

The retired New York City fire boat *John J. Harvey* dropped anchor in Hudson Saturday, offering area residents a peek at the operations that fought building, pier and boat fires for six decades.

At least 100 area residents, including a number of county firefighters, visited the fireboat, anchored at the St. Lawrence Cement Co. dock.

At around 6 p.m., the *Harvey* let her pumps strut their stuff, blasting water hundreds of feet into the air. In her heyday, the pumps could never stop, so they shoot over the George Washington Bridge, which it did at the bridge's opening.

It would be the first time since the boat's decommissioning in 1993 that it has been used for anything other than firefighting, said Lennie.

"Now, it's all for show. We're not trying [for full blast]," he said.

The boat, a floating firefighting museum, is on a five-day Hudson River excursion upriver to Troy, and has made stops at localities including Kingston and Poughkeepsie.

At 9 this morning, the *Harvey* is scheduled to depart for Albany.

The boat was commissioned by and served the Fire Department of New York from 1931 to 1993. A group of a dozen investors outbid at least one scrap company to get the fireboat in 1998.

Lennie, of Albertson, Long Island, served with FDNY for 33 years, 25 on the *Harvey*. He was the skipper of the boat again for this trip and several previous short trips.

Don't call him captain, however. The *Harvey* was a firefighting vessel, on which the term captain refers to a firefighting vessel.

"It's more fun, coming back," said the retired Lennie. "No one would ever come back," he said, as most decommissioned fireboats are destined for scrapyards.

He called the new owners' effort a "resurrection."

A captain or lieutenant would oversee the actual firefighting, while the pilot would attend to maritime matters, New York fireboat historian Al Trojanowicz said.

Trojanowicz retired last week from FDNY after 28 years, where he served as supervising dispatcher for department communications.

Saturday, he offered information and a photographic history of city fireboats to anyone interested.

The new owners, a collection of preservationists, firefighting enthusiasts, and boating fans, purchased the boat for \$28,000, twice the nearest scrapper's bid of \$14,000, said John Doswell, one of the owners.

The owners are collectively known as John J. Harvey Ltd.

While technically a private pleasure craft, the owners have set about the *Harvey*'s restoration, funded by public contributions, T-shirt sales, and the

occasional special event.

The white shirts depict the vessel with its name and her part in the city's \$20 each. The red shirts are reserved for

the owners, and thus cost a little less, joked Doswell. Other than the color, the shirts are identical.

The fireboat usually sticks close to New York Harbor, as Lennie said. As of Saturday, Hudson was the farthest the *Harvey* has been from home, he said. Pier 63 on the Hudson River side of Manhattan is the northernmost point of the boat's route.

"So far, there's been a wonderful reception," Beatty said. "We've had a lot of people on board at no charge to learn about river-based firefighting, many of whom have donated toward the ongoing restoration and maintenance efforts."

The floating museum makes no pretense of being a money-making venture. Beatty said, "We're all slightly eccentric."

Ship shape

Designed to pump 18,000 gallons of water per minute and travel at speeds of up to 20 knots, the *Harvey* surpassed its builders' expectations, reaching volume of 18,000 gallons per minute and exceeding 20 knots. In addition to the water cannons, a number of plugs linked traditional fire hoses on the

With five engines and many back-up systems, the boat could be underway and blasting water at the same time. Four of the five engines could power either the pumps or the propellers while a fifth, with a dual turbine, was exclusively for rotation.

The *Harvey* was FDNY's last internal combustion fireboat, outperforming steamboats that didn't have as much pumping power.

The engines were the first project of the new owners, as by 1993, the *Harvey* had been out of service for several years. The owners said, "We need to be functional, even though all five have been revived."

The *Harvey* was named for John J. Harvey, the pilot of the fireboat *Thomas Willett*. In 1930, the *Willett* was fighting a fire on the North German Lloyd Line steamship *Muenchen*, which exploded, severely damaging the *Willett* and killing Harvey.

The FDNY named its next fireboat after Harvey, and it was launched Dec. 17, 1931.

For the next six decades, the *Harvey* fought hundreds of fires, including at the Battery, and later at Pier 53, on

Retired fireboat a blast from the past

