



GABOR DEGRE | BDN

Joe Lavoie, a 93-year-old canoe maker, and his daughter Ann Richard are shown at Lavoie's Milford home. After returning from World War II he was a canoe maker at White Canoe and later at Old Town Canoe. Now he makes scale replicas of old cedar canoes, which were the standard before fiberglass and plastic became the material of choice for manufacturers.

Handmade creations

Craftsman, 93, and his daughter work together to build model canoes

BY JOHN HOLYOKE
BDN STAFF

MILFORD — Euclide “Joe” Lavoie sits in a rolling office chair of unknown vintage, scoots forward and reaches for the tin can, and begins to ... well ... get down to brass tacks. The can is full of those tacks, essential in the trade of making hand-crafted cedar strip canoes. And the 93-year-old canoe-builder, who has spent more than 70 years honing his craft, knows more than a few things about brass tacks. Lavoie scoops up a small handful, pops them in his mouth, and holds the tiny daggers there, mumbling to his adult daughter, Ann Richard, who sits across the model canoe they're working on. “I like when he has tacks in his mouth, because he doesn't get mouthy any more,” she says with a laugh. Lavoie pops the tacks out of his mouth again so that he can answer a question: In 70 years of pounding tacks into cedar strips — and storing them in your mouth — have you ever swallowed one?

He laughs. “Yeah,” he says. “They don't come out so bad.” In fact, Lavoie says that in one of his former jobs, a co-worker at Old Town Canoe was a notorious tack-swallower and always kept an emergency loaf of bread on hand, just in case. Bread? Lavoie says that canoe-builders believed that eating a slice of bread immediately after swallowing a tack encased the sharp object and kept it from inflicting too much internal harm. “The old man [at Old Town Canoe], he used to go so fast, he'd swallow one [tack] a week,” Lavoie says. “They'd keep a loaf of bread around. [He was always saying], ‘Give me a piece of bread.’” Lavoie laughs again — regular laughter is a staple inside his Milford garage while he's working with his daughter and telling stories — and eventually decides that story time is over. He picks up the tin can again and rattles it, making hundreds of tacks dance loudly. Richard is used to the rattling and says she hears it quite often. In fact, it's the playful



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Joe Lavoie did not finish this model canoe with canvas, but choosing to clear-coat it so the workmanship is visible.

Watch the video
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way her father signals that time for talking has ended. “That means, ‘Get to work,’” she says, smiling at her dad. And work, they do.

A life spent creating The Great Depression was tough on the Lavoie clan, and after Lavoie graduated from eighth grade, he left school to join the Civilian Conservation Corps. He began building canoes in the late 1940s, after serving in World War II. He returned to his native Milford, found work at White Canoe in Old Town, and spent 20 years there. After new owners bought that company, he

moved to Old Town Canoe, where he worked another 20 years before retiring in 1987. Lavoie also began building those models so that each of his three children could have one. Richard says her canoe ended up in someone else's home. “People got wind of [Lavoie's canoes], and he [learned] he could sell them if he wanted to,” she says. “I said, ‘Well, take mine and sell it, but you have to replace it.’” He did. But it wasn't until after he'd turned 80 that he decided to return to making model canoes for money, and ramp up production on the 48-inch and 30-inch model canoes that he loved to build. *See Canoe, Page C4*

1-Minute Hike: Parkman Mountain

Difficulty: Moderate-strenuous. The loop hike is a little less than 3 miles and visits two mountain peaks that rise over 900 feet above sea level. The trails that form the route include some short, steep sections that require hand-over-foot climbing. You will need to lift your knees high and hold onto rocks with your hands on occasion. You also should expect to navigate over exposed tree roots and rocky terrain. Agile dogs that aren't afraid of jumping up rocks should be able to complete this hike. **How to get there:** Drive onto Mount Desert Island on Route 3 (Bar Harbor Road). At the intersection after the causeway, veer right onto Route 198 and drive 4.3 miles; veer left onto Route 198-Route 3 and drive 4.1 miles and park in the small Norumbega Mountain parking area on your left, which is about 0.1 mile past the larger Parkman Mountain parking area, on the right. The trailhead where you want to start is marked with a cedar post sign and is located across the road from the Norumbega Mountain parking area. The trailhead sign reads



AISLINN SARNACKI



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At 941 feet above sea level, the bald summit of Parkman Mountain provides a 360-degree view of Mount Desert Island and the nearby ocean in Acadia National Park.

