

Historic craft sails into Picton Harbor

Storied yacht Stormy Weather will forego the oceans for fresh water this season

By Rick Fralick
Gazette Staff

Stormy Weather sailed into Picton Harbor last week and, believe it or not, local yachting aficionados couldn't be happier.

That's because this particular Stormy Weather has nothing to do with the actual weather and everything to do with 63 years of yachting history.

Designed and built in 1933 by Olin Stephens at the Henry E. Nevins yard in New York City, and named after a popular song of the day, Stormy Weather was officially launched on St. Patrick's Day, March 17, 1934.

The 53-foot, 11-inch-long boat was actually built specifically for a major trans-Atlantic race from New York to Bergen, Norway, which she won.

And that victory was only the beginning.

She was the overall winner of the 1935 Fastnet race in England, a race that is run every two years and involves a 603 nautical mile journey around the Isle of Wight, Fastnet Rock and back to Portsmouth.

She then went on to become the overall winner of a couple of Bermuda races and, through the years, has won her class at every major event on the east coast of North America, in addition to her many victories in the prestigious Southern Ocean Racing Circuit, where she successfully raced against the very best ocean racing yachts in the world.

For example, from 1937 to 1941, Stormy Weather was first overall five times in the Miami to Nassau race.

In 1936, she was first in class and second overall in

the Bermuda Race, a rough race that saw 10 of 42 entrants retire without finishing.

In 1941, she tied for first overall in the Southern Ocean Racing Conference and in 1948 won the title all by herself.

In 1947, she won the Bluenose Trophy during her only season on the Great Lakes.

And, on her 20th birthday in 1954, she was first overall in the Storm Trysail Race, which was 190 miles long and featured 63 yachts.

Despite her storied history, by the mid-1970s Stormy Weather was in trouble, both financially and physically.

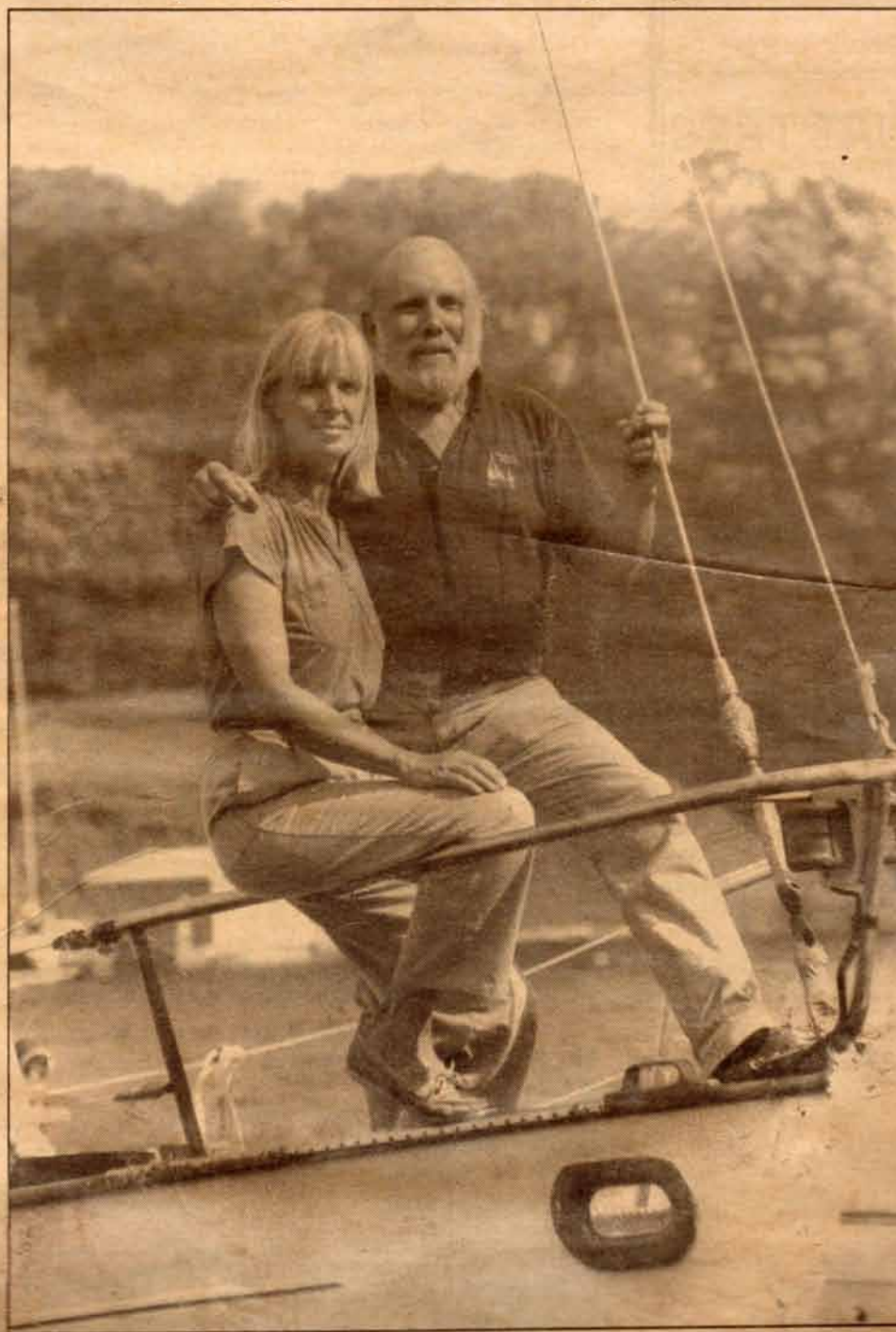
Enter Paul Adamthwaite, a native of Aberdeen, Scotland who, to this day is still the only person to single-handedly sail around the world, France to England, passing the four great capes, with only four stops in 11 months in a sailboat of less than 30 feet.

