

It was actually holding water! What started out as a pile of Western Red Cedar, Curly Maple, Aspen, and Ash planks was now actually floating on Big Muskego Lake. This long-anticipated event was the maiden voyage of the 15 foot-long wooden canoe that I had spent over two years building from scratch. The project began back in my first year of medical school. After long days of studying and exams, the smell of sawdust became a rewarding release. Ripping, routing, bending, clamping and gluing the contrasting brown and amber wood strips was truly therapeutic. That evening on the lake, I reflected back on the patience, hard work and creativity that it required. It has become as clear as the water I was floating on, that the skills and traits that prompted me to take on the challenge of building it were instilled in me at a young age.

At 10,000 feet in the Aspens and Pines overlooking Park City, Utah, is where I spent the summers during my youth. My father owned a small construction company, and I proudly considered myself his right-hand-man. Crafting high mountain cabins was our specialty. 6,500...that is the grand total of hand-driven nails that I pounded in just one summer. I likely spent almost as much time proudly calculating the nail total as I did actually pounding them. The days were long, and the manual labor was intense. Taking a break only meant a change from setting massive rough-cut beams to moving piles of 10-inch diameter logs. In a small family-owned construction company, it was up to everyone to contribute to make it successful. Surely, my teenage attitude wasn't always eager to pound nails as I watched my friends have more relaxing summers, but the experiences I received would become invaluable, and would far outweigh my meager wages. Countless life lessons were learned while working side-by-side with my father and brother. I was taught the importance of working hard, being honest, being grateful for what I had and taking the time to help others. Hindsight has taught me that my father was instilling in me the values that would stay with me long after the last log was set.

Those principles and values would later help me as I ran a busy property maintenance business to pay for college. They would also help me to succeed in college and medical school. Most importantly, they have helped guide me in being a good husband and father.

Whether it is crafting a cedar strip boat, building a log cabin, or becoming a sound physician, I have always been anxious to take on challenging goals. I am confident that those values that I have been polishing since I was young will help me take on the next challenge and goal of mine—to become a skilled Orthopaedic Surgeon.

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