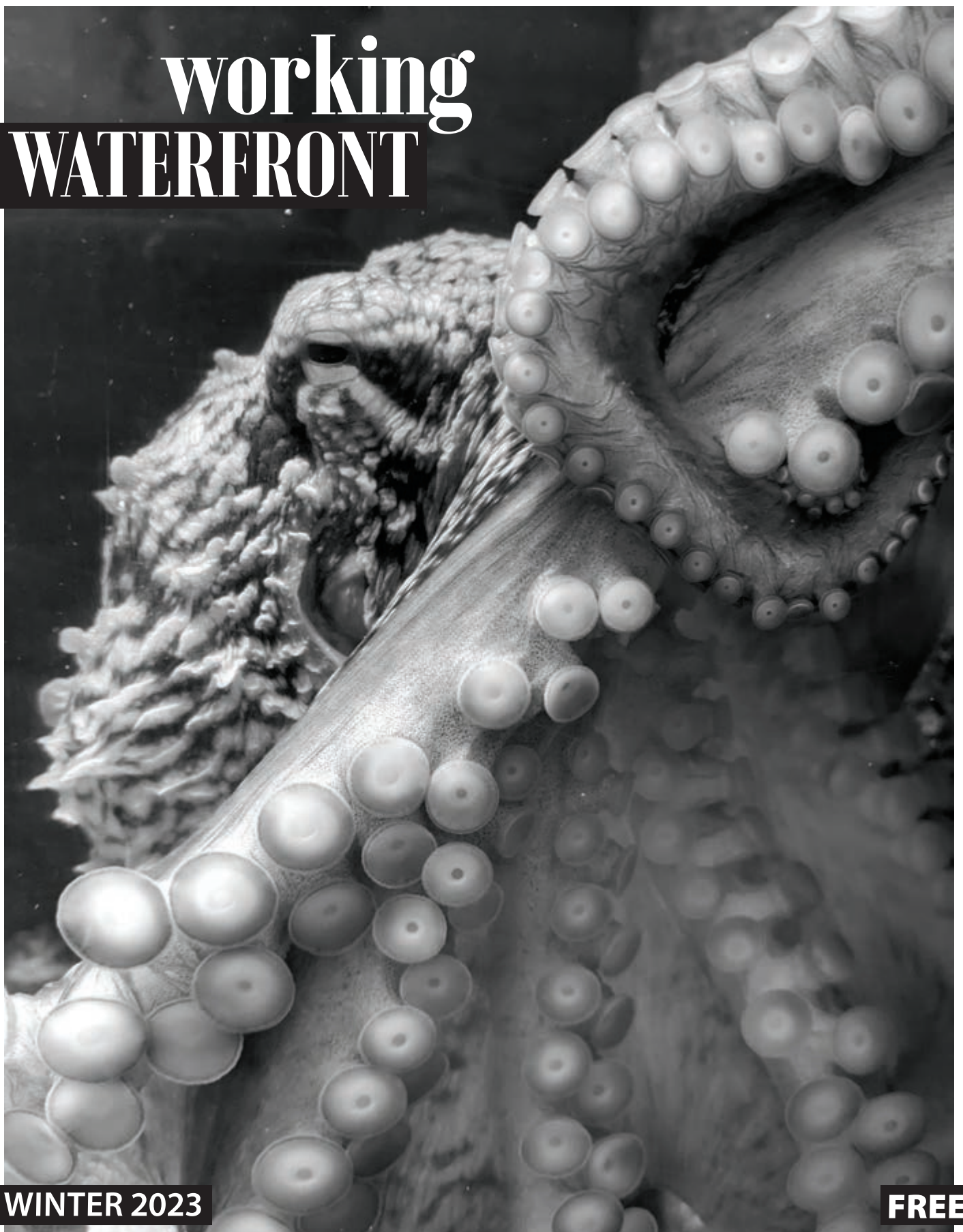


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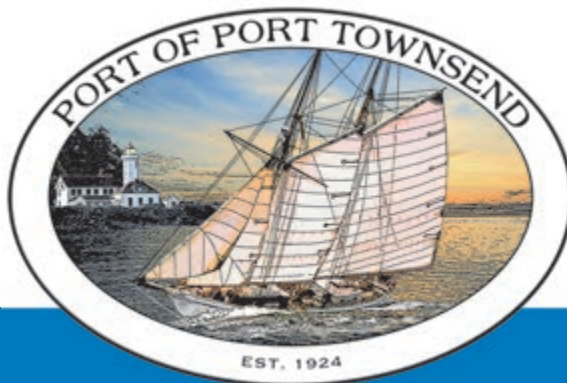
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# WOMEN WORKING ON THE WATERFRONT

BY ERIK DOLSON

It's no secret that Port Townsend is a progressive town. This extends to the part of our community that's the working waterfront.

