

MaineJobs SPOTLIGHT:

Boatbuilder

Chip Miller, Six River Marine, North Yarmouth

How did you get started?

As a young kid, I spent my summers skiffing around Montsweag Bay. I had a 16-foot dory skiff, with an old Scott-At-Water outboard, that used to be my great-uncle's. I had to scrape, sand, putty and paint her each summer. That boat was a lot of fun.

What training did you have?

I completed a one-year apprenticeship at the Maine Maritime Museum in Bath. I then refined my skills and gained experience at boatyards throughout New England before my partner (Scott Conrad) and I opened Six River Marine.

What skills are essential to your job?

In terms of boatbuilding skills, you've got to be good with your hands and know how to be a good problem-solver. We face new challenges every day. From a business standpoint, a key skill is excellent communication with our customers, making sure we understand their needs, and then giving them the facts they need to make decisions.



"If you are looking for an education in the field, there are many programs available in Maine," says boatbuilder Chip Miller of Six River Marine in North Yarmouth. (Merry Farnum photo)

We then have to communicate this to the crew to ensure that customers get what they want.

What is a typical day on the job?

The work here is very dynamic. The projects range from building new boats from the keel up, to replacing the keel of a 40-foot boat that is 80 years old. We also do finish, mechanical, electrical and plumbing work.

Part of every day is devoted to working and or managing these projects. The other part may be spent communicating with customers, looking at new jobs, writing estimates or organizing upcoming projects. We are a small company and believe our strength is providing excellent service.

What's your favorite part of the job?

I enjoy working with my hands, especially

with wood, but my favorite part is the people I work with, from the crew here, to the customers, to those on industry boards – Maine Marine Trades Association, Maine Built Boats and Maine's North Star Alliance Initiative.

What's the greatest challenge?

Balancing the workload to the crew size and making sure everything flows through the shop as efficiently as possible. This challenge is greater in spring, as boats are prepared to be launched for the summer.

What kind of person succeeds in the job?

You've got to have a real passion for this kind of work. You've got to enjoy working with your hands, be a creative problem-solver, and have a strong work ethic. It's a great job for the right person.

What advice would you offer to someone interested in a job in this field?

There are many opportunities here in Maine for boatbuilding, from traditional wood construction to high-tech composites using the most modern materials. If you are looking for an education in the field, there are many programs available in Maine, including on-the-job training, apprenticeship programs and formal educational programs. Contact the Maine Built Boats organization (mainebuiltboats.com) or the Maine Marine Trades Association (mainemarinetrades.com) for more information.

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