

Captain Andy Goes Ashore

By Freda Willox, *Vancouver Sun Magazine Supplement*, June 3rd, 1950, page 16.

Residents along the shores of Burrard Inlet's North Arm are sad. Their beloved Captain Andy, master of the motor vessel *Scenic*, is leaving them. The man who went to sea so long ago is going ashore.

Captain Andy is probably feeling a bit wistful too. Man and boy, little ships and big, have been his life.

Captain John C. Anderson was born in Hull, Yorkshire, in 1881. He went to sea at 15, serving his apprenticeship on the four-masted barque *Cornishead*, which sailed from Barrow in Furness, England, to the equator in 15 days, four hours. It's a record that's never been broken as far as is known.



Capt. J.C. Anderson

After four years under sail, he turned to steam and obtained his master's ticket. The open seas lay ahead of him, for life... or so he thought.

In 1908 Captain J.C. Anderson sailed the *SS Ferndene* (Captain Fisher) out of the port of Otaru, Japan, bound for Guaymas, Mexico. It was off the coast of Japan the cyclone struck. Lifeboats, steering wheel, deck cargo... all were swept away. They saved the ship... but one man lost his life and Anderson received the injuries that forced him to give up the life of a sea captain.

For three days the ship was hove to, and the crew repaired what damage they could. Then they headed for San Diego. Running out of fuel they had to burn their cargo of railway ties. From San Diego they pushed on to their original destination in Mexico, thence to Italy and England.

Even before the doctor's confirmation, Captain Anderson knew a long rest was essential. However, far field still looked green. He journeyed to British Columbia, settled in Burnaby, and gradually regained his health.

One day in 1914 he heard that *Harbor Shipping Company* required a man.

That was Captain Andy's introduction to Burrard Inlet.



British Columbia Archives (BCARS D-06740)

Harbour Navigation Vessel *MV Scenic* — circa 1920

Since then he has traveled more than 300,000 miles on the Inlet. And that means a lot of trips, when you consider the distance between Vancouver and Indian River is only twenty miles.

Captain Andy served as master on several Inlet motor vessels — the Lo’Olbee, Lake Buntzen, Enilada, Harbor Princess, Hollyburn, and for the past 12 years on the *Scenic*.

The latter is an 80 foot vessel, with summer accommodation for 140 passengers. Winter months the upper deck is stripped of canvas and benches and the lower deck cabin looks overly large for the average dozen or so passengers.

But whether it was 12 or 112 tickets to be collected, Captain Andy was always his genial self. He treated strangers kindly and kept up to date on the welfare of his “regulars”. Each child came in for special attention. There would be a twinkle in his eye as he pretended to sell a girl’s ticket to a little boy, or *vice versa*. The children adored him.

Several years ago a woman boarded the *Scenic*, looked at him and exclaimed: “That’s him. That’s Captain Andy!”

She had seen a movie of the trip in New York and had made a special point during her West Coast visit to spending a day on the Inlet just to meet Captain Andy.

And the pictures that have been taken of him!

“You know how these tourists are,” he chuckles... “Always taking snaps. Most of them sent me copies. Some of them came from the darndest places.”

Summers brought the campers. Every Monday morning the past few years about sixty eager girls and boys clambered aboard the *Scenic* bound for a week at *Jubilee Camp*. On the return trip another group of youngsters boarded the vessel homeward bound. Captain Andy was always right there to dispel Andy tears at the thought of leaving camp.

Every ten days, 50 or 60 boys embarked for a holiday at YMCA *Camp Howdy*.



City of Vancouver Archives (CVA Bo P182)

Harbour Navigation Vessel *MV Scenic* — Indian Arm circa 1939

Tourists come and go, but Captain Andy's heart was always with his "regulars," those people who live on the shores of Burrard Inlet. He has served them well, and beyond the call of duty.

Said one old-timer recently: "Captain Andy is the most beloved man on the Inlet."

He has watched several of "his people" grow from babyhood to manhood and he has served four generations of more than one family.

Captain Andy made 16 regular trips on his daily run to Indian River. Although summer months were busy and pleasant he has always been a "year-round" man. He felt his responsibility toward the isolated families and regardless of weather conditions never failed them.

Winter brought storms roaring down the Inlet. In heavy fog he depended on time, a compass and echoes. Not the echoes of a foghorn — there aren't any in that area — but the echoes of his own whistle thrown back from nearby cliffs when he was inching toward a wharf or float. And he was never known to miss a call.

At times ice shortened his trip. He would work his way just as far as possible up the Inlet; sometimes having to stop just beyond Lake Buntzen. Residents of Granite Falls would then travel by sleigh over ice the remaining five miles to get freight and mail.

Captain Andy had the distinction of being postman of the only floating substation in Canada. It was a common sight to see campers and residents board the *Scenic*, run up the few steps to the pilot house and buy stamps for out-going mail. Or it might be a money order, or a radio license. And residents have told me if there was something he couldn't supply, such as a foreign money order; he would make the trip to the main post office in Vancouver while off-duty.

I have heard children beg their mothers for permission to meet the *Scenic*. They would say: "But we have to wave to Captain Andy or he'll wonder where we are."

Once the *Scenic* whistle wakened a baby from his morning nap. A friend of the family jokingly told the Captain about it. From that day the Captain waited just that extra minute before blowing the whistle — and the baby slept.

I recall one day last summer taking a trip to Indian River with friends who were Burrard Inlet residents. Suddenly our small power boat veered suddenly and I said, "Aren't we going the long way round?" My host answered, "Yes, but we must wave to Captain Andy."

On a recent trip up the Inlet I was greeted with the same remark from everyone: "Have you heard the news: Captain Andy isn't coming back!"

Although Captain and Mrs. Anderson live in Vancouver, I found him recently burning blackberry bushes on his lot on the North Shore. He would not commit himself on whether he was planning to build a new house. In fact, judging from the many times his gaze turned seaward, I wonder just how long Captain Andy will be content to remain ashore.