Harbor Lights Festival Set for Dec. 19
3rd Year for KMM Sponsored Event

The museum is again gearing up for this year’s Harbor Lights Festival, which lights up the harbor with holiday lights on Saturday, December 19, from 5-9 p.m.

For the past two years the event, sponsored by Kodiak Maritime Museum, has drawn hundreds of people into the harbor to admire lights strung through the rigging and around the hulls of Kodiak’s commercial, sport, and personal boat fleets.

A “Vote Your Boat,” contest is also part of the festival, with gift certificates from Sutliff’s awarded to the top three decorated boats. Last year almost five hundred votes were cast for 34 boats. The Gallant Girl was the contest winner.

The event was begun in 2013 to help residents and visitors appreciate the importance of Kodiak’s commercial fishing fleet to the economy and culture of the island, but inspiration for the festival sprang from a Christmas boat parade in the 1990’s and early 2000’s. The parade featured decorated vessels steaming through the Near Island Channel in December. The boat parade was often canceled due to foul weather.

The harbor-bound Festival makes it easier for boat owners and crews to participate by keeping their decorated boats tied to the dock. This also encourages residents and visitors to walk the harbor floats with family and friends, to see the lights.

Last year hundreds of people strolled though the harbor on the evening of December 20th, the winter solstice. KMM expects a similar crowd this year.

As part of the event the museum will host an open house on December 19 at the Harbor Convention Center, overlooking the harbor. Light refreshments will be served, and live holiday music will be provided by the St. Innocent’s Academy Choir and the Girl Scouts.

Support for this year’s event comes from Sutliff’s Hardware, Cost Savers, Harborside Coffee, and a $900 community development grant from the City of Kodiak.

Thelma C Site Gets Geotech Survey

In early December, KMM contracted with Mill Bay Drilling and Brechan Inc., to drill test bores and dig shallow excavations at the Thelma C Exhibit site on the harbor spit to determine the geologic makeup of the area. The work was overseen by PND Engineering, as part of their engineering and design work on the project.

The exhibit will eventually showcase the Thelma C, a historic 36 foot fishing boat, mounted on a platform on the harbor spit. The museum hopes to begin construction of the exhibit next spring, with Brechan Inc. as the general contractor.

The harbor spit was constructed in stages during the 1970s on top of a reef and two breakwaters, the first constructed in 1958, and the second in 1964, after the earthquake and tsunami. The test holes drilled by Mill Bay Drilling indicate that the area of the spit underneath what will become the Thelma C Exhibit is made up of large armor rock, similar to the rock used to construct the outer breakwater on the south side of the harbor. For more on the Thelma C Project, see page 3.
As I write this, the December sun is shining on Kodiak’s harbor and the foul weather of the past few days has gone away. It’s a beautiful day on the waterfront, and maybe even unseasonably warm, at least compared to my memory of Decembers past.

The harbor is busy with pot cod boats, longliners and draggers, as the cod season ends and fishermen unload their last trips of the season, put away their gear and clean up their boats for the last time this year.

In early December in the 1970s, rather than codfish, the processing plants along Shelikof St. would have been running king crab from a special “eight inch season,” after the seven inch king crab quota had been caught. The weather was often foul and eight inch crabs were harder to find than seven inch crabs, but if things went well there was a nice paycheck just before Christmas, and a holiday home pack.

The eight inch season is ancient history now, but a certain cast in the afternoon light elicits memories of December days forty years ago—a northwest wind blowing crab cooker steam into Shelikof Street, from New Northern Processors next to the breakwater, and the Roxanne cannery, and Ursin Seafoods, the Pacific Pearl plant, B&B Fisheries, King Crab Inc., and APS.

Unloading to those plants then were boats that fish here still: the Irene H, the Icelander, the Melanie, the Ruff and Reddy; and boats long sunk or burned or grounded: the Rosemary, the Pacific Pride, the Epic, and the Lin J, crewed by young men and women gone grey now, the ones who lived, and, when you start going through the names, by a terrible number of people who never came home, and remain, somewhere, forever young.

Remember them in this holiday season, the people we lost to the sea, and be thankful for their once bright presence in our lives, and for the living the sea has given us, and for the friends and families who are with us now.

