

Wes Marden's

MODEL-SHIP FUN FOR KIDS & GRANDPARENTS



Teaching Kids Self Reliance and
How to Create a Fun Toy, On Their
Own, Out of Seemingly Nothing!

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FORWARD

WHY I WROTE THIS BOOK

It was thanksgiving day many years ago and my kids were all keyed-up waiting for the turkey to come out of the oven and getting into every thing while seemingly at the same time having nothing to do. They were cracking walnuts and making the usual mess when I noticed that one of the half shells was not shattered and it look like the hull of a dingy.

A light came on in my head and I said “lets have a sail boat race”. After explaining that we were going to take the walnut shells that were not shattered and make small sail boats out of them. The idea was a hit and we started carefully separating the remaining walnuts. It turned out to be one of those times when there was less of a mess around the nut tray than ever before simply because most of the mess was now being eaten.

Since that first time it has become a tradition that each kid would build their own “walnut sailing ship” mainly at thanksgiving to compete in the “Great Race“. Some of the “ships” subsequently ended up as personal place holders at the table. The tradition did not end with the crew off to college as it still hangs on today when they come home.

Henry David Thoreau had written in 1854 that “...man is rich in proportion to the number of things he can afford to let alone”. I had modified that statement in a paper in college to “... man is rich in proportion to the number of things he does for himself...”. I believe this is more important today than ever and we should also be teaching our kids to be more “self reliant”.

I hope this book will help make your holidays more fun for both the kids and grandparents and maybe a little of the philosophy will rub off too.

GETTING STARTED

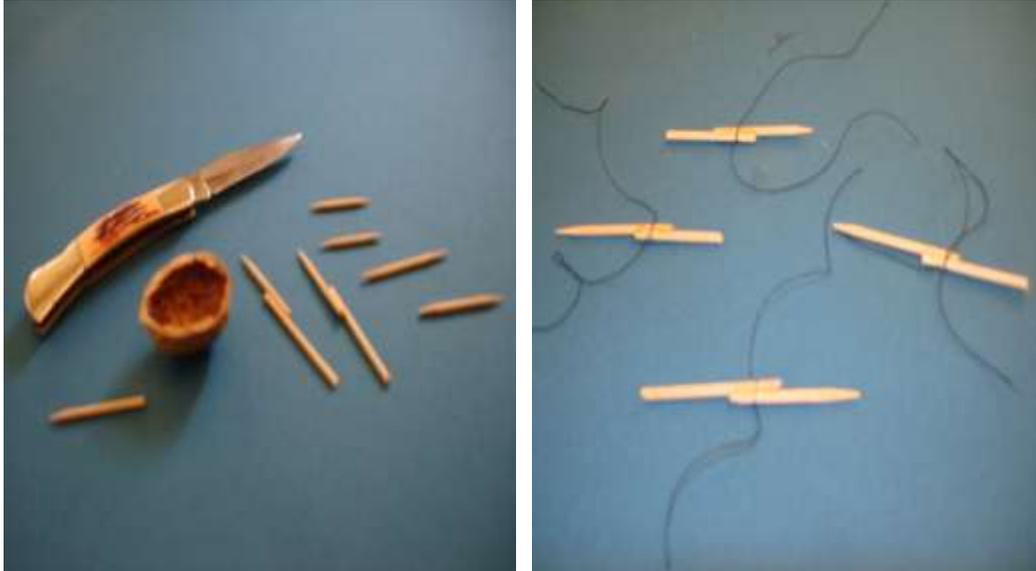


The great thing about this fun project with the kids is that most likely you have everything on hand when you start. A few Walnuts are needed, toothpicks, a jack knife, a little super glue, a bottle of Elmer's multi-purpose glue, a nut cracker with the tool to dig out the meat in the Walnut.

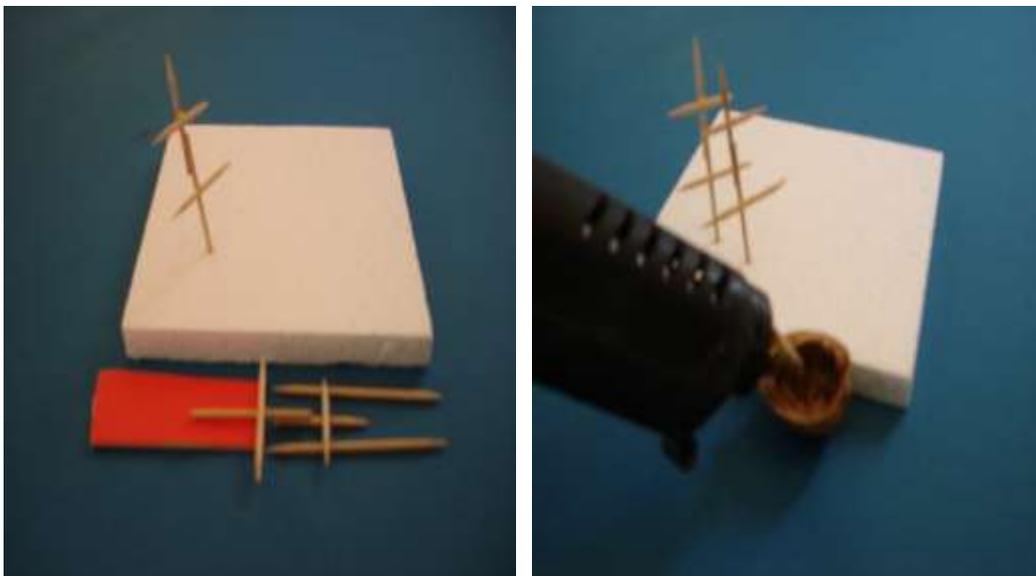
The first step is to gently crack the Walnut in a manner that only separates the shell slightly.



