

Sitka Maritime Heritage Society

Alaska Day Boat Cruise with SMHS
Our first Fall Fundraiser~ Learn about WWII in Sitka.
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AK Day Boat Cruise
Get the details on our first fall fundraiser!
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SMHS New Director!
Welcome Ashia Lane, our new Executive Director.
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Profile: A Sitka Family's Maritime Legacy.
Richard Huff was not only a self-taught boatbuilder and Sitka fisherman, he is also related to a SMHS staff member! Read about the boats and the connection on
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SSOAR Paddle Race!



This past August saw the 6th Annual Ocean Adventure Race. Here are the results!
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Membership Time
We are moving to annual memberships~ Here's your chance to Give to SMHS
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Tool Donation to SMHS
SMHS received a perfectly preserved boat construction tool this year. Read about the generous gift and see a photo!
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The Boats of Sheldon Jackson College

by Rebecca Poulson

Sheldon Jackson College began as a Presbyterian mission school in 1878, later becoming a high school, then college, which closed in 2007. Throughout most of this history, boats and boatbuilding played a large part.

Boatbuilding:

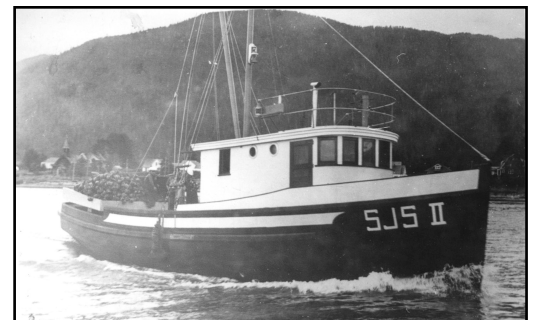
By 1886 the school had a boat shop, but none of the school's early carpentry instructors seems to have been a boatbuilder. Students did build a 14-foot rowboat for the Alaska Pavilion at

the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904, but in 1910 some instructors built a launch, that was out of the water again in less than a year, where it stayed for another year. Boatbuilding was part of the program, but not taught by a specialist boatbuilder until Peter Simpson came on board in 1939.

By 1906 or 1907 some graduates of the school set up a commercial boatbuilding shop at the Cottages (a model community for school graduates, on Kelly and Metlakatla Streets), but these men probably did not learn their craft at the school.

The "Grandfather of Sitka Boatbuilding," Peter Simpson, was a steam engineer and founder of the Alaska Native Brotherhood. At his

boat shop at the Cottages, where Merrill Rock is today, he and his crew of Sheldon Jackson alumni, who included George Howard, built dozens of small seiners, trollers, rowboats and utility boats, from 1906 through the 1920s.



SJS II. Image from Sheldon Jackson Collection

Then, in 1936, the relationship between the boatbuilding operation

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Construction of Princeton-Hall, Howard bros. shop, Katlian St. Image from Alaska State Library

and the school moved to a whole new level, when Peter Simpson proposed building a seiner for the Sheldon Jackson School. This boat would be used to generate income, as well as for transporting students.

According to school superintendent Les Yaw, in his book *Sixty Years in Sitka*, the boat would have been a failure as far as generating income were it not for another remarkable graduate, Andrew Hope. Andrew Hope was a boatbuilder and fisherman, and a nephew of Peter Simpson through their wives. He was a prominent Native leader in the ANB, as well as the Alaska Legislature.

After the third unsuccessful season, ending with damage to the hull, Andrew Hope repaired the boat and went fall fishing to Excursion Inlet. Not only did it bring in money, but he donated the work he'd done to repair the boat. He fished the boat several more seasons. On one fall fishing run, he tapped student Herb Didrickson as crew.

Besides taking students as crew, Hope, school president Les Yaw, and others took older boys out on the boats hunting for venison for the school. Simpson and Hope had students assisting with the sawmill



The Princeton-Hall with SJ Choir, 1948. Image from The Seattle Times

operation, and Hope led students in the rebuild of the sawmill building after it burned down in 1941. Andrew Hope also supervised the construction of the 65-foot *Princeton-Hall*, launched just days before Pearl Harbor in December 1941. Then, after the *SJS* and the *Princeton-Hall* were taken by the Navy at the outbreak of WWII, Hope oversaw construction of the seiner *SJS II*, launched in 1943. Much of the wood was sawn at the SJ sawmill.

