

Construction Bureau's Dan Caouette Builds One-of-a-Kind Canoes and Kayaks *Clear Stream Woodworking Attracts Worldwide Attention for Its Quality Products*

Dan Caouette and his wife Christine decided to go shopping for a couple of plastic kayaks about four years ago.

Then the Construction Bureau contract administrator got the idea he would build the boats himself out of wood. He bought the book "The Strip-Built Kayak: Three Rugged Boats You Can Build" and the unanticipated journey began.

In his spare time these days, Dan Caouette is building custom kayaks and canoes in his Milan home workshop for customers from as far away as Spain and Florida. His company is called Clear Stream Fine Woodworking, and business is booming. According to the company website, Clear Stream is "a small part-time studio dedicated to one of a kind cedar strip kayaks, canoes and small boats, fine cabinetry, furniture and antique reproductions."

"I will build almost anything out of wood. I'll take on anything," Caouette says. He's been working with wood since he was a kid playing around in his father's workshop. But it's the boat building that has quickly established Dan as a craftsman in a field where less than 30 companies do something similar nationwide. Dan's boats are built exactly to his customer's desires and specifications, with meticulous craftsmanship that can include a variety of woods and inlaid designs.

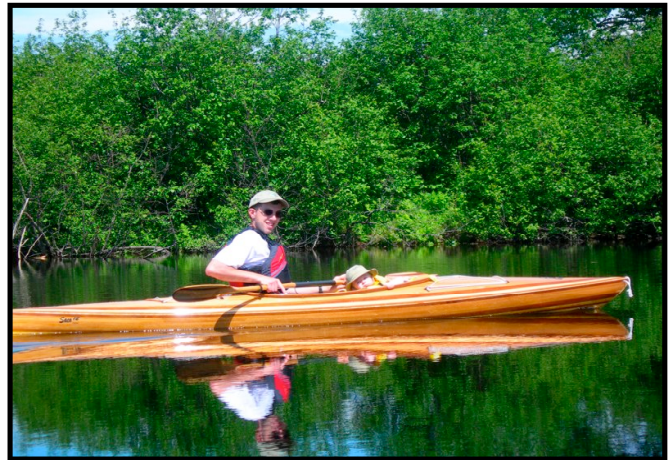
After he launched a website, the business took off in the spring of 2006 when Dan sold his first kayak out of "Saco Bound" in Conway. Then he got a call from a Connecticut man who asked him to build a sea kayak that became known as "The Black Pearl". His latest order under construction is for a Spanish customer who wanted something "light, fast and beautiful". The 18 ½ foot "Nereida" Njord is being made out of mahogany, curly maple and black walnut, encapsulated in a clear epoxy/fiberglass matrix and should weigh only 45 pounds. Detailed craftsmanship comes with a cost, but in this niche market, price is not an obstacle for those who want something truly special. It takes Dan 8 to 12 weeks to build a canoe or kayak that can range in price from about \$3,000 to \$6,000.



Described as "the ideal all-round canoe", the 16-foot "Prospector" is one of three designs Caouette builds.

Dan Caouette says he loves his job as a NHDOT construction engineer and has no plans to go full-time with the boat building and wood working business. At age 34, he hopes to build 2 to 4 boats a year for the next 20 years and possibly expand with retirement. His next phase may be in creating some original kayak designs, which he names after New Hampshire and Maine rivers.

"I've only just scratched the surface," Dan says. "There are so many things to learn with each boat."



After hundreds of hours of work, Dan Caouette likes to take his hand-built boats out on the water for a test run.

"People coming to me are in search of a very unique boat. I spend a lot of time talking to them before construction even starts. It's a labor of love. I know every inch of every boat and it's totally worth it when they are put in the water for the first time."

The Clear Stream website has generated worldwide interest as e-mailers from places as far away as Sweden follow Dan's boat construction updates online (www.clearstreamwood.com).

"It's incredible. A Scandinavian-designed boat for a guy in Spain is being built by a guy in northern New Hampshire using parts from Hawaii," Dan muses.