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# NEWS

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**Dick Case**

### LaFayette logs go down to the sea in ships

December 03, 2002

**DICK CASE**  
POST-STANDARD COLUMNIST



DICK CASE

The town of LaFayette may seem a far piece from Chesapeake Bay in Virginia. Maybe it's not.

Experts at the State University College of Environmental Science and Forestry bridged the distance recently with Norway spruce logs.

Two Virginia seacoast museums reached out to the Syracuse school for help in re-creating and rebuilding historic boats: a Potomac River dory and a Chesapeake Bay craft called a skipjack.

Both are under sail with the help of spruce logs that grew for decades at the college's LaFayette Road Experiment Station. Staff from the Alexandria Seaport Museum in Virginia shopped at the station for trees that could be used as spars on the dory a few years back.

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More recently, ESF donated four 65-foot spruces to Reedville Fishermen's Museum, Reedville, Va., for the mast and boom of the Claud W. Somers, a boat the staff rebuilt from the 1911 original.

The logs were harvested at LaFayette last August when they had sap in them and would take preservatives better, according to the college.

Last month, college officials received a certificate from the museum proclaiming them a "plank owner" of the skipjack, which is used at Reedville for exhibitions, races and pleasure cruises.

Professor Bill Smith, one of the college experts consulted by the museum, said he thinks traditional Chesapeake Bay boat builders may have used Southern pine logs but modern craftsmen look for Norway spruce because it's lighter and would make the

boat easier to sail.

"We think it's great the college was able to help," Bill commented.

Wendell Haynie, of Reedville, is a member of the museum board who helped rebuild the boat, which came originally out of Clam, Va. Historians found it in Maryland, where it had lately been worked to dredge oysters.

Wendell told me Monday he made the trip to LaFayette in August to check out the trees the college staff had picked out. "We decided on the spruce because we couldn't find any long, straight trees down here," he said.

The Syracuse college was selected by the museum's boat building consultant, Ben Buemi of Annapolis, Md., he explained. "They were so nice to us in Syracuse," according to Wendell. "Those are beautiful logs, real pretty."

The logs used in the boat were not treated. Two other logs were; they'll be kept as spares. Wendell said the visitors also took home a hickory log from LaFayette that they used to make rigging, such as cleats.

Wendell said he and a group of volunteers worked with Ben Buemi more than a month before the Somers was ready for its shakedown sail in early October. "We won the races, too," he added.

At the end of our chat on the phone, I say to Wendell, come back and see us; we've got plenty of tall, straight trees left hereabouts.

"We may do that," he says. "We're going to be putting up a boat building school next." More car talk

Paul Campanella wrote to add a voice to the comments about seat belts and lousy driving. He watches how his neighbors drive on Route 57 from Moyers Corners to Liverpool, which he calls "a speedway every day."

Paul's point is while a "Buckle Up" campaign by police is a noble thing, "Law enforcement agencies should spend more time apprehending and ticketing drivers who run red lights and stop signs and seriously exceed the speed limit every day. ...

"I am in very little danger from someone not wearing a seat belt vs. imminent danger consistently from those crazy drivers who won't obey the rules of the road.

"Those are the things I would like to see an emphasis on enforcing. I believe it would have a much higher positive effect on the safety of the



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driving public everywhere."

In addition to speeding - check out Onondaga Lake Parkway, for instance - Paul takes issue with drivers who take left turns at full speed without signals.

I also heard from Christopher Altimonda, a state police sergeant out of LaFayette, who wants us to know that police officers, firefighters and operators of emergency vehicles were exempted in the new law that deals with using mobile phones on the road, if they're on the job.

He was responding to a reader's comment about seeing a trooper using a cell phone while driving. That's legal. Dick Case writes Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday. Reach him at 470-2254, or by e-mail, [citynews@syracuse.com](mailto:citynews@syracuse.com).

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