Insert the blade of the pocket knife into the horizontal crack in the nut shell and gently pry the shell apart. The task with the knife needs to be done by an adult if the children are very young. Removing and eating the walnut meat will be fun for all ages.



Using the knife cut a toothpick in half and mount them together as shown in the first picture. The pointed part of the toothpick will be the top of the mast. If your toothpicks have points at both ends then cut the point off on the bottom. Because toothpicks come in different sizes you may end up using two toothpicks for each mast. Notice that the masts are off set like they are on real sailing ships. The easy way to glue them together is tie thread around parts and put a drop of super glue on either side of the thread and let dry.

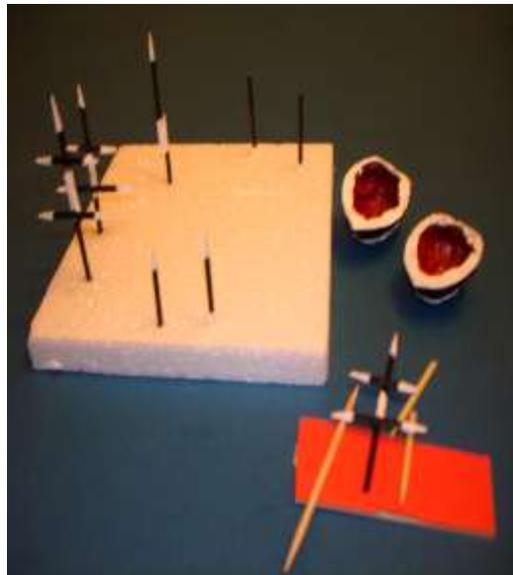


If you have a small piece of Styrofoam, it makes a great tool to hold the parts. Gluing the cross members is best done with super glue also. You can glue the mast to the shell but it is simpler to use a hot glue gun inserting the glue into the hull and holding the mast upright until the hot glue stiffens. Again, adult supervision may be in order for some children with a glue gun.

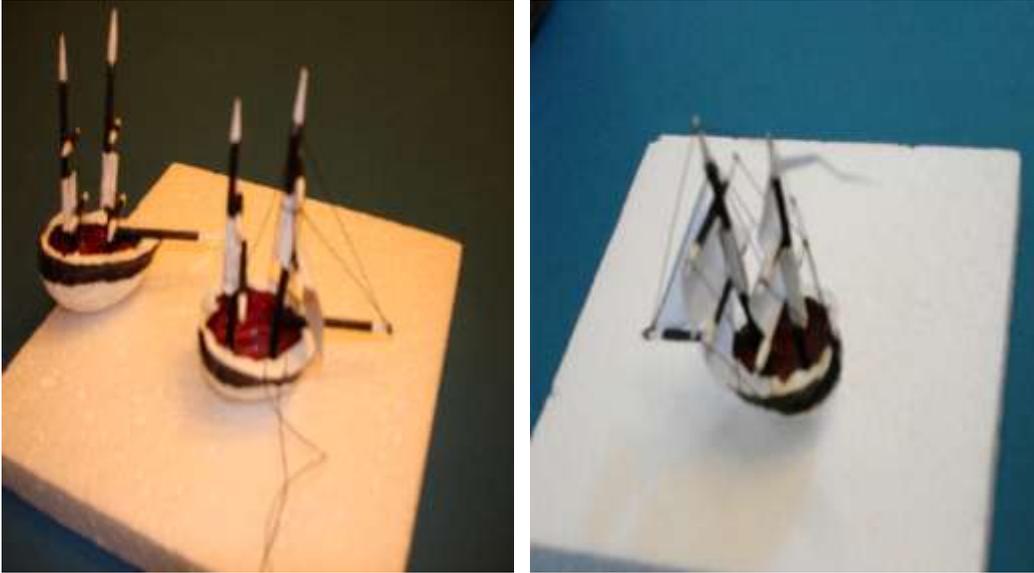


Making the sails is fun for the kids. It is nothing more than a trial and error process to find a size that will fit each spar. You can suggest that the kids see if they can draw or paint a design on their sails to help distinguish their ship from the rest of the fleet. It is also fun to add a small amount of rigging to the sails.

By this time you should have a fleet to race in the bath tub, pool or just a tub of water.



After the first year of creating sailing ships from unexpected items you will find that your tribe will start thinking in color. Adding more realistic rigging to the sails. Painting the masts, spars and hull.



If the same crew comes over each year for a specific holiday, such as thanksgiving, you may find a competition building days before the event. Each sibling trying to out due, out sail, out paint. out rig, out build, (you name it) the rest of the clan. If a new child is added or someone forgets, Grandpa or Grandma will be there with the knowledge to help the new comer join in the fun.

I hope you enjoyed this little book and it helps in some small way with the kids in your household.