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In The fall of 2010 I enrolled in a ship building seminar as part of my graduate studies. As an accustomed student of Dr. Bélisle's I knew to expect the unexpected. It came as no surprise to me when we found out that we would in fact attempt to rebuild parts of a 1750's Frigate, the Abénaquise.

Over a 3 day weekend (24-25-26 of September 2010) we made a fieldtrip to Jean's land. The object of this adventure was to reconstruct a small section of the frigate. Jean Bélisle has a strong belief in the hands on approach. In fact, only by doing can we really understand how hard it was to build ships in the 1750's.

The first day was spent setting up the camp and the chip yard. We rapidly realised that team work would extend beyond the production of the ship in to the kitchen and around camp. Because of the short amount of time and money we decided to make a single rib at 1/3 of the original size. This still gave us a project that would be over 8 feet tall. The assembly line production became the most efficient mode of production. And it was applicable for pizza making as well as shipbuilding.

The second and third days were similar in work load. As we were short on time and never more than a dozen on the job site we made the first cuts with our modern tools. Powered by a gas generator we used a circular saw to make the first cuts. In order to be as accurate as possible in our experience, we then used chisels, planers and draw knives to finish the shapes. It became apparent that everyone had a natural ability to carry out a specific job. I found my strength on the third day as we were assembling the work. As we mounted the pieces like a big puzzle, holes had to be drilled. That was my job, and I was glad I got to use a power tool and not a brace. To hold the pieces together we used tree nails.

After the labour intensive hours, we only produced a single rib from the hull of a frigate that contains more than 180. We dismantled the piece and carried it back to Montreal. In January we hope to remount the piece in the university.



The famous draw knife Viola was so good at.