



Pat Carney at her Saturna Island home.

Pat Carney: Saving Our Maritime Heritage

Pat Carney has had an impressive career in government, politics and business, and her work continues as she attempts to preserve some of British Columbia's most historic lighthouses

FARM GIRL. BUSINESS journalist. Distance education pioneer. Consultant in Yellowknife. Conservative MP for Vancouver Centre. Minister for Energy Mines & Resources. Minister for International Trade and President of Treasury Board under Mulroney. Senator. Author. Order of Canada recipient. And champion for the preservation of Canada's lighthouses. In most of these jobs and political offices, she busted the glass ceiling by being the first woman filling them.

This brief biography of Patricia (Pat) Carney implies that most of her life has been centred in Ottawa. But British Columbia—its farms, fisheries, coasts, islands and nautical heritage—are in her bones and have dominated her interests throughout her adult life.

I met Pat at her sun-speckled home overlooking Saturna Island's Navy Channel. Her house is friendly, with a wood-burning stove, vivid oriental rugs and comfy chairs. Her property is sprinkled with scores of lofty conifers and twisted arbutus trees with chartrreuse bark and burnt-orange peelings.

Far down in the cove, a dock juts out ready for the boat of her son, JP. She first bought land here in 1957. Despite many abodes during her tumultuous, often frantic life in politics, journalism and business, Saturna has been her refuge and is now her primary residence. From here, she persists in the battle to preserve the nation's historical lighthouses, to keep them from being razed or rotting away. "I'm a barnacle here," she says. "Stuck on Saturna. My parents wanted to be buried on this island. They paid \$5 for a plot. My plot is here too. It's spacious enough for all of us."

Born in Shanghai Pat's Okanagan-raised dad, Jim Carney, jumped ship in Shanghai in 1920, remaining there and later marrying South Africa-born journalist Dora Sanders. A year later, in 1935, Pat and her twin, Jim, were born. Her father's prescience led to a permanent move back to Canada in 1940, before the family—now including three children and a fourth forthcoming—could be interned in Japanese camps, the often fatal fate befalling many westerners



who'd remained in China.

Pat grew up on a farm near Nelson (after her father returned to school to become a veterinarian), then majored in economics at UBC, where she also began her journalism training by contributing to the student newspaper, the *Ubyyssey*. She joined the Vancouver *Province* and grew fascinated by coastal forestry. "I believed that forestry resources should be developed for the economic and social benefit of the region," she says. "I observed the big bunkhouses and town developments, interviewed grappler operators and CEOs and wrote stories about them.

West Coast Adventures She also took sailing trips through the Broughtons and the central coast with her twin, Jim, although she was a fair weather sailor and cooked rather than navigated. While sailing, she became conscious of the majesty of B.C.'s lighthouses and the value of marine safety.

Tough-minded and adventurous, Pat also hitchhiked on planes in the high Arctic after the regional discovery of oil and natural gas and wrote influential articles as a business columnist for the *Vancouver Sun*. When a newspaper strike left her idle, however, she founded a consulting company, "Gemini North," in Yellowknife. Along with many other studies, she and her partners completed a 2,200-page, ahead-of-its time report on "the social and economic impact of a proposed Arctic gas pipeline," work that included interviews with Dene, Inuit, trappers and hunters. As she wrote in her memoir, *Trade Secrets* (2000), the >



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assignment was to identify "the effects [of development], be they beneficial or adverse."

On to Ottawa After a decade in the Northwest Territories and Yukon, she was invited to run for federal office in the Vancouver Centre riding. Her first campaign failed, but her second, in 1980, put her into the House of Commons. During her second term, she took on her several ministerial portfolios—including being the minister responsible for the North American Free Trade Agreement. The never-ending work, often dirty politics, frequent misogyny, relentless media probing, and worries about raising her son as a now single parent while serving a constituency 3,000 kilometres away, made her chronic arthritis well-nigh unbearable. When her limbs "flapped as if they belonged to a puppet," she quit politics. It was 1988. It took a year for her to regain her strength.

But it wasn't the end of her time in Canada's capital. In 1990, she was called to the Senate. During her 18-year tenure there, she gave her "sober second thoughts" to major legislation arriving to the Upper Chamber from the House of Commons. And one of her accomplishments was the successful passage of a private member's bill: to save Canada's historic lighthouses.

Saving Canada's Maritime Heritage

It took nearly a decade to pass the Canada 2010 Heritage Lighthouse Protection Act. "The Act was stopped many times," says Pat. "We had seven versions. The Bloc Quebecois blocked it insisting 'heritage' was a provincial, not a federal mandate. Eventually, Larry Miller [MP Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound] got the Bloc to agree. Of course, many others helped to get the act approved, especially Mike Forrestall, the late Nova Scotia senator. It passed both houses unanimously in 2008."

The act requires that federally-owned lighthouses be protected by allowing them to gain heritage status, that the public must be notified and consulted before changes can be made to heritage lighthouses, and that designated heritage lighthouses

must be maintained and conserved appropriately. One might conclude that the act is saving our lighthouses. Unfortunately, it's not.

"The program is on the rocks and it's totally bizarre," says Pat. "The Department of Fisheries and Oceans added a clause stating that the act didn't pertain to lights that are 'surplus to operational requirements.' But in 2010, DFO declared 480 active and about 490 inactive lighthouses across Canada surplus to its needs, seeking to divest them, even though B.C. lights are operational. They're the most strategic real estate on the coast and shouldn't leave the federal inventory. They're important to cruise ships, tankers, freighters and recreational boats. Can you imagine? Vancouver's Point Atkinson and Victoria's Race Rocks lighthouses see the most tanker traffic in Canada! It's my dream to get rid of this 'surplus' boondoggle."

Pat's frustration is obvious. "I've worked 20 years on this issue," she says. "DFO is offering lighthouses to communities so these can apply for heritage status although in many locations, there are no communities nearby. Across Canada, local citizens petitioned for some 348 lighthouses to receive heritage protection. Of these 348 only 16 designations have been announced, with two more to come. Only five out of 41 B.C. lighthouses have received heritage protection." She points out the act stipulates that lighthouse heritage reviews must be completed by May 2015, although announcements may arrive after that date.

In the meantime, she's planning a different campaign to ensure the survival of six iconic lighthouses across our nation, all of them built before Canada's 1867 confederation. "For the 150th anniversary celebration, in 2017, Canada will provide funding. We are proposing a program to honour legacy lights, the icons of Canada's maritime history. One of them is 1860 Juan de Fuca's Race Rocks lighthouse."

AS THE SUN ILLUMINATES THE former senator's snowy hair and energized mien, Pat reflects on her personal legacy. "My biggest contribution," she muses, "is being a local girl, a member of a coastal family. My senatorial constituency was B.C.'s coast. I'm finishing my next book now. It's called *On Island*, and it's a mosaic of the stories of our coast." ☺