We've highlighted a few women working on the waterfront in this issue. What's surprising to a relative newcomer is how many more we could have included, from top administrators to those grinding off paint in the yard. We're proud of how women in Port Townsend are represented in the marine trades.

I'm personally proud of my daughter who works as a professional welder across the water. At 5 foot 3 inches, she doesn't throw steel around like men twice her weight, but her welds are as good as anyone's with equal experience. And she's

the one they tap to weld in tight places. The company she works for has an absolute prohibition against sexist behavior. That policy is becoming more normal in the trades, and it can't happen fast enough. No one needs the added stress of any form of harassment, and the sight of a woman doing physical work will become more common as opportunities are offered to more people.

As one of the women we interviewed for this issue said, "...I do not want to answer the question, 'What's it like to be a female Captain?'" Imagine dealing with the assumptions in the question, over and over and over again.

Those who would say to her "You're the exception, not the rule," need to

understand what lies just beneath the surface: "Most women don't go this route because they ..."

Because they "what?" Because they can't? Can't do the physical? Can't do the math? Can't handle the stress? Are not in every way that's important as capable as the men?

Who's the Captain? Captain is captain. That this issue focuses on women was my decision, and I don't know that it was the best one. A credible accusation is that by trying to uncover stereotypes, I give them weight. But this is a progressive town. In any case, we hope you you enjoy reading about those working on our waterfront.





# WHEN TALL SHIPS



*The Glory of the Seas under sail. All photos courtesy Michael Jay Mjelde.*

# RULED THE SEA



*Setting the main top sail on  
Glory of the Seas.*

**H**enry Gillespie's first taste of the maritime industry was in the early 1870s.

“His first experience was aboard a whaling ship and it was his last experience aboard a whaler,” author Michael Jay Mjelde told *The Leader*, “he was 17 and he was expected to do all the work of an able bodied seaman but he had lied about his experience to get the job.

“When they found out, of course they made an example of him so the first opportunity he had, he deserted the ship.”

The call of the sea however, proved relentless.



“He took the discipline and he learned from it. He found work aboard another ship and became proficient but it took him a long time,” Mjelde added.

“From Whaler to Clipper Ship - Henry Gillespie, Down-east Captain,” was recently published by Texas A & M University Press. It tells the story of Captain Henry Gillespie (1857-1937) who spent time at Port Townsend while commanding the clipper ship *Glory of the Seas* between the years 1906-1909.

Mjelde wrote the book on Gillespie’s ship more than 50 years ago but had little information of her captains and crews. His curiosity eventually got the better of him.

Captain Gillespie, he discovered, spent the bulk of his life on the west coast working for Barneson-Hibberd, which had offices in Port Townsend and served as agents for David Charles Henry Rothschild, who built a home in Port Townsend.



*The Custom House in Port Townsend.*

*Water Street in 1908 when the maritime industry was the chief means of transportation.*









*Catting the anchor aboard the  
Glory of the Seas.*

“At that time a sailor did everything there was to do aboard a ship, setting, readjusting sails. All done by hand because there were very few labor-saving devices in those days. You didn’t have winches but they had capstans for the large lines. It was a ship of 300 feet and a crew of 20 men, very small, and they’d crew four hours on and four hours off, 24 hours a day.”

Under Gillespie’s watch, 19 of his 20 men returned safe and sound. One seaman was remitted to the sailor’s hospital upon return, afflicted with venereal disease. The ship carried no doctor.

“The remarkable thing that drew me in, is the people that were involved. It’s the history of an industry and a way of life that we have a hard time relating to today because it was oriented around the maritime. We didn’t have the highway system then and everything was transported by ship. If it was long distance, Puget Sound to California, it was by ship. Then came the railroads and then the highway system,” Mjelde said, adding that Gillespie eventually commanded a U.S. Navy oil tanker in European war zones.

*Michael Jay Mjelde on Washington Street looking  
toward the movie theater and the Elks building on  
Taylor Street.*



*The New Sailors House as a three-story building across the  
street from the city hall.*





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# Commanding the Adventuress

BY MARCI PETERSON

Captain Katelinn Shaw of the Adventuress is often asked, “So what’s it like to be a Captain?”

