

On a Harbor Cruise, Under a Rainbow

By FRED A. BERNSTEIN

The John J. Harvey, a 130-foot fireboat sold by New York City at auction in 1999 and now on the National Register of Historic Places, is moving slowly up the Hudson River. An announcement booms over the public address system: "Alice, you have 30 seconds to move anything you don't want to get wet."

Alice Hepburn, a 10-year-old in a one-piece bathing suit and thongs, begins cramming toys into a plastic case. Suddenly, eight giant brass cannons (officially known as deck pipes) erupt in a display so grand it practically demands Manhattan as a backdrop. The cannons shoot water

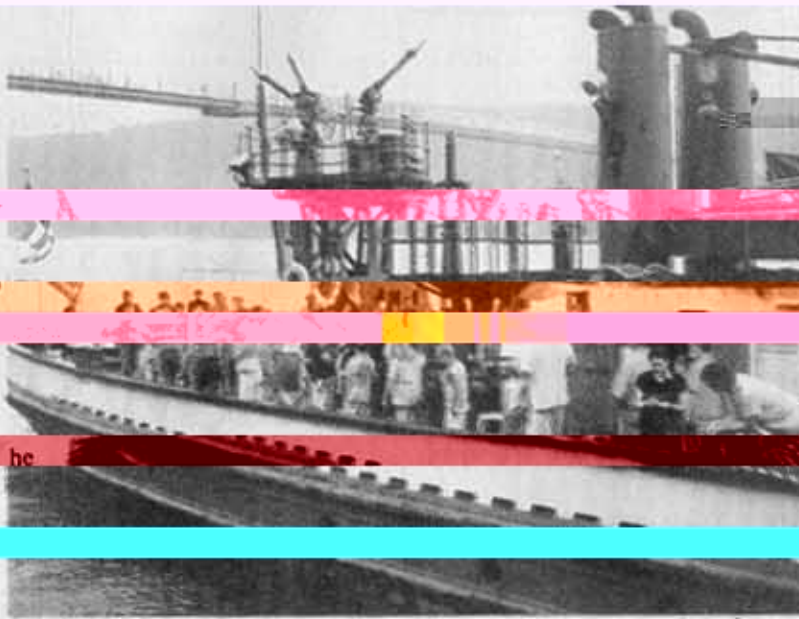
out of the river at the rate of 18,000 gallons, or two large swimming pools, a minute.

"Any excuse to spout, and we'll spout," said David Beatty, a 37-year-old entrepreneur, who owns the Harvey with 13 partners, mostly Manhattanites who take turns polishing its brass fittings and greasing the boiler, which is fire-engine red.

Mr. Beatty's T-shirt (really) to distinguish it from the souvenir T-shirts, which say simply "Crew" and are sold to keep the boat financially afloat.

"With all the water displays," he said, "we're just another tugboat."

Not quite. For 80 hours beginning in 1951 and commissioned 60 years later, pumped millions of gallons of water to the World Trade



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Volunteers sailing the north on the Hudson River, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

Center Hydrants west of ground zero were dry; our the Harvey takes its water directly from the river.

boat was present at ceremonies honoring lost firefighters. "We made the decision that anything the Fire Department asked us to do, we would do regardless of the expense," said Huntley Gill, one of the owners.

hundreds of dollars suggesting public access to Governors Island, a pet cause of several of the boat's owners.

berth at Pier 63, just north of Chelsea Piers. The owners show up when they can to paint, polish and weather-permitting, any other

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On a Watery Harbor Cruise, Under a Self-Made Rainbow

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An adventure on a fireboat with a new career in retirement.

Harvey into the harbor. Passing the Statue of Liberty, they play "God Bless America" (Kate Smith, not Celine Dion) on the public address system, while everyone gets wet and wide-eyed. When the sun is out, the Harvey makes its own rainbows.

The public is invited to join in. "This is one of the most fun things you can do in New York; it's free and no one knows about it," marveled Stuart Sealfon, a professor at Mount Sinai Medical School who was on the boat recently with his son, Adam, 11. Both were dripping wet.

Last summer the boat made a four-day trip to Albany, including several toddlers and Mr. Beatty's parents, who came from Ireland for the occasion, were on board. As the Harvey wasn't designed to leave New York Harbor, it has no staterooms. So some passengers slept on hammocks on deck, and others slept in motels or in friends' vacation homes along the Hudson. Meals were cooked on board.

Because the Harvey had never been north

The Harvey, built for \$600,000, was the most powerful fireboat of its day, the first with internal combustion engines; previous boats had been steam-powered. Named for the pilot of an earlier fireboat who died in the line of duty in 1913, the fires not only on vessels but also on New York buildings. It was a familiar presence at Fourth of July celebrations and other harbor festivities.

Taken out of service in 1994, the Harvey languished at the Brooklyn Navy Yard for four years before its current owners discovered it and bought it for \$28,000. They include Mr. Beatty; Mr. Gill, an Upper West Side real estate consultant; and Florent Morellet, owner of the restaurant in the meatpacking district that has

