

The Maud goes home

by John Bechtel
Freelance Writer

Great ships of historical significance do not always come to a dignified end. Often planned and constructed with great enthusiasm and care, many came to rest at the bottom of the waterways they plied, often accompanied by the bodies of the unfortunate sailors who went down with them. Battered and badly damaged ships of some explorers limped to the nearest port where they were greeted with wild celebration and popular acclaim, and then were refitted and restored to service; or left to weaken and rot from infestations of worms and other parasites, or to slowly deteriorate from the ravages of time, wind, sun, and water when no one had the will or the wealth to restore and maintain them.

In the polar worlds, ice usually had something to do with their demise, and slowly learning from lethal experiences, planning for ice increasingly had a lot to do with the next generation of ship design and construction.



The Maud lodged in Arctic ice. Roald Amundsen planned to sail her from Norway across the top of Russia, to Alaska.

PHOTO: NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NORWAY-OSLO

The HMS Erebus

One of the most famous lost expeditions, both of men and ships, was the one led by Sir John Franklin, an experienced Arctic explorer who in 1845 went looking for a way to cross the last unnavigated portion of the Northwest Passage. They became ice bound in Victoria Strait near King William Island in the Canadian Archipelago. Two ships and 128 men disappeared without a trace. The search for evidence of the vanished men and the ships HMS Erebus and HMS Terror became a cause célèbre. Rescue ships and parties were sent to solve the great mystery, and some of those rescue ships were frozen in ice and more men died.

As a result, the British Admiralty lost their enthusiasm for Arctic exploration. Timber salvaged from one of the rescue ships sent to find

Franklin, and that also got lost in the ice (and was later found), was used to make a desk that was given as a gift to U.S. President Rutherford B. Hayes for use in the Oval Office of the White House. Some presidents still use it.

The Franklin expedition has been the subject of countless articles, television shows, documentaries, radio broadcasts, literary allusions made to it from Jules Verne to Mark Twain, songs, ballads, poems, paintings, plays, and books. Franklin's HMS Erebus was discovered in the Gulf of Maud only two years ago, in September 2014, 170 years after it disappeared. A lesser known upside of this story is that thousands of miles of coastline were explored and mapped by all the search parties involved in the years immediately following the disaster. Last year the Canadian

Parks Service and the Canadian Navy put 34 personnel on the ground, and they are using laser technology and other advanced equipment to video and document every inch of the outside of the Erebus. The government-sponsored inter-agency project has put both civilians and military personnel through extensive under-ice-diving training exercises from Halifax, Nova Scotia, to Quebec City, in preparation for archeological dives around and into the Erebus.

It is worth noting that the Erebus was finally found in 2014 where Inuit oral histories indicated it went down.

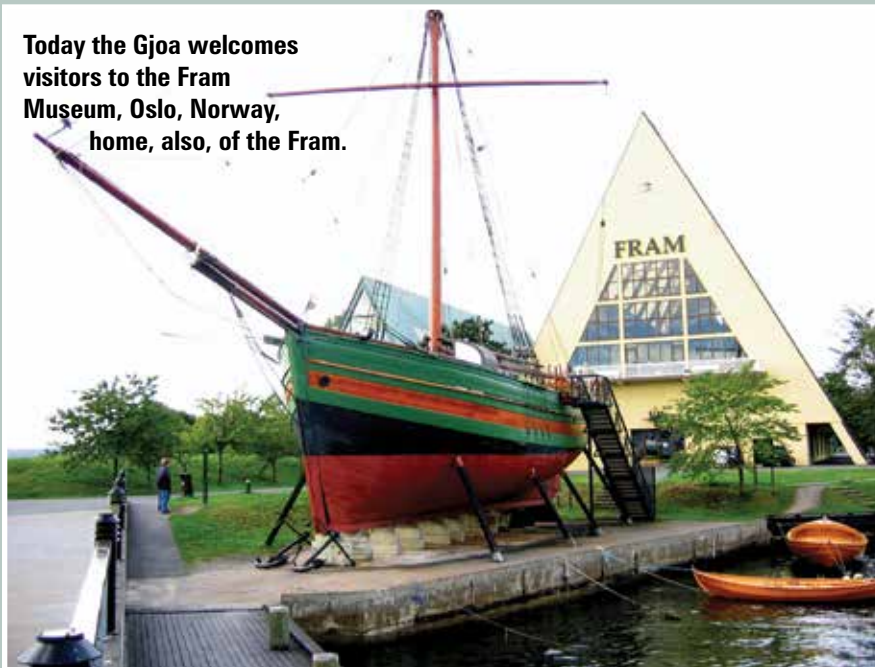
Work was interrupted in 2015 because a fierce Arctic storm reduced underwater visibility to half a meter (1.7 feet). Divers used markers and tie lines to find their way around after the storm.

