

Kevin Kennedy

I love the back creeks, ditches and marsh of southern New Jersey. I have a small dory that I built years ago that I used to explore these back waterways, fishing, crabbing and clamming. The issue is time and weather. By time I get down there and back home, it eats up most of the day. So I was looking for a base camp. A place to rest, maybe share some food and drink with good friends.

I wanted it to be old looking with a old proven design, something like Harlan & Anna Hubbards shantyboat or like the shanty boats that were common here in NJ years ago or one of the many Louisiana floating Camps (see photo) It had to have a covered porch, a curve roof, board and batten siding, wood windows, wood floor, a wood stove, no electricity or running water (foot pump is fine) and most importantly it had to be debt free.

1st issue

What I was told in NJ a “boat” is a vessel that moves cargo and or people from point A to Point B. So a floating cabin was out of the question.

2nd issue

Not everyone else idea of a dream boat matched mine hard to believe. Finding a marina to take a Homemade wooden shantyboat, was a lot harder than I thought. All so I found out a lot of marinas here do not allow overnight stays some even do not allow you a simple beer.

So back to the drawing board, I looked on the internet for a month. I was willing to compromise a little, but it looked Like a had to do more than that. I had bought some Marine plywood off a guy who owns a marina (Nacote Creek) he also built a lot of his own boats out of plywood. So I went and talked to him he did not warm up to the idea at first. I bought plans for the Millie Hill from Sam Devlin and sent him those to him he told me it would be ok for me to get a slip if he had one in the spring. So with the plans in hand I started my build. More or less all I used was the barge part of the plans I give the shanty a little more head room plus I did add a cover porch. I had my heart set on doing this build with mostly used materials or materials I already had.

I had a soft budget of \$3500 for the shanty (without outboard). Luck was on my side. I was about to add 48 suites to the hotel I work at. As they did the concrete form work, they throw a lot of scrap 2x4s away. I ended up with almost enough 2x4 and ½” exterior plywood to build the barge.

I did buy 1/4" and 3/8" marine plywood for the outside layer. I found a place that had 2^{nds} 1/4" laune plywood for the roof. It had water stains but was in good shape, and at \$5 a sheet I took it. I go past a fence company and they are always throwing away 2x4 and 2x6 at 43" each, so I grabbed them. A large flooring company had 1x8 pine flooring on sale for .99 a board ft. I started to bring home any good looking pallet and shipping crate I could get my hands on. But I wanted wood siding.

Board and batten was out of the question and there was no way I was going to use plywood, I found a small sawmill. He cut me some 1/2" by 6" rough cut spruce boards that I air dry for a couple of months that I used for siding. I still hope to replace it with board and batten one day.

At work they were throwing away old dented chafing dishes, I could not come up with any use for them so they went into the dumpster. That night it hit me. A SINK. Next morning I was in the dumpster digging out a chafing dish, which I drill a hole in and added a \$3 tail piece to. A propane tank became my wood stove. Heck, I even built my cabinets door out of nice polar boards I got from a pallet, but looking at them they were too nice so I redid them with plain old pallet lumber old spoons are my handles. My back door was built using scrap 2x4, left over pine floor, and for the window I found an old picture frame that had plexiglass in it.

Windows are made from 2x4 and pallet scraps. it goes on and on a pallet for a bar, a funnel for a urinal, an old rake head for a wine glass holder. Tin cans and hose claps for silverware holders, pieces of pvc pipe for fishing poles holder, paint was sample paint that I got for free. I even found small batteries used in fire alarm systems to power my led lights. I get almost a year out of them before I have to recharge them.

I did come in under my budget My guess is around \$2500 to \$3000. The boat weighs in at 4230 lb with outboard and gear. My biggest expense was epoxy 9 gallons and marina plywood. One day I will try and hide the led lights and switches. I do about 60 to 100 miles a year on the water, and most of them are from the Marina to Motts Creek Inn. I hope to be in the water early March this year, (last year it was March 12th) which will be the start to my 4th year there. I am on the water at least 9 months a year

Of course I want no credit for the design that belongs to Sam Devlin. Just wanted people to know that sometimes you will have to make compromise but you can still get mostly want you want.

This shanty is more of a chainsaw and sledgehammer than a fancy chisels and Japanese push saws kind of place. The shanty is less than three miles from the Viking Boat Factory. I have less in my boat than they have in a tank of fuel, but I would not trade places with them.



