



## A RIVETING TALE

~Andy Slavinkas



Andy Slavinkas

On November 4<sup>th</sup> Phil Zuchman treated us to such a jaw-dropping account of a coming-of-age expedition that this humble, sore-fingered stenographer, whose notes only render themselves as fiction, hesitates to retell it. Honestly, and I mean it, one had to be there to believe it.

In 1960, as an 18 year-old, Phil and a friend built two kayaks and paddled 2,000 miles from Bordentown, New Jersey to the Carolina Sea Islands. Each boat was 14' long with a 2' beam, and at the time, they were the two smallest vessels ever to make such a journey. The boats were built out of oak, marine ply, and a material similar to Hypalon which was sewn by hand and attached to the internal structure with zippers at deck level. They carried WWII navigational boxes, compasses, spear fishing equipment and hooks as well

as 12lbs of peanut butter, 6 lbs of apple butter, and rice. The two often slept in the boats with a sea anchor out and the hulls strapped together. Upon arriving in Baltimore, they spent five days fitting the boats with bamboo masts, leeboards, rudders, and lateen and lug rigs in order to take advantage of the wind.

The tale involved a visit to the boat houses in Philly, increasing media coverage, a major hurricane, sunburned eyelids, and a sense of awe at what Phil described as the "volume of nature." Their crafts stitched a chain of experience for these two young men as they travelled from Newcastle to Norfolk

to Lake Drummond to the Cypress Swamp and finally to the inland waterways of the Outer Banks where they went in opposite directions, each according to his own sense of direction, only to meet in the same place fifteen hours later. Their journey ended at Cape Fear and an island inhabited by people from Goa who didn't speak English. Suffering from North American malaria, they set the boats out to sea and hitchhiked home to New York City.

Phil's presentation was an amazing story of adventure, daring, chance, and courage. And the remarkable album of newspaper clippings and photos that documented the journey proved that Phil wasn't making it up. Thank you, Phil.



## NEXT MEETING:

**Tuesday, December 2nd at Café Gallery  
Cocktails at 6:30, dinner at 7:30**

### HOLIDAY PARTY!

Dave Soltesz has arranged for us to hold our annual Holiday Party at the Café Gallery again this year. For those of you who have not attended before, this is one of the highlights of the year—a chance to reflect on the year's outings, share photographs, and celebrate the season. The restaurant gives us a spacious room upstairs and a three-course meal with the following entrée options: panko-crusted chicken with sweet pepper sauce; baked double-thick pork chop with sage sausage stuffing; or Old Bay crab cakes with sherry cream sauce. The cost is \$35 per person. This includes tax and tip. Wine, beer, and cocktails are extra.

## BULLETIN BOARD

John Van Slembrouck is selling his tuckup TOM SPIDER. He's moving to Michigan and will consider any serious offer. The boat is in perfect condition. Contact Tom Shephard or John at vanslembrouck@comcast.net for more details.



### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**December 2:** TSCA Holiday Party at Café Gallery, Burlington NJ

**January 6:** Ron Gibbs will talk about Venice

**February 3:** Phil Maynard will show a video from last year's Maine Boatbuilders Show

**April 17-19:** Florida Gulf Coast Small Craft Festival

**June 20-21:** Philadelphia Wooden Boat Festival

The editors of *Mainsheet* welcome submissions from members. Articles on trips taken, books read, lectures attended, bold new techniques used in boat-building, or original poetry and artwork are all invited.

# AN OCTOBER TRIP TO ASSATEAGUE

~ Mike Wick

Too often, we write about Assateague that there were problems with bugs or with the heat, but on October 25<sup>th</sup> we didn't have these problems. October is a perfect time of the year for car-camping, and the Federal seashore is at its best then. The weather report was daunting, but the rain held off until Saturday evening, and we didn't miss any sailing.

Peter and Shirley Thatcher came down with us; they are old Assateague hands. You will remember their beautiful Barto melonseed at St. Michaels. Their son Tony had built her as a present, and she won a prize for her exquisite construction. John drove his camper, trailering his melonseed, and I towed the Gypsy. Phil had his Whisp sticking out of the back of his pickup. We had sun and all kinds of weather

and wind. One day there was too much wind for the Whisp near Sandy Point by the Verrazano Bridge. Phil beached and stowed his rig, and then John and Phil towed her home the length of Sinepuxent Bay to save Phil a long row to windward. Even though the dinghy was longer than her mothership, we were pleased that this proved a good solution. They had no problem beating upwind in the melonseed with this combination.

Assateague is a magical place. Now there are new showers and toilets which are a real improvement. I just love being there and waking up in the morning to a full day of sailing with a short stop for lunch. We are glad to welcome Peter and Shirley into the fold and hope to see much more of them in the future.



