

## Fox Project continued

The Statue of liberty, was dedicated in 1886, an event witnessed by George Harbo. John I.. Sullivan was the *bare knuckle Boxing champion* in America, his last fight going over 70 rounds. The promoter of these fights, Richard Fox became the backer of Harbo and Samuelson's voyage. Everyone was looking for a big idea, something which would set them apart and maybe make them rich and famous. Harbo and Samuelson wanted to become part of this dream and so they set out to build a row boat, outfit it and row from the Battery, in lower Manhattan, to Le Havre, France. Today there are rowing clubs and one of them is even international. People continue to attempt Atlantic crossings by oar alone but still no one has beaten the record set by Harbo and Samuelson.

## Skipjack Nautical Wares

Skipjack Nautical Wares and Gallery:-

At the end of last year, there was a tragedy of enormous magnitude visited upon our very special friends and Galley representatives Joe and Allison Elder. Their Portsmouth VA.. fine Maritime Gallerye and apartment was destroyed as collateral damage of the Baptist Church which had a gas explosion last December.

The Elders, members of their family and pets were able to escape and in fact, the building, was still standing strong, with minimal damage. This was a relief to all. After all the Elders had their life in this building;- upstairs as an apartment and downstairs as a quality seller of Maritime Art and artifacts.

Skipjack Nautical Wares and Gallery was without question one of the finest examples of the quality shops that are marching up the now resplendent High Street.. Skipjack was an apparent labor of love for the Elders for each and every display was unique and a delight to the eye. Aside from the amazing and often one-of-a-kind marine artifact was a growing collection of fine contemporary Maritime Art. This was displayed along with some truly significant Maritime Paintings from the past centuries. The name Butterworth comes to mind as one those artists that I viewed on Skipjack's walls.

In my travels I have always been interested in unique harbor side shops and galleries. Places like Mystic Seaports' Gallery, in Mystic CT., make Mystic CT., which is an out of the way destination the purpose of the trip. For me and other people I know, Skipjack was a destination. It was located in Portsmouth, VA., but Portsmouth wasn't the destination, Skipjack was and the hours you could spend at one of their special events or just browsing.

Last year, for instance, Skipjack hosted a special exhibit benefiting wildlife and the Elizabeth River. There was also a book signing by local author Amy Waters Yarsinske who spent years researching and writing "The Elizabeth River". This event or many others such as authentic sea shanties during "First Friday Exhibitions" made Skipjack into something of a living PBS Television Show that you could walk into and interact with.

The Elders' are shopkeepers on the simplest level but that only defines their basic premise, so I was like so many other people, that I have talked to, outraged by the action, the *City of Portsmouth*, took following the gas explosion that rocked the family out of bed at 4 AM. You might ask



Skipjack Nautical Wares being leveled in Portsmouth, VA

what could be worse than being evacuated from your home and business a few days before Christmas after this early morning horrific explosion. An explosion that damaged your building, blew out your showroom windows and left you 'homeless'. Immediately, you would say "phew! we are still standing! more than 90 percent of our inventory (much of it one-of-a-kind or Art on consignment) is at least *still* intact, not harmed by the devastating explosion.

You would think, "We can go back, we can fix this, set that and although we are damaged at least we are still in business". All those carefully placed and loved items that I described to you earlier *could be saved* with almost *no* damage. One of kind, thousands of dollars, thousands of hours to carefully make the crafts, to make the Art; to place the antiques and exhibit these items. *Instead*, all of this would be bulldozed into rubble by the City of Portsmouth within a day or two of the explosion.

Joe and Allison Elder thought they were *talking* to the *City* to get things in order and the next thing you know they were watching the destruction of their home and business.

*Holly Crap!* I thought we lived in America where a 'Man's home was his Castle'.

*Is there or will there ever be a reasonable explanation of such hasty and careless treatment of these valuable business owners, residents and citizens of Portsmouth.*

Aftermath; Last month Joe, Allison and myself sat on a bench, about 50 feet from what was Skipjack Nautical Wares and Gallery. The corner was all fenced in like it had been immediately after the explosion, so one would assume the public was protected from any falling debris. Despite this the building was demolished to protect the public. So, for now Joe Elder, like Bernard Baruch will meet and discuss the business of Maritime Art and Antiques with you on a High Street park bench.

Join in your support of Joe & Allison  
<http://friendsofskipjack.com>