble fingering of the kayak to feel the texture of the finish. In reality, they had never had to turn a half-capsized kayak over in their lives and were struggling to get good leverage. Finally, after I got my first mouthful of murky lake water in my gullet, my two friends managed to get me upright. I was a bit miffed that it took so long, but I kept quiet. After all, I still needed them for the main rolling session.

Next, we set up in waters about waist deep. Steve stationed himself at the bow of the boat and Richard positioned himself at the stern. I was nervous about trying a 360 degree roll, so I decided to capsize to the right and come back up on the right side. I know, I know, 180 degrees is the same regardless what direction, but it felt like it would be a shorter distance to recover by coming up from the same side of capsize. Long-time rollers might question the wisdom of that decision since I would be trying to reverse the momentum of the capsize, but I felt more confident about trying that way and I

think most would agree that proper mental attitude is just as important as technique.

I steeled my nerves for my first try. I felt butterflies in my stomach, then I took a deep breath and over I went. Immediately, I felt the stinging in my sinuses from the water rushing in. I tried to do a sweep from the combat position, as shown in the DVD. I might have rotated the boat just a few degrees, if that. I felt panicked, and I tapped the bottom of the boat. My friends tried to flip me upright, but were struggling to find the proper leverage. Finally, to help them help me, I did a layback underwater. Ah, sweet, life-giving air. The sun never looked so bright and warm.

I tried a few more times from the combat position, but the skinny Greenland paddle blades seemed to give very little purchase. My friends were beginning to become experts at righting a kayak.

I decided to try with the paddle extended. I felt a bit disappointed that my initial tries were so poor and that I had to resort to a "crutch." I felt better when I later learned that the extended paddle is a standard Greenland technique.

My first attempt with the extended

My first attempt ended badly with me bailing out, and it was a slight struggle to get back into the small cockpit, but the second roll was a charm.

paddle actually turned the boat enough for me to grab a gulp of air. Of course, that gulp of air was a short term gratification, since it meant that I was not keeping my head down throughout the roll. After two more failed tries, I tapped out. Steve and Rich commented that on my third attempt, when I laid back farther, I seemed closer to making full recovery. I tried a few more times with a more pronounced layback, but alas, no dice. In desperation, I tried the butterfly roll, with layback. Instant success! I rolled up so quickly, I did not even know what happened. It almost felt like I never fully got capsized. Rich and Steve hooted and hollered like the apes from "2001, a Space Odyssey."

Frankly, I don't think it was the butterfly roll that did the trick, but rather that I had laid back as far as I could—further than anytime during any of my sweep roll attempts. I figured if the layback was the key, then I would try it with the sweep. This time, I hit the sweep roll! Again, hooting and hollering from Steve and Rich, but I only heard it momentarily before I wobbled and went over again. My problem now was that I was rolling over with such violence that I was ending up capsizing on the other side. I had not run through the visualization exercise from the port side, so I felt confused when I capsized. I fumbled to decide which end of the paddle I should use to roll and Rich later told me that the tip of the paddle missed displacing his nose by inches. I guess he got his revenge because he chuckled over his beer that night, "I just had to go to the restroom, but since you were really into the rolling, I just...ah..." I just tried not to think about what that sigh of relief entailed.

Since that sunny day last year, I have rolled successfully many times. As long as I used a strong layback, the roll felt effortless. I can hit the roll 90% of the time from my "on" side, and about a third of the time from my "off" side. I'm trying to use more of a hip snap and less layback, so that the roll would work for kayaks with higher rear decks. Usually, the blown rolls are when I try that technique. I always stay in the shallows when practicing rolls, making sure that I have a friend watching me from the shore. I have no delusions that my roll is a reliable recovery method at this point, so you won't find me hitting the open waters. I'll stick to the calm bays and estuaries. My goal is to learn side sculling and the

balance brace, so that a roll is not such an all or nothing proposition. I hope that my experience would help others who are looking to learn how to roll. At the very least, I hope you chuckled to yourself over the retelling of my spectacle.

Maybe I'll make it to SSTIKS 2006 so I can get some first hand lessons. I broached the idea to my wife, and she said, "You're crazy. You're going to drag our one-year-old, drive a thousand miles in your 10 year-old pickup and meet some people you know from the internet?" Or, maybe not.

