

Rudy Haase has been a lifelong environmentalist

THE OLD farmhouse sits a few hundred metres from the highway, against the background of a large snow-dusted hill with a couple of barren trees. Woodland spreads across the landscape and a lake borders the property.

Martin Rudy Haase ("My friends call me Rudy, and you can call me that") is proud of his land and water. He protects it passionately, just as he does every bit of the environment, something he's done since 1954 when he formed the Friends of Nature Conservation Society.

At 85, he is still the society's executive director. Such is his love for all things environmental that he'll probably be in that post until they drag him away.

"People think it's amazing I haven't burned out," Rudy says, "but my theory has always been, 'Where there's life, there's hope. Without hope, there's no point going on living.'"

American-born Rudy has lived a very eclectic life. He has been a naval architect, served in the U.S. navy, bought surplus small craft, built them into yachts and sold them, ran cruises off Maine, and even married his bride of 58 years, Mickie, aboard a ketch he used as a charter boat in the Bahamas.

Rudy discovered their now-beloved Nova Scotia in 1967. He planned to build near Bras d'Or Lake but saw an ad for property in Chester, came to look, was impressed with the hospitable people, and made

BRIGHT SPOT



JOEL JACOBSON

Goat Lake Farm his home for the last 40 years.

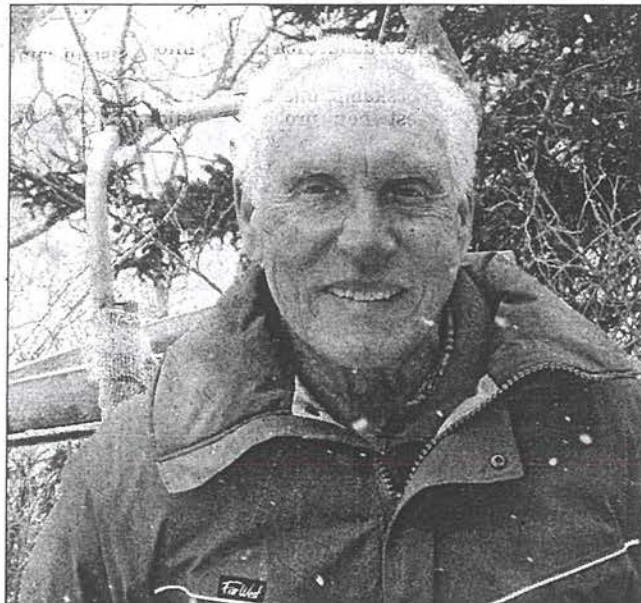
"On my second night in Chester, I made an offer and slept on the property in my 1964 Volvo, which I still have, by the way, and start it occasionally," Rudy smiles broadly, which he does often.

With two teenage boys and a three-year-old, the Haases settled in. Because their youngest son Leif, then four, was ahead of the school reading level, they incorporated the Chester Education Foundation and ran an elementary school for six years, until Leif attended public junior high in Chester and then private school.

Rudy bought a boatyard soon after his arrival and, for 25 years, custom built and sold a yacht a year.

Rudy chuckles. "I inherited Donald and Lloyd Barkhouse with the boatyard. I designed the boats and built the rigging, but I'm not a builder. The Barkhouses were fine boat builders. There was always work for them."

By the mid-1980s, Rudy was spending more and more time on his avocation, the environment, than on his business.



Environmentalist Martin Rudy Haase of Chester started the Friends of Nature more than 50 years ago to preserve wilderness areas. At 85, he's still totally involved in his passion.
(JOEL JACOBSON)

His affection for nature was nurtured by his mother in their native Wisconsin. "She loved walking on natural pathways rather than pavement, and always figured out the longest distance between two points," Rudy recalls fondly. "We also did lots of rudimentary camping at parks in Wisconsin."

In 1954, he wanted to save an island off Maine that had been slated for clearcutting. He founded the Friends of Nature. Elizabeth May, now head of Canada's Green Party, was 19 when she called Rudy asking

recall her wearing a Nova Scotia tartan plaid suit. Because of that meeting, then-minister of agriculture Vince MacLean agreed to stop spraying."

Rudy says Friends of Nature, with 50 paying members and more than 300 supporters, later provided a scholarship for Elizabeth to study environmental law at Dalhousie University.

