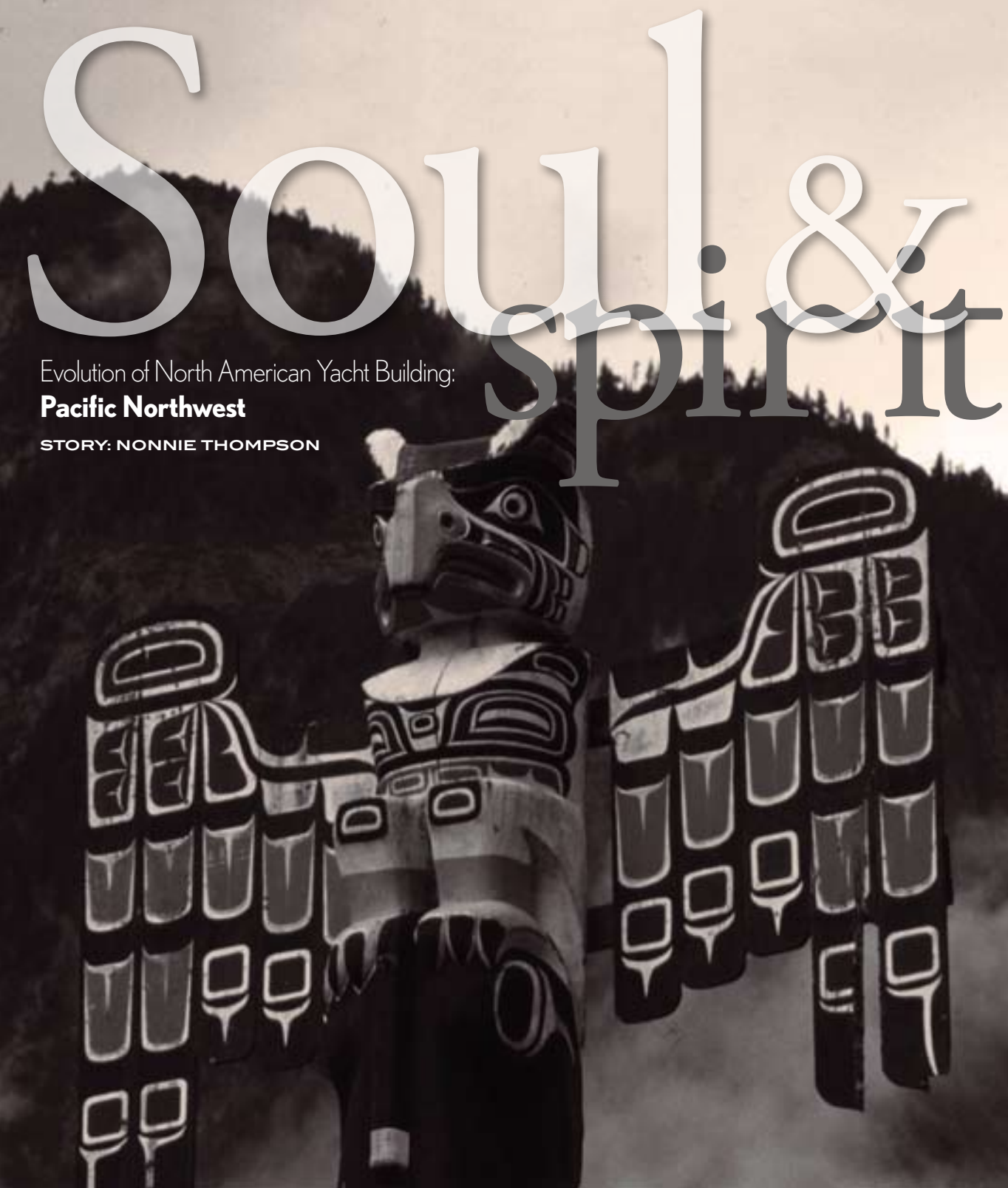


# Soul & Spirit

Evolution of North American Yacht Building:  
Pacific Northwest

STORY: NONNIE THOMPSON



NEIL FRABINOWITZ

According to native lore, indigenous tribes carved a life out of the precipitous forests and protected waters of the Pacific Northwest for a thousand years before the white man arrived. Carbon dating has put that estimate closer to 30,000 years. Sometime after the last ice age, humans crossed the land bridge from Asia and a marine-based society developed on rocky shores of the Eastern Pacific. Since then, the 40,000 navigable coastal miles of Puget Sound, British Columbia and Alaska's Inside Passage have hosted varied and interrelated native populations. Heavy, fast dugout canoes hewn and grandly carved from the giant

and abundant cedars maneuvered the inlets and rivers. For untold generations, they hunted, fished, built and gathered – using bone, stone, shell and wood. The cold, clear waters rich in whales, fish, kelp and mollusks nurtured the aboriginals physically, while the ice-capped volcanoes, hot mineral springs and tumbling rivers spoke to their souls. Today, in these stunning fjords and inlets, megayacht owners cruise in their new Pacific Northwest boats. Their interiors shimmer with exotic stone and woods, their freezers fill with fish, their expansive windows frame glaciers, eagles and whales, while the peace and beauty make their hearts soar.

## COAST SALISH AND THE EURO-AMERICAN SETTLERS

According to his memory, the young Coast Salish boy, Sealth (Seattle), was in his seventh spring when he stood on a Puget Sound shore and watched “a giant canoe with wings like a gull” sail into view. It was 1792, and the “giant canoe” was British man o’ war *Discovery* with Captain George Vancouver – the first ship and white men the natives had ever seen. For Sealth, the happy memories of the explorer’s visit remained with him all his life. Vancouver wrote that day, “The serenity of the climate, the innumerable pleasing landscapes, and the abundant fertility that unassisted nature puts forth, require only to be enriched by the industry of man.”

