

Voyage to the Future



WESTPORT NEWS photo / Brian A. Pounds
 Jim Brunton, left, of Westport, and Embera tribesman Alberto Rio Tapi present a handwoven basket as a gift at Captain's Cove Marina in Bridgeport Monday. The basket took a year to craft. See notebook on page A26.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK / Will Rowlands

Voyage With A Purpose

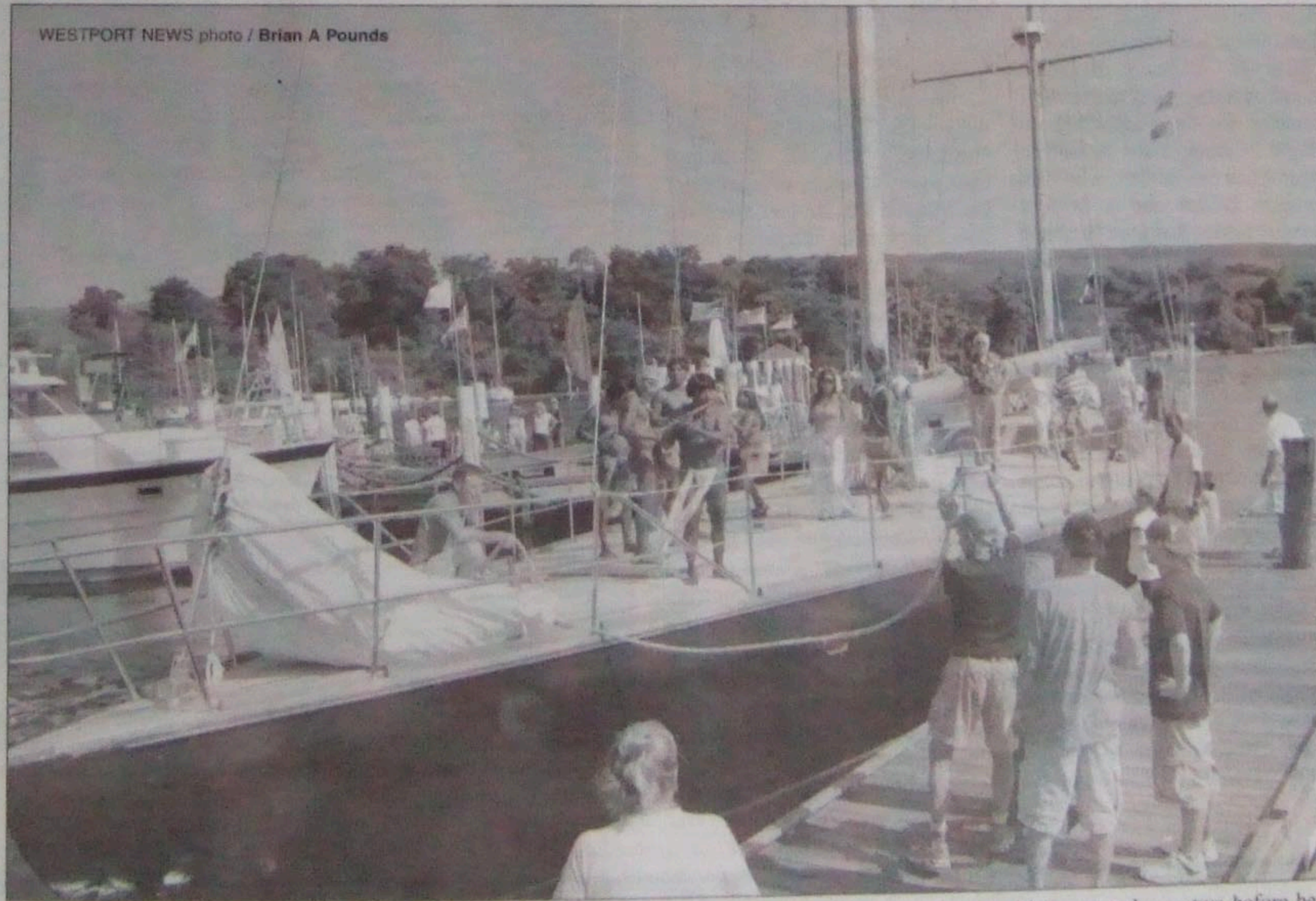
On its maiden voyage, the 92-foot twin-masted *Pajaro Jai* wanted to pay a visit to Westport this week. Unfortunately, its passage, which transcends time and culture, would not include Westport as a port of call. Hopefully, things will be different when the ketch makes its way back from Nova Scotia in September.

The *Pajaro Jai*, whose name means "Enchanted Bird" was built in the village of Mogue, Panama, on the banks of the Mogue River in the Darien Rain Forest by the Embera who are native to the region. The area is part of the largest rain forest in Central America.

The Moon Travel Planner describes the area thusly: "It takes about a half hour by boat from either Patiño or La Palma to get to the mouth of Río Mogue. It's a potentially bumpy boat ride on the ocean. The Mogue is a beautiful river, in a slightly spooky, Conradian sense. It's swampy, still, and serpentine, with towering black mangroves on either side. Boats have to take it slow up this murky river to avoid damaging the engine. It's about a 25-minute cruise from the mouth of the river to Mogue village."

The *Pajaro Jai* took 12 years to build and is the brainchild of Westport businessman Jim Brunton. Brunton's software company and the *Pajaro Jai* Foundation (PJF) are both based in Westport. Brunton first met the indigenous peoples of the area in 1967 when, as a Peace Corps volunteer, he found himself in the Panamanian rain forest.

The mission of PJF is to encourage self-sufficiency among indigenous societies. Its principal instrument is the cruising yacht *Pajaro Jai* which features the materials and workmanship of the region. With an on-deck sailing capacity of more than 100 guests and a main cabin designed for lectures, concerts and discussions, the ship was designed with its mission in mind.



This vessel is the second to bear the name. The first, launched in 1986, participated in 60-80 events a year before it was lost in a tropical storm in 1991 after hitting a reef off the coast of Jamaica. As its predecessor did, the new vessel will travel the world with the aim of bringing people together to discuss ecological concerns while highlighting the talents of the Embera.

Brunton's displeasure at the vessel being denied docking privileges in Westport was apparent when I talked to him on the *Pajaro Jai* at Captain's Cove. He said there was no real reason why the vessel

shouldn't have been allowed to dock at Longshore. He characterized it as "timidity" and noted that it actually would have been one of the better docks at which the vessel has tied up.

Jim Hardin of Westport, shared his friend's disillusionment. "Typical Westport," he said. "They'll find a way not to do something."

Stuart McCarthy, director of Westport's Parks and Recreation Department, said he talked to Brunton about a year ago but noted that Brunton never made a specific proposal. When Brunton called McCarthy

from the high seas a day or two before he wanted to dock in Westport, McCarthy said he had no choice but to turn him down.

McCarthy was concerned that the boat was too big and that there would be a crowd of people wanting to park, board the vessel and go for a brief sail. From McCarthy's perspective, logistical considerations and safety concerns were paramount. We can only hope that something can be worked out when *Pajaro Jai* returns from Nova Scotia in September.

Having been denied a berth in Westport,

