

The African Queen

“Nobody in Africa, but yours truly, can get a good head of steam on the old *African Queen*.”

Humphrey Bogart’s boastful statement to Katherine Hepburn in the 1951 movie *The African Queen* began the adventures of a rough talking boat captain’s relationship with a Methodist missionary during the outbreak of World War I in German East Africa. Captain Charlie Allnut and missionary Rose Sayer’s cinematic adventures aboard the *African Queen* went on to earn academy awards and a place in American popular culture. The movie also influenced two steam boat enthusiasts to capture the excitement of building and operating a scale version of the *African Queen* in Garrett County, Maryland.

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The *Turkey Neck Queen* in its new home at the Garrett County Transportation Museum, Oakland, Maryland.

Inset photo: Detail of the steam engine.

Garrett County’s version of the *African Queen* plied the waters of Deep Creek Lake under the stewardship of Charles McIntire and Bernard Fensterwald, self described “steam heads” who shared a common interest in old wooden crafts. In contrast to the scruffy Charlie Allnut character, the would-be captains were accomplished professionals. Garrett County resident Charles McIntire became the president of 20 hardware stores near Washington and later the owner of three furniture stores in his home county. Bernard Fensterwald’s Harvard Law degree was followed by extensive service as a legal advisor to the United States Department of State and lead investigator of the *Committee To Investigate Assassinations*, which was mainly concerned

with finding the people responsible for killing President Kennedy. The partners became acquainted when Mr. Fensterwald acquired a house adjacent to the McIntire family on Deep Creek Lake.

In reminiscing about the fun times, Charles McIntire stated, “We were both fond of wooden boats and decided we needed something exciting to do. At the time there was a company in New England that sold steam boats, so we made a decision to purchase one. But unlike other customers who bought the boat fully assembled, Bernard and I decided that we wanted to build it ourselves. We were optimists. Of course we knew about the *African Queen* but it was mostly an interest in boats that motivated us to buy it.”

The model they chose to assemble was a scale replica of an 1890s steam launch. It included a small wood burning boiler that provided a half horsepower of thrust and a seating capacity for four adults.

Over the next couple winters, spare time was spent between stem and stern learning the basics of boat building. Sailing was not smooth for the aspiring captains. “We decided that at the pace we were moving neither one of us would live long enough to see it completed. Even though we did a lot of the work, the boat was returned to New England for completion,” recalled Mr. McIntire. “The company later notified us the boat was ready, along with a big price tag!”

The boat eventually made its way to the Deep Creek Yacht Club where a banner was created proclaiming the craft to be the *Turkey Neck Queen*, a reference to a geographic location on the lake and Bogart’s boat.

Bernard Fensterwald passed away before the boat’s return to Garrett County and stewardship of the project was continued by his partner who desired to have fun operating it on Deep Creek Lake.

Unlike Bogart who felt the pulse of the *African Queen* at every turn in the river, Charles McIntire described himself as a “neophyte captain. But I did feel a little like Humphrey Bogart one time when the boiler almost got away from us. The pressure relief valve was ready to go off, so I starting grabbing logs from the boiler and throwing them into the lake.”

The *Turkey Neck Queen* proved to be a slow but steady craft that drew attention. The distinctive ker-chunk, ker-chunk, ker-chunk sound accompanied by puffs of steam provided an anachronistic vision to onlookers. And if vacationers did not see the boat approaching, they would surely hear it because, “The *Turkey Neck Queen* had a wonderful whistle that attracted lots of attention. The whistle was also a way to reduce boiler pressure, so we used it often,” recalled Mr. McIntire.



Top: Bernard “Bud” Fensterwald (left) and Charlie McIntire working on the *Turkey Neck Queen*.

Bottom: Wayne Dunbar (left) and Charlie McIntire enjoying a day at Deep Creek Lake aboard the *Turkey Neck Queen*.

After several years of use, the craft was removed from Deep Creek Lake and placed in storage. When the Garrett County Transportation Museum became a reality, a decision was made to donate the distinctive craft. Charles McIntire witnessed the *Turkey Neck Queen’s* final voyage in a most unusual setting—an aerial crane ride from Second Street in Oakland to the second floor of the unfinished museum.

Today, the *Turkey Neck Queen* rests comfortably and appropriately among Deep Creek Lake artifacts displayed on the second floor of the museum. Its former owner, Charles McIntire is also enjoying retirement by spending time at residences in California and Oakland, Maryland.