

Assinboia captain recalls days on board

by Shirley Whittington
Captain Ernest H. Ridd is a tall clear-eyed man with broad shoulders and strong hands. It is easy to imagine him in the trim brass-buttoned uniform of the CPR Lake passenger fleet.

Captain Ridd wore the gold braid for many years. He was Captain of the S.S. Assinboia from 1957 until 1965 when the high white ship, (and her sister the Keewatin) were withdrawn from service. "She was steel hulled," says Captain Ridd, "but there was a lot of wood in her. It would have cost too much to refit her to conform to Department of Transport fire regulations."

The two ships began their annual runs from Port McNicoll to the Lakehead in April. For two months, they carried freight but the second week in June they became the glamour girls of the Lakes, as the passenger season began. Holidayers arrived on special boat trains at Port McNicoll, where beautifully tended flower beds at dock side greeted them. Captain Ridd stood at the head of the gangplank, and welcomed passengers aboard for the five day excursion, which was luxurious and relaxing, in the tradition of ocean voyages.

The 200 passengers enjoyed sumptuous, many-coursed meals in the elegantly appointed dining rooms. Bouillon was served on deck at

11:00 a.m., by white jacketed stewards, and after lunch, they brought out afternoon tea. In the evenings, there were dances, singings and movies. And on all sides, passengers were able to enjoy some of Canada's most spectacular scenery.

"I was fond of that ship," says Captain Ridd. "Everything was kept up nicely. We kept all the brass shined, and the woodwork polished."

The passenger season finished on Labour day, but the Assinboia and Keewatin continued to labour up the Lakes, carrying freight until well into December.

Great Lakes adventures
"Oh - There were storms," says Captain Ridd. "You couldn't stay on the Lakes without storms. But in my time, there was good communication, and nothing too serious ever happened while I was on board."

The Assinboia's biggest misadventure happened long before Captain Ridd's time. It was in 1909, when she was sitting above the Soo locks waiting for passage through. Below, waiting to lock up, was the freighter Perry G. Walker. Her captain got his signals crossed, and the Walker plunged into the lower gates. All of Lake Superior came flooding in, and brought the Assinboia unceremoniously with it. "It was," says Captain Ridd, "the fastest locking in history."

The great storm of 1913 was also before Captain Ridd's time on the Lakes, but his ship, the Assinboia, weathered it without mishap. On that black night of November 9, eight ships foundered and two hundred lives were lost. When the Assinboia arrived at Fort William, she was sheathed in 400 tons of ice.

Both the Assinboia and the Keewatin were built in Glasgow Scotland, and crossed the Atlantic under their own power.

The St. Lawrence shipping canals however posed a challenge. They were too small for the big ships, so they were cut in two and towed, in bow and stern sections, to Lake Ontario through the Welland Canal to Buffalo.

There the two halves

were reunited, and the Great White Sisters, as they were known, became a stirring sight on the Lakes.

The Assinboia was the flagship of the fleet. When her days as a passenger liner were ended, she was sold to American interests in Philadelphia. As she was being refitted for a second career as a floating restaurant, she caught fire. "Then she was scrapped," says Captain Ridd. "It was a sad end for a nice old lady."

Now retired, Captain Ridd lives in a twelfth floor apartment with a panoramic view of Georgian Bay. He says he doesn't miss sailing, but since he's been retired, he's spent a lot of time on the water.

He's been twice to his birthplace, England, by steamer. He's also taken two Caribbean cruises. "I'd far rather travel by

ship than by plane," he says. His most extensive voyage was a two month journey by sea through the South Pacific to Japan, and back. "No, I wasn't seasick," he says, "but I was glad to go ashore. Two months is a long time."

Would he like to see passenger ships running out of Port McNicoll again? "Oh yes," he says with a slow smile, "but it's awfully costly to build passenger ships these days."

And even if they did, it's doubtful that any modern ship could sail the Lakes with the aplomb of those two White Sisters from Port McNicoll - the Assinboia and the Keewatin.



