

Sweet Memories

These memories were collected during the Museum's exhibition on shipping in Niagara in the summer of 2004.

The latest issue of Museum Chronicles asked for memories of the S.S. Cayuga before it finally ceased operation in 1959. As children, we would go swimming off Mississauga Point or at Queen's Royal Beach in the late 1940s and early 1950s. We had inflated automobile tire inner tubes, covered in patches. They were inflated at the British-American gas station on Queen Street and I think that we obtained the inner tubes from the same source.

When the Cayuga was sighted, entering the Niagara River in the late morning, we launched ourselves on the inner tubes to ride the waves created by her wake. It was also fun to go down to the wharf, where carts of crated fruit waited under the shed roof for loading, to see the ship's arrival or to say farewell to visitors. I do not recall the Cayuga stopping on the downriver trip back from Queenston. The Niagara-on-the-Lake dock lurched backward under the impact of the ship's towering hull and the trailing wooden buffers groaned and splintered as they absorbed the pressure of ship against dock. Local boys, with more courage than me, dived into the churning waters around the ship to retrieve coins thrown by passengers on the ship's upper deck. There must be plenty of small change in the mud below the dock, if the dredge known as "the sand sucker" has not recovered these coins. Cars carried on the lowest level of the Cayuga were loaded and unloaded from a side door, and they rumbled over a ramp to the dock.

We took the S.S. Cayuga to Toronto to go to the Canadian National Exhibition or to visit an aunt and uncle there. I remember peering down a passageway into the hot, noisy and oily engine room or watching the waves fold back as the steamer progressed across the lake. Going through the passage between the Toronto Islands, the smooth, green water parted like, to my childish mind, jelly. The ship's interior was sparsely furnished with wooden benches so it was more agreeable to run around the open decks. Our destination was the Canada Steamship Lines wharf on the Toronto waterfront - only one wooden building from that era survives. The trip back to Niagara began after 8 p.m. and it took almost two hours to get home, so we were very sleepy on the return voyage. For adults there were nighttime, shipboard dance excursions on summer weekends and the Cayuga, with glittering lights reflected off the water and the faint sound of a band playing, was a magical sight as it steamed majestically upriver to Queenston. A few trips on the busy Queen Elizabeth Way to Toronto, via Burlington, are enough to make one year for the old passenger steamer.

- Peter Moogk

**S.S. Cayuga – 1944
Dr. Ralph Malone
Interviewed by Selina Appleby
August 2004**

Nearing 80, Dr. Ralph Malone can still recall his 2 moth working experience on the S.S. Cayuga with pleasure. His job as a steward consisted of serving hot dogs and coffee to the 1900 passengers who boarded in Toronto for the Lake Ontario run to Queenston. There were two trips a day with the moonlight trip as the most interesting. The night trip included an orchestra and the passengers were able to dance on the sometimes rocky ship.

He was 19 years old at the time and he describes his job as a relatively easy one, starting with the preparation of coffee and hot dogs from 7-9 a.m. in the cafeteria area; tow stops – one at Niagara-on-the-Lake and the other at Queenston and the immediate return to Toronto. His most vivid recollection is the way the ship docked at Queenston and as soon as the ropes were released from the bow of the ship the current swung the ship around and pointed “up river” to Toronto. When he arrived in Toronto they had a break until the moonlight cruise back to Queenston. He continued serving coffee and hot dogs but since it was a “dry ship there was no booze, but they brought their own in a hip flask”.

Although there was little drunkenness the odd one was contained in a cabin next to the passenger cars on the lower deck. His cabin was situated next to it. But on the whole things were very orderly. He enjoyed the camaraderie of the staff who all were students like himself working as stewards. Although he always liked boats, having been born in the Caribbean, it was his landlady who had given him a letter or recommendation to the Canadian Steamship Lines who hired him.

Since it was a coal burning ship, later to be converted to oil, he still recalls the heavy black smoke coming out of the stacks and the lasting impression it made on him. And now 60 years later he lives in a condo overlooking the Niagara River and the docks as a constant reminder of the S.S. Cayuga.

**S.S. Cayuga
Mrs. Anne Buyers
Interviewed by Selina Appleby
August 2004**

When Anne Buyers talks about the Cayuga her eyes light up. At the age of 89 she complains of forgetting many things but never the Cayuga. As a child her family came to Niagara-on-the-Lake from Buffalo for the summer and rented a cottage where the Chateau Gardens stands. From there she had a good view of the docks and the boats.