Fifty-nine years later in 1851, that industry arrived when the Denny Party of twelve sailed the schooner *Exact* into Puget Sound. Native villages of cedar-planked longhouses existed on every waterfront, strung along all navigable waters for commerce and subsistence. With fishing weirs, dried and smoked shellfish, herds of deer and elk, berries, roots and plants, the natives were well established. Chief Seattle was happy to see the white men and their big ships return to his territory as a trading presence; his tribe helped them settle and find resources, anticipating a friendship with the settlers. By 1855, twenty-two Coast Salish tribes had ceded their ancestor’s land in the US government’s Point Elliot Treaty. Chief Seattle said “How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? We do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water.” The tribes were relocated to reservations.

Arriving in fleets of schooners and later by train, the Euro-Americans settled in Puget Sound and tamed the wild areas. By 1880, the pioneers boasted a population of 3,500. To serve their web of communities using the rivers and bays as the natives had – but at greater speeds – the pioneers required steam vessels. And so began the Mosquito Fleet, a swarm of smaller passenger and freight boats brought from afar or built by the myriad shipyards cropping up on the Seattle shoreline. Some 2,500 boats crisscrossed the sound for over 50 years.

With a growing lumber and fishing industry and trade to the south and the Far East, local craftsmen and draftsmen naturally turned to ship building. The Hall Brothers on Bainbridge Island, Moran Bros. Co. and King & Winge in Seattle built steel and wood ships for lumber, coal, troop and wartime service. Tug and tow service began in the 1890s when Thea and Andrew Foss, two of the area’s many Scandinavian



PSMHS

immigrants, turned one rowboat into what has become a world-class fleet of tugboats. Foss Maritime and Puget Sound Tugboat Co. were the workhorses of the sound and beyond, towing rafts of logs, tugging schooners in from the sea, or nudging scows into rivers for coal and lumber.