(Continued on page 00)



H.M.S. Erebus. by Belgian seascape painter François Etienne Musin. Ill-fated Sir John Franklin, above right.

Today the Gjoa welcomes visitors to the Fram Museum, Oslo, Norway, home, also, of the Fram.



(Continued from page 00)

The Gjoa

Fifty years after the Franklin tragedy, Roald Amundsen and six men sailed through the entire Northwest Passage in three years, from 1903-1906. Amundsen bought the 70-foot ship, Gjoa, named after the first skipper's wife, in 1901, and began immediately making improvements in preparation for ice. In the Tromsø shipyard in Norway he had the hull strengthened, and the next year he had it strengthened again by adding iron in Trondheim.

There are a number of reasons why Amundsen succeeded where others failed, and one of the important ones, besides his assiduous preparations and his choice of route, was that he wisely chose to winter over with the local tribespeople three years in a row, waiting out the worst of the ice, acquiring skills from the natives, and doing scientific experiments. When they resumed their trip each time, it was slow going, as many of the waterways were so shallow there was less than a foot's clearance below their keel and they had to navigate their way through treacherous ice fields. That's why his trip took so long. He left Kristiania in Norway on June 16, 1903 and reached Nome, Alaska on August

30, 1906. He reached San Francisco on September 10, 1906, where he and his little ship got a hero's welcome. Amundsen went home, but the Gjoa stayed in San Francisco, where it was pulled ashore and put on display in Golden Gate Park.

When the Gjoa was 100 years old, and still sitting outdoors, dry rotted, in San Francisco, she was hoisted up and trailered to the harbor where she was placed on the deck of a cargo ship and arrived in Oslo on June 2, 1972, where it has been fully restored and is proudly on display at the National Maritime Museum. The Gjoa made it home.



The Fram leaves Bergen, Norway, on July 2, 1893.

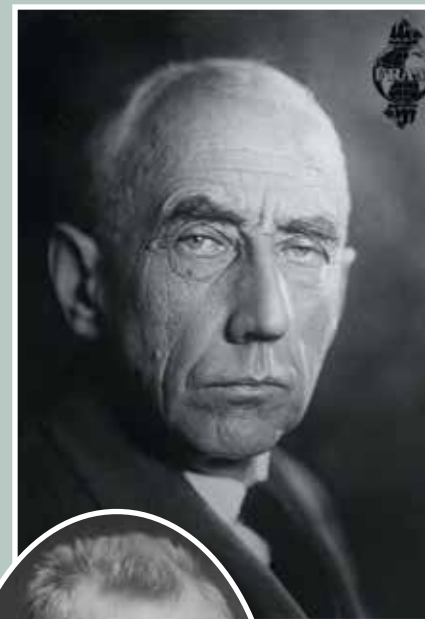
PHOTO: NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NORWAY-OSLO

The Fram

The Fram was the first Norwegian ship specifically designed and built for navigating polar ice, with accommodations for a crew that would spend up to five years at a time at sea. It was about 120 feet long and 40 feet wide and was shaped like an egg sliced in half lengthwise. The hull was almost three feet thick and constructed with greenheart, some of the strongest, densest wood known. Its shape was designed to resist crushing by the ice and would ride up on the ice instead.

But this shape also caused an awful ride in open sea. Both the rudder and the propeller could be lifted from the ice. It even had a windmill on board for the generation of electricity for lamp lighting. Designed by Norwegian Fridtjof Nansen, who planned an expedition of "polar drift", freezing the Fram into place in sheet ice and migrating with the ice pack over the North Pole. The ship spent three years trapped in the ice, from 1893 to 1896, but missed the North Pole.

