



The Express, a 95-year-old vessel, anchors in Near Island Channel.

(Audrey Kang photo)

# This old thing?

*Captain anticipates new adventures for aging vessel with rich history*

By **ERIK WANDER**  
Mirror Writer

The Express, a 95-year-old boat currently anchored in Near Island Channel, has a rich history and a fascinating story.

If new owner and captain John Clutter has anything to say about it, the boat's future looks equally as promising.

Clutter plans to convert the Express, currently a salmon tender, into a charter boat for conducting research.

"It's a work in progress," he said. "People wonder what kind of boat it is. Well, it's one of a kind."

Clutter's 128-foot, steel-riveted boat was built in 1913 in Portland, Ore., where it started life as the steam fireboat David Campbell. It doused Portland fires for 15 years.

In 1928, the David Campbell became a fur trader when it was purchased by the Kanga Ranching Co. to haul freight in the Aleutian Islands. It was renamed the Aleutian Native.

In 1932, the Aleutian Native was purchased by Petroleum Navigation Co., converted to an oil tanker and given the name that would stick for 76 years.

The Express became a tug for a time and eventually the first big U.S. boat to crab fish in the Bering Sea when Mike Lynch purchased it in the 1950s.

In the early 1970s, the boat was converted to a salmon tender. Clutter purchased it five years ago in Seattle, Wash.

He said the storied history of the Express makes it a rare find.

"It's a 95-year-old boat," Clutter said. "It takes a while to get it dialed in, but it deserves it. It's had a lot of history, and it's

had a lot of luck."

Clutter said many people have expressed curiosity about the boat since its arrival in Kodiak nearly two years ago.

"I've had all kinds of people coming up, thinking it's a yacht," he said. "But it's a working yacht. That's my idea. You've got to enjoy what you've done."

Clutter said he was inspired to take to the sea at a young age "by Jacques Cousteau, National Geographic, pictures of Tahiti, that sort of thing."

"Sailboats have always fascinated me," he added. "I've always known that I was going to have a tall ship."

Having studied oceanography and geology, Clutter said he is specific about his interest in conducting research charters.

"Coral reef studies, beach cleanup projects, working for universities or the Office of Naval Research, remote places, places in the world where speed and time are of the essence," he explained.

He said the Express, as he plans it, will be a perfect fit for



**JOHN CLUTTER**

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By **ELIZABETH**  
Mirror Writer

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By **ERIK WANDER**  
Mirror Writer

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