

Country Joe McDonald to perform at benefit for sloop

By Melina Makris

BEACON—Beacon's Piggy Bank restaurant will host a benefit for the Sloop Woody Guthrie August 29 and the event will feature the well-known Country Joe McDonald.

"We hope to raise a few thousand dollars," said Jim Bopp, a member of the Beacon Sloop Club.

All proceeds from the concert will go toward the Sloop Woody Guthrie, a wooden replica of the gaff-rigged boats that once traveled the Hudson River between New York City and Albany when that was the "main highway," according to Tom Baldino, one of the Woody's captains.

The Woody Guthrie, named for the legendary singer who penned "This Land is Your Land," was the brainchild of folk singer and activist Pete Seeger. According to Baldino, Seeger "fell in love with the idea" of using replicas of the Dutch sloops to help bring attention to the river and the need to clean it up. The Clearwater was the first of the two and the Woody Guthrie followed ten years later. Seeger paid the \$70,000 cost of the Woody out of his own pocket. Since then, it's been plying the Hudson on an educational mission, taking about 1,000 people out onto the river on weeknights during the summer. A one-masted white oak and cedar boat, the Woody Guthrie uses no modern winches, only block and tackle to hoist its main sail.

"The boat is an eye-catcher," Baldino said, noting that while the Woody is on the water, other boats



Country Joe McDonald at Woodstock in the summer of 1969.

often circle it and call out compliments.

"That makes us feel good," he said.

Unfortunately, the boat's beauty is also, in a sense, its curse. Because it's made entirely of wood, ongoing exposure to the water makes it rot and it "constantly needs repairs," Baldino said. Grant money has been used to put a new deck on it and the crew has done "some Band-Aid work," but more is needed to "get it really tight again," the captain said. Storing it in a greenhouse during the winter - it was left in the water one winter and it partially sank - causes more "constant movement on the planks and screws," which is no good for the boat either.

Appropriately enough, the benefit at the Piggy Bank will feature a 90-minute concert by singer-songwriter Country Joe McDonald, who formed Country Joe & the Fish in 1965 and later performed at Woodstock. McDonald was planning a trip to the



The Sloop Woody Guthrie under sail

Woody Guthrie Museum to present his CD, "Woody Guthrie in Song and Word," a tribute to the singer, a fellow Oklahoman, with whose music McDonald grew up, when he decided to come to Beacon and perform a benefit for the sloop that bears Woody's name.

"He said, 'I don't want any money'," Bopp said of McDonald. "Joe's always been there for us. He's been a great friend."

In addition to McDonald, Seeger will appear as well and the event promises to be a night of good music and good food for a good cause, with "a lot of Woody songs," Bopp said.

The concert will begin at 7:30 p.m. in the parking lot of the Piggy Bank, located at 448 Main Street in the city's east end. A donation of \$20 or more per person is suggested. There are no tickets but reservations can be made by calling the Piggy Bank at 838-0028 or Jim Bopp at 242-3074.