From 1898 to 1902 the Fram under the leadership of Norwegian explorer Otto Sverdrup successfully navigated parts of the Arctic archipelago, charting the location of islands, coasts, and waterways; an area about a quarter of a million square kilometers (155,325 square miles). He discovered a number of new islands west of Ellesmere Island, which are collectively known as the Sverdrup Islands.



Roald Amundsen, above, and Fridtjof Nansen, left.

A few years later, in 1910, Amundsen had the Fram refurbished in preparation for another attempt at polar drift to the North Pole, but his heart wasn't in it, and after he left harbor he headed to Antarctica instead, partly to avoid creditors who were looking for him back at the harbor. On his return from Antarctica in 1912, he reached Buenos Aires, Argentina. Amundsen took off for his next adventure. Meanwhile, the Fram spent the next two years sailing up and down the Brazilian coast, receiving a change of plans several times. She made it back to Norway on July 16, 1914, worm eaten and in bad shape. The Fram was done. Towed into Oslo on May 6, 1935, it was pulled up onto land, and a building was built around it. Today, 80 years later, it lies in state in a museum bearing its name in Oslo. Skillfully built, and guided by some of the best seamanship of the day, the Fram made it home from treacherous voyages in uncharted waters.

The Maud

A new ship was built expressly for Amundsen because by the time the Fram got back to Norway it was too damaged to make another Arctic trip. Amundsen planned to make the Northeast Passage with her, from Norway across the top of Russia, to Nome, Alaska. The new ship was modeled after the Fram, and Amundsen got permission from the Norwegian government to take some of the equipment from on board the Fram and use it on the Maud. The Maud was designed and constructed to Amundsen's specifications, and he invested most of his money in the ship. The Norwegian government contributed as did some other sponsors, but in the end the cost of the ship and supplies far exceeded the money available, and when Amundsen sailed, he carried with him the financial burden of heavy debt and creditors waiting for him on the other side. After two winters and three summers in the Northeast Passage, the ship arrived in Nome, Alaska on July 27, 1920, where Amundsen left the ship.

The Maud continued on for another three years under the command of Oscar Wisting in another abortive attempt at an East-West polar crossing, and they arrived back at Nome in 1925 where creditors were waiting for their collateral. Wisting managed to evade them and slipped out of port, but when they arrived at Seattle on October 5, 1925, the creditors were waiting to seize the ship.

The Maud was sold at auction to the Hudson Bay Company (HBC), which used her as a supply ship in the Canadian archipelago. In 1926 she was frozen in the ice at Cambridge Bay, and the HBC kept her there as a floating warehouse, radio station, and machine shop. In 1930 she developed a leak near her propeller, and without any appropriate repair facilities available, she sank at her mooring, half in and half out of the water. Not exactly a glorious finish for a ship designed for great things.

But it got worse. Over the years the Maud was gradually cannibalized for practical purposes. Her foremast is reported as having been removed for a flagpole at the HBC trading post. Her wheel was removed and sent somewhere in Norway, but no one seems to know where it went. The local Inuit complained that oil leaking from its hold was ruining the fishing in the area, and in 1935 her hull was dynamited to remove the oil in the hold. By 1939 the deck was gone. (Good wood is scarce in Cambridge Bay.) What was left of her was wrecked by ice which gradually moved her remains further from shore. The frigid Arctic water prevented damage from shipworms, which usually destroy whatever is left of shipwrecks.

(Continued on page 00)

Launching of Maud in Vollen, Norway, 1917.



Polarskibet "Maud" gaar af Stabelen 7de Juni 1917.

PHOTO: NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NORWAY-OSLO

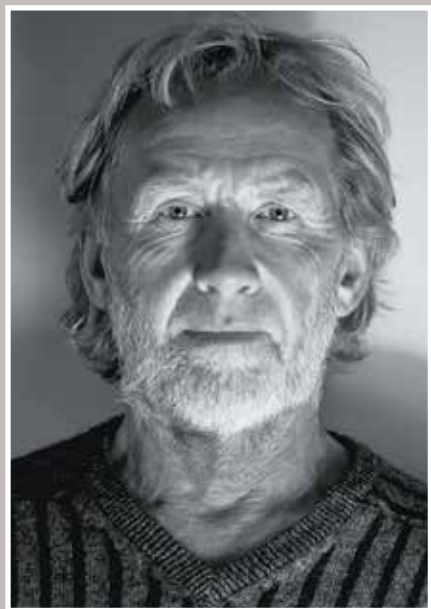


On a quiet evening, Maud can be seen with all the airbags attached around her hull.

