



Peter Shields (left) joins with his son, Island Tug and Barge Ltd. president Capt. Bob Shields, for the commissioning of their fleet's newest tug, the Island Scout.

Island Scout saga one whale of a tale

MARINE SERVICES: It wasn't easy to get sophisticated tugboat built and launched

BY ASHLEY FORD
BUSINESS REPORTER

The *Island Scout* is the little tug that could — but almost didn't.

The newest addition to the Island Tug and Barge Ltd. fleet was officially commissioned yesterday several years after its hull was built in China.

The boat will be used by the Vancouver-based company in its fuel-barging delivery and other marine services along the coast.

"To say the least, this tug has enjoyed a colourful history," said

Capt. Bob Shields, president of the company.

Given its rather tortured birth, it is fitting that it's also probably the most sophisticated tug on the coast — and certainly the most quiet.

The 150-tonne vessel started life on the back of an envelope when Shields was headed to China, where the company was having an oil-tank barge, the *Island Provider*, built.

"We needed to find another tug and on the way sketched out a rough hull design and asked the Chinese to build it for us with the intention of cradling it on our new barge hack

to Canada," said Shields.

On the way home, there was a towing "snafu" that saw the barge damaged off the north coast of Japan.

It ultimately wound up in the Pacific Russian port of Nahodka.

"Boxfuls of U.S. cash later," the barge and tug hull went back to China for repair and were then towed to Vancouver, Shields said.

There the hull sat for a while before Shields hooked up with Robert Allan Ltd. Naval Architects and Marine Engineers of Vancouver to finally give the boat a functioning heart.

"We decided to do the work our-

selves and the result is the most sophisticated tug on the coast," Shields says.

Apart from its advanced electronics and noise reduction qualities, the tug boasts two independent steering and rudder systems.

Shields won't say how much the whole exercise cost.

"It cost way more than it should have, but if we had had it built by a conventional shipyard it would have cost more," he said.

Island is a private company employing 107 workers with the main focus of operations on bulk-

fuel delivery, underwater-cable installation, general towing and barge services.

Island's roots stretch back 75 years. It began operations in 1925 under the leadership of Harold B. Elworthy with the tug *Island Planet*.

It was eventually purchased by the Shields family in 1993. The current fleet comprises nine tugs and 12 barges.

Shields Navigation, also owned by the Shields family, was brought under the Island Tug umbrella in 2000.

aford&png. canwest.com