



THE THOLEPIN

June 1017

The Pull and Be Damned Messabout

Thank you to all who helped at the Pull and Be Damned Messabout on Saturday, May 20 at Seafarers' Memorial Park. OARS volunteers were out in force to help launch boats, give rides in the Elizabeth Bonaventure and Annie C and help the Anacortes Small Boat Center put on a great event.

The annual event brought in about 80 participants and another 40 guests who strolled along the dock and checked out the boats.

Supporting the Messabout is a great way for us to have some fun and live up to our mission to "promote wooden boats and small craft traditions."

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- New Members: Denise & Mike Antrim
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We had a great turnout — at least 20 people. Hope to see that kind of participation by members through the year as we tackle our annual maintenance projects and take part in the Waterfront Festival, the Fourth of July Parade, Veterans Day ceremonies and other events.

So, thank you again to all the OARS helpers, many of whom are also ASBC members, and congratulations to Beth Bell and Andy Stewart and others for putting this together.

Jack Darnton
OARS President





More from the President

Our annual maintenance effort is coming up in July when we will recondition the Glide and get her back into tip-top shape. This is a big and necessary project carried out by OARS members who donate their time and skills. (Many hours of work are involved. Hiring the work out would be prohibitively expensive.) It can be a lot of fun as well as work and a chance to learn about the care and repair of wooden boats. We have some great mentors in the club.

In the past, the annual maintenance work has often fallen on too few people, and at the same time some members who would like to help have not been asked. This year I'd like to try something different. The plan is to recruit a number of "maintenance team captains" who will put together teams able to work one or more maintenance shifts.

Our first step is surveying members on their maintenance skills. We want to establish a maintenance roster for this year and beyond. If you haven't responded yet, please look at the information below and email your answers to Jack Darnton at: darntonfamily@comcast.net

Work on our annual reconditioning project generally includes tasks such as cleaning, scraping, sanding, painting and varnishing. Please look at the categories below and decide which one best describes you.

1. Experienced - You've done basic boat maintenance before, are familiar with the products and processes OARS uses and can instruct others. You are "maintenance team captain" material.
2. Helper - You've done some of this before. With a little instruction on the task at hand you're good to go. Need some oversight.
3. Novice - Willing to help but need instruction and guidance.
4. Availability – Are you generally available to help in July?

The annual maintenance is a lot of work, but if we all pitch in it can go quickly and smoothly.

Jack Darnton, OARS President

Lake Whatcom Race



Vicki Stasch, Priscilla Legg, Vicki O'Brien, Barbra Buxton, Simone Spiess
Master: Cathy Schaffer and Mascot: Lexie

First Place!



Featured Oars Member Erica Pickett



The Early Days at the Anacortes Shop

A friendly, tail-wagging dog named Gracie met me at the door when I arrived at Erica and Bob's house. I knew immediately that Gracie would be a big part of my interview; she never left their side. Born and raised in Seattle, eldest of five children, Erica spent her youth doing lots of camping and hiking. At the University of Washington, Erica majored in English. Bob Pickett, born in St Petersburg, Florida spent his career as a clinical chemist. However, they proved early on neither could settle for just a "job"; quitting their jobs the same day without consulting each other. Down to 30 cents, they went for a 15-cent coffee and met up with a friend in Seattle. When he asked what they were up to they said, "not very much"! Apparently, he needed some help refurbishing the 93' Princess Mary, an express cruiser, built to run rum. After working around Seattle shipyards a few years, they left in 1971 for the opportunities of Anacortes. Bob and Erica started Flounder Bay Boat Shop in the big shed at Skyline Marina. They bought the old Schwartz Iron Works at the corner of Third Street and O Avenue in 1972. Next, they began selling lumber from a small mill in 1975 and the business became Flounder Bay Boat Lumber.

Erica and Bob told me about many of their business ventures, one of which was "Puzzle Boats". They had met a crazy "Aussie" at a boat show and partnered to design and market a home boat building kit. The boats were pre-cut with a router and there were two different styles to choose from; the Jabiru and the Joey. They sold several boats; unfortunately, the joints took too long to cut and the enterprise was not cost effective.

Erica has always been involved in the Anacortes business community. Named to the Forest Board in 1982 the Planning Commission in 1984. Erica and Bob retired in 2004 and Erica has served on the City Council ever since.

Another unusual adventure that Erica and Bob participated in was the "Log Patrol". In 1976, they obtained a patrol license from the State of Washington to round up merchantable logs off the beaches. Below is Erica's description of how the log patrol process worked.

