

# Come sail away

## Windjammer offers magical seafaring escape

By CARA NISSMAN

**R**OCKLAND, Maine — When you first approach the Schooner Stephen Taber, images of swashbuckling pirates and exotic islands flash through your mind. It is a wondrous 68-foot windjammer with four sails, the likes of which you'd expect to see in "Horatio Hornblower." But these romantic visions quickly subside when you descend into your accommodations for the next few days. You pull the yellowing string to switch on the light bulb and view your cramped cabin below deck, a hole with a bunk not much roomier than a coffin, and you realize: This is a far cry from a Royal Caribbean cruise.



After a week of inching along the Sumner Tunnel or Southeast Expressway, you may doubt that sharing two manually operated heads — marine toilets — with 25 others translates into a relaxing vacation. But after sailing on the Taber, passing tiny islands where seals and seagulls share sunny outcroppings and sharing wonderful tales with passengers and crew members, you'll find it is a great way to unwind.

"If you tell somebody that you're going on a boat with no shower, no bathrooms, they'd think something's wrong with you," said Medway native Paul Earle, who has traveled on the Taber for 19 years. "They can't understand it until they've experienced it."

"You can't prepare people for it," said Capt. Ellen Barnes, 65, co-owner of the Taber with her husband, Ken, 62. "You've just got to do it.



HERALD PHOTOS BY JUSTIN A. KRAFT

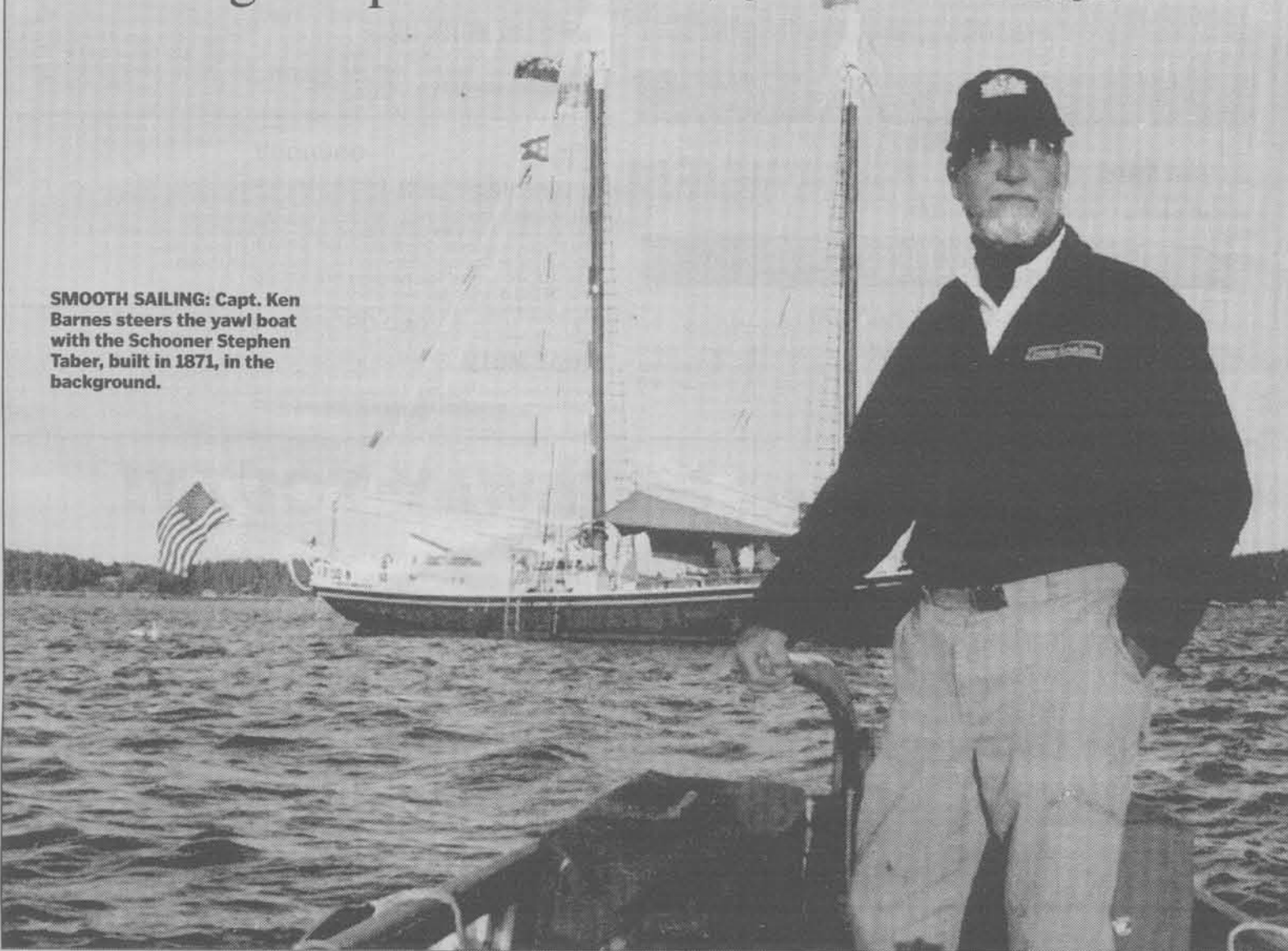
**HIGH SEAS: Capt. Ellen Barnes regales passengers with tales of the sea, above. Inset left, crew member Aimee Le Page secures a reef line on the mainsail.**