(Continued from page 00)

The Asker Investors

The Maud remained in the waters of Cambridge Bay for over 85 years. In 2011 the Tandberg Eiendom company of real estate investors in Asker hired Jan Wanggaard to look into the possibility of bringing Maud home to Asker where she had been built. This was a remarkable grass roots investment in cultural history, where the costs were unknown, and there was



Project Manager Jan Wanggaard

no profit in sight.

Why would they undertake a project that could last a decade or more with no idea of cost? Amundsen once said: "And yet even today we hear people ask in surprise: What is the use of these voyages of exploration? What good do they do us? Little brains, I always answer to myself, have only room for thoughts of bread and butter." For the investors of Tandberg Eiendom in Asker, at least part of the answer has to be their attachment to their local identity. After spending years and significant sums contributing to the development of local infrastructure and living environment, bringing Maud home where she belongs just feels like the right thing to do. In many ways this project replicates the courage, determination, and vision it took for Amundsen to have her built in the first

place.

Jan says theirs is a totally private project, with no financial involvement from the public purse. Jan finds that a little surprising considering how much Amundsen contributed to the nation of Norway. A failure by the fledgling Norwegian government of 1905/1906 to provide adequate financial support to Amundsen was a source of bitterness to Amundsen as an explorer until his death. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Arctic and Antarctic exploration had captured the public's eye, and it had quickly developed into an international competition in the newspapers, a polar Olympics of sorts, and Amundsen was carrying the Norwegian flag. He expected better recognition and support for the home team from the Norwegian power structure than he got.



Maud in Oslo before departure from Norway, 1918.



Maud crew of 2016 from left: Bjørn Myrann, Terje Mørkved, Kjell Myrann, Stig Pettersen and Jan Wanggaard.

The Team

Unlike the Erebus extravaganza, Jan works with a core crew of two and they call in others on occasion as they are needed.

Jan is a philosopher-sailor who has spent a lifetime on the water. His ambition has not been to win competitions, but to immerse himself in the natural element, to be a part of

the forces of nature. Perhaps in the process he became one himself. He likes physical activity, and continually improving his own abilities to create and achieve and to perfect. He studied industrial design and the connection between crafts and the human spirit. He is a hands-on kind of guy, and although he admires much of technology, he believes young

people today have become over-intellectualized and are losing their physical connections with nature and life. Jan is the only diver on this project in the icy waters of Cambridge Bay in Nunavut, Canada.

He says they operate without a budget and without time frames or deadlines. They proceed with a

(Continued on page 00)



The crew lines up in anticipation of Maud's resurfacing after 85 years. Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, in the distance.

(Continued from page 00)

scientific mind and a dock worker's practical canniness. They approach the task of raising a ship that has been submerged for 85 years in icy water with patience and cautious resolve. There is no place for hurrying. They proceed with the same mindset as Amundsen 100 years ago when he planned his expeditions: attention to the smallest details was the difference between life and death. Not only was Amundsen the first to discover the South Pole, he and his crew returned. The five-member team of his closest competitor who reached the Pole all died trying to get back to base. If Amundsen were present in Cambridge Bay today, he would approve of Jan Wanggaard.

Just as he was chosen to lead the project based on the implicit trust of others in him, and not political jockeying for a resume-building spot in the limelight, Jan picked his team of two because of past history with them and their intense desire to work with him on this project. He has known Bjorn Myramm, who he describes as "a very smart man" and a "jack of all trades and expert at nothing" for over 30 years, and Stig Pettersen came to him after the project was announced and said he wanted to be a part of it, and added "if you say no, I will never give up or go away until you change your mind." Like both Amundsen and other successful expedition leaders, Jan Wanggaard understands the value of competent, motivated team mates who are willing to follow direction. He and his colleagues are knowledgeable about engines and mechanical things such as compressors and tugboats and how to make things work under challenging circumstances. And they share a respect for the indigenous tribal people of the Far North.

The Plan

Because the waterways in parts of the Canadian archipelago are ice-free for less than twelve weeks in the summer, the project would take three years: the summer of 2014 to get a tug and barge to Cambridge Bay from

Jan Wanggaard's First meeting with Maud.