By: Vicki O'Brien, Tholepin, Archivist



*Bob and Erica at their home in Anacortes,
(Painting: Flounder Bay Boat & Lumber Supplies).*

Log Patrol

By Erica Pickett

It didn't sound hard, and it was to be done on salt water, so that made the project more interesting right from the start. I don't remember who had this bright idea, but it took on a life of its own and pretty soon all of us were looking forward to going log patrolling.

Log patrol. If it sounds like some kind of forest round-up, well, that's about what it is. Most of the logs around Puget Sound were taken to the mills by water, and naturally a few of them escaped the great log rafts and washed up on the beaches. That's where the log patrol came in.

The state claims any saleable logs on the beach as its own, but somehow the logs had to be brought to market in order for the state to realize any money from them. So the state sold a certain number of log patrol licenses, giving each boat a set area to cover. When a patrol boat had amassed 50,000 board feet of logs, the state would hold an auction, sell the logs, and send the patrolman a check for some fraction of the total collected.

It was to work like this: Don Erdman had the 50' tugboat Hioma (ex-Parthia) and needed something to keep her busy. Bob and I had a large shop that could handle whatever construction and repair the undertaking might require, and John Black had the legal expertise and the money to set up a corporation for us and secure the log patrol permit from the state.

It sounded like the perfect trio, the threesome made for the task, the tripod to hold up our part of the world. We were ready.

John was among the most enthusiastic. Whether this was from complete ignorance of the situation or from some misguided sense of adventure, I couldn't say. We had built some marina floats and a small barge with him in the recent past, and I guess this just looked like the logical extension of that sort of enterprise.

John Black has a happy countenance and a can-do attitude. He would not strike you as athletic, yet he is tremendously strong and able. He is the only son of one part of what is a huge family of influential and powerful people around the northwest. His Uncle Renton had a fair-sized city named for him, one his uncles ran the great cedar mill that used to turn out shingles just north of the Ballard Bridge, and his grandfather had been the sea captain who brought many of the animals back to begin the menagerie at the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle.

John is from a family that is accustomed to doing things on a grand scale. He is a graduate of the Lakeside School and has a degree in economic geography, yet these hands-on projects were what he really enjoyed.

Don always reminded me of the guy you would expect to find driving the combine. He was tall, fair-haired, lanky, slope-shouldered, and had the prominent adam's apple of the country boy. He was inventive and clever, and could keep things running under the most improbable conditions. He would be the sort of person who would bring in the entire wheat crop in the midst of a wildfire. He worked for Culbertson Marine Construction on a pile-driving and towboating operation and expected to be able to control large objects like barges in the midst of bad weather and changing tides.

Don had never learned that there was any utility at all in subtlety. If you wanted something done, you had to step right up and do it or holler at someone else to do it.

And what about us? Well, Bob and I had bought the old Schwartz Iron Works building in Anacortes in 1972, and we were still looking for ways to support this investment more comfortably along about this time in the spring of 1974. Log patrolling looked interesting and had the potential for income. We had been involved with John on a couple of other projects, and had found them interesting if not terribly remunerative. Still, this had the look of opportunity.

An outsider might have thought that Bob's background as a clinical chemist would not be all that handy in this environment, but he had served a stint as an auto mechanic and really enjoyed solving problems. He had grown up in St. Petersburg, Florida, had owned his own boat in high school, had done a lot of sailing on the Sound and knew the water. He was strong and not accustomed to giving up just because things became strange, unfamiliar or dangerous.

The guys decided that we lacked a proper "booming ground," a place to make up the log boom and hold it at anchor. It was going to take a while to get 50,000 board feet of logs assembled, and Fidalgo Bay was given to making up pretty good and deconstructing the booms. All we needed was a little stretch of quiet water where we could sink a few anchors.

John did the research at the state level and discovered an old booming ground out at West Sound on Orcas Island. He arranged a legal lease and we set about designing and building four anchors for the corners of the boom.

Actually, Don designed the anchors. He knew from past experience that there was only one way to build them. We rounded up four old 55-gallon drums. Don cut the tops out with the only method known to work: standing on the head of the drum, he chopped the drumhead out with a dull axe kept expressly for this purpose. Then he blasted some holes in the sides of the drums with a torch so that he could stick water pipes through the sides. Finally, at Don's direction, we loaded the whole works, four deheaded drums with pipes running through them, into the back of Don's $\frac{3}{4}$ ton pick-up truck.

