

The African Queen - A History

Legacy in Key Largo Part III

By Jimmy Hendricks

March 17th, 1987 St Patty's day the African Queen was in the St Paddy day parade in Dublin, Ireland, and then to get a good head of steam up and take a cruise on the Liffey River with Dublin's Miss Boat Show, and then high tail it back to London for the Easter Parade.

While at the Earls Court Boat Show in London we were invited to appear in the Melbourne and Sydney Boat Shows, so it was off to Australia we trucked her over to London's Tilbury docks and she was loaded aboard a Polish Freighter this would be the start of the Queen second trip around the world the first one started in 1912 when she headed to Africa and ended upon her return to England in 1986, and now she was beginning the trek again in 1987 but the second time would not take 74 years to complete.

Dad and I met the freighter when she docked in Melbourne, the Queen none the worse for wear, however she needed a major scrub down since even tipped on her side was to wide to fit into a cargo container so she had to ride on the top of the containers and the soot from the ships smoke stack turn the entire boat black as the coal, after a good scrubbing involving a pressure washer and untold amounts of degreaser the old girl was once again presentable for her "Press Day" on Melbourne's Yarra River. The boat show committee had gone all out for the event as we passed under a bridge we emerged from a wall smoke and as the bow passed through smoke more fire

works went off and the Queen had officially arrived in Melbourne.

While I got to visit Sydney I was not there for her arrival in Sydney Harbor which I understand was just as spectacular as the Melbourne opening, although with the back drop of the Sydney Opera House for my point of view I would think it was even more so.

Once the Australian appearances were over the African Queen was once again load on a freighter to start her second leg of her second journey around the world, which would involve her first trip through the Panama Canal.

Dad kept Katharine Hepburn informed of the African Queen adventures, writing very long and detailed letters, to which Miss Hepburn would reply with one line notes such

as: "Dear old Queen" or "You are really giving her an interesting life". Dad even managed to get his name in the back of her book entitled



African Queen on the Liffey River in Dublin with Miss Boat Show.



African Queen on the Yarra River in Melbourn Austrailia.

"The Making of the African Queen" by supplying the pictures that John Hoesli had given him. Miss Hepburn even made dad contact Sir John Wolfe to get permission to publish the pictures to which Sir John told him that, "Katie could have whatever she wants and to please have her call him", to which Miss Hepburn did and she and Sir John had a reunion via telephone. The interesting thing that I have come to discover including myself

everyone who is involved with the African Queen talks about her as if she was a living breathing thing.

The African Queen arrived

Photos provided by Jimmy Hendricks

back in Key Largo with many miles under her hull some she had put there while others she received while riding on the decks freighters. When there came a phone call from a Frank Martin which was facilitated by my sister Barbara's friend Lori Best and a chance meeting of Mr. Martin who was a Movie Producer and had managed to get John Huston to agree to let him produce a documentary about Mr. Houston's life before he had died a year earlier in 1988. Mr. Martin needed a center piece for his documentary, for which Robert Mitchum was going to be the narrator. Mr. Martin was told by Lori that she not only knew who had the African Queen but she had taken a ride on her as well. Lori contacted Barbara who arranged for dad to meet Mr. Martin in Key Largo, and the next thing you know the Queen was off to Hollywood to star in her second film and her first Hollywood production.

In route to Hollywood dad had agreed to make an appearance at the Cincinnati and Seattle Washington boat shows in what was becoming a tradition a press on the Ohio River in Cincinnati, I believe that show is in January and for press day on the Ohio it was 13 degrees below zero, the Queen performed beautiful in the cold weather and steamed up and down the Mighty Ohio all morning long, however once the Queen was loaded back on her trailer her crew decided to go off for cocktails to warm their bones instead of properly winterizing her boiler a mistake that the effects of

which would not become noticeable until her next press day. As fate would have it the boiler let loose with a big swoosh as all the water drained out of the boiler and into the fir box on Lake Washington in Seattle and ended up being towed passed the review stand, another magnanimous showing for the dear old Queen.

After being shown how to plug the damaged fire tubes dad set out again to launch the Queen in the Long Beach, California harbor where another famous Queen the Queen Mary is permanently moored. As dad steamed the African Queen toward the Queen Mary the repair did not hold once again and another swoosh and they were dead in the water, however a passing boater towed them back to shore.

With the Seattle and Long Beach incidents behind them it was off to Hollywood for the filming of the "John Huston, The Man, The Movies, The Maverick". Upon returning from her latest film the Queen had a new boiler manufacture by the St. Louis Semple factory, however that boiler was only used for a year as another appearance by the Coast Guard determined that the new boiler was not ASME certified.

The recent visit by the Coast Guard also brought up the concern that the African Queen was being used as a commercial vessel, instead of as private vessel status that we had agreed to. They also informed dad that unless he got the certified to carry passengers and have a proper inspection protocol that they would not let him dock the boat any longer in a commercial marina that he would have to keep the boat behind our family home.

Now the problem with getting the African Queen

certified to carry passengers is that is considered "Coastal Trade", and since the Queen is a foreign built vessel she will need an act of Congress and a Presidential signature to be exempt from the "Jones Act" which prohibits foreign made vessel from participating in coastal trade, as anyone who bought an early Taiwan built boat who tried to put it in charter service will tell you. So off dad went to capital hill and Congressman Dante Fascell and his staff helped prepare House Bill H.R. 1803, the bill was introduced on April 11, 1989. At hearing before the House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, Congressman Fascell testified:

"My constituent here James Hendricks rescued the African Queen, literally. She was rusting in a field and about to disappear from the lexicon of mortal man; but she is well and alive, and he has been having a great adventure with her ever since" (this is an excerpt from the Congressional record).

The then Junior Senator Bob Graham introduced a companion bill into the Senate. Both bills moved slowly through Congress. Combined they became P.L. 101-92 signed by President George Bush into law August 16, 1989. Dad referred to this event as the African Queen getting her citizenship.

Look for continuation of this article in **The African Queen Part IV** in the **Coconut Telegraph February Issue**

Why People Move South



Photos found at www.StrangeCosmos.com



The Cultured Conch

continued from page 18

Environ-mental Walking Tour. 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. San Pedro Church gardens, MM 89.5 Bayside U.S.1 Plantation Key. 853-0651 or 664-5574.

Sat., Jan. 13 - Florida Keys Commercial Fisherman present 2nd annual seafood fest-ival. 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Bayview Park, Corner of Truman and Eisenhower, Key West. 619-0039

Sat., Jan. 20 - Sun., Jan. 21 - Florida Keys Art Guild Outdoor Art Festival. Free. Waldorf Plaza Key Largo 743-7441

Wed., Jan. 24 - Key West

Symphony presents Out of This World Gala Tribute to longtime supporter Robin S. Weiss. Special performance by KWSO members. TBD 292-1774.

Sat., Jan. 27 - Sun., Jan. 28 - Key West Art Center presents 22st Annual Key West Craft Show.. Free. 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Corner of Whitehead & Caroline Streets, Key West. 294-1241.

Sat., Jan. 27 - Anne McKee Artist's Fund Auction. \$20 includes food and bar. 6:30 p.m. East Martello Museum, 3501 S. Roosevelt Blvd., Key West. 295-8383.