

Cruising with Captain Dave

Skipper gives history lesson with boat tour

BY RON CLAYTON

CORRESPONDENT

Passengers on the Blue Moon may sign on for a river cruise and get a history lesson from its skipper, "Captain Dave" Anderson.

"The one thing I enjoy the most is that I have a genuine care for making people happy," said Mr. Anderson, an Anniston, Ala., native who lives in Rising Fawn, Ga.

Blue Moon Cruises operates a 70-foot Skipperliner cruise ship, offering "eco-tours" through the Tennessee River Gorge from Chattanooga to Hales Bar and wildlife excursions on the Hiwassee River to the bird and wildlife sanctuary in Meigs County.

Mr. Anderson says he took a winding road to wind up behind the ship's wheel.

Graduating from college without a direction in life, he took a job as a deckhand on a ship supplying oil platforms in the Gulf of Mexico. That led to a career on the water and a captain's license.

He was skipper of seismographic ships for Mobile Oil and captain of the Spirit of Chicago, a cruise ship on Lake Michigan.

But he loved history and missed home, so he jumped at the chance to become captain of the Southern Belle in Chattanooga. When not at the pilot's wheel, he visited libraries and museums to learn about the region and its people.

And when the Ocoee Adven-



PHOTO BY RON CLAYTON

Blue Moon Captain Dave Anderson shows Winchester, Tenn., residents Mitchell and Anne Green areas of a river map where the excursion boat is traveling.

ON THE WEB

- Learn more about Blue Moon excursions at www.bluemooncruises.org
- Learn more about Ocoee Adventure Company at www.ocoeeadventure.com

PERSONAL GLANCE

- Name: Dave Anderson
- Age: 50
- Hometown: Anniston, Ala.

ture Company went looking for a captain who could pilot a river cruiser and entertain the customers at the same time, "Captain Dave" filled the bill.

"He is one of the greatest storytellers in the area, and has a great knowledge of history of the river and of the wildlife. He keeps the trip interesting," said Larry Mashburn, a partner in the

Polk County-based company.

He tells stories about who owns the big white house atop a nearby mountain; where Dragging Canoe hid out while rebelling against settlers or how Suck Creek got its name from the "narrows" that wrecked many a raft and boat.

On a recent trip, Mitchell and Anne Green, of Winchester, Tenn., said the stories of history and nature gave them a new appreciation for the Tennessee River. They said they plan to come back for another trip in the fall when the leaves turn.

Mr. Anderson lives in a log cabin where he can see Cloudland Canyon from his porch. In his spare time, he carves small animal heads and creates necklaces for sale at camps and state parks.

"I just enjoy everything I'm doing," Mr. Anderson said.

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