Boys worked half days on those boats, doing everything from wood work and shaft work to fabricating railings. They worked under school instructors, the school engineer, and Hope and other boatbuilders like George Howard (Hope's brother-in-law, and son of the George Howard who started out with Simpson) and Herman Kitka.

Students in the 1940s and 50s worked half days, and spent half days on their school work. For girls this meant the laundry, housekeeping, or kitchen duties; but for boys, it could mean working alongside and being mentored by the likes of Peter Simpson and Andrew Hope, and even school president Les Yaw. It meant participating in meaningful and exciting projects like building boats, hunting, and commercial fishing.



The Anna Jackman, 1958. Image from Discovery Voyages.

Both boats were well built. As former skipper, Bill Zeiger, recalled in 2001, they were very stout boats, and took any weather – which was not the case for the crew! Building these boats was a great source of pride for all involved.

The Boats:

The boats themselves were a big part of life for students at the school.

Until 1972 the school was run by the Presbyterian Board of National Missions, so school boats were mission boats. The Board of Missions sponsored a total of nine boats for carrying out mission work, the first commissioned in 1909, the last sold in 1984. These as well as a few private boats comprised the “Presbyterian Navy.”

In 2001 former chaplain and skipper Bill Zeiger recalled the significance of those mission boats: in those days many people lived outside of towns. The boats, like the *Princeton-Hall*, would visit logging camps, cannery watchmen, Coast Guard stations, homesteaders, and villages. Besides delivering the Gospel – in the form of Sunday school and worship services – the missionaries would also “cut hair, tune guitars, and show movies.”

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WWII sailors view Sitka from their visiting vessel tied up at the US Navy dock on Japonski Island.

Watch the USCG Drills
from the Water!

Learn about Sitka's WWII
History

Tour the Waters of
Sitka Sound &
Japonski Island

Tickets \$45 per person
Available at Old Harbor Books

Depart Crescent Harbor at 3pm,
(Load up at 2:45pm)
Return at 5:30pm

No-Host Bar Available

Snacks Provided by the Larkspur Café

Boat Services Provided by
Allen Marine, Inc.