In mid-summer 1897, the steamship *Portland* docked in Seattle loaded with gold, igniting the Klondike Gold Rush. During the boom, Seattle grew to 86,000 almost overnight. Business generated by supplying prospectors brought great wealth to the city, and local builders scrambled to keep up with orders. The Moran Bros. Co. built 12 sternwheeler steamers of 175 feet and 35 feet wide for use on the Yukon River. Constructed in assembly-line fashion, all 12 began the 4,000-mile trip together in May of 1897. One was lost, one left for repairs. “It was the most remarkable feat of its kind ever attempted,” according to *The New York Times* (August 15, 1898).

“Seattle became the front door to the Klondike,” says Dick Wagner of the Center for Wooden Boats in Seattle. “People came through to provision for Alaska and the middle class of the area prospered. Suddenly, there was spare money and time, a new sector of the economy, and a social scene. Second homes sprouted up around the lakes.” Designers and shipwrights were called on to meet the challenge for small and convenient recreational cruising boats.

## DESIGNERS AND DREAMBOATS

Just in time, racing skipper and already successful yacht designer, L.E. “Ted” Geary returned from MIT and became known for the breadth and success of his designs. His legendary 40ft R-Class boats, sleek and stunning, dominated the racing circuit along the West Coast for three decades. Among his notable designs were: the Geary 18, the first diesel-powered tug in the United States, commercial and fishing vessels, fast commuter yachts and, during World War I, large 330ft wooden-hulled freighters.

As a young shipwright and designer, Ed Monk worked for

## PACIFIC NORTHWEST CHRONOLOGY

9000 BC

Aboriginal people cross the land bridge from Asia and settle in North America.



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600 AD

Coast Salish tribes establish prominent villages along the Duwamish River.

1792

Captain George Vancouver sails into Puget Sound on British Man o’ War *Discovery*, and is met by Coast Salish tribes.

1851

Denny Party arrives on the schooner *Exact* in Alki; modern development of Seattle begins.



Chief Seattle

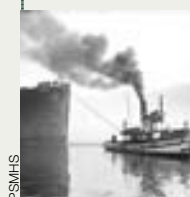
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1853

Washington becomes a territory.

1882

First Trans-Pacific steamship departs Seattle.



PSMHS

1892

The Seattle Yacht Club is organized at the base of Duwamish Head, Elliot Bay.

# Soul & spirit

## Evolution of North American Yacht Building: Pacific Northwest



Moran Bros. Steamers



George Vancouver

Hall Bros. Yard



Dreamboat Arlene

Geary. During the Depression years, Monk went on his own to launch a 36-year career that produced over 3,100 naval designs. Forever known in the Pacific Northwest for his style and philosophy of design, Monk had an overwhelming influence on sailboats, fishing vessels, and power cruisers. His boats are still some of the most beautiful, sought after and functional. His son, Ed Monk, Jr., followed in his footsteps with a degree in Industrial Design from the University of Washington, but the influence his father had on him began in childhood. Working as a draftsman and designer for pleasure and commercial vessels up to 100 feet for many years, in 1978 he met Alex Chueh of Ocean Alexander, whose son John continues his work with Ed Monk, Jr. to this day.

During the 1920s and 30s, Northwesterners were exploring their boating climate – racing and cruising year-round. The growing leisure class dreamed of a comfortable, safe and economical cruiser. Between 1924 and 1930, Leigh Coolidge designed and NJ Blanchard Boat Company produced 25, 36ft motorboats “for the average man.” These hardly average, perfectly proportioned, lean and easily driven boats had full headroom below, cozy cast-iron stoves, and bright pilothouses for the often gray Northwest. At the same time, Lake Union Drydock Company, together with designer Otis Cutting, was creating the Lake Union Dreamboat, a 40 to 45ft “pleasure boat, plainly but neatly finished and sturdy and seaworthy in every particular.” The raised-deck rush was on with Vic Franck, Grandy Boat Works, Jensen Motorboat and others building what became generically known as the “Dreamboats.”

In 1935, Ben Seaborn took a challenge from Norman Blanchard, Jr. “to build a good-looking family cruiser that will really sail.” To that end, he designed the Blanchard 42. His association with the Blanchard yard sent him in critical new directions, including Boeing 314 Flying Boats. Seaborn may be best known for his popular hard chine, “funny looking” plywood speedster, the Thunderbird 26, but his 30+ designs from 26 to 80 feet – over his short life – were considered radical and exciting.