Hyok is a 35-year-old engineering manager and once served as a U.S. naval officer. He was born in South Korea, immigrated to the U.S. at the age of seven and now lives in Corona, CA with his wife and one year old son.

He has also built an Aleutian kayak. A deep love of fishing and the ocean instilled by his father eventually created within him an interest in kayaking. His next boat will be built specifically for fishing, planning for it to be about 14 feet long, with a generous 26" beam.

Editor's Note from Greg Stamer: A number of people have learned to roll on their own, and doing so can be easier and safer if you have one or more assistants. However, it's often not at all obvious to "helpers" how to right a capsized kayak, so you need to instruct them before you start practicing. Assuming that their feet are planted on the bottom, it helps to face the bow or stern, wrap one arm under, and one arm over, the bow or stern. Get a good grip on the keel/gunwale and twist the kayak upright. Alternatively if you need to right a kayak and your feet cannot touch the bottom, or it would take too long to reach one end of the kayak, then position your body over the capsized hull at the cockpit, reach under and grab the gunwale, and then fall backward, using your weight to pull the kayak upright. As the capsized kayaker you should lean forward or aft to make all of this easier. In addition, learning to roll is safer and is less of a hassle if you use a sea-sock. A well-fitting sock limits the amount of water that can enter the cockpit.

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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:

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Pond Scum

Hanging (Upside-down) with Boyz in Hoodz

By Kate Hartland

“What’s with the Stealth Kayakers?”

That was my query to Jim, who had brought me to Walden on my first visit to Boston. I had my bright yellow Avocet, Euro-paddle and a snappy C-to-C roll which was all any reasonable kayaker would need.

“Oh, that’s the Pond Scum, they do Greenland-style kayaking,” he explained. I shrugged it off as a cult thing, kind of like war re-enactors in neoprene. Jim made some noises indicating an interest in trying out those skinny paddles. I tried to keep him focused on learning his own snappy C-to-C instead.

As we paddled back to shore at the end of the afternoon, we passed the guys in hoods. They were doing some amazing rolls such as I’d never seen. I watched in fascination. It seemed like a pretty cool set of parlor tricks, but those of us who were serious ocean-going kayakers had better things to do.

JIM SEARCHES WALDEN FOR WALRUS OR SEAL FOR DINNER, BUT WILL PROBABLY HAVE TO SETTLE FOR TACOS.



The following year I did a circumnavigation of Manhattan with a diverse group of boaters I’d never met



KATE ACCESSORIZES HER POND COUTURE WITH DON BEALE’S NEW FALL LINE OF NORSAQS.

before. (Thank you, Greenland paddler Dan Falk, for organizing this.) About a third of them had Greenland paddles. They were the third whose backs I could see well ahead of me, cruising steadily at speeds I couldn’t maintain with my ungainly Nordkapp. How’d they do that?!

That fall I moved to Boston and began spending evenings at Walden Pond. Often as not, the boyz in hoodz were there. One of them, a bewhiskered fellow by the name of Turner, (or was it Wilson? I could never keep it straight) asked if I’d like to try his paddle. We swapped. I dug in with the stick and nearly turned over. It handled entirely differently than mine. I had to use more torso rotation, enter the water cleanly and pull harder toward the end of the stroke rather than the beginning. By the time we had circled the pond, I was into the rhythm.

Meanwhile my friend Jim had adopted a Beale paddle and was hitting graceful rolls without fail. He showed me how to do this. I sent for my own paddle from Don Beale.

The Scum (Turner, Will and Dan) responded to this by offering any instruction I desired. Often it sounded like this:

“That’s pretty good, but could you just keep your head down and bring up the boat first?”

“That’s better, but you might want to

get the paddle closer to the surface.”

“That was a good sweep, but if you arch more you might find it easier.”

“Yeah, that was great! Now do it three more times.”

They are excellent teachers. They have a way of zeroing in on exactly what is keeping a roll from working. With their coaxing and tweaking and encouraging, I always came away from the pond with a little better form. I began using the Greenland stick for all my paddling. The balance brace became second nature, the layback roll was bombproof. I bought a tuilik. I was hooked. Even my whitewater roll improved.