Part of the legacy he'll leave, he says proudly, "was promoting Elizabeth May. She's become a real activist. My friendship with her, and the help we have been able to give her, has been vital to me."

Rudy's bright eyes flash as he credits the Ecology Action Centre in Halifax for its work with the Friends of Nature to create wilderness areas.

"There are now 33 wilderness areas but I think the greatest satisfaction I've had is saving Shelter Cove at the end of the Tangier Peninsula. We raised money and I donated personal funds to pay off the debt for the title search."

Rudy has received various awards, but one he received this week touched him deeply. Nova Scotia filmmaker Neal Livingston premiered a

51-minute biography recognizing Rudy's life's work in wilderness preservation and environmental protection.

Brad Armstrong, a carpenter and volunteer conservation co-ordinator with the Friends of Nature, attended the premiere.

"There were more than 200 in the Chester Playhouse, standing room only, young and old, from here, and from across the country and the States."

He praises Rudy highly, as a mentor and an example of what one person can do with a bit of effort.

"Rudy lives what he preaches," says Brad. "He cuts (without a power saw) and hauls his own firewood, eats organic foods and no meat, has solar panels in his home, yet doesn't try to push this down anyone's throat."

Brad acknowledges how lucky he is to spend time with Rudy. "I'm always learning from him."

Bright Spot appears Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Be sure to read Great Kids in The Sunday Herald. Contact Joel Jacobson via e-mail at jjacobson@herald.ca or fax at 426-1158, or phone 902-426-0128.

Dear Leske, Keif + Julia,
This is being mailed from Belmar,
but written in Montreal before I board
Goeyhland bus. The train trip from Halifax
was great, as always!

Love, Rudy



A & E
*Environmental
 Documentary*
Page 9



SPORTS
*Under-15
 Champs*
Page 12



COMMUNITY
*Pre-Primary
 Praise*
Page 16



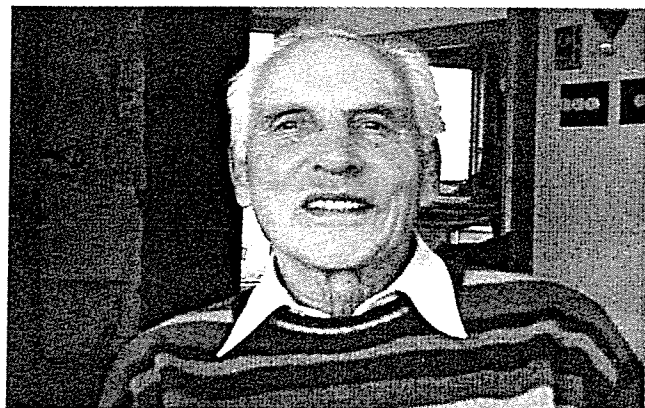
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Rudy Haase

Contributed photo

Local environmentalist featured

CHESTER — The Chester Playhouse will present the premiere of a one-hour documentary on local environmentalist and activist Martin "Rudy" Haase, Sunday, March 18, at 7:30 p.m.

Haase's life work has involved wilderness and forest preservation in Canada, the USA, Costa Rica and New Zealand, and he has been active on many environmental issues in Nova Scotia spanning more than four decades, including proposals to form a Chester Municipal Land Trust.

Haase, 85, was born in the USA and has lived in East Chester for more than 40 years with his wife Mickie.

Elizabeth May, Leader of the Green Party of Canada,

will be a guest at the screening, as she has been a friend and colleague of Haase for more than 30 years.

The documentary is directed by Nova Scotian documentary filmmaker Neal Livingston, and is produced by Black River Productions in association with CBC Maritimes and The Chester Educational Foundation.

Livingston is an award-winning filmmaker, who lives on Cape Breton. He has produced political documentaries on environmental issue including *Herbicide Trials* about the fight to stop the spraying of forests in Cape Breton, to the more recent 2001 film *The Battle at our Shores* about the off-shore oil and gas industries.

This is a pay-as-you-can event.

The theatre was packed by over 200 people, with many standing. After the showing, Rudy, Elizabeth and Neal gave short talks, followed by a discussion with the enthusiastic audience.