### PNW PAST HAS A FUTURE

The Pacific Northwest story is rich and diverse. In the 1970s, Dick and Colleen Wagner were living in a houseboat on Lake Union and noted a rising interest in wooden boats and their history. What began with loaning their wooden rowboats and sailing dinghies to friends became a “living

museum,” says Wagner. Expanding their maritime passion into public education, they opened the Center for Wooden Boats. Later, renowned master shipwright Bob Prothero began the Northwest School for Wooden Boatbuilding in Port Townsend to “teach and preserve the skills and crafts of fine wooden boat building.” After the first highly successful Wooden Boat Festival in 1977, the Wooden Boat Foundation opened in Port Townsend, “to celebrate, promote and preserve maritime heritage, skills and culture through education and participation.” With these strong foundations, Puget Sound promises a great future renewing the past.

### LUXURY YACHTING

Following the PNW tradition of innovation, Robert “Bob” H. Perry opened his Shilshole Bay shop in 1974 and proceeded to draw “the epitome of cruising yachts.” His Valiant, Tayana, Passport, Cheoy Lee, and twelve other designs, plus a host of one-off custom sail and now power cruisers and racers, account for more than 5,000 yachts sailing the world today.

In the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, Ivor, Jack and Steve Jones designed and built fast, flat-bottomed runabouts for competition, holding world records for many years. Over the next 25 years, Delta Marine produced 800 stout, fiberglass commercial fishing boats for the demanding waters of the Pacific Northwest, replacing an aging wooden fleet with seaworthy, reliable and low-maintenance seiners, gill netters and pilot boats. Westport Yachts began in 1964, producing a fishing and ferry fleet of 200 boats. Nordlund Boats began with custom fiberglass yachts in the 1970s.

With the growing wealth of the Seattle area, these established shipyards were ready to answer the call for luxury. In the 1980s: Delta, Westport, Nordlund and Christensen, and in the 90s Northern Marine, began construction on sleek, luxury, long-range pilothouse yachts. In 1985, Delta built five 70ft motor yachts based on its successful crabbing hull. Today, the yard has successfully delivered 35 motor yachts including the largest private yacht to be built in the United States in over 75 years – *Laurel* – a 240ft motor yacht with a steel hull and composite superstructure. Current projects range from 125 to 200 feet and include composite, aluminum and steel hulls. From sturdy expedition yachts to sleek, highly styled tri-decks, each ship from Delta is one-of-a-kind. Within the broad confines of their dreamboat hull, the in-house Delta

## PACIFIC NORTHWEST CHRONOLOGY

**1893**  
The Great Northern Railroad reaches Seattle, opening a new market for the fishing industry and the populace of the East Coast.

**1897**  
July 17<sup>th</sup>, the steamship *Portland* docks in Seattle loaded with gold, igniting the Klondike Gold Rush.

**1899**  
16-year-old L.E. “Ted” Geary draws and builds his first racing sloop, the *Empress 24*.



**1902**  
Hall Bros. (1902-1912) moves shipyard to Eagle Harbor on Bainbridge Island, and became the town's first large-scale industry.

**1904**  
Moran Bros. (1882-1916) launches US Battleship *Nebraska* into the Great White Fleet.



**1880-1930**  
Mosquito Fleet plies Puget Sound, delivering goods and people to all communities.



**1917**  
The Lake Washington Ship Canal is completed and connects Puget Sound with Lake Union and Lake Washington. The lakes become a popular site for boat building.