In days gone by

A proud moment - it was during Captain Ridd's first year as captain of the Assinboia that he was presented with the traditional silk topper by George Patterson, then of McNicoll. Standing beside Captain Ridd is his

(late) wife Kathleen, and Chief Engineer Fred Irvine. In the background are Reeve Labert Calvert and Sid Mallin, Port McNicoll Harbour Master in 1957.

Photo courtesy Captain Ridd



Captain E. Ridd today

church directory

THE CATHOLIC PARISH OF FLOS
SCHEDULE OF MASSES: Father Neil Varley
Phelpston: Sun. 9 a.m. and 11 a.m.
Allenwood: Sat. 6:30 p.m. Sun. 9, 10, 11 a.m.
Elmvale: Sat. 7:30 p.m. Sun. 10:00 a.m.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA
Minister: Rev. Sydney McDonald BA
Phones: The Church 322-1411, The Manse, 322-2453
Elmvale Church: Christian Education, 10 a.m.
Christian Worship, 11 a.m.

UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA
St. John's - Elmvalle Minister: Rev. B. Gazzard
Worship: 11:00 a.m. (Nursery during Service)
Phones: Church 322-1472, Manse 322-1522
Wyevale United Church: 11:30 a.m.
Waverley United Church: 10:00 a.m.
Rev. Allan J. McLaughlin, Minister

SALVATION ARMY
Capt. and Mrs. Roy Figley
The Salvation Army are meeting in the Youth Hall at the rear of 251 2nd St., Midland.
9:30 a.m. - Sunday School for all ages
11:00 a.m. - Sunday Morning Meeting
7 p.m. - Sunday Evening
Tues. 7 p.m. - Prayer and Bible Fellowship
Wed. 2:00 p.m. - Ladies Meetings.
Appointments for spiritual help
526-2751 - Captain and Mrs. R. C. Figley.

THE ANGLICAN PARISH OF ELMVALE
Rector: The Rev. J. Allan Kirk
Rectory - 322-2115 Church - 322-2712

SERVICES:
Sunday, 9:15 a.m. - The Church of the Good Shepherd, Wyebridge - morning prayer - 1st, 3rd and 5th week. Holy Eucharist - 2nd and 4th week.

Sunday, 8:00 a.m. - Holy Eucharist - 11:15 a.m. 1st and 3rd week - Holy Eucharist - Wycliffe Church, Elmvalle morning prayer, 2nd, 4th and 5th week - St. John's Church, Waverley, 10:15 a.m. Holy Eucharist - 2nd Sunday, Morning Prayer - Other Weeks.

Church School during Main Service at the churches

The Place Setting

MIDLAND

The Place to purchase your fine china, crystal and giftware.

We wish to thank the people who helped to make our first week a success.

Winners of the opening draw were:

Norma Pender, Midland; winner of a place setting of china in the pattern of her choice.

Doreen Parent, Perkinsfield; winner of a set of crystal of her choice.

Dishes and accessories for every dining need...

711 YONGE ST., MIDLAND 526-8523

What motives prompt George Taylor to seek the provincial seat for Simcoe Centre Riding

Know and understand this gifted, dedicated young man . . .

TAYLOR CARES - He has served Simcoe Centre over 9 years, including:

