

## A Whale of a Tale for Local Farmer



Fred Hamilton on the set in Shelburne for the filming of "Moby Dick". The wagon is from Fred's farm in Lower Onslow. (submitted photo)

By Linda Harrington

Lower Onslow's, Fred Hamilton has had to turn his hand to many jobs over the years to keep his dairy farm diversified but being part of \$25 million television production was never something he envisioned.

Nova Scotia filming for "Moby Dick", a made for television four hour mini-series began in Lunenburg in September and finished up in Shelburne on October 6th. Fred Hamilton received a call in August from his friend Bill Flower, who has worked with NS film productions for about ten years.

At the time, Fred says it just



Jason Bezanson, of Middleton, drives a team of horses onto the set of "Moby Dick" at the Lunenburg Foundry. (submitted photo)

seemed like a crazy idea that might happen but by the first of August everything was starting to fall into place. "They wanted me to get 2 teams of horses (2 Belgian and 2 Clydesdale). I have two of my own, we use on the farm for wagon and sleigh rides, and we also use a team from Ben Cavanaugh. The director specifically asked for large horses that would show up better on film."

Fred asked Ron MacKenzie, from Brentwood, and Jason Bezanson, from Middleton to help with the teams of horses. Filming often involved of variety of configurations for the horses, from teams to singles, and three drivers were necessary to cover the changes in harnessing and driving. Several wagons from Hamilton's farm were also used in the production.

Fred, the other two drivers and 4 horses left for Lunenburg on Sept 21st. This was a "prep day", to get the horses used to driving on the set and to make sure all the gear was working. Filming continued in Lunenburg from the 22nd to 25th and in Shelburne for three days beginning Sept. 29th. There was a return trip to Lunenburg to retake a scene because the camera didn't work and one final day in Shelburne for a third week.

"They were long days," says Fred. "Most were 12 hours of filming but the start times varied. We could be working from 6PM to 6AM, with an hour break. Most nights we finished up at 1 to 3AM."

The changes to a normal work day were a bit difficult on the horses. "It was hard to feed the horses their regular meals," Fred says. "There was a lot of 'hurry up and wait' kind of days. We would be asked to be ready in an instant

but then we might have to sit and wait for 2/3 hours until the actual scenes were ready for us."

These long days gave Fred a greater appreciation for the life of an actor. "It is not all glory," he says. "You must keep a good sense of humor during the long days and many retakes."

The horses were often used for background scenes, some as drive pasts or some with the horse and driver just sitting still. A few scenes involved more action with actors running and jumping onto the wagon.

"There was a scene shot in Shelburne that involved driving the horse onto the main street at full trot and then to stop exactly on a designated spot. A man had to throw a whaling spear at a target on the wagon. We must have done a retake of this scene at least 30 times before they got it perfect. It will probably be just a few seconds in the final production."

Fred says they were treated exceptionally well during production. Transportation, lodging and meals were all included as well as payment for the drivers, horses and use of the wagons.

There were hundreds of extras used in the filming, with as many as 400 people of all ages on set. Besides the two teams of horses Fred took down, another horse from Lunenburg was used, as well as, South Shore oxen, pigs and chickens.

"One of my horses did not like pigs on the wagon at first but he eventually got used to them," says Fred. "The crew used to spray a fire hose to wet things down and the horses were not always happy about that either. They had to get used to things like zoom-booms and scissor lifts with beepers going off but overall I was pleased



Looking rather like Clint Eastwood, Fred Hamilton of Lower Onslow, is wearing one of his costumes from a recent filming of "Moby Dick". (submitted photo)

with how well they handled all the commotion around them."

If scenes were exceptionally long and hard for the horses Fred would switch them off to give them a break.

Fred was amused by the costumes he and the other drivers had to wear to look authentic to

### Upham: Supporting small businesses essential

By Linda Harrington

M.U. Rhino Renovations has grown from three employees, when it first began in 2005, to ten full-time and four part-time workers. They have talented craftsmen on staff who can handle any renovation job, large or small.