## WILLIAM GARDEN

On a tiny forested island off the British Columbia coast, a wispy early morning mist filters halfway up the trees, while the splash landing of Canada geese sets bald eagles aflight. On the dock, a short gunkhole from the Sidney shore, stands a quiet man swaddled in a tweed woolen jacket, cap and scarf, studying the boats at anchor, bundled against the damp Pacific Northwest. William Garden has spent his life passionately dedicated to designing boats. Since 1935 when he was 17 and first entered Seattle's Edison Boat Building School, Garden has penned a fleet of some of the most gracious designs ever put to paper and ultimately built with a flair and purpose that has not only endured, but set design standards through a near century of evolutionary naval architecture.

Toad's Landing is the private island Garden has called home for nearly 40 years, where along with his longtime companion Janie, the solitude of this creative outpost among the cedars, gardens and rhododendrons, has inspired some of the most beautiful hand drawings to grace the realm of naval architecture. The peaceful architect's compound includes boat-building sheds, railway haul out, and launching and repair outbuildings, which wind through the forest glen and surround a handcrafted home where memories of a life of golden days afloat and a legendary career merge.

At nearly 90 years old with a prolific record of having shaped the finest vessels of his day in both power and sail, from dinghy to megayacht, Garden is perceived as a sage among naval architects but is soft-spoken, humble, and has sought no glory or recognition for his achievements. Two years ago he received homage from peers and the Canadian government in the prestigious Order of Canada for his contribution to naval architecture. But accolades mean less to him than a client's treasured cruise or seeing his boats well kept underway. His trademark fine entry, flared bow and narrow beam are shapely lines simply born of a love of boating. A sailor first, his designs flow from his passion. His understanding of the craft of boat building has resulted in the true intent of his designs materializing more than any naval architect could hope. Builders love his plans. Garden invests himself in each design and tracks their success through the life of the boat. He not only offers plans to builders, but fosters dreams and encourages clients, speaking of each shape and sheer with affection, keeping clippings, photos and taking pride in their performance like children he's raised and now, with pride, live a life of their own.

Born in Calgary Alberta, November 5, 1918, where prairies were so broad it strained the eyes, his family moved to Oregon, and later Seattle, where he welcomed the sea and would never leave its side. He started boat-building school and then worked for Andrew's Boat Company, and later built the schooner *Gleam* and sailed it throughout the Northwest islands he learned to love. He teamed with Dave Leclercq (who launched LeClercq Marine, which became a three-generation family company) and together they built a handful of sailboats until the war.

Most of his drawings had been a workboat breed of fishing boats and tugs, and he produced nearly fifty of them by the time he was in his mid-twenties. He repaired ships for the military through the war and after, while hard at fishing boats again, Garden's passion for Northwest cruising was fueled by a summer cruise aboard *Gleam*, which motivated him to push the sailing side of his design work.

By 1947 he became a licensed naval architect and was drawing the lines for what became one of his favorites, the 40ft schooner *Rainbird* he built by 1949 for himself, and aboard which he honeymooned.

He soon had this ad running, "Boats of every sort, I love to design boats, rather design than eat. Often do. So let's get going on the perfect ship before you are so old that you have to be carried aboard. I have drawers full of stock plans and a head full of boats that

want to be launched. Whether you want the ultimate in a motor-sailing yacht or a one-cylinder clam hound, I can fix you up with a plan to suit." This youthful exuberance was as aggressive a campaign Garden has ever developed.

Throughout the 1950s, his naval architecture firm Maritime Shipyards, shifted several locations throughout Seattle and produced hundreds of work and recreational designs. His career took him around the world several times, designing yachts for the wealthiest of his day and he is credited with drawing more than 1,000 vessels from dinghies to offshore cruisers, elegant yachts and workboats of every demeanor. But the urban arena lost its appeal and he considered retiring to New Zealand, choosing instead to settle at Toad's Landing and enjoy exclusively creating recreational designs.

Many original wood versions displayed a rakish, clipper-style bow with a graceful sheer, canoe sterns and easily handled sail plans with pilothouses suited for moods of the Pacific Northwest. Several of his creative designs eventually launched armadas of production sailboats. Among Northwest designers like Bob Perry and Greg Marshall, and builder/designers like Sam Devlin, Garden provided inspiration early in their careers. Marshall and Perry both worked for Garden; Devlin studied the art of Garden's drawings and considers him the Rembrandt of design plans.

