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Tugboats Steaming Around Kitsap

• Examples of this unusual craft will be on display in Poulsbo and Port Orchard.

By Shawna Walls, swalls@kitsapsun.com
 August 26, 2006

Bobbing in the water at the Poulsbo Yacht Club marina, the Mikfin cuts an unusual figure among the sleek, modern vessels in neighboring slips.

At first, the chunky tugboat seems as out of place as a mule in a stable full of thoroughbreds, but the Mikfin is no weather-scarred working boat. It's a Lord Nelson Victory Tug, one of fewer than 100 tugboat-styled yachts built for the company in the 1980s.



Steve Zugschwerdt | kitsapsun

Nan Mader and Ted Leader own and live aboard the Mikfin, moored at the Poulsbo Yacht Club. The yacht is a Lord Nelson Victory Tug, one of fewer than 100 tugboat-styled yachts built in the B1 80s by Tommie Chen in Taiwan. Several of the craft, including the Mikfin, are gathering at Seattle's Bell Harbor this weekend.



Steve Zugschwerdt | Kitsap Sun The tug-styled yachts are known for their classic, wood-trimmed, cozy living spaces. Mader and Leader have lived aboard their 37 foot craft for almost twenty years.

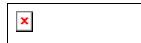


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Steve Zugschwerdt | Kitsap Sun Mader and Leader have lived aboard their 37 foot craft for almost twenty years. They prefer to name their yacht



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Several of the craft, including the Mikfin are gathering at Seattle's Bell Harbor this week, then traveling through Agate Pass to Poulsbo, and on to Port Orchard.

Nan Mader and Ted Leader own and live aboard the Mikfin. Lifelong boating enthusiasts, they were previously owners of a 20-foot craft they used on weekends. The couple saw the first Victory Tug model when it launched in Seattle in 1983. A few years later, when they decided to purchase a craft to live aboard, Mader said there was little question what kind they'd get.

"We looked at probably 50 other boats, and I always compared them to this," she said. "I just love this little boat."

Designed by naval architect Jim Backus and built by Tommie Chen in Taiwan, most the tugs were manufactured for only a few years from 1983 to 1988. Most, like the Mikfin, are a

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37-foot model, with a handful more at 49 feet. A few 41-foot models were built in the early 1990s.

perfect to relax with your outside rather than in a boathouse enjoying the mild winters the Pacific Northwest offers.

In addition to the classic, wood-trimmed styling of the pilot house, the tugs feature cozy living spaces with hand-worked wood. Though small, they're spacious for their exterior size, and built as tough as the working tugs they resemble.

"They're really seaworthy," Mader said.

Owners live all over the world- — Mader noted one owner who planned to take his tug to Israel — but several are in the Puget Sound area.

About 15 of the boats, plus several long-distance owners arriving without their vessels, will be at the Northwest rendezvous. Joining them are the boat's designer and builder, who will be giving talks about the tugs.

This year's gathering will be the largest-ever fleet of the sturdy little craft. Three previous Northwest gatherings were held in Seattle and Gig Harbor, with a Northeast gathering in Maine.

The unusual design of the boat attracts attention and devotion. Mader said she and Leader had only had theirs for a year before someone saw them on the water and radioed them with questions. Shortly thereafter, they joined an owners group that has grown, and now includes nearly all owners of the vessels.

"We all keep in touch," Mader said.

The public is invited to see the tugs launch from Bell Harbor or arrive at the Port of Poulsbo and Port Orchard Marina.

If you go

What: Northwest Rendezvous of Lord Nelson Victory Tugs.

Where: Gathering at Bell Harbor in Seattle, then traveling through Agate Pass to Poulsbo and Port Orchard.

When: Launch from Bell Harbor at 11:30 a.m. Sunday, arrival at the Port of Poulsbo about 2:30 p.m. Monday launch at noon, arrival at Port Orchard Marina about 2 p.m.

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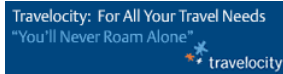
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