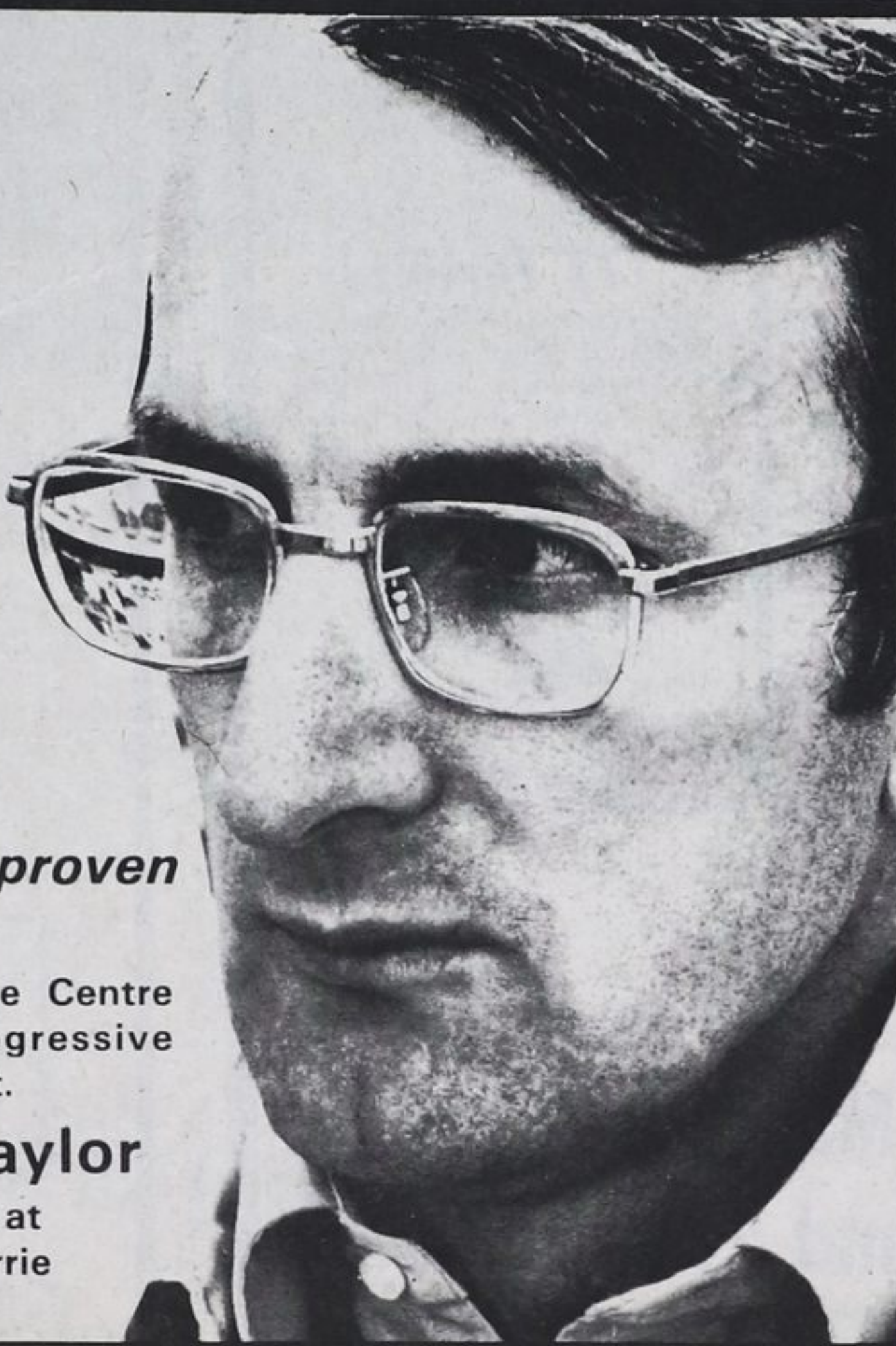
- United Appeal Director
- YM-YWCA Director
- Campaign - Chairman, Canadian Cancer Society
- School Trustee
- Law Reform - land speculation, landlord tenant, and education acts and administration of justice.

Recognized for a proven capacity to serve

On June 9, Keep Simcoe Centre Secure, return a Progressive Conservative Government.