“I don’t mind being asked, ‘What’s it like to be a Captain?’ But I do not want to answer the question, ‘What’s it like to be a female Captain?’”

So I asked, “What did you have to do to be where you are now?”

Captain Shaw grew up in Ashland, Oregon to parents who owned a sailboat, but didn’t just go sailing. They’d hike, camp, backpack, everything that the outdoors had to offer. However, when in high school, Captain Shaw was a deckhand on board the Adventuress and observed a lifestyle she never knew existed.

While attending the University of Puget Sound, she got her ‘a-hah’ moment.

“I was working on my thesis and looked out the window and I realized if I continued working towards this, I’d still be looking out the window. After I graduated, I sailed around the world on the Barque Picton Castle, a three masted square rigger.”





“Did you round the Horn?” I said.

“No, we went through the Panama Canal. Spending 14 months at sea, I felt the rhythm of the ship, loved the lifestyle, getting to meet people and share what you love to do with what they love to do.

“I did go around the Horn on the Dutch Bark Europa, another three masted square rigger. I wanted to sail on a European ship to see how they do things. I applied conventionally and was turned down conventionally. I went to their website and saw that there was a month missing in their schedule, which means she was docked. So I went to work in the shipyard.

“They do take people who are not Dutch. I am not Dutch and neither were many of my shipmates. I just needed some paperwork including a Dutch Seaman’s Book and was accepted.”

Finally I was face to face with someone who had actually rounded Cape Horn where the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans meet south of Chile and known to be a most dangerous passage due to extreme high winds and currents. The Captain didn’t have a grim look on her face when I asked her to describe what it was like. Instead, she expressed excitement.

“I love sailing the Southern Ocean. It’s just raw power. The swells are longer and you don’t know how fast they’re going until they hit the deck. It’s like hitting a wall. And in those conditions everyone is so focused on doing what you have to do. And you keep counting heads to see if someone went overboard.”

“Did you go to school for this?”

“No, although sailing academies do exist. I taught myself a lot from a books. But in the trade, you still learn it from someone. You do need to learn a lot, but be careful who your mentors are.”

Circumnavigating the world on the Barque Pictan Castle is only the tip of the iceberg for the Captain. She then went on to sail on a variety of ships all over the world.

Walking toward the Adventuress, I asked how the upkeep on her was going.

“She’s doing very well,” Captain Shaw said. “The programs are markedly effective, but we’re still struggling. We need volunteers and funding.”  
I stopped in my tracks. “Volunteers?” I said. “I’m signing up.”

“One thing I would like the readers to know,” said the Captain, “is that you can still be part of The Adventuress. You don’t have to know anything.”

The ship is down rigged for the winter. A plastic tarp blankets her while she sleeps. When I stepped onto her deck, a silent gasp caught in my throat and tears blurred my vision. Without all her sails and rigging, she was still a beauty to behold. And there was something else captivating me. A feeling that perhaps only a sailor can identify with and only a ship can create. And for which I don’t have the words.

I looked over at Captain Shaw, a big smile on her face. I think she knew that, like her, standing on the deck of a tall ship is life changing.

Captain Katelinn Shaw is such an engaging woman. We laughed as much as we talked. I admire her courage and tenacity and the risks she took in life to be who she is today. But isn’t the biggest risk in life not taking one?

Sound Experience is a nonprofit organization that sails the historic schooner Adventuress to educate and inspire an inclusive community. For sailing schedules and more, go to [soundexp.org](http://soundexp.org).





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# Working the waterfront's other side

**K**akantu's mother spent her few remaining months off Port Townsend's waterfront, searching for a suitable den to lay her eggs.

She would have been perhaps five-year's-old at the time and her brood could have numbered into the hundreds of thousands, according to Port Townsend Marine Science Center's Aquarium Curator Ali Redman.

Of his 200-some thousand siblings, a brother and two sisters are probably all that remain now, just 18 months later.

The Giant Pacific Octopus (GPO) known as Kakantu, floated into Redman's life when he was just a few months old, on July 4, 2022.

"We have a joint project with the Pacific Crab Research Group where we use light to attract zoo plankton," Redman told The Leader, "some octopuses have a few, but very large eggs, and when they hatch-out they don't look like a tiny adult - they're clear, with very, very short tentacles, they are a part of the zoo (animal) plankton. They're floating with the current. So we have a tool for research purposes that is a light trap and it attracts very small plankton."

When he hatched, his chances of reaching maturity were on the order of one in 50,000, despite his high intelligence.