But who needs all those other rolls? Isn’t one good roll enough for any kayaker? And yet... how did Dan do that hands roll? And what was that short stick that Will was using? “Here, try it out,” Will offered, “I’ll spot you.”

KATE FLOATS LIKE SCUM



Of course, as we all know, once you learn a roll it is immediately superseded by a new roll to learn. There is no end to the challenge. I worked my way through reverse sweeps, offside laybacks, butterfly rolls, storm rolls (still not very smooth), mummy rolls, norsaq rolls, and the dastardly spine roll (still unsuccessful). It no longer struck me as odd to have rolling as the point of going to the Pond. Plus, I had to keep up with Jim, who was learning new rolls faster (and better) than me.

Sometimes other kayakers would paddle over to see what was up with this woman in the hood. "Want to try out my paddle?" I'd ask. "Here, try a roll, I'll spot you." It was hard to believe I was helping other people to learn to do the rolls I'd been taught by the Scum. "Keep your paddle near the surface. That's better, now do it three times!"

CULT GROUP MEMBER DAN SEGAL IN A RARE UPRIGHT MOMENT (WE THINK HE NEEDS SPONSONS).



The other night Dan was tutoring me ("Keep your head down in your armpit! Bring the boat up first; we don't care if you come up! Now do it three times!").

Knowing full well what he was doing, he suggested I try out his SOF boat. The lure was cast, I took the bait. Wiggling past the ribs, I squeezed in, fitting my heels into a space far inside the kayak, legs outstretched in an unfamiliar position. With Dan standing nearby, I flopped into a balance brace that could have been done sleeping, it was that comfortable in his boat.

I tried a roll. It rolled easily.

Dan took the paddle away. "You don't need that. Use the norsaq."

It rolled easily. He took the norsaq away. "Try a hands roll."

It rolled easily. Must have been the boat, I'd never done one before in the Avocet.

He suggested, "Make a fist with both hands. Now roll that way."

It rolled easily. Dan was not yet finished. Reaching down under the water, he pulled up a rock. "Hold this, roll with

it. Don't take your head off that back deck until the boat is up. If you do, I'll never let you get in this boat again!"

It rolled easily. Rock'n'roll, baby!

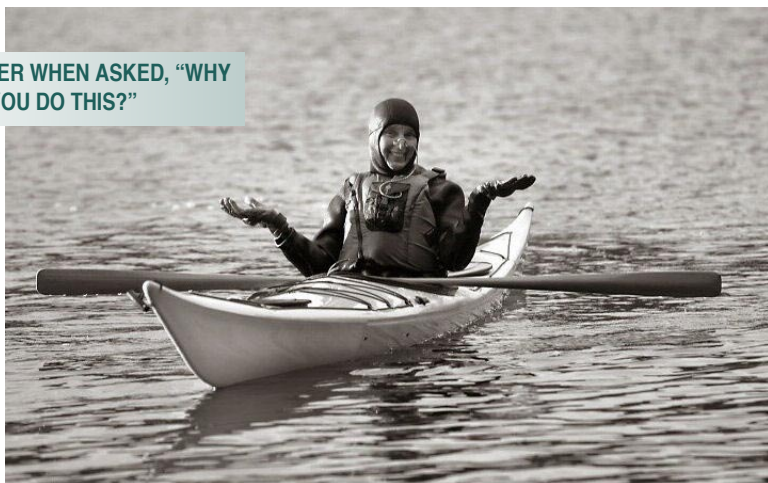
"I'll bring the boat along with me on Friday. You can mess around with it again if you want." Dan knew I'd be there.

This is what happens when you hang around with Scum. I think there's an SOF kayak in my future. It's not my fault. I've been brainwashed by a neoprene-clad cult group.

Photos by Jim Hamilton.

Kate Hartland lives in Cambridge, MA. She divides her time between holding her breath under water, and all that other stuff that happens on top. She is proud to have been the instigator of a thread that Ralph Johnson pronounced "as frivolous as anything I have seen lately" on the Qajaq USA forum.

KATE'S ANSWER WHEN ASKED, "WHY DO YOU DO THIS?"