-Toby Sullivan, Executive Director

Andy Joca- Our Newest Board Member

Andy Joca, 39 is KMM’s newest board member, after coming joining the crew in April.

Andy grew up in Middleburg, a small town outside of Jacksonville, Florida. “My backyard was a vast swamp,” he says. “I spent many hours and days in the wilderness, hunting, fishing and camping.”

He joined the Coast Guard in 1994 “to serve my country, travel and work on or near the ocean,” and in 1998 earned a degree in civil engineering at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut. He received his M.S. in Project Management at George Washington University and is a licensed Professional Engineer.

Andy, his wife Katie, and their two girls, Molly and Amelia, arrived on Kodiak in the summer of 2013. He presently serves as the facilities engineer for the Kodiak Coast Guard Base.

Andy also served two 3-week stints as the Coast Guard’s liaison to the North Slope during Operation Arctic Shield, in August and September of 2014 and in June and July 2015.

Andy is a passionate waterman, and enjoys surfing, spearfishing and fishing here in Kodiak. “I love Kodiak, and am very happy for the opportunity to help preserve part of its interesting and unique maritime history by being on the board of the maritime museum.”

With his engineering and project management background, Andy is a great source of valuable insights into the process of moving the Thelma C Project forward.

His wife Katie and their two girls will also be manning a cookie table at the Harbor Lights Festival and singing Christmas carols there, along with the rest of the Kodiak Girl Scout troop.

Do you have old photos of Alaskan fishing boats, fishermen, or canneries? We can scan them for posterity and help others see the way things once were. Contact the museum at 486-0384, or President Wallace Fields at wfields@gci.net, or 486-8370.

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City of Kodiak Approves Harbor Lease for Thelma C Exhibit Site

At its December 10th monthly meeting, the Kodiak City Council approved the first reading of a resolution to approve a long term lease agreement between the City and Kodiak Maritime Museum for the Thelma C Exhibit site.

The 7,200 square foot site, adjacent to Kodiak’s small boat harbor, lies within a six sided plot of steeply sloped land on the Harbor Spit, between the sidewalk and the mean high water mark, and between Oscar’s dock and the Threshold Recycling drop-off box.

KMM has been working with the City for some time to obtain the lease, which will give the museum site control of the parcel. Legal control of the site is necessary for the museum to perform work on the site and secure funding to finish the project.

The lease term is for 20 years, with two five-year extensions possible. KMM will pay an annual lease fee of $10 per year, and be responsible for any costs associated with the exhibit, including maintenance, utilities and insurance.

The exhibit site parcel is on preciously unplatted land, requiring a survey which was donated to KMM by Jim Purdy of Kodiak Land Surveying in 2014.

A second reading of the resolution approving the lease will be read at the City Council’s next meeting in February, and if approved, a thirty day waiting period will follow before the lease takes effect.

KMM Website Upgrade Funded by Grant Awards

Kodiak Lions Club recently awarded a grant of $300 to KMM for an upgrade of the museum’s website. This grant will augment a previous grant of $1,000 from American Seafoods for the project. Total cost of the upgrade will be $1,800.

The redesign work will be done by web services company Yellow Interactive, with input from KMM staff and board members. Yellow Interactive designed the KMM website in 2006 and has maintained it since then.

Because KMM is a “museum without walls,” without an exhibit space of our own, it relies heavily on its website to distribute information about programs and events. The site receives hundreds of visits each month.

While the website functions adequately for most users, certain out of date components limit its appearance and functionality on mobile devices, which are increasingly how people access the web. And while content has been steadily added to the website over the years, the website’s architecture has not accommodated additional content in an organized way, which has caused redundancy and a lack of coherency in some parts of the site.

To address these issues, Yellow Interactive will upgrade the website’s coding to utilize current HTML and CSS technologies, which are supported by all major desktop and mobile browsers. They will also reformat the website information to automatically fit the user’s device, allowing content to be viewed without having to zoom, and improving page loading times. Decorative text in the website will also be redesigned and coding for images will be upgraded to allow for loaded with a “lightbox,” technique, rather than the current pop-up windows. All of this will allow for faster load times and a smoother viewer experience.