Owner Myron Upham has lived in North River all his life

the 1851 period. "I must have worn 4 or 5 different costumes. They were really old clothes, not look alike, and the seams were perhaps a bit on the weak side. I remember bending over and hearing the behind rip out of my pants. It was a good thing I had a long coat on and that I was sitting down a lot," he laughs.

Fred was amazed at the attention to minute details. He says there were people hired to take digital photos of each person so that every single detail would be duplicated. Some shots were done over 3 days at different places but the character always had to look identical to the first shot.

"Moby Dick" is produced by Rikolt von Gaern, directed by Mike Barker, the script written by Nigel Williams. The script is based on Herman Melville's 1851 novel and the miniseries is being produced by Herbert Kloiber's Tele Munchen. It is the most expensive project in the German company's 40-year history and has meant great spin offs for the local communities.

"It is unbelievable all of the dollars that will be going into the local communities," says Fred Hamilton. "From smaller things such as lumber and locally made barrels to actual boats and the building of complete sets. The budget for catering to several hundred people each day must have been huge and there would have been lots of extra contractors and specialists required. It is wonderful to have such a big budget production filming in Nova Scotia."

Several big name actors/actresses were a part of the cast of "Moby Dick". X-files star Gillian Anderson, Nova Scotian actors James Gilbert (The Tudors) and Donald Sutherland, Academy Award winner William Hurt and Oscar nominee Ethan Hawk. Fred says he often saw the stars walking by on a daily basis as they were involved with filming their scenes.

Fred was amazed at all the hours of work that goes into preparing for filming. Things like spreading sand all over the asphalt roadways and building boardwalks to cover the side-walks. "They built a complete church in Shelburne and a bow of the ship for a pulpit where Donald Sutherland (Father Mapple) gives his sermon," he says. "We did a lot of filming at night and there were huge cranes with massive lighting equipment. It was amazing to watch how they do all the special effects."

The whole experience is something Fred will not soon forget and he will be anxious to watch the miniseries when it airs sometime in 2011. "There should be good views of the horses in the opening scene."

The horses are enjoying some down time and a well deserved break before hitching up for sleigh and wagon rides at Hamilton's Farm in Lower Onslow. Perhaps they will be giving hoof prints to autograph seekers this fall!

## SMALL BUSINESS PROFILE

### M.U. Rhino Renovations

and he is pleased to be running his business in the hub of Nova Scotia. The company is very supportive of local sporting activities, sponsoring ball hockey and softball teams and individual Midget and Bantam hockey players.

Myron feels very fortunate that the economic slow down has not effected his company in any way. Several large companies, such as Shannex Elderly Care Living, K&M General Contracting Ltd and several others have

been giving M.U. Rhino Renovations plenty of repeat business.

M.U. Rhino Renovations is able to offer competitive pricing because they strive to be a company with no overhead. "Our equipment and vehicles are paid for, with no debt," Myron says.

Mr. Upham feels that being a small business can often be an asset because consumers like to give the "little guy" a chance to prove themselves.

Supporting other small

businesses is something Myron Upham feels strongly about. "Supporting other small businesses is a must for every small business if we are going to survive together. A "rising tide raises all ships". If we are too busy to get to a customer in a hurry, we will recommend another contractor to them," he says.

Myron would like to congratulate all the other small businesses that were nominated and wishes good luck to the other 2 finalists.



Nancy and Myron Upham with Truro Chamber of Commerce President Jim Lorraine.



M.U. Rhino take pride in the quality of work they do. They know that a happy customer is a repeat customer. M.U. Rhino could not have won this award without the dedication and loyalty of its crew. Our thanks to all our staff.

Seen here, Wayne MacMeekin, Matt Upham and Darrell Upham are a large part of the MU Rhino team.

"Here's my card!"