"Typically, when we think of highly intelligent animals we think of animals with long life spans, complex social arrangements and a lot of parental care," Redman explained. That is not the case with GPOs, which Redman said, is essentially a mollusk without a protective shell.

"They care for the eggs and once the eggs hatch, that's it and it is thought that one of the reasons they evolved such high intelligence is because they gave up the shell so they had to learn to stay alive.



An octopus hatchling, a paralarva.

“Mostly they’re avoiding predators. Their squishy little bodies can get into about anywhere. They are experts at camouflage. If they’re caught in the open they can ink, and that’s a nasty thing. It’s not a good thing for even the animal and they will swim away.”

GPOs utilize can travel up to 200 kilometers a day and live in depths from rocky reefs and kelp forests, to tide pools.

“One of their skills in life is being very adaptive to a wide variety of resources and habitat, and that is part of being really smart,” Redman said.

If a GPO reaches seven months they begin crawling.

“They are focused on growing, getting experiences, and they can grow by up two percent of their body weight every day. When mature they’re usually 40 to 60 pounds - sometimes you’ll see crazy numbers, records of 600 pounds, but those are unsubstantiated. Kakantu was about one centimeter when he came here. When they are small and in the wild, there are so many threats, they start off life so, so tiny and get eaten by just about everything.”

Within a few years, the need to procreate will mandate Kakantu’s release back into the Pacific Ocean.

“While they’re young and in an aquarium we can meet their psychological needs,” she explained, “they get to maturity right near the end of their life, and their wants and needs in life change.”

For Kakantu, instead of eating and growing he will focus on mating.

“If you’re a female it becomes about finding a nice den site - that’s the point in which we try to release them. After they mate they’ve got maybe eight months of senescence.”

Redman tries to quell her emotions when discussing what she’s learned from Kakantu.

“Every octopus is a unique individual and they recognize individual humans. Every octopus I’ve had the opportunity to meet stands out as an individual. One of the things I’ve enjoyed is seeing how those personalities develop and change over time.

“The fact that they are actively learning through experience, and as they get older and less vulnerable the become gregarious, showing how their experiences help shape who they are, and that you’re not the same at every stage of your life.

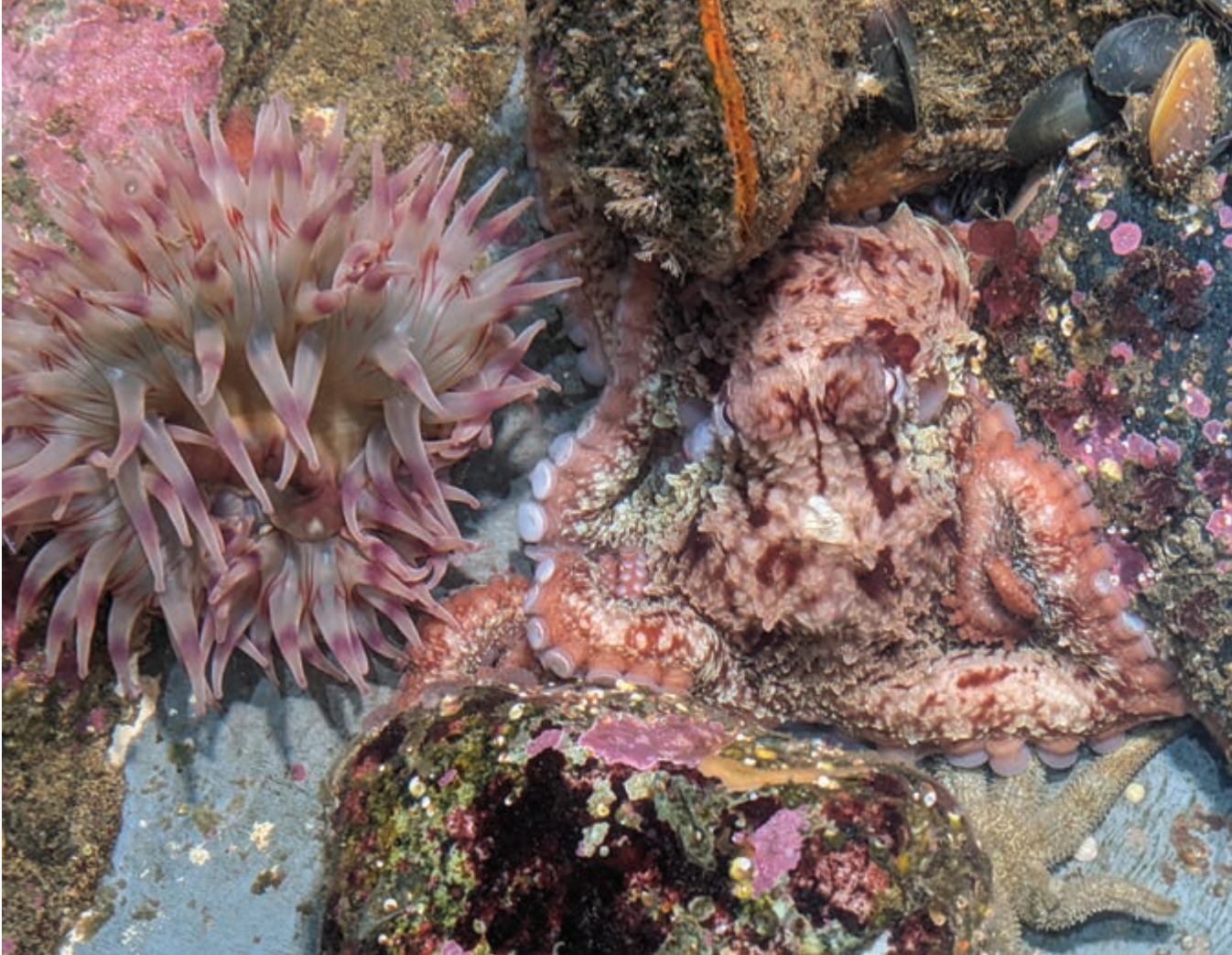
“The Marine Science Center is here to promote conservation and habitat and to be able to say that it’s important for us to conserve our natural resources, to care for and protect the Salish Seas for animals like Kakantu, we want to show people all of the amazing things that are under the waves.