Back then, Concrete Nor'West was located at the end of O Avenue at Curtis Wharf in Anacortes, right on the Channel, and only a block from our shop, so Don didn't have far to drive. Good thing, too, because a drum full of concrete must weigh about 850 pounds, and the four of them together fairly flattened all of the tires on Don's pick-up. He managed to crawl up the street with all of those flat tires, and we lifted the bed of the truck with a jack and took the load off the tires with jackstands until we could figure out what to do. Naturally, Don was not at a loss.

Don owned, in his inventory of amazing equipment, a one-ton flatbed truck with a small shearlegs mounted on it. It looked like a dirt farmer's conception of a tall tow truck. Don had the rest of this plan all figured: he would borrow a landing craft and then he would bring this flatbed into town and take the anchors one at a time off the pick-up and sling them onto the landing craft which would tie up at the end of the street. Perfect!

He decided to bring the flatbed closer to the work before he really needed it, and I soon understood why. One Saturday Don showed up with this thing, about a 1949 Chev, coming around the corner of Third and O while he did something in the cab of the truck that looked an awful lot like pumping the bilge. The vehicle careened to a stop in front of the shop and I went out to investigate.

When I asked the question, Don explained the thing that looked like a bright red gas can for an outboard motor on the floor beside him. Because the master brake cylinder on the venerable Chevy was defunct, he was using this gas can with hand pump on the top in the cab of the truck. The can was filled with brake fluid, and, if Don pumped fast enough, the truck would stop.

This was the machine that was to load these 850-pound, nasty looking, concrete-filled, pipe-poking anchors onto the deck of a borrowed landing craft. If I had entirely understood the situation, I would have turned pale and run. As it was, I had complete faith in the judgment and abilities of these wonderful men around me, and just looked forward to the next episode of the Shackleton Corporation Afloat.

The tide was right to do the anchor loading after work. Thinking about it now, maybe no one would ask permission to use the dock or the street end or whatever, and that is the real reason we did it after hours. At any rate, the tide was right at that time of day. The landing craft was not one of those indestructible military affairs, but rather a local product made of fiberglass by a company long gone called Raider Marine. They were built to handle a pick-up truck, anyhow, so we weren't worried about the boat's capacity.

Earlier in the day, Don had been inspecting the steel cable that his flatbed was rigged with to check for bad spots or hockles in the cable. I noticed with some alarm that the eyesplice that held all of this wire to the

shearlegs was done with only one tuck on two out of three strands. Don explained to me that he had never seen one fail. One tuck is quite enough. Since Don was the one who had spent several years on a bucking barge, and I had never been aboard, I believed him.

The pier at the end of O Avenue was about 12 feet above the water. There were long moments of hearts in mouths as Don suspended each potentially lethal, pipe-pierced barrel over the little landing craft. He carefully operated the brake lever on the winch drum and gently set each of the concrete-filled drums onto the deck. By golly. We had all four drums aboard, the landing craft still floated more or less on her lines, and we were ready to head for West Sound.

It was an easy ride out to Mitchell Bay and the anchors with their buoys went into the water without a hitch. Why no one went into the bay and why the landing craft was returned to its owner entirely unpierced by all those poky pipes is still beyond me.

The next essential piece of equipment we needed to build for our new enterprise was a powered raft or barge of some kind to ferry the tow line and the crew to the beach to tie onto these valuable logs. Bob and I gathered together the materials to build this little craft, and the partners spent several days nailing a plywood deck and bottom onto the three 4x12 fir stringers to produce a five-foot by about fourteen-foot barge.

Don welded up a tow bit from some pipe we rounded up, we treated all the wood with green cuprinol and bedded all the cleats and bits in that black tarry goo that the roofers use to patch things (known as bear sh*t by the local boatbuilders), then painted the whole works white with blue trim. Anacortes Marine up the street sold us a 1955 15-hp Evinrude to power the little barge.

We called this little craft the Swifter after the cross logs that the Canadians use on the tops of their log booms to make them more seaworthy. The name had a fine, seagoing history, and besides, we thought "Swifter" had the ring of efficiency about it.

While we were finishing up the barge, John, with his business background, had been busy making sure that we were legally incorporated, and that the proper permit had been purchased from the state. I will never forget our first "corporate meeting." We sat in a circle in front of the stove in the front room of our workshop, John and Don occupying the two things in the place which looked the most like chairs, Bob and I sitting on some little foam cushions tacked to plywood circles which just fit on top of five gallon paint cans. These makeshift stools had the virtue of keeping us up off the floor, but we did nevertheless sit pretty darn close to the ground.

John had cooked up a regulation black hardbound minute book from somewhere, and called the meeting to order. We made a few decisions, John noted them in the book, then we all signed that we agreed with what had been decided, and that we had all really been in attendance. He even had one of those metal embossing stamps that said "Shackleton Corporation" and embossed the minutes with it. John liked to do the legal things with a flourish. He would go on to earn his law degree.

