

## TEXADA'S FAST FERRIES

PASSENGERS AND FREIGHT TO DOWNTOWN VANCOUVER IN UNDER 5 HOURS!

In 1946 a partnership of young WWII veterans purchased decommissioned naval vessels and converted them for passenger service on the coast. The Gulf Lines Company was born.

As well as conveniently connecting Blubber Bay and Van Anda to Powell River, the ships provided a luxurious - and fast - transportation link to destinations south.

The *MV Gulf Wing* (formerly the *Fairmile*) began her coast schedule in May, 1946. Leaving Vancouver's Coal Harbour the ship, "resplendent in the shining white and two-toned golden mahogany colour scheme," zoomed along the coast at 17 knots. A young Ted Ross remembers its roller-coaster, stomach-churning voyages that managed to make it to Texada in only 4 1/2 hours!



Ultimate coastal travel luxury was achieved when the 145-foot *MV Gulf Stream* (formerly *HMCS Wolf*) commenced service in 1947 (see photo). Twin 400-hp diesel engines provided smooth travel. Five large staterooms, a coffee bar and men's and women's salons attracted appreciative passengers.

Bill Young's Texada-PR water taxi, the *Louvain*, was no competition for the sleek, steel-hulled fleet. Its 12-hp 2-cylinder gas engine had faithfully chugged out "2bits-2bits" since 1912. When Bill retired in 1951 Ben Nicholas upgraded the service by purchasing 3 new high speed water taxis in 1953/54 - the *Texada Moccasin*, *Ladyslipper* and *Bluebell* for the Powell River run.

The Gulf Lines suffered a blow when the *Gulf Stream* came to a tragic end. At night on October 11, 1947 north of Powell River on its run to Lund, the ship crashed full-speed into Dinner Rock. Five passengers died (3 children and 2 women) trapped in their staterooms as the stern remained submerged. The ship later sank 160 feet to its rest below.

Although the company added the *MV Gulf Mariner* (formerly *HMCS Truro*) to its fleet in 1947, the days of express trips came to an end in 1951 when the Black Ball Ferries service enabled easy vehicle connections to Vancouver. Texadans had lost their "fast ferries."

Today a memorial on Dinner Rock and the wreckage below remind us of the potential dangers of travelling the rugged BC coast.