"It was something I wanted to do for myself, not for publicity," he now says modestly of his 1975 feat in a Dufour 29-foot sailboat.

Notwithstanding his passion for sailing, Paul's first career was as a fighter pilot in the Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Navy, where he accumulated 1,198 successful carrier landings in 23 years of service.

Growing up during the Second World War, Paul naturally saw lots of airplanes overhead and wanted to fly, but his was a sea-going family.

He held the distinction of being the only student in his school to be wounded by the Germans when, during an air raid, a small piece of shrapnel struck him in the forehead, leaving a tiny scar visible to this day.



A Storied Past - Betty Ann and Paul Adamthwaite relax on the bow of Stormy Weather.

Later on in life, when he inquired after and was sent a batch of information by the Royal Air Force, his grandfather, a naval officer, "blew up," upon seeing the RAF address on the package and got his grandson into the Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Navy instead.

Paul retired from the navy in 1975 and began indulging his passion for sailing with the aforementioned trip around the world.

Meanwhile, by 1977, Stormy Weather was in the Caribbean and chartering, but she was financially troubled and in terrible physical condition.

Paul got wind that the bank was about to foreclose and in 1978 offered the owner less than \$10,000, which was accepted. He then spent close to \$100,000 and two years of solid work restoring her, with the help of original designers Rod and Olin Stephens.

"The love, time and effort are a lot more important to me than the dollar value," says Paul, who started work on his new boat in the U.S. Virgin Islands and finished up in the British Virgin Islands.

"By 1980 she still wasn't entirely finished, but she was sailing.

"On my first Atlantic crossing (he has made 36 altogether in Stormy Weather, including three solo) I had just three or four bunks, a stove and a sink, but by 1983 she was just about finished."

"I started racing the heck out of her in the Caribbean during the 1980s to see what would work and what would break."