“You have to care and you have buy-in to want to take action,” Redman said.

For more information of the work of the Port Townsend Marine Science Center, visit them at 532 Battery Way or online at [ptmsc.org](http://ptmsc.org).



Kakantu changes his texture and camouflages himself in order to survive.





Kat Murphy of Katfish Salmon.  
Photo by Natalie Berger

*Murphy provides access,  
education to consumers  
about sustainable seafood*

By Kirk Boxleitner

**B**efore Kat Murphy started Katfish Salmon Co. in 2018, she'd invested two years of work into the Port Townsend Shipyard, where she worked hard but yearned for a more direct interaction with the waters that she grew up loving.

Even when the water wasn't always easily accessible, Murphy was a beachgoer and surfer at heart, who was able feed her preexisting



passions with an oceanography course that became available to her during a university semester abroad.

“Being given access to these local waterways as an adult, through stints of working on tall ships and commercial fishing vessels, allowed me to appreciate and value them even more,” Murphy said. “If you want people to care about conserving and protecting these waterways and resources, people need access to them.”

Murphy worked a single season as a commercial fishing deckhand, before she became the skipper of her own ship, as the owner and operator of the fishing vessel Grace, which she fell in love with at first sight, and which she scrambled to purchase in time to meet the fishing window in Alaska that same year.

Even as Murphy credited those who’d helped train her with allowing her to stand on their shoulders, metaphorically speaking, she also confidently asserted that she’d earned a place of her own in the maritime field.

Murphy possesses both an appetite for overcoming challenges and a passion for passing on the hard-earned (and learned) lessons of her own experiences to others, but she also believes in employing practical means to educate others.

Murphy proudly touts her painstaking sustainable fishing practices, catching her fish one at a time with a traditional hook and line, as a way to get her clientele invested in fish as a resource.

“I want to be part of the solution, while also being able to make a living,” Murphy said.

When Murphy isn’t fishing for salmon in Southeast Alaska during the summer months, she’s selling catch — both her own, and additional fish from her fishing cooperative in Alaska, which consists of other small-boat fishing families like hers — to provide directly traceable seafood, that she sees as being of a higher quality, from the fishers to the consumers, thereby more closely connecting those local communities to their own fishing industries and workers.

Murphy believes that cleaning, bleeding and icing their catch, on board their vessels, enables those fishers to produce the highest quality fish on the market.

For Murphy, being “part of the solution” even extends to addressing what she deemed “barriers to food justice” within her own community, by working with local SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) coordinators, to develop wholesale contracts intended to stock local food banks with sources of high protein.

As Murphy states on her Katfish Salmon website, at [katfishsalmonco.com](http://katfishsalmonco.com) online, “I am a choice that people make when they buy their fish, and I feel privileged to be able to provide my local community and communities throughout the Pacific Northwest region with that choice.”

