

Noted activist, humanitarian Haase dies

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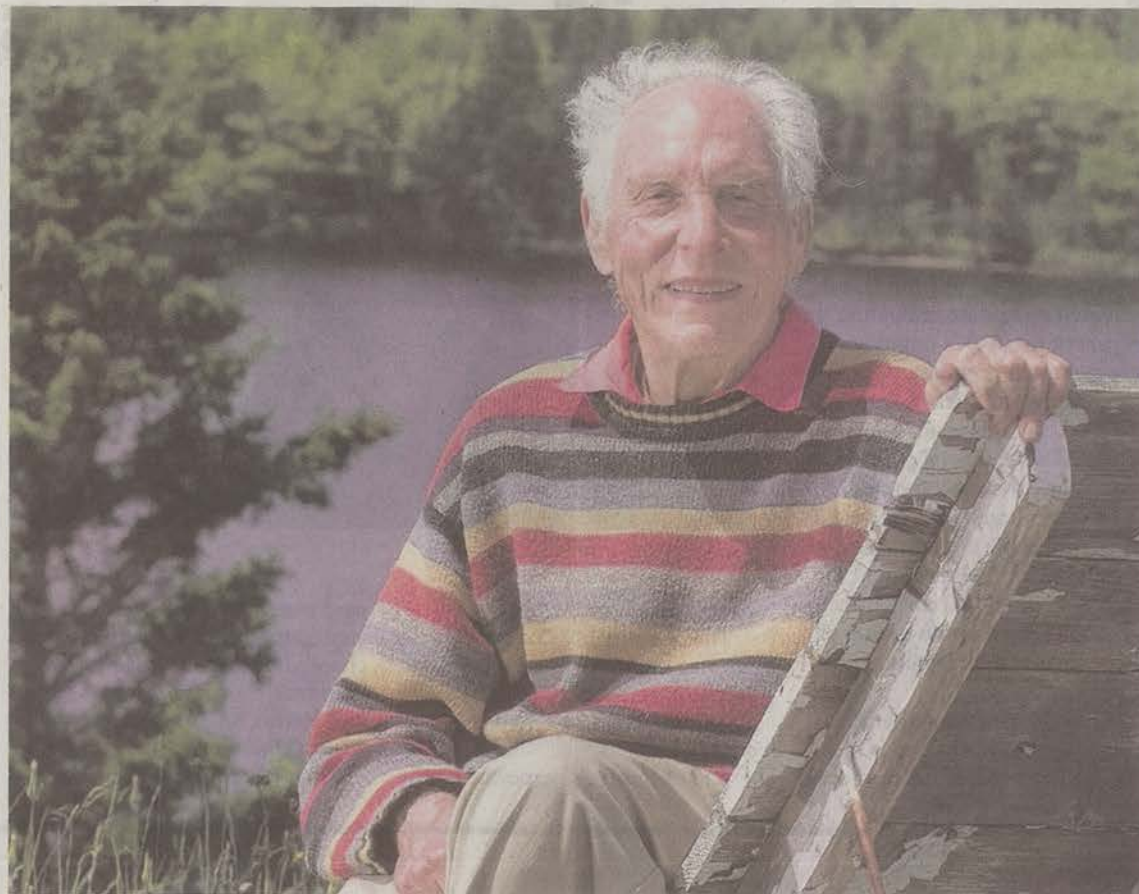
Elizabeth May was intending to arrive in Nova Scotia on Thursday and hoping to bid a final goodbye to one of her heroes, a man who has perhaps done more than anyone to preserve this province's naturally beauty.

The leader of the Green Party of Canada would not get that opportunity. But she took comfort knowing Rudy Haase spent his remaining days at his Chester sanctuary, a 80-hectare piece of property he, years before, ensured would be protected and preserved that way forever.

"He was a real hero of conservation worldwide, but Rudy also personally touched the lives of thousands of people," said May. "He was a Nova Scotian through and through. He was very committed to Canada, very committed to Nova Scotia. As much as he was a world citizen, he put down his roots in Chester. He was so attached to that land."

The lifelong conservationist, activist and humanitarian died on Tuesday at the age of 95. He leaves behind an unparalleled legacy of conservation in Nova Scotia. Thousands of acres of pristine wilderness right across the province, from the Bras d'Or Lakes, along Eastern Shore coastal islands, beaches and beyond, can be attributed to him. He spent years purchasing these properties and donating each of them to the Nova Scotia Nature Trust and other organizations. He was bestowed with the Order of Nova Scotia for his efforts.

Haase was already an accomplished conservationist when he



Rudy Haase, of Chester, died on Tuesday at age 95.

came from Belmont, Mass., to Nova Scotia in 1967. He played a pivotal role in ensuring the last dry tropical forest in Costa Rica was preserved, saved a swath of plane trees along Boston's Charles River from clear cutting, and McGlathery Island in Maine was rescued from clear cutting and became a nature preserve.

Haase and May crossed paths in 1978 when she was a member of Cape Breton Land Owners Against the Spray. He and his predeceased wife Mickie became like second parents to her.

"They were a force of good in the world that few people can

claim to be," said May.

"He was not someone who would ever get discouraged. I've known other noteworthy environmentalists. Farley Mowat got very discouraged about the state of the world. David Suzuki got discouraged. Looking at the science it's hard not to get discouraged. Rudy was someone who maintained a very optimistic and hopeful outlook.

"The message was always persistence. Rudy exemplified what I like to call habits of effective citizenship. He loved writing letters to the editor and he took it seriously. He was a prolific letter

writer because he understood that writing letters to newspapers not only expressed a view, it helped educate other people.

"The fight to protect some of the places he loved took years; his fight to stop uranium mining in Nova Scotia, to get it legislated. He kept at it and kept at it. Decades later he got it legislated.

"He and Mickie took a keen interest in children. Together they would launch the Chester Day School and Library, an institution that welcomed anyone. He would also help fund lessons for young aspiring musicians."

Haase never lost his youthful,

carefree side.

"We always had a friendly competition over who would be the first to go swimming at Goat Lake. Every winter he would go on a flexible flyer sled and go down hurtling at great speeds, just like a six-year-old kid, loving every minute of sledding well into his 80s."

He was much more than an environmentalist, said Syd Dumaresq, chairman of the Friends of Nature Association, which Haase launched.

Rudy, a naval architect by education, purchased and operated the Barkhouse Boatyard in East Chester. Dumaresq said he employed local craftsmen with the aim of helping to preserve the wooden boat-building industry.

"Sailing was one of Rudy's first loves. This made the boatyard, a few steps from his home at Goat Lake Farm, a great fit."

Days before he died, Dumaresq took Rudy for a sail just off the coast of his Chester home.

"It meant a lot to him, it meant everything to him. He wrote me a letter to thank me."

In 2007, Nova Scotia filmmaker Neal Livingston released a documentary detailing Haase's textured life. During its filming the pair became close friends. When property near Livingston's Cape Breton home was about to be clear cut, Haase stepped in and split the cost of the land with Livingston.

"Nova Scotia needs about a hundred Rudys, but they aren't there," said Livingston. "People who can afford to be philanthropists in Nova Scotia are not philanthropic to the kind of issues that Rudy was.

"We owe a great debt to him."