It's a magical experience."

A trip on the Taber begins the night before setting sail. The Barneses invite everyone for tasty pub grub and Maine blueberry ale at their

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**SMOOTH SAILING: Capt. Ken Barnes steers the yawl boat with the Schooner Stephen Taber, built in 1871, in the background.**



# Voyage is magical escape

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restaurant, the Waterworks, to get acquainted before spending the first night aboard the boat. Indeed, the trip's most rewarding interludes are informal chats with the captains, who spin yarns about past discoveries, challenges and passengers. We discussed constellations with Ken Barnes — whose favorite star is Aldebaran, the literal bull's eye in the Taurus constellation — and learned recipes and local lore from Ellen Barnes. Her recipe for mouth-watering gingerbread, among dozens of others, is featured in her cookbook, "A Taste of the Taber."

The Taber sails at a steady pace during the day; at night it anchors wherever the wind has whisked it. The crew members invite passengers to help unfurl or tie up the sails and hoist or drop the anchor. Passengers can help raise and lower the vessel's flags as Ken Barnes plays the bagpipes and blasts off a tiny, 2-foot-long cannon to celebrate the start or close of each day. Volunteers also help clear the galley and clean the dishes after meals.

During most of the journey, however, passengers are free to gaze idly over the waves at ospreys, seals and passing vessels. You're bound to spot other windjammers (more than a dozen operate in the area) and feel as if you've sailed into another era. Indeed, when we anchored near one island, the captain of the schooner American Eagle rowed over in a dinghy to borrow a deck of cards.

The Taber anchors frequently so passengers can explore little islands off the Maine coast. On our three-day trip, passengers visited North Haven antique shops. On six-day trips, the Barneses steam lobsters and corn over a driftwood fire on an island's shore.

"There are literally thousands of little islands in this area and I don't think we've ever taken the same trip twice," said Ken Barnes, his gold whale's-tail earring glimmering in the afternoon sun.

"Anybody can do a four-star hotel. This is special," said Mary Wolff, a local first-time passenger. "In hotels, it's the same wherever you stay. Also, in a hotel, you never get to talk



HERALD PHOTO BY JUSTIN A. KRAFT

**SETTING SAIL:** Crew members Aimee Le Page and Stephen O'Connell adjust the foresail aboard the schooner Stephen Taber.

to anybody next door. We've met so many lovely people."