# *A strong sense of community*

BY THAIS OLIVEIRA

Melanya Nordstrom, 33, discovered the marine trades during her second year of woodshop at Chimacum High School.

It was during the class with maritime woods that she realized her interest in carpentry and working with her hands could be a career opportunity. And that was settled.

She received a scholarship to the Northwest School of Wooden Boatbuilding in Port Hadlock and to a couple of other woodworking workshops.

Right off the bat after graduating in 2010, she was employed at Boat Haven in Port Townsend. After a few years, restless for new experiences, Melanya decided she needed a break from the waterfront. She worked in a gym, a bar, a bank, and a tire-changing shop.

“They were interesting experiences that just helped reaffirm how much I like (and need) creativity and working with my hands,” she explains.

As a painter and varnisher for the Port Townsend Shipwrights Co-op since 2017, she cleans all the algae and fish residue off the topsides, fixes damaged planks and makes sure the wood is preserved and in good shape to go back in the water.

Every year she sees the same boats come back from the fishing season and the relationship between vessels and owners is one of her favorite parts of the job.





Two of her “regulars” are the Evening Star, built at Puget Sound Boat Building in Tacoma in the 40s, which is still being fished by the same family it was built for. And St. John II, built in 1944 at the Hansen Boat Company in Ballard, and bought by the current family in the 80s. The two boat builders are part of a handful of shops that made most of the fishing boats in the area, and many others used in World War II, according to Melanya.

Working largely with men does not make Melanya feel she is an outsider in the community. Earlier this year when she became the mother of a premature baby, her co-workers embraced her in that fraught moment and continue to support her journey as a single caregiver.

They got together and planned her baby shower after work, in the shop, underneath a boat called Reality. One guy brought the salmon he fished, the other beef he raised. “Probably the most guys in a baby shower, all in their dirty Carhartts”, laughs Melanya.

Two days after the shower, the baby was released after seven weeks in the NICU. The coworkers came to her aid again. One guy put together the bassinet while she drove home from the hospital and another dropped dinner at her door.

With the support of the strong maritime community Melanya continues to grow in her career and as a single caregiver. The baby, now 8 months old and out of danger, grows healthy and loved.

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# *The Touchstone founders*



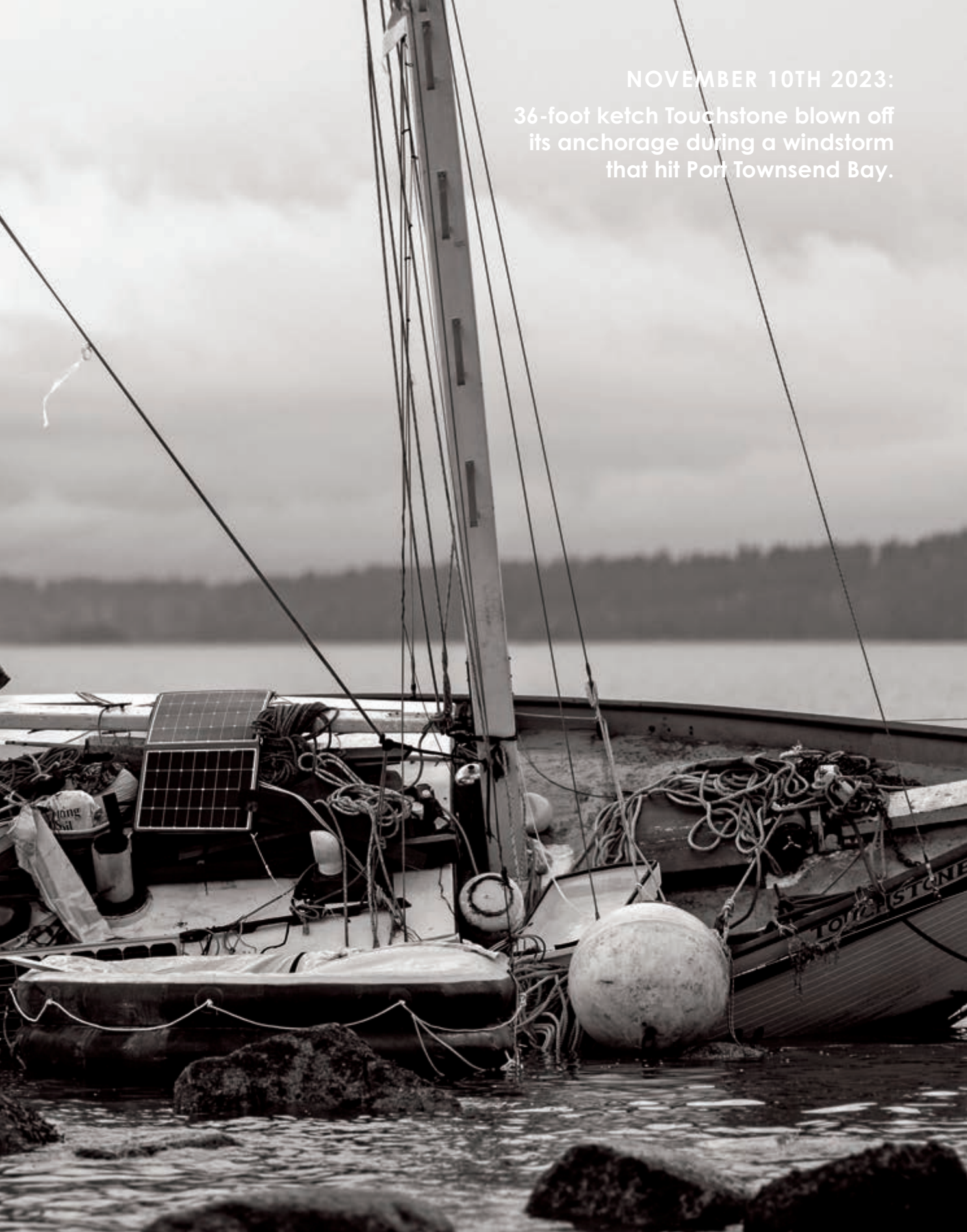
**D**uring the night of Nov. 10, between 8 and 10 p.m., Braith Miller's 1974, 45-foot ketch Touchstone, crashed onto the shore near Bayview Restaurant in downtown Port Townsend. Winds in Port Townsend had hit gale force highs at 47 mph.