Don was elected Vice-President. You have to understand that the only corporations he had ever been familiar with were on a par with General Motors and Westinghouse. All of a sudden he was a corporate officer, too. Don was just amazed. Impressed, too. In just a few short weeks he had been promoted from pile buck to Corporate Vice President. Nothing we could say would persuade him that his life was not fundamentally changed.

Launch day for the Swifter found the little barge resting on the rough planks which made up the bed of an old trailer from Don's equipment inventory. Like a lot of Don's equipment, this very usable trailer had the look of something which might have seen duty in the Civil War. Don towed the trailer behind his boom truck so that we would have a way to lift and launch. The old boom was not altogether comfortable about the weight of the load, but did the lift. It was on the way down that things got a little exciting as the brake didn't really want to hold and the launch went, shall we say, quicker than expected.

Don gathered up the essentials for our patrolling operation: a big single-bitted axe, boom chains, boom logs, a tow line and lots of heavy line and chain. Boom logs had to be a good foot and a half in diameter and were generally hemlock because that was a lower priced log at the mills. The boom sticks, as they were also

called, had about a three-inch diameter hole bored through the log at each end so that the toggle of the boom chain could be dropped through and two logs hooked together. All of this gear was necessary and all of it was heavy. We hauled it down the dock to the old Hioma and loaded it aboard.

We decided to try to move our first log off the beach at the foot of Fifth Street on the east side of Cap Sante. Don wanted to show off the abilities of his dear old Hioma, so naturally he told the guys to set the chain choker around the biggest, oldest log on the beach. Bob, standing six feet tall, could just about see over the top of the log. He and John had to dig quite a hole under it just to get the chain around it. They brought the tow line out to a big iron hook that was spliced into the end of a one-inch nylon line at the stern of the Hioma. The other end of the expensive hunk of Gold Line, as the nylon was called, was bent around the tow bitt.

The signal came to begin the pull, and the old Hioma took the bit in her teeth and began to strain. She pulled and she pulled, and developed a heck of a port list as a result of all this torque going nowhere. She was digging quite a hole in the water, but the log was not even twitching. Finally Don gave the boat all the throttle there was and kind of lunged against the line. The tow line snapped, sending the iron hook from the stern rail against the back bulkhead of the cabin with a sound like a gunshot and leaving a frightening imprint there in the fir siding on the house. The towboat fairly leapt out of the water and tried to take off toward the refinery dock, glad to be free of her burden.

Don, who had been inside the boat steering, came out on deck to survey the damage. The print of the hook in the bulkhead was impressive, though no less so than the condition of his prized hunk of big nylon Gold Line: it had gotten so hot during all the pulling that the fibers had fused together like a rod. Don said he could have driven it into the ground like a steel fence post.

Okay, so our expertise did not lie in estimating the horsepower required to move a given log. We didn't move that one, but there were lots of smaller logs on the beaches; really, most of them were smaller. The guys had started out with a big one just to test the power of the old Hioma. Now we knew that there would be some logs she just wouldn't pull.

The fellows had heard that the beaches near Keystone Harbor down on Whidbey Island were loaded with logs. We went down by car one day to take a look and decided to spend a few days on a maritime round-up. Don bought all the provisions for the trip to make sure that they included his favorite dish, corned beef hash topped with canned peaches.

John really should have asked permission of the ship's captain to bring along his golden retriever, Protein. The name came from one of John's business plans to extract protein from pea leaves, a plentiful by-product of the huge pea crop in Skagit Valley at the time. Protein was of that branch of the retriever family which specializes in action and stamina. He wasn't one of those dogs to spend much time at his master's feet, but rather the type to wear out the lawn in a weekend.

It wasn't that Don didn't like dogs, either. It was just that the Hioma did not present much territory for a dog to patrol. On his first day on the boat Protein discovered the shaggy carpet of mooring line flaked down on deck. It seemed to be the only thing aboard the tug that was even remotely like grass, so Protein did his business on it as he would do on the lawn. Don was absolutely livid at the picture of this great fudgy dog turd on his handsome mooring line and he pitched the dog into the drink with a great shout. Thereafter, Protein was banished to the waters and the beaches whenever possible.

Things at Whidbey were going along pretty well. There certainly were lots of logs and only a few curious property owners who thought they owned them. One guy did call the sheriff on the log patrol men for stealing his logs and was informed by the lawman that he ought to be quiet or the law would require recompense for all the state's logs made into this property owner's bulkhead.

