



Highlander Sea

© Tim Wright

training ship for apprentices hoping to work in his company Secunda Marine Services, involved in the offshore oil & gas service industry.

So why sailing when work will be on ocean going tugs? Simply so they can better understand the environment in which they will work. To sail a schooner across an ocean is to use and respect the elements, not to fight them. This will be an important lesson when at the helm of a tug in rough weather.

The successful candidates (many from Halifax) who win a place on *Highlander Sea*, will spend 7-12 months on board working long hours without pay. These 20 youngsters will learn about maintenance of a vessel; about the camaraderie of a crew at sea, they will learn the basics of navigation and the traditional art of sailing an old schooner. Above all, they will gain a respect for the sea. From each group of these hard-working cadets, around 60% will usually be employed by Secunda.

She originally would have slept around 9 pilots, now, with 26 berths, she can accommodate the full core crew of 6 and 20 cadets. She has all the feel of a working boat, with cadet's bunks kept neat and only allowed the minimum of space. There is only one electric winch on board *Highlander Sea*, her main throat halyard hoist. Everything else is operated by hand.

She underwent an extensive refit in Snyder's Yard in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia (the original source of much of her hardware) where they replaced decks, 13 deck beams

and main & aft mooring bits. Her pilot house was reinstated as original (the lines were still there from when the doctors removed it). Presently, all her spars, booms, gaffs & bowsprit are douglas fir. Her Jumbo boom is spruce. She is carved built white oak & mahogany planks on white oak frames with caulked seams. Under sail, she carries over 9,700 sq. ft. of sail. The galley, forward, is a big, well-thought-out, working area capable of providing for 26 hungry crew and is headed by the most impressive fisherman's stove I have ever seen. Cast in solid iron, it burns not wood anymore but diesel oil. It was warm cast like *Highlander Sea's* wheel in the Lunenburg Foundry back in the 20's. When Scott Thomas wanted to replace the buffers for the mainsheet, he stepped ashore and wandered into the Foundry and not only could they cast new ones but they still had the original wooden pattern to do so.

In Antigua, the cadets worked from 0700hrs. to 1900hrs. in preparation for the coveted Concours D'Elegance Trophy. *Highlander Sea* had a successful Classic Yacht Regatta, with Smithers on board for two of the days and a film crew from Discovery Channel on the last day. They won Best Traditional Working Boat Concours d'Elegance, and Fastest Elapsed Time in the Tall Ships' Class.

At the time of writing, *Highlander Sea* had sailed north to the Tall Ships' Races continuing her challenge with her nemesis *The Pride of Baltimore II* to whom she frequently wins and loses by seconds. Captain Scott

Thomas would also like to take her back to her beloved Gloucester Schooner Festival and share again the spirit of *Highlander Sea*. For more information about Secunda Training go to: <http://www.secunda.com>

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## The Spirit of Highlander Sea

BY LUCY TULLOCH

Every year there is one boat that sails into Antigua that makes you stop whatever you are doing, and gaze in awe. This year, when *Highlander Sea*, sailed into Falmouth Harbour, I instinctively hoped that everyone was witnessing this fine sight. She displays an ocean-going strength with a refined elegance that only a true working classic can. Lying at anchor, her proportions are aesthetically right from every aspect. And her captain, Scott Thomas, feels this spirit.

Built in 1924 at the A. D. Story shipyard in Essex, Massachusetts, the Grand Banks Topsail Schooner, launched as *Pilot*, is believed to have been built on spec, to challenge the Canadian & American Fishing Boat races; but her future actually lay with the Boston Pilot Authority, who bought her uncompleted and later served as a Boston Harbour Pilot Schooner for almost fifty years. Built stoutly of oak, she was fit to withstand the heavy seas and boisterous gales of that area. Serving in World War II,

she bravely piloted ships & convoys through complicated mine fields and narrow openings of anti-submarine nets in Boston Harbour.

Designed by the famous yacht designer and pioneer aeroplane builder, W Starling Burgess, and built by F W James & Son, *Highlander Sea* is a spoon-bowed, auxiliary schooner; 154 ft overall, 101 ft waterline, drawing 14 ft 9" and with a beam of 25 ft.

Ending her service in 1968, she was later bought by two doctors and two lawyers who re-rigged her and planned to sail her round the world. Reaching only as far as Fiji, they then sold her in 1976 to Norman D. Paulson, Minister of the Church of Solar Logos who kept her in Massachusetts & San Diego before getting tied up in a deal with land exchange. The deal was in limbo for four years and eventually she was returned to Paulson in Gloucester, Massachusetts.

During her time here, a lobster fisherman named Tom skipped her. Every Sunday he "invited the world to sail with him". In '86

Gloucester started the Schooner Festival and with around a hundred people on board, she proudly won the race. Inspired once again, Paulson began work on her, including a new topmast, before taking her back to San Diego in '91 to continue this work. In these seven years, new engines were installed, two generators, watertight bulkheads, a bilge-pumping system and fire-fighting systems. All this, with the aim of creating a school ship able to take 88 day-passengers or 30 overnight passengers. Brochures were designed & printed, advertising went ahead, plans were made but finally the insurance premiums were ironically too expensive and she did not sail.

It was in '98 that Fred Smithers (previous owner of the magnificent Polish-built gaff sloop *Caledonia*) contacted Jol Byerley of Nicholson Yacht Sales in Antigua in search of a "Bluenose schooner". What serendipity for Smithers! Jol knew all about *Highlander Sea* and negotiations soon began. Smithers had great ideas for her as he wanted to start a sail

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