Miller was wrung out as he watched recovery of his boat by volunteers from Salish Rescue. "I've been through so much I've lost track of time. The mind goes. I've been through borderline hypothermia," Miller said. "I'm doing the best I can." The vessel was recovered after the tide came in the morning of Nov. 11.





NOVEMBER 10TH 2023:  
36-foot ketch Touchstone blown off  
its anchorage during a windstorm  
that hit Port Townsend Bay.



# *When knotwork is not work*

BY MARCI PETERSON

Jacob Brokowski, whose business is called Fancy Knotworks, places something in the palm of my hand. A geometry design of woven thread atop a piece of wood with metal plating beneath it, secures a thick 1 1/2" spike that narrows down to a point puncturing a cork from a bottle.

"I made you a marlinspike," says Jacob. I thank him profusely, admiring the woven thread, hiding the fact that even though I have decades of sailing experience, I thought a marlinspike was a fancy name for a fancy knot.

Entering the living room in the apartment Jacob shares with his partner Emily, I pause with every step. Small bottles encased in detailed lace-like patterns of rope are scattered on bookshelves. "Okay Jacob," I said. "I want to know how you make these, when did you start making them and why?"

"At the age of 14, I was a member of the Sea Scouts. Every year we went to the Port Townsend Wooden Boat Festival. I was inspired by the traditional way of sailing. There was a timed knot competition where a figure 8, bowline, clove hitch, sheet bend, two half hitches and a reef knot had to be made. These were all taught to Sea Scouts. When I saw a man with a walking stick covered in rope, that was the first time I had seen that kind of knot work in real life. I bought a 2002 copy of the *Marlinspike Sailor* by Hervey Garrett Smith to teach myself more."

Jacob gets up to fetch the book. "All the illustrations he drew by hand. And here's a ditty box. The plans were drawn based on one owned by Tom Crosby, a whaling captain."

"Like a steamer chest," I comment.

"A sea chest differs from a steamer chest because it has sloped sides and rope handles," Jacob said, then brought out the one he had made that carries the supplies needed for his knot work. It's beauty is difficult to put into words.



Jacob Borkowski. Photo courtesy of The Artful Sailor





Two knotted mugs. Photo by Marci Peterson

He then brings a green box with small knitted toy inside. “This is a replica of an 1839 school box. Making this is how I learned to dovetail.”

I asked Jacob how dovetails and boxes entered his life.

“I always wanted to know how to dovetail because I wanted to make sea chests. I started making small boxes, but didn’t know the details.

