

Ken Guelta

by Pat Murphy

Were you to peek under Ken Guelta's button-down shirt, I'm pretty sure you would find a big red "S" on his tee. Ken is a real-life "Superman in residence" at the Boatworks.

I stopped by to see him not long ago only to find he was off on one of his rescue missions. Engine problems had left the skipjack *Nathan of Dorchester* stranded. Who better to send than the motor specialist?

When next I tried to meet with Mr. Guelta, he was whisked away on emergency once again, this time to fill in as crew member on a skipjack charter.

The Museum is gracious about sharing its volunteer from Church Creek. "Mr. Fix-It," as he's been called, first came to the Boatworks a couple of years ago, searching for a boat pattern suitable for his restored 1909 Arcadia marine engine.

There he met Frank Newton and joined the *Nathan's* crew, then slid into volunteering at the Museum and Boatworks. "I've always been a repair/maintain kind of person and that's what I do here," Ken explained.

Ken's first team project was the restoration of a sailboat to be auctioned off by the Museum. Dedicated volunteers worked throughout a cold Maryland winter, resurrecting the Hampton to her former glory just in time for the spring Boat Show.

What motivates someone to this level of self-sacrifice? Ken says, "I get interested in stuff and I just want to do it," downplaying his strong work ethic and integrity.

For more than 30 years, Ken worked 12-hour days in concrete pipe manufacturing, first in quality control then management. At day's end, he would return home and work his 30-head cattle farm. Didn't I say he was Superman?

No doubt the farm came to mind when Ken joined volunteers with respirators and white suits to clean out the Boatworks' upper level prior to its renovation. "Pigeons lived here for 20 years and we had to shovel the pigeon

manure out, bucket after bucket of it. You couldn't breathe and it was hot," he described.

The new Boatworks second floor is a bright, ready-for-action place. When 30 eighth-grade girls came to learn the wooden boat craft this spring, Ken was there. He introduced them to tools. "They had no idea how to use a plane," Ken grins.

Initially, he spent 25 hours cutting out the parts. Later he helped supervise the girls as they assembled their "Six-Hour Canoes."

While Ken readily admits to his preference for mechanics (he still works two days each week maintaining

farm equipment,) most often it is his carpentry skills that are needed.

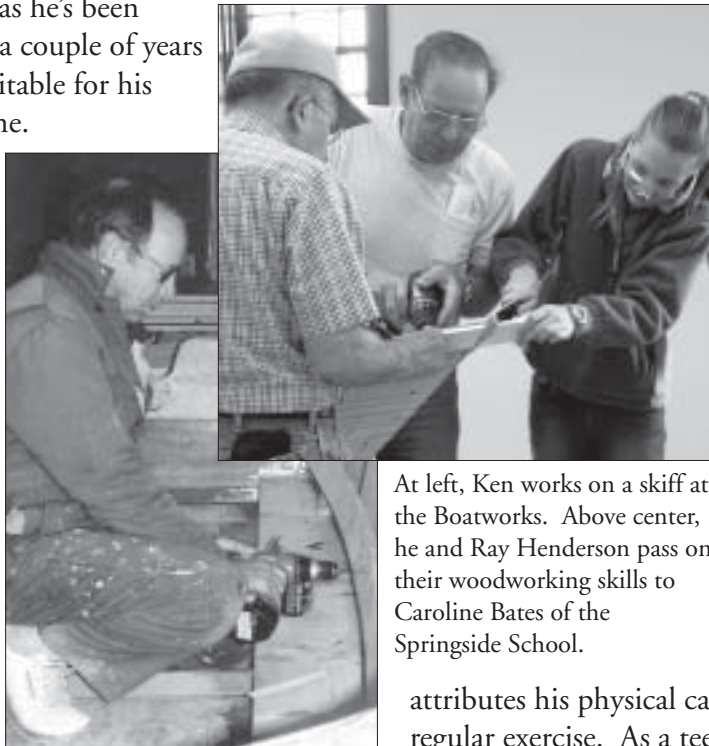
Years of working along side his father building houses prepared him for helping with remodeling at the Museum and Boatworks, where he also helped construct its first fishing skiff. He has spent months of labor on the ongoing Dovetail project. Detail was paramount as he precisely duplicated and installed its ribs.

This tan, agile man with the ready smile

attributes his physical capabilities today to a lifetime of regular exercise. As a teen, Ken and two friends bought a set of barbells. "We built a little shack in the woods and we'd lift weights at night," he explained. Now he works out at the gym three days a week—on his volunteer days.

Ken's wife, Edwina, an accomplished gardener and quilter, says they still enjoy taking their 25-foot power boat out on the Choptank when the fishing is good. Ken's first motor boat was one he built in his early teens. He used it for racing and it brought him "a mess of trophies."

Volunteers don't often receive trophies for their efforts, but if they did, Ken, yours would be a big one. From all of us at the Museum, thank you! ☀



At left, Ken works on a skiff at the Boatworks. Above center, he and Ray Henderson pass on their woodworking skills to Caroline Bates of the Springside School.