Walden Pond

All kinds of kayaks show up at the Pond

By Dan Segal

Walden Pond is a kettle hole 23 miles west of downtown Boston. It's in Concord, Massachusetts, on the edge right next to Lincoln – both high-priced and high toned towns. But across the street from the Pond is what's left of an old mobile home park. There are two trailers still there which have been grandfathered. There used to be a snack bar as well. The trailer park is right next to the Concord Transfer Station which used to be the dump, and has been

capped recently. The Pond sits right next to a major 4-lane roadway -- Route 2, if you want to pull out a map. It's the closest public beach to the cluster of small cities that Paul Revere and Billy Dawes rode through in 1775, such as Arlington and Lexington, Cambridge too. It is now a state Reservation (most states call them parks). The Pond is in constant use from dawn to dusk. Heavy use when the water's soft and the weather's warm, but there are

people there all year round.

The Pond itself stretches about a half mile across at its widest, with three lobes coming off in the form of coves. Its banks are sandy most of the year, with the sand giving way to growth soon above the waterline. The land rises all around the Pond, thirty, forty, fifty feet, and is covered with the usual New England mix of deciduous trees and pines. Trails wind through the woods, both close to the water

and farther away. There is a public beach in the corner closest to the parking lot, with a buoyed swim area, bath house, and life guards. But most people who come find their own spot to hang out somewhere more private. The entire shore is available. And the entire shore is used. Some people have staked out their own chunk of beach and occupy it at the same time of day, almost every day, every summer, for years.

With its high banks separating it from the rest of the world, the Pond feels completely isolated. Coming to it from the road, even in a car down to the launch area, is like taking a deep breath. You can feel your heart rate slow, your eyesight get a little sharper, your lower back relax. Noise of the traffic -- so close -- is blanked out by the hills and trees. A few raptors circle overhead, and a few cormorants swim and fish. Even the wind is mostly kept away; a strong breeze is filtered and swirls lightly by the time it gets to the water. We joke that a three-inch wave is big for the pond. But it's true. It's easy to understand why Henry David Thoreau found such peace at this place and even felt he was in wilderness when only an hour's walk from his friend Ralph Waldo Emerson's house in Concord's center.

There's some wildlife at the Pond. The odd woodchuck can be seen lurking in the rocks. Surprisingly large turtles climb out of the water once a year to lay and bury their eggs next to heavily-walked paths. There's the occasional sighting of the old master turtle named The General who is huge. We steer clear. The pond gets stocked with fish. I'll have to ask



MIRIAM COHN TRIES OUT A PROTOTYPE OF A FIBERGLASS, GREENLAND-STYLE KAYAK ON A QUIET SUNDAY MORNING.

Three different clubs of these people bicycle to the pond, swim in schools like whales back and forth, then run home. They do not care what might be in their way, are unfazed by harpoons, and seem to think that the pond is theirs alone. When we know it's ours.

The main parking lot is across the road from the Pond. But the parking lot for the launching ramp is right down by the water. It's reserved for cars with boats only. No motors or sails are allowed on the pond. Most of the boats on the pond are kayaks. Canoeists seem more attracted to the Concord and Assabet rivers which are close by,

All kinds of kayaks show up at

numbers. Everyone seems to test their new kayaks at the Pond. The most popular Olympic sprint kayaks in the world were perfected here and are built a couple of miles away. There are recreational kayaks, sit-on-tops that people snorkel from, slalom kayaks doing English Gates. There are people who don't even kayak, but watch every night and seem to help keep track of who is where and how they're doing that night, and what they're paddling. These folks have staked out their bit of beach right next to the launch area and report to the regulars on their arrival.

Some of the people in kayaks show up as groups, sometimes formal groups. But most people just show up, often on their



DAN COMPLETES A ROLL IN HIS FAVORITE: A SEMI-REPLICA OF THE DE RIJP KAYAK THAT WAS COLLECTED IN THE 1600S BY DUTCH WHALERS. THE KAYAK WAS BUILT BY HARVEY GOLDEN.

what kind and when, someday. There are fishermen on the banks at all times, it seems, and often in canoes and sometimes in aluminum skiffs with electric trolling motors. (The motors are not supposed to be there, but no one complains.) The fishing lines and The General are hazards to be avoided.

Triathletes pose the greatest danger.