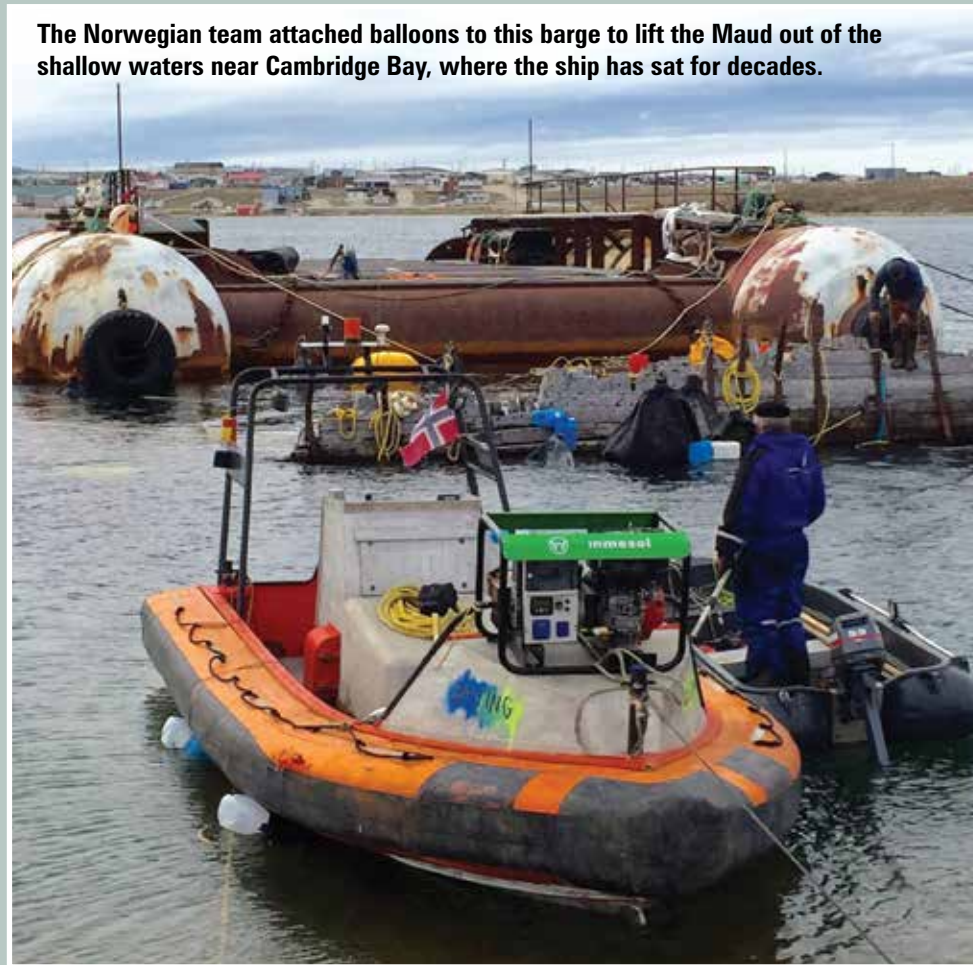
PHOTO: NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NORWAY-OSLO

Norway. When the ice began to melt in mid-July of 2015, they would begin diving around the Maud, examining her and testing their plans to lift and move her. The final uplift from the seabed and affixing the Maud to the barge would begin in July this year, and she would be moved to Greenland where she would winter, and her final

voyage home to her birthplace in Vollen, Norway would happen in 2017.

Or maybe not. Maybe they would make the return trip back to Norway retracing the original route the Maud took to get from Norway to the Canadian Northwest Passage—across the Northeast Passage, through the Russian Arctic, in effect reliving the

The Norwegian team attached balloons to this barge to lift the Maud out of the shallow waters near Cambridge Bay, where the ship has sat for decades.



Amundsen voyage. It might take longer, but they would not have the risk of crossing the tempestuous North Atlantic Ocean.

Just to get the 50-year-old tugboat Tandberg Polar and the barge named Jensen from Norway to Cambridge Bay in 2014 was a task requiring masterful seamanship. Crossing the Atlantic in early July they met nasty storms and 30-foot waves. As they rounded the southern tip of Greenland, they were introduced to "summer" ice ranging in size from small chunks to icebergs 300 feet high, complicated by occasional dense fog and high winds.