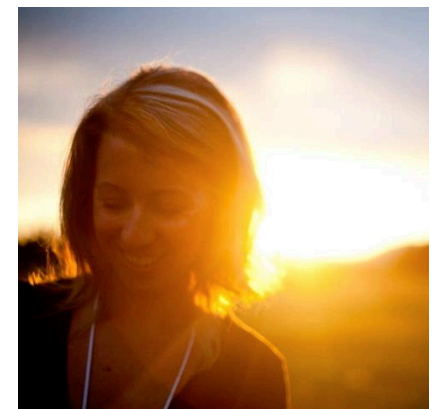
SITKA MARITIME HERITAGE SOCIETY ALASKA DAY BOAT CRUISE

Thursday October 18th, 2012

SMHS Welcomes New Executive Director

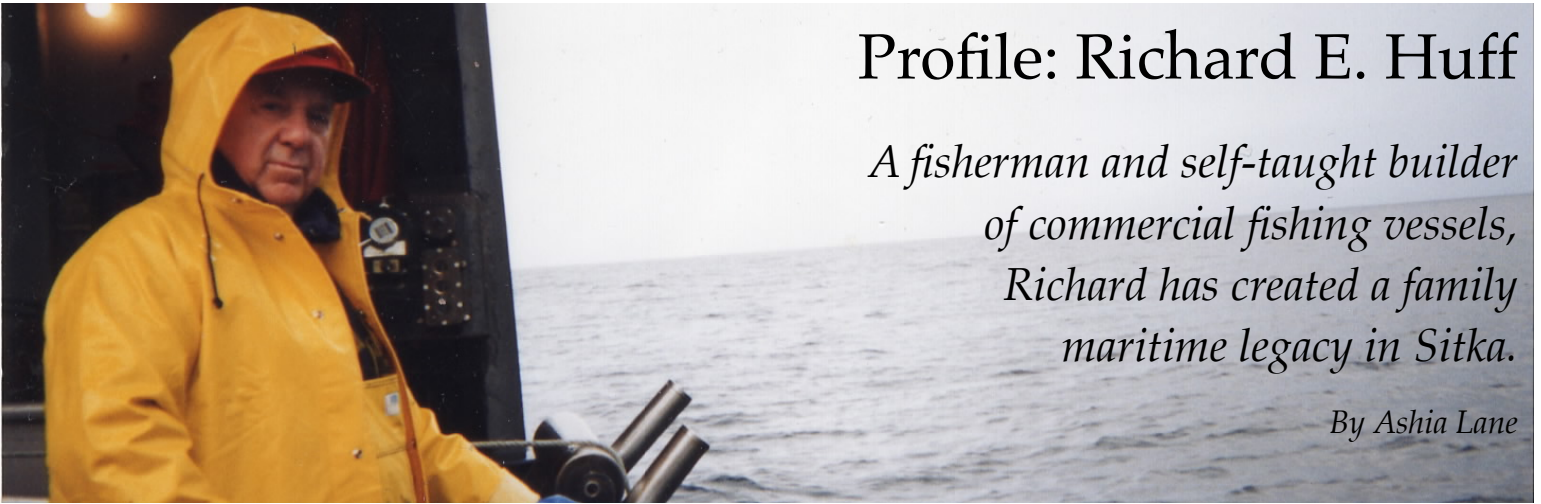
After two years of contributions to the Sitka Maritime Heritage Society, Executive Director Andrew Miller has passed the reins to Ashia Lane.

Ashia comes to us with plenty of experience working for local non-profits, and we look forward to her fresh energy with many of our projects, including the renovation of the historic boathouse. Please be sure to welcome her to the organization, and let her know how you'd like to be involved in future projects!



Looking for updates about SMHS? Check out our website and our new Facebook page! We frequently update both, with news on SMHS projects, tidbits of Sitka's rich maritime history, links and photos. www.sitkamaritime.org





Profile: Richard E. Huff

A fisherman and self-taught builder of commercial fishing vessels, Richard has created a family maritime legacy in Sitka.

By Ashia Lane

Richard E. Huff, b. 1922, began building commercial fishing boats at age 44, fulfilling a life-long dream. He built boats into his early seventies, completing six in his career. Richard turned 90 this past August, and has presented his family with a legacy of maritime love and involvement.

Richard was born in Lorane, Oregon, to a family of ranchers and loggers, including his father Walter Finley Huff, who is thought to have once worked as a beach seiner at the mouth of the Columbia River around 1915. Walter also spent time as a logger, and both occupations are believed to have influenced Richard and his six brothers. Two of the brothers, Walt and Everett, fished portions of the west coast and Alaska, as did Everett's son Billy, and two of Walt's children,

Richard was close with this particular branch of the Huff family, and fished with his brother Walt, as well as cousin Warren who fished out of Sitka in the 1950s, and cousin Timmy (son of Richard's brother Kenneth) in the 1960s.

Richard first came to Sitka in the early 1940s, during World War II, when he was stationed here while serving in the U.S. Marine Corps. The landscape, and boats, left an impression on him that would last throughout the war, including his deployments to Saipan and Nagasaki. Richard returned to Sitka in 1952 with his wife and three (of eventually four) children in tow, hoping to find work that would allow them to remain in Sitka permanently. Contrary to his initial plans, the family returned to the Eugene, OR, area after two short years, as the newest addition to the family, baby George, had asthma and required a drier climate.

Richard spent the next years in a variety of professions, working as a logger, truck driver, car salesman, and real estate agent. By 1958, the family had returned to Sitka, where Richard was employed with the Alaska

Lumber and Pulp Co. He worked with the company until 1960, when his leg was crushed by a bale of pulp which fell from the ceiling. The family stayed on in Sitka until 1962, when they again headed south.

The fishing boats of Sitka had made their impression on Richard; upon returning to the Seattle area, Richard endeavored to build his first fishing vessel, the *Saratoga*. This was a conversion boat, made from the wooden hull of a 40' Navy Liberty Launch, to which Richard added an engine and running equipment, built the fo'c'sle and other quarters, and outfitted the vessel to function as a longliner. He completed the project in the minuscule yard next to his



Richard and son George in the hull of the F/V Saratoga. Photo courtesy of the Huff Family



F/V China B in the boatyard, 1982. Photo courtesy of the Huff Family

Profile, Cont. from page 4...

personal home, a floating house boat anchored by the shore of Lake Union.