Among his powerboat designs, Garden penned many noteworthy hulls including the quick-hearted, slender-stemmed Westport line, which proudly slices through seas with a fine entry and hardly a hint of bow wave. Motor yachts often portrayed a "rumrunner" speedy temperament in Garden's hand. He believed motor yachts should never be stodgy, should have gusto, perform sprightly and should not push much water. Even his humble sailing catboat that he reshaped with a finer bow, he calls "an educated cat". More than 500 of his designs are now archived at the Mystic Seaport Museum with perhaps his most endearing sailboat design, *Oceanus*, a 60ft double-ended sloop that Garden himself sailed around Puget Sound for a dozen years. From his high-ceiling boat shed flooded with daylight and filled with charming small boats, varnished spars and models, drawings, and a world of custom hand tools and boat-building history, Garden now tinkers with engines, designs, and ship models. With sadness, he noted *Oceanus'* recent sinking by a careless new owner, but with a sparkle in his eyes he proudly declared he has worked out a redesign with a different quarter and aft cabin arrangement, "something better" and proudly pulled out the new plans..."it's a design I'll probably build in heaven," he says. - Neil Rabinowitz



NEIL RABINOWITZ

## PACIFIC NORTHWEST CHRONOLOGY

### 1920-40

During WWII, area yards meet the war effort, building transport, supply, mine sweepers and submarines. Some Puget Sound pleasure boats are pressed into military service.

STABBERT MARITIME



### 1949

Stabbert Maritime is founded by Fred Stabbert.

### 1950-60

The Nordlund, Rust and Jones bros. open Nordlund, Westport and Delta Boatyards, respectively.

### 1974

Bob Perry opens his naval architecture office on Shilshole Bay.

NONNIE THOMPSON



### 1975

Cecile M. Lange and sons begin building the Cape George Cutter - a 38ft full-keel blue-water yacht in Port Townsend, made of fiberglass and Port Orford and Alaska cedar.

### 1978-83

Foundations and public schools serve the community with boat building workshops and training.

NEIL RABINOWITZ



### 1980-90s

Delta, Westport, Christensen, Nordlund, Northern Marine and many other yards produce luxury megayachts.

# Soul & spirit

Evolution of North American Yacht Building: **Pacific Northwest**



Westport's 1st Large Yacht

COURTESY OF WESTPORT SHIPYARDS



Victorious: Nordlund 115

NEIL RABINOWITZ



NEIL RABINOWITZ

Design Group sees to every detail. Other notable designers working with these big yards are the Setzer Group, Tom Stringer, Inc., Bill Langan, Greg Marshall, Donald Starkey and Jack Sarin, to name a few. Through the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the current fiscal slump, these yards and designers have continued production, repairs and refits, and have grown with their clients' dreams.

On a smaller scale, but with the same quality and luxury principals as the above-mentioned, Grand Banks Yachts began its run in 1956 as American Marine out of Hong Kong, building sailboats and motor yachts to designs by the world's top marine architects including Sparkman & Stephens, William Garden, Nat Herreshoff, Ray Hunt and others. By 1973, the yard evolved from a wooden boat builder to a leader in fiberglass construction by later taking the day cruiser and infusing it with Pacific Northwest flair, despite the fact that the boats were being built in Singapore.

With a pedigree of both America's Cup and large motor yacht construction, partners Donald Campbell and Randy McCurdy formed SanJuan Yachts in 1998, also taking on the lobster boat market. Naval architecture and innovative design provided by Greg Marshall and the SanJuan Yachts design team breathed West Coast air into the East Coast lobster boat, blending teak with advanced composite construction. All are resin infused with E-glass, Kevlar and Corecell, producing extremely light and incredibly strong motor yachts. To date, SanJuan has built and delivered over 60 motor yachts and offers seven models between 30 and 75 feet.