Last summer a small crew attached large airbags along the sides of the Maud with very strong lightweight ropes that could be handled without the use of expensive heavy equipment. The Maud would be very heavy as she was lifted from the seabed because of her heavy iron plating. They went as far as they could before winter ice of 2015 shut them down for the year.

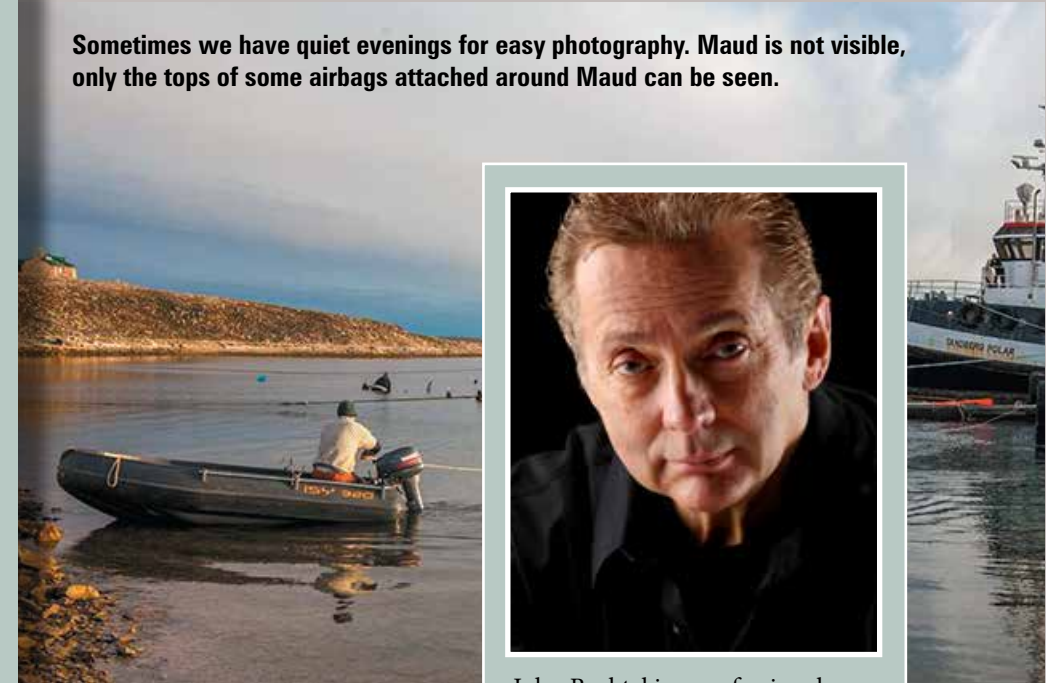
As you read this, the "summer" of 2016 in Cambridge Bay is winding down and the nights grow longer and the days grow shorter, the ice begins to lock out marine traffic and isolate the small town once again. It is not hard to imagine life here as Amundsen experienced it. The Maud recovery team has been living an expedition of their own; small, intimate, and close to history. What will they do next? What route will they take? If they take the Northeast Passage across the Russian Arctic, will they be able to reestablish connections made by Amundsen with the indigenous tribes? Will the descendants remember? How long will the trip take? Will they remove the moisture from the oak of the ship by using the new technology of freeze drying? Will they do this on a winter layover, or will it happen back in Asker?

Sustained by a feeling of the rightness of what they are doing and with strong focus, Jan Wanggaard and his small crew are patient, live in the moment, and relish their own small place in Arctic maritime history as they take the Maud home to the village of Vollen, in the municipality of Asker, where she will finally come in from the cold.



The Maud surfaced on Saturday, July 30, 2016. A very happy Jan Wanggaard examines the wreck of the resurfaced ship.

Sometimes we have quiet evenings for easy photography. Maud is not visible, only the tops of some airbags attached around Maud can be seen.



You can follow their adventure here: <http://www.maudreturnshome.no/>, or go to their facebook page, [maudreturnshome](https://www.facebook.com/maudreturnshome) for more information and photos.

Unless otherwise specified, photos provided courtesy of Jan Wanggaard.



John Bechtel is a professional freelance writer for the food, wine, and tourism industries; ghostwriting non-fiction books; and web content strategist for businesses.

You can follow him on his website www.greatplainsdrifter.com.