Elect George Taylor

Committee Rooms at
5 Dunlop St. W., Barrie
Tel. 728-8711



fabulous SAVINGS ON Wood's AND Wood's ACE FREEZERS

\$189.00

starting as low as

full food spoilage WARRANTY

We have 8 units including 7-8-12-16-22 cu. ft. freezers that are only slightly scratched or dented at the plant and are able to offer these freezers at TRULY BIG SAVINGS.

1 ONLY-used 14 cu. ft. freezer \$150.00.

WE HAVE A SIZE AND PRICE FOR EVERY BUDGET

Urb's Home Furnishings

101 Main St. Penanguishene 549-8912
"You Furnish The House, We Furnish The Home"

VOTERS' GUIDE
X check

ARE YOU* ELIGIBLE TO VOTE on Thursday, June 9th?

Qualified voters must be on the NEW List of VOTERS in order to vote.

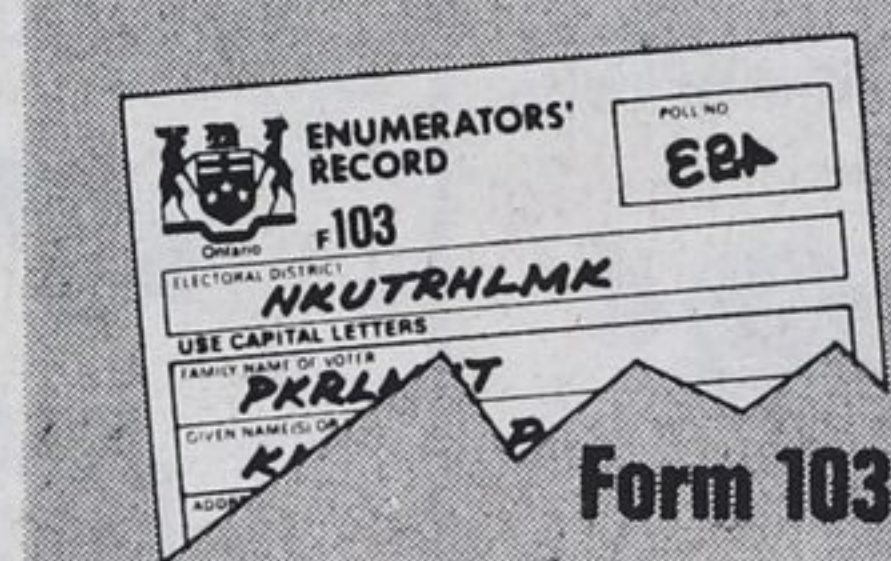
IT'S UP TO YOU TO GET ON THE LIST!

X CHECK NOW-DO YOU HAVE FORM 103?



X CHECK NOW-Do YOU have "Form 103"?
A new List of Voters is compiled for every Election. By now you should have a receipt (Form 103-see illustration)-proof that you have been enumerated and therefore are eligible to vote. Take Form 103 with you to the Polling Place when you go to vote at the Advance Poll or on Election Day (June 9th).

X CHECK AGAIN-YOU HAVE NO "FORM 103"?
Possibly you were not at home on the two separate occasions when the official Enumerators called. If you do not have a Form 103 (as illustrated), then you are not on the new List of Voters and, therefore, will be ineligible to vote on June 9th UNLESS YOU ACT NOW!



X CHECK-PHONE the Returning Officer in your Electoral District for the necessary information of how to get on the List of Voters-at the number listed below. Listen carefully and have a pen and paper ready to jot down the information.

X CHECK-RURAL RESIDENT?
If you live in a rural area, and are qualified to vote, it will be much easier for you to vote on Election Day. (June 9th), if your name is on the List of Voters. However, qualified rural voters, not on the list before Election Day, may still get on the list and vote by having a friend or neighbour on the same polling subdivision list "vouch" for them on Oath at the polling place.

Check this list for the phone number of the Returning Officer in your Electoral District.

Simcoe Centre
1-705-726-7323
Simcoe East
1-705-325-9577

X ELECTIONS ONTARIO

This Voters' Guide Published by the Chief Election Officer of Ontario