Her frequent trips to Toronto to visit her grandmother, with her younger sister in tow, made a lasting impression on her. She recalls the importance of the Cayuga in the life of her family, since her father was a regular passenger. Now having moved up King Street to where Parliament Oak school is today the first whistle of the boat gave her father just enough time to hurry down to the dock in time for the departing whistle.

The docks were not only a social venue to watch all the people but a commercial spot to watch all the baskets of fruit being loaded for the Toronto markets. These baskets included peaches from their small orchard when she paid special attention to the baskets that she and her sister helped pack.

But the most fun was waiting for the boat to depart and the swimming out and surfing the waves... "it blew its whistle and sent out huge waves like the ocean." But all was not fun when on one occasion when the ship was coming in she and her friends in a canoe took shelter under the docks. When it docked the water under the docks began to rise and so did the canoe. Luckily they flattened themselves in the bottom of the canoe and escaped injury.

This scare did not dim her recall of the beauty of the interior of the ship which she described: "The brass trimmings were always highly polished and gleamed and the washroom was furnished with wicker and chintz. A grand stairway branched in two from the main floor and the entrance into the dining room was like the elegant Statler hotel in Buffalo."

She also recalled the storm that smashed the glass of the already closed door and sent the suitcases swirling.

But when she returned to Niagara-on-the-Lake after an absence of 25 years she was "horrified" to see the mess at the dock area. Since transportation was now mainly a sea of cars the lake and boat travel soon became a thing of the past.

Years later on her way home to Niagara-on-the-Lake from Toronto she caught sight of a half-sunk boat in the harbour at the foot of Spadina. IT was her beloved Cayuga and this time her eyes filled with tears as she felt the loss of her childhood along with the submerged Cayuga.

George Hinterhoeller

**An interview with Nona Hinterhoeller, wife of George, by Selina Appleby
September 2004**

From the time George Hinterhoeller arrived in Canada in 1952 to his death in 1999 he never lost his vision. He was a sailor and a boat builder with a commitment to

sail and provide the means for others to do the same.

Born in 1929 in Austria he first sailed at the age of 8. His love of sailing continued all his life echoing in his own words; “Sailing is listening to the hissing sound of the bow waves, watching the ever-challenging wave formation and gliding smoothly over a mirror-like surface on a quiet day.”

He started out working in Niagara-on-the-Lake at Shephard’s boatworks but continued to build boats as a hobby in his own home. His wife Nona recalls the encroachment on their house: “We had to live in the rest of the house since he was making such a mess of the living room.”

Soon he opened his first workshop at King and Paffard Street where he teamed up with 2 partners – Gord Brinsmead and Hans Christiansen. They pooled their tools and \$400 each and were now open for business. When Christiansen returned to Denmark the 2 partners were left at Hinterhoeller Ltd. According to Nona, an amateur inventor named Bert Miller was building canoes out of fiberglass and this was the inspiration for George to use the same material on sailboats. She recalls their boat-building skill: “A 16’ boat was built in 3 ½ hours by 4 craftsmen” and so the famous “Shark” was launched.

She explained that the shape of the hull was inspired by Goring Ball’s boat the “Teenie – H”.

Both the speed in building the “Shark” as well as its speed in the water revolutionized the boat building industry.

In 1969 George joined Cuthbertson & Caisson as a builder at C&C Yacht Co. on King and John Streets (later destroyed by fire – across from Pillar and Post).

In their heyday they employed 200 workers and brought world recognition to the town for its boat building industry. Caught up in the bureaucracy of running a business did not agree with George or as one of his workers said: “He preferred being with the guys on the floor and as a carpenter all he wanted to do was build boats”.

Winning awards, including a Doctorate, didn’t impress him and when the business went into bankruptcy, he soon started over again. This time with no partners. It was said that the reason business had gone bad was that the long-life of the Shark diminished future sales. They were “hoisted by their own petard”. The boats were just too well made and lasted too long.

George opened a new shop in Port Weller on Read Road and it was here that the ‘Non-Such’ was redesigned. It had one mast and one sail and its popularity created a new market. Approximately 1000 ‘Non-Such’ were built.

Although he had reached retirement age his passion for sailing was still very much alive.

He continued to sail until he became too ill. The water was never out of sight as he positioned his bed overlooking the Niagara River. The last entry in his cruising log aptly reflect's his life:

As he said: "It was a great ride!"