

After 80 Years, *Bernida* Returns to Mackinac

By Karen Gould

The 32-foot sloop *Bernida*, winner of the first Bayview Yacht Club Port Huron-to-Mackinac Island yacht race in 1925, has returned to the Island after 80 years to serve as an icon of the legacy she helped create. This year, she greeted racers from shore as they crossed the finish line at Mission Point Resort, but within a year or two, she may once again sail in the Lake Huron classic.

Bart Huthwaite, commodore of the Mackinac Island Yacht Club and founding director of the Mackinac Boating Heritage Foundation, is spearheading a \$200,000 project to restore the vessel with a series of raffles. Mackinac Boating Heritage Foundation, he said, is dedicated to preserving Mackinac area maritime history and is working hand-in-hand with the Mackinac Island Tourism Bureau to raise funds throughout the Midwest.

Three raffles will be held over the next year to cover the restoration costs. The first raffle has begun and will end on September 30, with one grand prize winner walking away with \$10,000. Only 1,000 tickets are available at \$100 each.

A second raffle will be held at

the Metro Beach In Water Boat Show in Detroit later this year. With a small bit of the restoration begun, *Bernida* will be trailered to the boat show so people will see, first-hand, the restoration process.

The final raffle will take place this time next summer during the Bacardi Bayview Mackinac Race on Mackinac Island.

"We're restoring the *Bernida* \$100 at a time," said Mr. Huthwaite. "This is a boat of the masses, not a boat of the classes. It's a go boat, not a show boat."

"One hundred dollars is not a ton of money to know you had a hand in the restoration process," said Mary McGuire Slevin, director of the Mackinac Island Tourism Bureau. "This is a great

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Above photo: This painting of *Bernida* by Island artist John Manikoff shows her just about to cross the finish line to win the first Bayview race Monday, July 27, 1925. Her elapsed time was 50 hours, 50 minutes. Prints of the painting are for sale with a portion of the funds going to support the restoration project. Unframed prints are \$125 and framed prints cost \$250. They can be ordered at www.johnmanikoff.com or by calling (517) 243-1255.

Lower photo: After 80 years, *Bernida* has returned to Mackinac Island. Though no longer sea worthy, plans to restore her to compete in Island yacht races by 2007 are underway, beginning with a raffle. She arrived at the Arnold Dock, Friday, July 22, and was transported to Mission Point Resort, where she was on display during this year's Bacardi Bayview Mackinac Race.



Reenactors Adhere to Historic Customs

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"The greatest thing about this hobby is the night," said John Calder, a member of Massachusetts Provincial Battalion. Mr. Calder portrays a civilian quartermaster, and he lives in Dearborn. "Around nine or so, there is no public, but we're still all dressed, using candles, there are no electric lights, and we just sit around the campfire. Even when nobody is watching, we try to keep as close to the 18th century as we can."

At times, maintaining such strict adherence to historic customs can be difficult. Although reenactors are allowed, and, in fact, required, to use Colonial Michilimackinac's bathroom facilities, all other aspects of life are reconstructions of life in a moving military camp, which can mean some uncomfortable situations for many of the reenactors.

"We always have to cook over a fire," said Molly Troeger of Grand Rapids, a member of the Scottish 42nd Royal Highland Regiment. "That is never nice in the summer."

Paul Grant, also of the Royal Highland Regiment, commented on the difficulties of wearing a

period authentic outfit in temperatures in the high 80s and low 90s.

"It's way too warm for this clothing," said Mr. Grant, who was clad in a wool kilt, high knee socks, and a wool shirt and vest. "The kilt is nice, but this is too much wool to be wearing in the summertime."

With heavy clothing and difficult tasks, the question arises as to why these people would dedicate several weekends each summer at reenactments. The answer, for many reenactors, is multi-layered and complicated, but there is one binding factor that they almost all hold in common: reenacting is a family hobby.

"There are six Calders here," said Mr. Calder proudly, gesturing at his younger son, a sergeant, three of his grandchildren, and his daughter-in-law. "This whole unit works as a family."

Mr. Grant was pulled into the encampment after a Fourth of July celebration with his family, when his brothers pressured him to try it out. Ms. Rensland is the daughter of two reenactors, and dragged her best friend and "adopted sister," Ms. Troeger, into the camp.

"This is really the best family hobby," said Ms. Troeger. "You can see kids running for hours, not just plugged into a TV. They're having the time of their lives. This is an extended family structure. There's not a kid in this camp that I can't tell not to do something. This is the place for old-fashioned family values."

Many reenactors also find participating in historical activities a way to feed a fascination with history, and a way to continue to learn.

"For me, this started out as an interest in history," said Mr. Calder. "This was a good way to learn history, and to teach it, as well."

Ms. Troeger, who is a professional writer, couldn't help but wax poetic of her experience as a reenactor at Colonial Michilimackinac.

"The locale is absolutely beautiful, with the lake and with the sense of history," she said. "Here, people can connect more to those who came before. You can close your eyes and smell the gunpowder and hear the soldiers march, and you're there. Just for a brief moment, you're there."

Outside of the common bonds of family and history, however, there are not many apparent similarities between individual reenactors. People come from various backgrounds, careers, religions, and areas of the country. That, several involved said, is part of what makes the experience so enriching.

"There is such a broad base of

At left, Stephanie Rensland of the Scottish 42nd Royal Highland Regiment portrays a camp follower at encampments and battle recreations. "Camp followers were legitimate business people," she says. "They did washing, cleaning, mending, and cooking for the soldiers."



Alison and Nicholas Calder of Dearborn enjoyed sampling the wares from their grandfather's quartermaster supplies. The two often spend two to three weekends at encampments with their uncle and grandparents.

backgrounds," said Mr. Kemmer. "We have people who do part-time work to people with doctorates in engineering. We have everything, and that's one of the nicest things."

While the most visible things these reenactors will do are the encampments and occasional military reenactments, the work that goes into being a reenactor extends far beyond sleeping in tents and firing muskets. Participants are involved throughout the year, both in meetings, and in gathering their own equipment.

The Royal Highland Regiment is part of the Northwest Territories Living History Society, which meets quarterly, holds social events, and also a winter camp where members can trade ideas, share books, and prepare for the summer season. Also, gathering equipment and preparing authentic period clothing requires extensive amounts of time and money.

According to Mr. Kemmer, to completely outfit a soldier can cost about \$2,000.

"Everybody has to provide his

own stuff," said Mr. Kemmer. "We have manuals telling them what is correct to wear and carry. We'll send them to sutlers, which are the stores we buy things from, and we'll tell them which have the best deals. For those who want to be really authentic, they'll make their own things, and we can give them patterns."

Mr. Calder put in extensive research when he decided to portray a civilian quartermaster. He wanted to find out precisely what a quartermaster in the 1760s would have carried, how much of it, and what would be done with the supplies. He then put in the effort to actually buy, find, or make replicas of the equipment that would have been supplied by a quartermaster.

"We have these displays to show people the things a quartermaster had," said Mr. Calder. "We have examples of things the soldiers would have carried. It helps to give people an idea of the quartermaster persona."

Ms. Troeger added that, especially for the women, there is lots

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