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Taking advantage of Bridgeport's harbor

Bridgeport needs to figure out why it has a harbor. Sure, the glaciers and tectonic plates and all that have something to do with it, but the why question is still there.

There's been a fair amount of talk about

Bridgeport harbor these days, what with Connecticut Post reporters poking and prodding at every inch of the shoreline, and Bridgeport harbor has turned

out to be is about the most inaccessible piece of shoreline around.

The other day there was a photo of Post reporter Bill Cummings squeezing through the opening of a fence that's supposed to keep people away from the burned remains of the Pleasure Beach bridge.

Well, people – yours truly included – have been squeezing through that same opening for a few years now. So you'd have to wonder why the city doesn't just open it up, repair the railing and let people go out on it.

They're going out on it anyway. Why make them

risk ripping their pants to do it?

And the Bridgeport-Port Jefferson ferry wants to move its operation from the confined spot it's in now, to the other side of the harbor, where the banana boats used to come in. Should the operation move, it would build a new terminal and most likely spawn some retail activity in a part of the city that could really use it.

One question regarding the ferry move would be what sort of impact might it have on downtown Bridgeport?

Unfortunately, there's no ready answer. Paul Timpanelli, executive director of the Bridgeport Regional Business Council, said the other day that no such survey has ever been done.

The ferry offers packages for events at Harbor Yard, both the stadium and the arena. Those would continue, said Fred Hall, vice president and general manager of the Bridgeport & Port Jefferson Steamboat Company. Passengers would be shuttled from the new site.

What would help downtown, of course, would be some attention to the I-95 underpasses that separate Harbor Yard from downtown.

For the uninitiated, the dark, cavernous underpasses provide a sort of Ichabod Crane experience. In other words, let me get through this thing before the guy on the horse comes thundering out.

Would it break the bank at the state Department of Transportation to put in some lights, or commission some murals, or something?

The harbor, according to experts, really doesn't have much shot at being a true working harbor. It is not deep enough. It does not have rail service. And it doesn't have the laydown area – storage area, that means – of 40 to 50 acres that would be needed.

Sitting one evening in Portland, Maine, eating casually at a waterside table, its red and white checked tablecloth fluttering at the corners, my wife and I watched a small commercial fishing boat unload its day's take.

There was the clatter and the scent of the sea. We walked around and Portland's waterfront is a bouillabaisse of pleasure boats, working boats, marinas and restaurants. The town's old red-brick warehouses have been born again as lofts and shops.

Seemed to me like the sort of place Bridgeport could be.

Last December, John Patrick Flanagan, of Fairfield, died of cancer at age 44. He left a wife and three children.

In addition to having been a husband and father, he was a son, brother, colleague, friend and counselor, each role a strand that reached out to a wide Fairfield County and Connecticut network.

Some of those family and friends have started the John Patrick Flanagan Foundation. Its mission, given John Flanagan's commitment to his children and family, is to help vulnerable children and families by supporting charities that provide the direction, education and healthy environment that vulnerable children and families need to have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

The Foundation's first fund-raising event is today, a half-marathon in Fairfield.

You can learn more about the foundation by visiting www.jpff.org.

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