“Hadlock Brook Trail, Parkman Mtn., Sargent Mtn. & Pond, Penobscot Mtn. and Bald Peak.” And, yes, you can start at this trailhead to reach all of these landmarks. The Acadia National Park trail system is vast — that's why it is wise to carry a detailed trail map. **Information:** Both rising over 900 feet above sea level, Parkman Mountain and Bald Peak stand side by side on Mount Desert Island, east of Somes Sound, and their summits are so close together that hikers usually visit both in one outing. Located in Acadia National Park, the mountains provide panoramic views of the stunning landscape of MDI and the nearby ocean.

Watch the video
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Well-maintained park trails climb both mountains and span between their peaks, allowing for a loop hike that is a little less than 3 miles long. Starting at the Norumbega Mountain parking area, carefully cross the busy Route 3 to reach the trailhead. The trail plunges into a beautiful shaded forest filled with balsam, cedar and spruce trees and soon meets an intersection, where you should turn left onto the Parkman Mountain Trail. From there, it's a *See Hike, Page C4*

BDN drift boat trip winner drawn

BY JOHN HOLYOKE
BDN STAFF

As has become our custom, the BDN began accepting entries for our popular “Win a Drift Boat Trip” contest at outdoor expos back in February, and, as has become your custom, hundreds of interested anglers signed up to spend a day on the water. Our marketing gurus here at 1 Merchants Plaza spiced up the trip this year and began calling it “Float with Holyoke.” I figured that new labeling might reduce the number of entries, seeing as how I often point out how few fish I catch, but that wasn't the case. In addition to accepting mailed-in entries and entries that were deposited into a box at the Cabin Fever Reliever in Brewer and the Eastern Maine Sportsmen's Show in Orono, we added an online component this year, and several prospective anglers participated via the Internet. Late last week, we drew the lucky name, and I'm happy to announce that this year's lucky fisherman is John St. Onge of Cumberland. St. Onge will join guide Dan Legere of Greenville's Maine Guide Fly Shop on Father's Day, June 19, for a daylong drift down the East Outlet of the Kennebec River. I'll tag along to provide comic relief and ballast, as well as to take photos and notes for a future column. St. Onge said he's an avid fly fisherman and has spent plenty of time on the East Outlet. In fact, he has even fished out of Legere's boat in the past. The day promises to be a great one, with fantastic food — see where my priorities lie? — super fishing and the kind of camaraderie you only find when you're sharing a boat with someone. Thanks to all who took part in this year's contest, and my apologies to the dozens of entrants I may have “guaranteed” a victory. *See Winner, Page C2*

Kenduskeag racers ready to take on whitewater

Bright and early Saturday morning, a large throng of paddlers will gather in the town of Kenduskeag, mill about, check their gear, and prepare for the 50th running of one of the region's iconic spring events. It's time, once again, for the Kenduskeag Stream Canoe Race. The organizers are ready. The paddlers are eager. And the river vultures — those race fans who gather near rapids, rooting for the stream to exact its annual toll — are ready to feed. The veteran racers will be there, of course. You'll be able to identify some of them quite easily: They'll be standing beside battered boats that are decorated with 10 or 20 or 30 ace participation stickers. Alongside them, you'll find canoeists and kayakers of all experience levels. Some race every weekend during the season. For others, this 16-mile jaunt to Bangor is it ... their once-a-year foray into whitewater racing. Still others — they'll be the ones laughing nervously — are here for the first time ... and many have no idea what they're in for. Sunburn? A chilly dousing in the unforgiving Kenduskeag? Fatigue? Soreness? All are possible. So is this: These rookies might have such a good time that they'll save the date of next year's race as soon as they finish. That's what happens, you see: Competitors become friends here. They share their war stories, about rocks they didn't see, and rapids that swallowed them, then *See Holyoke, Page C4*



JOHN HOLYOKE