

The Noted Bidar, The Aleut Boat That Won't Sink

Unsinkable bidar — the Aleut wood-framed skin craft, still in use today on the Pribilof Islands, was designed to have a free board of about four or five inches when it was swamped with water.

Having been ingeniously designed in this manner, the water in the bidar could be bailed out thus enabling the Aleut mariners to continue on their voyages.

"My people traveled great distances on the ocean with those bidars. They have been known to sail from Attu Island to Kodiak," said a St. Paul Islander recently.

Bidars seen on St. George and St. Paul Islands are about 30 feet long with about an 8-foot beam. Aleuts say that they were built up to 50-foot lengths.

The bidar of today has been modified. Varnished sail cloth is now used for covering replacing the tough sea lion skins used formerly.