“I wasn’t very good at school with the academic stuff. I ended up in a trade school at Seattle Central to learn boat building. I graduated when the recession hit so I bounced around doing odd jobs on boats and fell in love with it. One really cool project I worked on was a boat built in the 1920’s.

“One summer I went to Maine to sail and work in a shipyard. I decided I didn’t want to stay the winter and wasn’t making enough money to stay. I came back to Seattle and lived on a boat with some friends and doing odd jobs.”

After a traumatic event, Jacob had an epiphany of sorts.

“That’s when I decided to get a real job,” he says and was hired as a cabinet maker.

“The nice thing about doing cabinets instead of boat work is that it’s very steady. What I found out is that the season you want to be out sailing, is the same season you have to do a lot of boat work.

“I have the free time now to do more knot work.”

I asked for demonstration while we talked and picked up a knotted mug. “What would you charge for this?” He laughs. “I was working on a bottle. I dropped it and it broke. So I ended up making that.” And many other eye catching items encased or wrapped in rope.

As I watched him wrap and knot fine line around a bottle, it’s as if he’s knitting with his fingers instead of using needles.



Emily & Jacob Borkowski with Salty Sue. Photo courtesy of The Artful Sailor

“How did you become involved with The Artful Sailor?” I said.

“They had a kiosk at the Lake Union Boat Festival. While visiting with them, they said that had a shop in Port Townsend.

“So we went up and the second time we went there, they took pictures of my work. The owners, Emiliano and Salty Sue, were so encouraging and started selling my stuff there. I just charge enough to keep me in materials,” he chuckles. “I’d like to teach people how to do it because I enjoy it myself.”

As I prepare to leave, I asked Jacob if I could have a piece of rope that was covered in pine tar because it reminded me of the time my late husband and I lived on a sailboat.

“Do you have time for you to make you a Star knot?” he said. “Then you can take some smelly rope with you.”

Twenty minutes later, I reluctantly left. And to this day, and every day, I use my marlinespike and wear my Star knot.

For more information, email Jacob Browkowski at [borkowski.jacob@gmail.com](mailto:borkowski.jacob@gmail.com).



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# *Investing in the future*

## *generation of maritime workers*

BY THAIS OLIVEIRA

Chrissy Mclean grew up in Tacoma sailing and boating. Her parents had a 40 foot sailboat used to take the kids on journeys to the San Juan Islands and on those trips, she was completely enthralled in the natural world of the shorelines.

“I have fond memories of rowing our dinghy around Reid Harbor and pulling sea stars off of the rocks and spending hours with a bucket hauling up moon jellies from the docks in Friday Harbor”, reminiscences Chrissy.

It was as a student at Huxley College at Western Washington University that McLean started teaching youth and adults by leading sea kayak trips in the San Juan Islands and Mexico. Most of those were focused on natural history (bird watching, marine mammal viewing, intertidal invertebrates, plants).

In those 20 years as an experiential educator and environmental scientist, she has worked for the Port Townsend Marine Science Center, the North Olympic Salmon Coalition, the WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife, and Outward Bound.

Today, as a vocational programs manager at the Maritime Center, McLean supports students ages 16-24 as they learn more about career pathways related to the maritime community in a variety of programs.

In the Port Townsend Maritime Academy, students receive high school credit and several industry credentials for their hands-on learning and time on the water as well as skills in emergency management, first aid training, navigation.

In the Real World Readiness program, students receive paid training in the boat shop and learn durable skills- how to communicate in a work setting, being on time, recording their hours, resume creation and completing job applications.

“We are just starting these industry internship placements and it's really exciting to connect students with local businesses”, explains McLean.





Chrissy McLean with Bravo Team students Emilio Schordine and Willow Parvati

Another one of her tentacles in the community is the Bravo Team, a school year long maritime skills and marine science program that is offered through OCEAN at Port Townsend schools. The class focuses on maritime skills using the longboat Townshend.

Skills include safety, sailing, rowing, navigation, weather prediction and observation. A lot of teamwork and practice on decision making and leadership.

But that's not it. She is also an instructor at the Girls Boat Project, a program led by women who are professionals

in the maritime industry. The focus is on girls between 6th and 8th grade, boat building and shop skills using projects like skiff construction and building tool trays.

And finally, she volunteers with Schooner Martha as an instructor and a mate to support their sail training program. The instructor considers it one of our region's treasures in sail training for youth and she tries to connect as many motivated youth as I can to their programs.

"We are busy changing lives", exclaims McLean.



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