Yellow Interactive will also work with museum staff to eliminate out of date content and improve the current site architecture, which should provide a more seamless, intuitive and enjoyable visitor experience. The upgrade would also provide a template for the addition of future content in an organized way.
Whaling for NASA on the *Tom and Al*

Launched as the *Ragnhild* in 1900, the *Tom and Al* was renamed after themselves by Thomas J. King and Albert L. Winge when they purchased it some time after 1910. The men also owned the King and Winge Shipbuilding Company in West Seattle which built the more famous *King and Winge* in 1914, making the two vessels shirt tail relatives, if not exactly sister ships.

The *Tom and Al* sailed as a halibut schooner for decades, manned by dory men who rowed away from the ship each morning to fish their longline skates.

Around 1960 the vessel was acquired by Tom and Eben Parker, a pair of colorful and imaginative siblings from the Oregon coast. Looking for a way to make the boat pay for itself, they contracted to deliver a very special kind of sea creature to the Bio Products processing plant on the Columbia River in Astoria. To get the venture going, Bio Products purchased a 90 mm harpoon gun from a Norwegian outfit, and gave it to Frank and Eben to mount on the *Tom and Al*’s foredeck. They set to sea looking for sperm whales.

In their later years the brothers would regale young fishermen in Kodiak’s watering holes with whaling stories, not all of them suitable for a family newsletter. Their listeners, products of the 1970s anti-whaling enlightenment, were aghast at the killing of these sentient creatures, but as fishermen themselves, could not help their vicarious fascination at the thought of hunting the Leviathan, the ultimate fishery.

The thing to remember from where we sit now is that in 1961, when the Parkers went after whales, it was perfectly legal and socially acceptable to do so in the United States. In fact, school groups came to gawk at the dead whales laid out on the dock, and the Bio Products manager invited people over for a whale meat barbecue.

According to Frank Parker’s son, Frank Parker Jr., Bio Products sold the whale meat to Oregon mink farmers to feed their fur bearing livestock, and the whale oil to NASA, which had just sent the first American into space. While the notion of NASA buying whale oil seems bizarre now, in the context of the times, and given the exotic nature of the oil, it made sense.

Once rendered down, whale oil burns with a clear white light, an extremely valuable property before electricity, and which made the fortunes of several New England seafaring towns until cheaper kerosene became widely available after the Civil War. But whale oil also maintains its viscosity in an extremely wide range of temperatures and pressures, a characteristic which made it useful for all kinds of mechanical applications well into the 20th century. In 1961 that special viscosity also made it invaluable for machinery headed into near earth orbit, where things get very hot in direct sunlight and very cold in shadow, and where the near vacuum of space causes most petroleum and vegetable based lubricants to boil into vapor.

These days, NASA denies using whale oil in its spacecraft, and certainly using any part of a whale was illegal in the United States after the 1971 Marine Mammal Protection Act became law. However, equally suitable synthetic lubricants didn’t come into use until the mid-1960s, and like other high technology items of the post war years, including watches and transmissions, it seems probable that whale oil lubricated some of the hardware NASA sent up in those early space flight years. It is likely that the oil was used by subcontractors rather than NASA directly, and probably without much discussion, given the general lack of empathy for whales at the time. Still, a lively online debate endures on this topic, easily accessible to the curious Google searcher.

For the Parker brothers however, it was economics rather than regard for cetaceans which ended the *Tom and Al*’s whaling days. NASA, or their suppliers, began using synthetic lubricants and stopped buying whale oil, which made Bio Products drop its ex-vessel price for whales, which made whaling un-profitable on the *Tom and Al*.

Frank and Eben went on to other fisheries, including Alaskan pink shrimp, and fished the boat until it sank off the Barren Islands on February 2, 1980, hauling a load of Kodiak shrimp to Homer.

As part of Kodiak Maritime Museum’s efforts to expand its reach and audience, KMM Executive Director Toby Sullivan attended the Museums Alaska/Alaska Historical Society Annual Conference in Cordova in October. Toby and KMM Board President Wallace Fields also represented KMM at Pacific Marine Expo in Seattle in November.