Richard spent the next 5 summers fishing the *Saratoga* out of Sitka, selling cars, and renovating and selling boats during Seattle winters. These sales projects helped to fund his boatbuilding dreams, which included the *Saratoga II*, also a Navy Liberty Launch conversion boat with a length of 50'. He eventually sold the *Saratoga I*, and continued fishing the *Saratoga II* with his son Neil, to whom he sold the boat in 1977. Richard began work on his next two boat projects the following year. Steel seiners that he constructed from the ground up, the *Argosy* and the *China B* were 58' and 52', respectively, and Richard built them simultaneously in Monterrey California. Upon completion, both boats were sold, and Richard immediately began work on his fifth project, the *Argosy II*, returning to the 58' design he was fond of.

The *Argosy II* (now the *Marshal Tito*, based out of Bellingham, WA) was also built in California, and upon its completion and subsequent sale, Richard returned to Port Orchard, Washington, where he had established a small home and farm. Now almost 70 years old, Richard was still spending his summers fishing in Sitka as the captain of an ever-changing list of fishing boats, and had a long and colorful resume of work for his lifetime. As a self-taught boatbuilder, he had learned metalwork and lofting (three-dimensional design application for boat building), wiring, and engine installment and repair. Not to be burdened by age, he quickly decided to build his sixth and final vessel, the *Kalliste*, a 58' steel-hulled fishing boat.



The *Kalliste* at dock, 2012. Photo by Ashia Lane

The *Kalliste* was completely built on Richard's farm property in Port Orchard, culminating his boat building career and providing inspiration to his nephew Warren Huff, who built his own version of a steel-hulled seiner, the *Riever*. The *Kalliste* was a feat of engineering considering Richard's age, the location, and the minimal team of builders and workers called in to assist. Upon completion, the boat was sold to a fisherman in Sitka, who is still the sole owner of the vessel, a testament to the design and workmanship. The *Kalliste* is often docked at Eliason Harbor, its Sitka base.

Richard Huff retired from full-time commercial fishing six years ago, at the age of 84. He sold his final boat, the *Cape Alava* and resides full-time in Port Orchard, WA. His maritime legacy includes his son Neil, grandson George, and now granddaughter Ashia, who is approaching maritime heritage with a slight twist, as the new director of SMHS.

SMHS & the Sitka Sound Ocean Adventure Race

This past August, SMHS hosted the 6th annual Sitka Sound Ocean Adventure Race, a human powered water craft race. Over 20 individuals entered the race, with a spectrum of vessels: single and double kayaks, a two-person aluminum canoe, rowing sculls, and stand up paddle boards. Contestants had the choice of three separate ocean courses, 6, 14 and 20 miles, all of which travelled northward from the UAS boat ramp in the channel.

This year's contestants were mostly local Sitkans, but the Calvin family travelled from California to take part. Leif Calvin also taught a kayak stroke clinic prior to the race, hosted by The Fishermen's Quay. Leif is a paddling coach in California, and has trained under Olympic paddlers, so he was the ideal instructor for the clinic as he is also familiar with Sitka and her waters. The clinic proved a successful intro to the weekend's activities, as the paddle race took place on Saturday August 11th, with the Baranof Barracuda Swim Club-hosted Change Your Latitude- 57° North Open Water Challenge swim on Sunday.

Boats, Cont. from page 2...

The boats would carry Sheldon Jackson students to other towns in southeast Alaska, to speak, and for the choir to sing at churches, and for the basketball team to play. Students stood wheel watch, and Herb Didrickson remembers sometimes having a hard time staying awake on the podium. In 1948 the choir – girls on the *Princeton-Hall*, and boys on the *SJS II* – traveled to Seattle, to sing for the Presbyterian General Assembly.

There is a story about the choir holding a practice, in Johnstone Straits, Canada, girls on one boat, boys on the other. The story is that two tugs changed their route so they could follow the singers – giving a

toot of their horns when the concert ended!

Dick Nelson was skipper of the *SJS* when World War II broke out, and the Navy requisitioned the boat. So, he went with it! He volunteered for the Navy, and was accepted as a 2nd Class Bosun. He ran boats in Alaska throughout the war.