Yet the tight quarters can be too close for comfort. If two people are sharing a cabin, one person has to lie in bed so the other has space to brush his teeth at the tiny sink and don clothes for the day. Getting up in the morning to use the head can be daunting at first, considering it's about 10 feet away from some of the cabins; those with weak bladders might not fare well as seafarers. We heard our next-door neighbor crack jokes in his cabin before turning in for bed, and earplugs couldn't drown

out another passenger's snores. After a while, we accepted it as background noise and snoozed peacefully to the slosh of the waves against the hull.

It can get cold on a windjammer at night. Ken Barnes likes telling the cautionary tale of a New York guest who kept requesting additional blankets to ward off the cold. Later, they realized she had been wearing only a silky nightgown to bed. To be comfortable on a windjammer voyage, passengers must pack several layers, including wool socks, a waterproof jacket, gloves

and hat to keep dry while soaking in the scenery — and refreshing sea spray — above deck.

On warmer nights, passengers can sleep on deck and breathe the salty air while dreaming of maritime adventure.

But consider yourself warned: Paul Dorr, the ship's cook, begins earning his living as early as 4:30 a.m. Stay below if you can't sleep through clanging pots and the wafting scents of baking rolls and sizzling sausages.

When the sun shines brightly, passengers can comfortably munch meals on deck. Among the hearty New England dishes we consumed while on board were seafood alfredo, which featured succulent scallops, shrimp, lobster and mussels; beef stew; and stuffed turkey, baked in the Taber's tiny wood-burning stove. When rain showers dampen outdoor dining, passengers retire below deck to the oak galley, where diners are flanked by black-and-white photographs of the Taber.

Capt. Ellen and Ken Barnes purchased and refurbished the Taber about 25 years ago. When you sail on the Taber, built in 1871, it's as if you were taking a voyage on a floating museum. Photographs from the 19th century through the restoration process to today chronicle the Taber's progression from being a cargo boat that hauled pulpwood, bricks, coal and stone to being the oldest documented sailing vessel in continuous service in the United States and a National Historic Landmark Vessel.

"If you look at the Taber today, you see the same thing as in 1880," said Ken Barnes. "It's a historic treasure."

For information on the schooner Stephen Taber, call 800-999-7352 or go to [www.stephentaber.com](http://www.stephentaber.com). Cruises cost from about \$450 to \$950 a person, depending on the length and time of year of the voyage. For information on other schooners in the Maine Windjammer Association fleet, call 800-807-WIND or go to [www.sailmainecoast.com](http://www.sailmainecoast.com). If you'd prefer a one-night schooner cruise, try the Schooner Wendameen at 207-594-1751 or [www.schooneryacht.com](http://www.schooneryacht.com). Schooners sail annually from May through October.



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## Drive through history at Owls Head museum

OWLS HEAD, Maine — Cruising for a history lesson? Zoom over to the Owls Head Transportation Museum for a peek at more than 150 historic aircraft, automobiles, bicycles, carriages and engines, including a replica of Orville and Wilbur Wright's 1903 Kitty Hawk Flyer.

Established in 1974, the museum, housed in an old hangar, displays items chronologically so patrons can understand transportation's progression. An exhibit on the evolution of the wheel leads into an exhibit of early bicycles. Car fans will dash to peer inside early automobiles, from a 1903 Mercedes Simplex and an Auburn 851 Boattail Speedster to classics from the '50s and '60s, such as a sweet aluminum-body 1959 Ferrari T196 Dino Testarossa. And

with ragtime jazz echoing off the tall walls, frequent fliers will get a rise out of viewing Sir George Cayley's 1804 unmanned glider and one of the few World War I-era Curtiss Jenny planes in flying condition. Go to the workshop behind the museum to see old propellers and engines in the middle of restoration.

With frequent air shows and events, including a foreign car festival (Oct. 13) and a 400-item auction (Oct. 27), there are various ways for visitors to enjoy the museum's offerings.

The museum is open daily, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tickets cost \$6 for adults; \$4 for children. The museum is two miles south of Rockland on Route 73. For more information, call 207-594-4418 or go to [www.ohtm.org](http://www.ohtm.org). — CARA NISSMAN