At the MA/AHS conference, Toby presented a paper on the 1981 Seattle cannery worker murders, which involved young Filipino labor activists who had worked in the Alaskan salmon canning industry in the 1970s. The paper was presented as part of a panel centered on Alaska’s fishing history. An article about the murders also appeared in KMM’s Spring 2015 newsletter.

The Cordova history and museums conference was also notable for being held in the brand new Cordova Center, a multi-use facility in downtown Cordova which combines a theater, meeting rooms and a museum under one roof.

In November, Board President Wallace Fields joined Toby and Alaska Historical Society President Anjuli Grantham in manning a booth at Pacific Marine Expo in Seattle. “Fish Expo,” as it’s more familiarly called, brings suppliers, processors, fishermen, and various regulatory agencies and non-profits together each year in a trade show format at Century Link Field Event Center.

The expo this year had over a hundred exhibitor booths spread across the convention floor, with various educational forums held throughout the three day expo.

This was the first year KMM had a presence at Fish Expo, but the response from the crowd was overwhelmingly positive. Hundreds of people stopped by the booth to ask questions, share stories, and sign up as members.

The museum’s board and staff planned the trip as a way to reach out to fishermen and others in the Pacific Northwest with an interest in Alaska’s maritime history, and to raise awareness of KMM and its mission “to recognize, preserve, and present Kodiak’s maritime heritage.” With Kodiak’s long connection with the Pacific Northwest through its fishing fleet and processing industry, the KMM booth was a lively corner of the Expo for three days.

Anjuli Grantham was on hand in the booth to promote the Alaska Historical Society’s “Alaska Cannery Initiative,” which is an effort to document the history of Alaska’s salmon canneries through the preservation of photographs, cannery records, and artifacts. With hundreds of canneries along Alaska’s coastline, many of them abandoned and derelict, the initiative hopes to raise awareness of the significance of the Alaska salmon industry to Alaska’s history, and preserve physical pieces of that past. For more info on this, check out their website: http://alaskahistoricalsociety.org/about-ahs/alaska-historic-canneries-initiative/

Following the close of Expo, KMM collaborated with Northwest Seaport and the historic Puget Sound steamer Virginia V to present “Fisher Poets on Lake Union,” on Friday, November 20. Ten artists took command of the Virginia V saloon deck to present stories, poems and songs about the lives and culture of fishermen to a crowd of seventy five.

A similar event during Pacific Marine Expo itself drew an appreciative crowd off the floor of the expo to an a presentation stage.

The original annual Fisher Poets Gathering is held each February in Astoria, Oregon, and the 19th edition of it will hit various stages in Astoria Friday, February 26, and go through that weekend. Their
KMM recently came across these images of Uganik Bay in the 1930s, and staff and board members have been trying to find out more about them. The photos were found in a box in a house in Anchorage a few years ago, and are part of the permanent collection of the Anchorage Museum of History and Art.

Some of the images are of identifiable—the Deep Sea was a well-known fish trap and setnet site tender in the late 1930s and 1940s, which was lost in Cook Inlet by the Army in 1942. The presence of the Deep Sea in the collection dates the collection before November 1942, when the vessel sank.

Note that the Deep Sea seen here is not to be confused with the Deep Sea which was built in 1947, and which wrecked in Whale Pass in August 1976, with the loss of all eight people on board, including three young women and three children, all members of a Uganik beach seining family.

We’ve also been able to identify the docks and buildings in the images as part of the Uganik Fisheries Company plant in the Northeast Arm of Uganik Bay, otherwise known as the “Herring Plant.” That plant operated until the early 1950s and is now abandoned, with collapsed buildings and derelict docks, and its interesting to see it here as the lively and functioning facility it once was.

Other details remain a mystery. Who are the men in these photographs? Are the two bald men brothers? Who is the young man with the halibut? Where is the beach, presumably somewhere in Uganik Bay, with the man sitting on a rock, and which fish trap is that on the horizon behind him? And who was Manuel, and where was his cabin, with the sign on it saying “Cottage by the sea. Prop. Manuel?”

If you can tell us more about these images, please get in touch with us here at the museum.
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