Later he ran the *Princeton-Hall*, and in 1958 traveled to Florida to bring the steel-hulled, Edwin Monk-designed, 65-foot *Anna Jackman* from where she'd been commissioned in Florida, through the Panama Canal.

The *Princeton-Hall* was sold in 1965, the *SJS II* in 1973, and the *Anna Jackman* in 1984. The college purchased a plywood boat, the *Blue*

Fish, renamed the *Sheldon Jackson*, in 1973. This boat was replaced in the early 1980s by the *Taku Queen*, which the college wanted to rename the *SJC*. Both boats were used for school activities, in the fisheries and timber programs, for jaunts for volunteers, and as a recruiting tool, and the *Taku Queen* occasionally chartered for Raven's Way. The *Taku Queen* was used less and less, probably due to high running costs. This boat was sold around 1990.

Boats were important when they were the only way students could get to school, and made possible many memorable trips. But students building boats – under craftsmen, and Native leaders, like Peter Simpson and Andrew Hope – was surely a high point for the school.

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SSOAR, Cont. from page 5...

Safety for the event was donated by the USCG and Sitka SAR teams, who not only made sure that all participants were outfitted properly with safety gear, but also kept a close watch on participants throughout the course. Thank you USCG and SAR!

SMHS is proud to host this diverse race, the only of its kind in Alaska. Information about the 2013 race will be posted soon on the SMHS website: www.sitkamaritime.org and on the SSOAR website: www.sitkaadventureracing.org **We look forward to seeing you on the water in 2013!**



Bill Foster paddling a single person kayak in the 2012 SSOAR race. Photo courtesy of Don Kluting



Members of Sitka Search and Rescue donated their time and resources to keep all safe! Photo courtesy of Don Kluting

Maritime News:

A few items to mark on your calendars!



SMHS is hosting an Alaska Day Boat Cruise with a chance to view the USCG drills from the water, and learn about Sitka in World War II. See Page 3 for details.

Sitka WhaleFest is happening November 1st-4th! This year's symposium theme is *Cold Rivers to the Sea: Terrestrial Connections to our Northern Oceans*. Be sure to sign up for the symposium and check out the Market and other events. Sitka Maritime Heritage Society will have a table at the Market, where you can get SMHS gear and info.



The SMHS Annual Meeting is coming up this winter, with a theme of Women in the Fisheries. We will explore the various roles of women from fisherwomen to management to the support industries. Keep checking our website for information and dates! www.sitkamaritime.org

SMHS's Newest Donation

Randall Rodgers graciously donated an engineer's caulking mallet that is about 100 years old to Sitka Maritime Heritage Society.

The mallet is a traditional tool used to pound oakum or cotton into the seams of a wooden boat hull in order to make the hull firm. This particular mallet was found in the 1980's inside the hull of a 110-foot schooner that was scheduled for demolition. As the boat was taken apart for salvageable parts, the mallet was discovered inside the hull, where it had most likely fallen to an out-of-reach place during construction. It had been perfectly preserved for the life of the boat, when it came into the hands of Randall Rodgers.

SMHS is extremely grateful for this wonderfully preserved piece of history, and will display it for public viewing once the boathouse project reaches completion.



To Contribute to Sitka Maritime Heritage Society

*Please return this page with your tax-deductible contribution to
PO Box 2153, Sitka, AK 99835 or give online at www.sitkamaritime.org*

A one year membership in the Sitka Maritime Heritage Society is \$30, based on the calendar year. We offer premiums for contributions of \$100 or more to our Boathouse Fund.

Thank you for supporting Sitka's maritime heritage!

-
- \$100 or More: Choice of SMHS hat, shirt, or DVD footage taken by Sheldon Jackson School Superintendent Les Yaw in the 1930s.
 - \$500 or More: Choice of Rebecca Poulson prints
 - \$1,000 or More: Donor's name listed on a plaque at the Japonski Island Boathouse

NAME: _____

Membership Level: Individual (\$30) _____ Family (\$40) _____ Senior/Student (\$15) _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

SMHS FALL 2012

Sitka Maritime Heritage Society
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Sitka, Alaska 99835