In 1986, Paul married Picton native Betty Ann



Gazette photo by Rick Fralick

Racy Yacht - Launched officially on St. Patrick's Day, March 17, 1934, the yacht Stormy Weather has a long history of excellence in ocean racing.

Yacht, from page 1

Anderson, an outstanding artist and skilled sailor in her own right, who has made 14 of the 36 trans-Atlantic crossings with Paul.

Despite the repairs and upgrades to Stormy Weather over the past 15 years, she is still spartan by the standards of many modern yachts - the boat cannot be plugged into dockside hydro and uses ice boxes rather than a refrigerator.

Since the restoration of the boat, Paul has sailed her for a couple of months every winter in the Caribbean, usually out of Antigua, where he participates in the Antigua Race Week and invariably finishes in the top three.

He then sails each year to Douarnenez, France where he has been very much involved with the classic French yachting magazine *Chasse-Maree*, and with the restoration of the Douarnenez Port Museum. He spends a couple of months in France every year.

This is the first time Stormy Weather has been in Picton (she arrived June 24 at 4 p.m. after a trip up

the Hudson River) and the Adamthwaites and their crewman Matthieu Abiven of France were met at the Prince Edward Yacht Club dock by a welcoming committee.

They have a home in Picton and will be based here this summer, although they may take day trips by sail to Toronto or Kingston.

Matthieu, a native of Brittany who has taught sailing and offshore cruising in France, is particularly looking forward to visiting Quebec at some point this summer.

"Now we finally have a chance to let all our friends here sail on Stormy Weather," Betty Ann enthused.

This winter, they hope to drydock their yacht somewhere nearby, and indoors, so they can spend the off season refinishing the exterior and interior surfaces of the boat.

Paul points out that the onboard diesel engine has only been stripped down twice in 20 years.

Stormy Weather can accommodate eight or nine persons, although on

day races, as many as 20 can safely sail onboard.

She sails under British registry and the Adamthwaites are members of the Royal Ocean Racing Club, which was founded in 1925 and now boasts 3,500 members.

As a side business, Paul writes computer software programs on such subjects as morse code, and yacht racing technique.

"We love our freedom and our sailing time, but I've got to keep my grey cells up to date and computers enable me to do that," he chuckles.

He also designs Web pages, mostly in French, a language he speaks fluently.

Paul is an accomplished scuba diver and always has diving equipment onboard Stormy Weather.

Paul and Betty Ann are both active members of the Prince Edward Radio Club, and when at sea check in regularly with their fellow "hams."

In the spring of 1995, their amateur radio friends followed Stormy Weather's crossing of the Atlantic and on Paul's very special mission - to enter his boat in the Fastnet Race on the

60th anniversary of her first overall victory in that famous race.

Out of 243 entries from all over the world in the 1995 Fastnet, Stormy Weather, with a crew of eight, came first in the Seahorse Division, second in her class (size) and sixth overall.

When Paul departed Portsmouth on Aug. 12, 1995, only 188 boats had finished. The final results showed that many famous boats did not fare so well, such as Great Britain II, which finished 183rd overall.

Paul returned home to Picton in August, 1995, leaving Stormy Weather in France. On Oct. 21 he flew back and, with Betty Ann, sailed his yacht back to Antigua for his 36th Atlantic crossing in her.

Two months home at Christmas, a couple of months sailing the Caribbean, and then another trans-Atlantic crossing to France in the spring, and so on.

This year, 1997, is different, however.

After winning all three races in her class at Antigua Race week, and first overall (the vessel is now 63 years old) Stormy Weather left Antigua on May 20 for Bermuda and, after a very short layover, sailed from Bermuda to New York in a time of only four days and one hour.

After a special reception for the famous boat in New York, Stormy Weather headed up the Hudson River to the Erie Barge Canal en route to Lake Ontario and Picton for the summer.

Stormy Weather even has its own homepage on the Internet, which can be accessed as follows: <http://www.reach.net/~stormy>.