Walden all the time. Large numbers of athletic and enthusiastic whitewater folks come to practice rolls and moves. Playboaters improve their endos, pirouettes, and cartwheels. Racers (down river, marathon, open water, and sprint) do laps, some twice daily. Squirt boaters attempt the mystery move in still water. Ocean kayakers practice re-entries in large

way home from work.

Few of these people are shy, and after a while we all know each other. Everyone tries everyone else's paddles and kayaks. I wouldn't call it an open-minded group, but it's awfully playful. Insults and jibes are happily offered from all sides. But everyone is willing to see what they can get from other disciplines. Racers

try wing strokes with Greenland sticks. Whitewater folks try Greenland-style rolls with whitewater paddles. Some now wear *tuiliks* on rivers. Greenlanders try playboat moves. Everyone tries to keep the Olympic sprint kayaks upright. There's always an audience.

Many of these people sport Walden Qajaq Society tee shirts. Mostly the folks who wear *tuiliks* and use Greenland paddles, of course. It's a society, not a club. No one can control who is in a society. There isn't a membership list, there are no dues. It's just who shows up and what they contribute.

There are a few rules, gently enforced, not formalized. You do not teach a member of your own family, or a significant other. You are allowed to say you have a roll if you can do it three times in a row in fresh water in front of witnesses. Slower is better. Quieter is better. We do not charge for "instruction," such as it is. That way we don't have to teach anyone we don't want to. We all make fun of each other. We all learn from one another. It's never boring. It's often humbling. We push. We help. We wrestle, ram, capsize, race, challenge, and comfort each other. We consider ourselves very

lucky to be close to such a place. And to the people who come there.

I, for one, always leave the pond feeling more at peace with the world.

Photos by Kate Hartland

Growing up in Michigan, Dan Segal used to hang around boat ramps helping people launch in order to try as many different boats as possible. It was sailboats when he was a kid. Now he hangs around the boat launch at Walden. Some people never change.

Qajaasaarneq

A recap of the year's rope gymnastics highlights

By Dubside

Public awareness, opportunities for showcasing, and the availability of information about rope gymnastics all made significant progress in the U.S. this year. Those more interested in boatbuilding, paddle making, or on-water activities may view ropes as a trivial adjunct to traditional kayaking, but if Greenlanders had that sentiment, **allunaariaqattaarneq* wouldn't be a competition event. It is part and parcel of their kayaking pursuits, and should therefore not be dismissed here. It also has something to offer as a spectator sport. Moving out from the shadows of the esoteric, **qajaasaarneq* demonstrations are becoming a more common sight at both traditional get-togethers as well as mainstream paddling symposia. A month-by-month recap of the year's highlights:

January

Sarasota Kayak Festival

In Florida I attended the first annual Sarasota Kayak Festival, organized by Rick Storsberg, an avid traditional enthusiast and employee of the county parks. He pulled off a successful weekend that should do well as an annual event. I found a pair of sturdy trees for morning rope demos both Saturday and Sunday. The local TV news station gave us a minute of coverage on Sunday night showing kayaks being rolled with sound bites describing the traditional origins. The piece ended with a few flashy rope

moves shown as the anchor signed off – no explanation as to how this related to kayaking, but it made a nice visual.

February

Sweetwater Florida

Florida-based Sweetwater Kayaks held their ninth annual symposium in the Tampa Bay area. This predominantly BCU-oriented event has increased the proportion of traditional offerings to meet a growing interest among the participant base. Although I did not attend, I'm told that a passing rainstorm provided the perfect opportunity to string up ropes indoors, proving the versatility of a paddlesport activity that doesn't require water or kayaks.

Hellertown Pennsylvania



In Hellertown, Pennsylvania the Lehigh Valley Canoe Club held their third annual River Film Festival. One of the main driving forces behind Qajaq USA's increased visibility has been public

relations coordinator Ed Zachowski, who established an organizational first by having a portable ropes rig made to set up next to the literature table. This took our promotional display to a new level of interactive appeal.

