

Finding Farley: My Love Story

A photo expedition presented by Ed O'Reilly

February 22, 2017

It was abundantly clear throughout his presentation Ed O'Reilly has a passion for cruising the waters of Newfoundland's south-coast aboard his Fisher 37' motorsailer. Ed explained his love affair was in part stimulated by Farley Mowat's book, *Bay of Spirits, A Love Story* written in 2006. Mowat's book is about his love story with his wife Claire, who he met in St. Pierre. The book is based on Mowat's time on the south coast during the late 50s and early 60s. Ed explained he has read the book at least three times and refers to it during the travels along the southwest coast. Indeed, the book features plenty of detail of the coastline, including difficult docking and descriptions of reefs and other navigational challenges. More importantly, Farley Mowat provides a vision into the people and the places of a time prior to Resettlement.

Although a kayak and a Fisher 37 have little in common, Ed frequently made observations of what it would be like to paddle the coastline and recommended several references which would make for a safe and more interesting trip. These references include:

- Weather forecasts: Environment Canada, Windfinder (St. Pierre Airport), and Smart Bay (Placentia Bay)
- Environment Canada's Marine Weather Guide
- The Cruising Guide to Newfoundland; Cruising Club of America

- Coastal Cruising in Newfoundland; Rob Mills
- Places Lost; Scott Walden
- Facing the Sea, Light Keepers and their families

Ed's presentation included incredible photography with clearly illustrated maps, including distances, which made it easy for the 35 in attendance to follow Ed as he described his experiences and landscapes, notably fiords, from the Burin Peninsula to Burgeo. Ed also read from Mowat's book which helped give the audience a sense of the place and its people...a love affair shared by Ed and Mowat.

We were shown a beautiful picture of Sagona Island with a narrow, shallow channel. In Jersey Harbour, close to Harbour Breton the audience learned of a prosperous community, now abandoned, settled by fisherman and merchants from the Jersey Islands. All that remains are meadows, a cemetery and the rusted skeleton of the trawler, the Rupert Brand II.

Ed told us the South Coast has a well deserved reputation for fog and the best time to paddle the coast is August. He spoke of winds and how sea conditions quickly change. One notable event was a day when shortly after he said goodbye to a couple of kayakers he observed rough sea conditions even though the wind was only 10 knots. He was so concerned he attempted to inform the paddlers by radio, without success. Ed clearly impressed upon us this coastline is unforgiving with few landings, funnelling winds and an ocean with a long fetch which reacts quickly, indeed violently to winds which would usually be considered as moderate.

Ed chatted about friendly communities; some quiet while others a beehive activity as a result of the area's aquaculture industry. Ed acknowledged how fortunate he is to have a warm comfortable bunk and I think, could not quite understand how we could paddle the coast and sleep in tents; on sites which were neither flat or soft!

The photos of the coastline and the fiords were magnificent, however Ed also encouraged us to hike the mountains which rise abruptly for more than a 1000 feet from the ocean. The fantastic hiking opportunities were also acknowledged by some of the attendees.

Richards Harbour, Cape La Hune, Rencontre East, Facheux Bay, L'anse Flamme (Dorset site) Pushthrough, Dawson Point....there were more! In all likelihood Ed's presentation will encourage trips to the South coast of this Island!

| Hazen Scarth