What began as a small company founded in 1949 by Fred Stabbert, with a surplus World War II US Army wooden medical-supply vessel, has now become Stabbert Maritime – a family-owned operation with a focus on the conversion of expedition vessels. The Stabbert group of companies has evolved over the years, anticipating the trends of the Pacific Northwest maritime industry. They began with contract towing and grew to encompass commercial fishing, passenger vessels, cargo transport, offshore supply vessels, geotechnical and research vessels, and now yacht conversions and refits in their Seattle shipyard, Stabbert Yacht and Ship.

Twelve years ago, Stabbert Maritime began chartering superyachts in remote locations on the Pacific coast, primarily in Alaska and down to the Galapagos Islands and Costa Rica. These locations had for the most part remained undiscovered

by large yacht owners. With the introduction of these areas, Seattle has become the port of choice for yachts cruising the Pacific coast. Stabbert Maritime, along with the other commercial operations in the area, blended its commercial-vessel background to yachting; a blend that has made Seattle a strong location for repair, refit and new construction in the United States. Also on the Stabbert Maritime list of accomplishments is the new Salmon Bay Marine Center, where docks are now complete and open to vessels 100 to 240 feet for permanent moorage, surrounded by office space whose tenants comprise businesses in the yachting industry.

No megayacht-focused discussion of the Pacific Northwest would be complete without the mention of the America's Cup build. In 1999, Jim Betts Enterprises (now Anacortes) constructed *America True*, the 30<sup>th</sup> AC challenge and the first campaign managed by a woman, Dawn Riley. For the 31<sup>st</sup>, 32<sup>nd</sup>, and 33<sup>rd</sup> regattas, local sailor and designer Paul Bieker has headed up the BMW Oracle structures team. Fifteen years after his I-14 draw-build-champion success, Bieker and his team led an international crew of top technicians to build the composite multi-hull in Anacortes, under tight security for the 2009 competition.

Through 150 years of changing fads and boating needs, the one constant in the many designs and sizes, materials and artisans of the diverse Pacific Northwest boating world is quality. Pride and loyalty have kept generations of employees at the same company. Custom care of clients and products have determined the survival of many yards. Innovative and use-appropriate designs have satisfied and challenged naval architects and the yards they work with. Unique to this region is the pioneer spirit. From the Coast Salish natives who honored nature and its bounty and the scrappy band of hard-working settlers, the people of the Northwest have lived with the sea. They've made it work for them with little convention and few strict mores. At times, they would have been completely off the radar, if there'd been any. Then came the developers, traders, miners and loggers, and the ships with which they required to thrive. In the end, it's the joy of plying the waters on a crystal NW day; the Olympic Peaks pulsating with ice, deep waters teaming with wildlife, rivers gushing into hidden fjords, and eagles wheeling overhead. Paddle an Inuit canoe, sail a Ted Geary sloop, drift a Dreamboat or power a Delta über-yacht. The point is to get out there and nobody does it better, more often and with more class than the hearty folks of the Pacific Northwest. |

## PACIFIC NORTHWEST CHRONOLOGY

**1985**  
Delta Marine launches *Zopilote*. Designed by Steve Seaton, the 70ft yacht is Delta's first luxury motor yacht.

DELTA MARINE



**1994**  
Janicki Industries opens. Today they build advanced composite tooling for the production of boat hulls and decks (for BMW Oracle and major yacht builders).

**1995**  
Northern Marine in Anacortes builds "burly composite expedition-style yachts in the 55ft range". The yard recently launched Hull #2 of its 151ft series.

NEIL RABINOWITZ



**2006**  
Westport Yachts launches *Vango*, Hull #1 in their 164ft series of turnkey production fiberglass yachts by Donald Starkey, Bill Garden, Taylor Olson.

NEIL RABINOWITZ



**2006**  
Delta Marine launches the 240ft *Laurel*.

**2008**  
April 9<sup>th</sup>, BMW Oracle confirms, "Progress well-advanced on new AC yacht." Paul Bieker heads the structural design team; this is the third AC yacht built in Anacortes, WA.