March

New Jersey Paddlesports Expo



The same portable suspension system was used again at the New Jersey Paddlesports Expo. This event is attended by major manufacturers and all the regional clubs but is held in an indoor setting with no provision for trying out boats. For weeks ahead of time Ed went to great lengths to convince the rather skeptical organizers that what we wanted to do was relevant to paddlers and would be of interest. As anticipated, having a live demonstration and encouraging audience participation really set us apart from the other displays and created a bit of a stir. We gave T-shirts to the highest scorer each day. The weekend's champ was Melissa

Neuhaus with 44 points. The owner of the Jersey Paddler, the sponsoring retailer, even got on the ropes for a try. By Sunday afternoon the organizers were begging us to come back next year. I discovered that demonstrating the same introductory moves repeatedly over the course of a weekend is rougher on the hands than regularly practicing my half-hour competition routine.

April

Charleston, South Carolina



Qajaq USA had several representatives at the East Coast Canoe and Kayak Symposium in Charleston, South Carolina where through prior arrangement a ropes demonstration was listed in the weekend's program. To my specifications, the festival organizers installed the requisite posts in a high-visibility area, allowing us to do high and low ropes simultaneously. Throughout the weekend ropes sessions were held informally with kids more eager than adults to try. By this time I had discovered there were viable alternatives to nylon rope and was experimenting with ¾" polyester for low ropes with good results. Although the posts were buried several feet deep in holes dug with machinery, they were wobbling quite a bit by Sunday. Concrete is the way to go for permanent installation. This was not the first time rope sessions were held at this symposium, Maligiaq Padilla demonstrated ropes at the 1999 Charleston symposium.

May

Hyde Park New York

Ninety miles upriver from New York City in the town of Hyde Park, the Hudson River Greenland Festival included a greatly improved ropes demo from the year before. We now have much more accurate information about the various moves to replace the assumptions and speculations of the past. Wayne Gilchrest, the chief organizer of the event

and a solid *allunaariaqattaartoq* (ropes gymnast) himself helped rig the ropes and demonstrate moves.

Also during this month my piece on the 2004 Greenland championship was featured in the Atlantic Coastal Kayaker magazine, recounting my experiences during the ropes contest and the Greenlanders reaction to seeing a foreigner do so well. By the way, my offer still stands: the first person who can perform 336 points worth of rope moves within 30 minutes is entitled to the golden harpoon medal Maligiaq won at the Qaqortoq competition and gave to me.

June

Twanoh State Park, Washington

At the South Sound Traditional Inuit Kayak Symposium (SSTIKS) in Twanoh State Park, Washington I was able to meet the amazing Doornink family, the resident west coast rope experts. Having more than one eligible demonstrator is a plus. I was very thankful for the participation from Andrew, Stephanie, and Rachael Doornink. We arranged one high rope and two low rope stations. The high ropes move known as *kiillugu* (wherein the ropes are held in one's teeth while passing over) has become a good demo finale. I figured this one out after I got back from Greenland. The trick is to swing your legs over on one side then come down gently so that you finish with as many teeth as you started with.

July

Philadelphia Canoe Club

With no major festivals on the agenda, I stayed in my backyard, so to speak, which encompasses the Philadelphia Canoe Club and their annual open house. For this type of situation I like to keep it simple and only demo low ropes using whatever suitable trees can be found. A few people were inspired to get on for a try, entertaining many onlookers.

The big league rope activity occurred at the Greenland competition in Paamiut. Maligiaq, the reigning ropes master, did not attend this year. My attempts to find out the individual ropes scores met without success because this time they were not formally posted to the competitors, which should remind us that numerical measurements of achievement are not the overriding reason for holding the championship.

August

Michigan Training Camp

At the Michigan Training Camp I improved on last year's introductory ropes demo by setting up both high and low ropes after a lot of scouting for properly spaced trees on relatively flat ground. In what has become an expected phenomenon, only the bravest volunteers gave it a shot during the scheduled demonstration. Others waited until the audience thinned out considerably, or made arrangements to come back a little later. A few of the most enthusiastic aspirants asked about point values so as to calculate their repertoire totals. The time for a U.S. competition may soon be at hand.

R2K5

Back out on the West Coast, the Doorninks again assisted at the "R2K5" wooden kayak builders' get-together in Port Townsend, Washington. Joe Greenley of Redfish Kayaks put on this event and needed no convincing that a ropes demo would make a nice addition to the program. To cope with the meager selection of trees at the beach location, Tom Sharp designed and built a freestanding ropes structure with the assistance of his father Bud. Constructed of doubled 2x6s in an A-frame configuration, this one was a bit more substantial than the one Ed made on the east coast, but took longer to assemble. Designing a very light, easily transported ropes framework that is robust enough to do the job may be an interesting structural engineering problem for boat builders. If we had more than one framework we could have done high and low ropes at the same time.

