

Old salt shares fishy tales from sardine boat

By Andrew Fruch
SPECIAL TO THE BEAVER

Bronte Harbour had an unexpected visitor this week, as a piece of history made its way to the dock. An 80-ft. sardine boat named the Bernadine from Campobello Island, decided to make a stop in Oakville as it continues on its journey to Owen Sound.

"It is a voyage of purpose," said Charles Wyman Creaser, Captain of the Bernadine. "A lot of people don't know the story of boats like these. It is a floating piece of history."

Creaser decided to set sail to promote tourism on Campobello Island and celebrate Owen Sound's 150th anniversary. Owen Sound was named after the older brother of explorer Captain William Fitzwilliam Owen, a British naval officer who first surveyed the area and was granted Campobello Island in 1767.

"A chance stop" brought Creaser to Oakville. He had no idea Oakville was also celebrating its 150th anniversary.

Creaser set out June 16, and has been stopping en route as he navigates the Great Lakes. Some of the stops planned include Port Dover and New York. He expects to reach Owen Sound by mid-August.

The Bernadine has become a floating museum, as Creaser gives tours of his boat and has set up a series of displays and a video to showcase the history of the East Coast fishing industry and Campobello Island. Creaser also has letters



LIESA KORTMANN / OAKVILLE BEAVER

AHOY THERE: Captain Charles Wyman Creaser with his 80-ft. sardine boat called Bernadine, which docked at the Bronte Harbour pier by the Lighthouse for a visit. The Bernadine is sailing from the Bay of Fundy, Campobello Island, to Owen Sound to celebrate Owen Sound's 150th anniversary. It stopped unexpectedly here only to learn it is also Oakville's 150th anniversary.

of endorsement from the New Brunswick government.

"I like meeting the different people who are interested in the history," said Creaser. "It's a chance to tell a story that a lot of people do not know."

Campobello Island is in the Bay of Fundy near the entrance to Passamaquoddy Bay and Cobscook Bay. It's part of New Brunswick, but the only bridge connecting it to the mainland leads to the U.S. state of Maine.

The island served as the summer home of the late

Franklin Roosevelt, former U.S. president, and is known for its fishing industry.

Spending a great deal of time on the water is nothing new to Creaser, who was born

and raised in New Brunswick. He began his career at sea as an 18-year-old, working on coastal oil tankers for Imperial Oil and was also trained and worked as a deep sea diver. In

the off season, Creaser works as a millwright in Ontario.

Creaser came into possession of the Bernadine a few years ago when a friend informed him the Bernadine was sitting in a yard unused. Creaser restored the boat to its original condition.

The Bernadine is completely authentic.

There is no running water, washroom or fancy electronic gadgets.

An iron stove, compass and radio are the sole luxuries found aboard the vessel.

Now that Creaser is familiar with navigating the Great Lakes, he hopes to repeat the voyage.

"I'd like to try it every year," said Creaser. "Or maybe one year I navigate the Great Lakes, and the next I travel down the east coast."

As for now, Creaser is enjoying his journey and everyone he meets at each stop, and he says "It's a great chance to exchange fishing stories."



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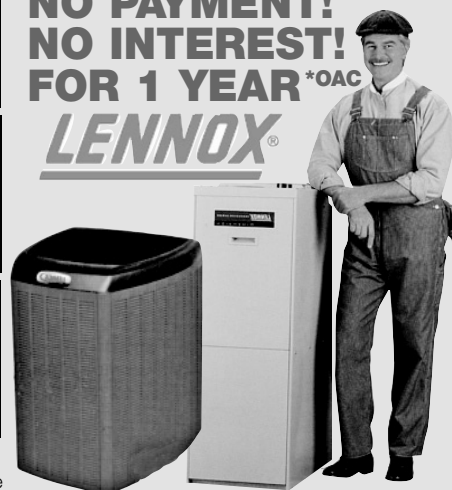
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