Bob and John took the chain and the shovel into the beach on the Swifter, then brought the tow line out to the iron hook at the stern of the Hioma. All kept well clear of the tightening line as Don towed the log into the water and added it to the raft while the guys wrapped the chain around the next log. Pretty soon they had enough logs to begin making up the boom.

Now Keystone Harbor is the site of the ferry landing and the little embayment there is just barely larger than the ferry itself. If the ferry were to turn sideways at low tide there wouldn't be but a foot or two of water under her ends. At really low tide the boat doesn't even run. Ferry skippers tend to regard all the water in the harbor as their very own, even though there was, at the time, a small boat launch ramp to the south inside the little bay and enough water to anchor a couple of smallish craft nearby.

The fellows determined that the ferry system had not leased the entire harbor, just the ferry channel, and decided to set a buoy to anchor up the boom so that it would be out of the strong tides outside. They methodically added logs to the boom until they figured they had close to the 50,000 board feet required by the state to hold the auction.

The fair tide which would carry the boom around the point and towards Anacortes began running at about six in the evening. The guys figured it would take an hour or so to get everything squared away to leave, and began work at about five. What with one thing and another, and work on the water having so much motion about it, the work took longer. John had appointments in Seattle and left Bob and Don to bring the boom home.

Don was in a hurry to leave and to catch the tide and didn't notice the ferry bearing down on the entrance to the harbor as he turned the Hioma with log boom in tow out of the harbor. Tangling with any of the Washington State Ferries and their rights-of-way is among the known ways to find oneself before a Coast Guard hearing, and Don was desperate to avoid any confrontation. He thought he had time to get out of the way, and he was mostly right. The Hioma and her boom escaped all but a stern tongue lashing on the radio by the ferry captain and the two vessels escaped any collision. Still, it was a portent of things to come.

By now the tide had nearly turned and the wind would soon be running against it. The old Hioma turned her nose for home and began to pull. As the tide changed the water came roaring around Admiralty Head, the chop built up and soon the logs were trying to hop out of the boom. In flatter water the big bunch of logs just floats inside this log corral made up of boom logs. The boom chains are iron chains about eight feet long with links the size of large elongated doughnuts. There is a ring which would easily go around a round melon at one end of the chain, and a ten-inch toggle at the other end which is run through the holes in the end of the boom logs then through the ring to fasten the two logs together something like a button in a buttonhole. A couple of the toggles had worked out of the rings and the corral gate had opened. Logs were headed home to the beach.

Bob rode out on the Swifter with the idea of reconnecting the boom chains which had come apart at the aft corners of the boom. Good idea, but impossible to effect in the four-foot square chop that surrounded the little Swifter. The next best thing was to set what is called a "log dog" into each log and tie all the logs to each other, and that is what Bob did. Log dogs look like heavy steel arrowheads about eight inches long with an open eye in the middle. They are designed to be hammered into the log like a nail with the eye standing up to receive a line or rope. We had quite a pile of these log dogs, each with a hunk of line spliced to the eye.

So, along about midnight the boom was together enough to let Bob and Don continue on their trip north to Anacortes. Bob spent the night on the Swifter, herding strays. By now the tide was flooding pretty good, the water was far from smooth and the little Hioma arrived in Anacortes with just a few of the logs she had started with.

Don managed to run across a great bundle of alder logs floating in the channel on the way in, tied on to them and towed them into Murphy's Marina. Alder tends to want to sink after a while so the bundle was secured close to shore near Murphy's crane. Then Don arranged a sale to the Scott Paper mill and contracted with one of his logging buddies to haul the logs to the mill.

All of us had put time and money in to this operation but Don had contributed the most in the way of equipment and fuel. I think in the end he wound up with the Swifter and the motor for some partial return on his investment. And he collected a little money from the alder bundle. But that was the only "bundle" involved in this Shackleton adventure.



Left to right: Don Erdman, Bob Pickett and John Black. In the background is a seine skiff headed back to the water from the Fisherman's Packing Corporation down the street. Don's orange pickup truck is in the background behind John. The three guys are considering how best to finish off the Swifter, our little outboard-powered barge, sitting upside down on Don's trailer.

Photo by Erica Pickett.



First ride on the Swifter in the boat haven at Cap Sante. Don steers while John assesses the stability of our little craft.

Photo by Erica Pickett.



Don was very pleased to be official! Photo by Erica Pickett.

Loading the borrowed boat with four anchors for the booming ground at Curtis Wharf. The truck is at the end of O Avenue,

Photo by Erica Pickett.



Getting the logs rafted up in the log boom. Note the dog on the Swifter.

Photo by Erica Pickett.