John Guidera

# MAKING A SIMPLE FOUR-PIECE HOLLOW MAST WITH AN OCTAGONAL CORE

~ Phil Maynard

I needed a lighter mast for my Whip. I previously made a two-piece hollow mast with a three-sided core, but I now have a better method that uses four pieces to produce an octagonal core. Using two pieces of 1"x 3" and one piece of 1" x 2" poplar, I ripped the 1"x 2" piece in half and then ripped shallow 22 1/2 degree v-shaped grooves in all four pieces on a table saw to achieve the eight-sided hollow core. In the past I made a 16' unstayed birdsmouth mast which I like very much, but it was difficult to achieve the accuracy I thought necessary to insure good glue joint integrity compared to this new method which has factory edges as the primary glue surfaces. It does not "snap" together like the birdsmouth method, and all the tapering is done on the outside just like a solid stick. With the new method the core is a constant cross-section so end plugs and blocking are the same diameter, which makes them easier to fit compared to a tapered birdsmouth. I added a top end plug and a longer one



Phil Maynard

at the bottom to get me above the mast partner as well as short 1 1/2" plugs approximately every 1 1/2' between the lower plug and the 8" snotter plug. I used a square plugs with 22 1/2 degree shims that I cut at the same time as the grooves. Since the taper is all on the outside, the mast gets stronger at the base, not only from the increase in diameter but also from the increase in stave thickness. This could be an advantage for unstayed masts. In its rough eight-sided condition, the mast is 6.4 lbs and tapers from 2" to 1 9/16". This method is wasteful compared to birdsmouth or box construction methods so my guess is that it is best for small masts with one-by stock. It would be interesting to see an engineering analysis with varying tapers/blank thicknesses/diameters compared to equivalent birdsmouth taper/stave thickness/diameters.



Phil Maynard



# COLD WATER WORKSHOP

~ Mike Wick

Chuck Sutherland spoke at the Red Dragon Canoe Club a couple of years ago, so I was excited about driving to French Creek State Park when I read in the *Mainsheet* that he was giving a presentation there.

We all worry about accidents and whether we are prepared. I take precautions. Once, I capsized when I lunged to leeward to retrieve a cap that had blown off my head. Now I always wear old caps that I don't mind losing. It's better to lose a hat than to capsize. My favorite place for sailing is Assateague; the water in Chincoteague, Assateague, and Sinepuxent Bays is almost never more than knee deep, even when you appear to be miles from shore.

But now the days are getting shorter, and the water, even in Union Lake, is getting colder. We all wear waders to keep our feet dry during launching. Now I know better and kick them off once I start sailing. I wear an inflatable life jacket, but I wonder if it is enough. After listening to Chuck, I know it isn't.

Chuck tells fascinating tales of growing up and of close shaves when ice was on the water and things started to go wrong. Recently he was sailing his ACA canoe and capsized, and Marilyn didn't notice that he was no longer behind her. He is very persuasive, and his message is: "Dress to swim." If you don't wear the right gear, you might be sorry, and that is only if you are lucky enough to survive.

Chuck knows his subject; he has been analyzing fatality reports and writing accident reports for decades as editor of ANorAK newsletter and as an ACA-certified kayak instructor. He has self-published a pamphlet on Cold Shock and Hypothermia that he presents to any sailor or paddler he sees who is improperly dressed for the conditions. If you are interested in the subject, Tom Shephard and I have a supply of these pamphlets to give to you.

\$700 GoreTex full-body dry suits might not be appropriate for our sailboats or for water that is only

cool, but here is a wish list of useful items that could appear under your Christmas tree:

## TORSO

Thin Poly or Capilene - to wear against the skin

Polartec 200 - warm and wind resistant

Pile jacket - to put on during breaks

## HEAD

Wool or Polartec hat - for cool water

Full hood of Polartec - for cold water

## FEET

Polartec or Pile socks - wear inside wet suit booties

Latex socks - an option on dry suits

## HANDS

Wool gloves or mittens - for cool water

Neoprene gloves or mittens - for cold water

## SHELL

Dry Suit - GoreTex provides the best protection

Dry Top - keeps you dry while in the boat

Paddling Jacket such as Patagonia Skanorak - provides good protection

## OTHER EQUIPMENT

See my article on the Small Reach Regatta in the September 2008 *Mainsheet*

One additional precaution that I would like to initiate: capsize drills. In warm weather we could practice swamping and capsizing off the beach at Union Lake. Phil practiced with his melonseed in September. He discovered that the best place for buoyancy bags was under the washboards and that flotation in the ends has to be carefully balanced to float the boat such that her decks are horizontal. The wider and more stable our boats are the harder it is to right them after a capsize.





# MAINSHEET

Monthly newsletter of the  
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