September

Port Townsend, Washington

Rope gymnastics demonstrations and instruction were made available along with my rope DVD at the 22nd annual West Coast Sea Kayak Symposium. This major event, also held in Port Townsend, Washington attracts over a thousand people and features the big names of the symposium circuit. We used the 2x6 structure as before, decked out with a Greenland flag hung from the upper crossbeam. I've noticed a pattern where younger folks (ages 6 to mid-teens) who are successful at a few moves will

repeatedly attempt harder ones with a determination few adults exhibit. This includes trying *palluussineq* (**exercise 6/7 face down on ropes lengthwise, each leg wrapped, rope to outside of each foot), *tunuussing* (**exercise 4/5 lying face up on rope, both heels under rope), and *singernermillugu* (**exercise 10/11 hanging sideways, forearm wrapped, rope inside elbow, other arm free) without shoes on. I am especially pleased to see some of these youngsters, on their own initiative, begin instructing others, allowing me to stand back and watch. Paul German, the symposium's executive director had the most spunk of all. He insisted on trying **qajaasaarneq usiaagalerluni makinneq* (the move done sitting between the ropes wearing a weighted backpack).

October

Delmarva Paddler's Retreat



At the seventeenth Delmarva Paddler's Retreat I was assisted by Wayne Gilchrest for scheduled ropes instruction Friday afternoon and Sunday morning.

I believe this was the first time an event offered actual ropes instruction instead of mere demonstration. We set up the most elaborate arrangement to date with three low rope stations and two high rope stations in a stand of trees, and had Ed's portable structure erected indoors in case of rain. This allowed for a very slack set of low ropes for beginners, and tighter ones for those with more confidence.

We offered one of the new

**Qajaasaarneq* hats to anyone who could do thirty points or more. Congratulations to Dave Sides, Greg Stamer, and Jacob Isbell.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I'd like to thank all those people, both named and unnamed, who have taken part in advancing an important element of the

Greenland heritage we are committed to preserve, study, and promote. I am also indebted to the wealth of insight and wisdom Qajaq USA brings together. I have had occasion to question whether my detailed cataloging of all seventy-four rope moves, with drawings, point values, and descriptions is in keeping with traditional mores, or perhaps our American preoccupation with written documentation is viewed unfavorably. Pavia Lumholt reassured me that in the old days a Greenlander could go to any street corner to learn ropes in as much detail as desired, so there was no need for printed materials. However, nowadays this is not the case and without a means to preserve and disseminate **allunaariaqattaarneq* it could fall into disuse. Pavia feels that documentation is definitely the way to go.

I think that rope exercises have progressed beyond being the least understood part of Greenland kayaking and are well on the way to becoming an integral part of traditional kayaking in the U.S. The fact that this activity often appeals to previously underrepresented age groups, and has the potential to become popular outside of paddling circles, gives Qajaq USA new opportunities to fulfill our mission. All I ever learned as a kid was that Greenland was covered with ice. I would consider it a fine legacy if in five or ten years grade school curriculums began including exposure to rope games and/or traditional kayaks as a way of introducing Greenland culture.

**Editor's Note:* The terms *allunaariaqattaarneq* (rope gymnastics) and *qajaasaarneq* (the technique where you sit and roll like a kayak) are used interchangeably in this article.

*** Editor's Note:* Further explanations of Traditional Greenland Strengthening and conditioning exercises for kayakers can be found in "The Little Green Book" available at <http://www.qajaqusa.org/gallery/Rope-Gymnastics-Notebook>

More rope gymnastics information can be found on the QAJAQ USA Greenland Kayaking Techniques webpage. <http://www.qajaqusa.org/Technique/Technique.html#ropes>

Dubside earned 336 points in the rope competition at the 2004 Greenland National Championships in Qaqortoq and is the first American to achieve a qualifying score in this event.

Notes from the Regions

IF YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SHARE FROM YOUR REGION,
E-MAIL YOUR REGIONAL CONTACT:

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THE GREAT LAKES AREA

David Braun
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