

NEWPORT BOAT SHOW ♦ Bertram 31 ♦ REPOWER SPECIAL ♦ New Buffalo, MI

CLASSIC *Yacht*

ISSUE ONE

for those who love great boats

BROOKLYN BOATWORKS

SMALL YACHTS FOR
A GOOD CAUSE

NEW CLASSICS
VAN DAM WOOD CRAFT
MASTERS OF MAHOGANY

VICTORY
IN SEATTLE

Winter 2007

classicyachtmag.com

TUGBOAT BLVD

Victory in Seattle

By Tom Blackwood

It was on a Friday, the 25th of August, while enjoying spectacular weather in the Northwest, when the guests started to arrive in numbers. The buzz of voices grew and so did the smiles and amazement as each drew near the pier and they saw them; a fleet of beautifully maintained tugs. Bell Harbor Marina located in downtown Seattle, Washington at Pier 66 was the gathering site for over 30 Lord Nelson Victory Tug owners and fifteen of the salty yachts.

This would turn out to be the largest gathering of Victory Tug owners in the history of the company, which began some 20 years ago.

Yachts of all hues and sizes created a colorful scene in the harbor, drawing a good deal of attention from the many passersby. There were three models present: the 37', the most popular size with 76



built; the 41' with just six having been built, and the 49', the prize of the fleet, numbering eight in existence. For a worldwide fleet of about 90 boats extending from Japan across North America to the Mediterranean,



TOM BLACKWOOD PHOTO

having 30 of them represented at the first International Lord Nelson Victory Tug Rendezvous was considered an over-the-top success.

Although most of the group knew

each other to some extent through years of correspondence, e-mails and articles in the quarterly newsletter, *Tuggers*, many had never met in person.

Right: The onboard marriage (L to R); Janis Bialko, Tom Blackwood, the “reverend” Ted Shann



Below: Lord Nelson Agate Pass. L to R: D, Tug E. Bear, Lady



Handshakes and hugs were in large supply as names and faces connected. One could not help but feel the excitement and observe the strengthening bonds of camaraderie. When the word got out that a couple became engaged, one of the captains performed an impromptu on-deck marriage. Although “good only for the duration of the cruise”, the captain said it was as real as real could be. It was a beautiful sight with rose petals laying on the highly varnished caprails, a walk down the side deck “aisle”, even the bride’s bou-

quet helped set the scene. All attended, gathering on the dock below to witness the joining of this couple, from the first *oohs* and *ahhs* and finally in the end cheering wildly at the sealing kiss. A fun-loving group, these tuggers are!

That evening the entire group gathered for an excellent dinner at Cutter’s, one of Seattle’s Pike Street Market top restaurants with a expanding view over Elliot Bay. Looking west across Puget Sound, the impromptu wedding party enjoyed a sunset of gold and crim-

*Victory Tug 37s at
Thistle Dew, Nellie
7, Pet Tug, Equinox*



*Left: The author with builder
Tommy Chen in front of
Thistle Dew and Pet Tug.*



son as the sun settled into the Olympic mountains.

At dinner, the tuggers were introduced to three very special guests that would be making a presentation the following day. These guests were: Loren Hart, the founder and designer who developed the concept to build the Victory tugs; Jim Backus, the naval architect that took the idea and drafted plans for what has become the most desirable and authentic looking of the pleasure tugs; and Tommy Chen, the builder and owner

of Ocean Eagle Yacht Building Corp of Pa-Li, Taipei, Taiwan where these beautifully appointed seaworthy tugs were built.

On Saturday, the entire group gathered at the Odyssey Marine Center to listen to these individuals present an unscripted history of how the Lord Nelson Victory Tugs became a reality. For two and a half hours the group listened intently, hanging on every word knowing that a gathering of these key players might never occur again. Loren stated that he focused



his design interests on the inside of the boat and that Jim took care of the technical aspects of designing the hull and exterior. Without a doubt, this was the highlight of the rendezvous and all were glad they had traveled the distance (some thousands of miles) to be there when the story was told.

Throughout the presentation anecdotal stories would arise. One such story dealt with the construction of

the 49' tug. It turned out the boat was too big to get out of the boatyard so trees had to be cut down to clear the way. Then, the moving and maneuvering of it required two 60-ton cranes, one at each end of the vessel. Furthermore, when they got to the bridge, the 49' vessel was too tall! The solution was to unbolt the bridge from the base, taking off all the nuts and bolts, lift the bridge and pass the tug underneath. Needless

The Tugs

49'
Guinea Rider
Polar Mist
Sounder

41'
Carolina
Sheryl Ann

37'
Annie
Equinox
Lady
Mikfin
Morning Mist
Nellie D
Pet Tug
Thistle Dew
Tug E. Bear
Vickie Marie



In the next issue of Classic Yacht, Tom Blackwood provides an in-depth history of the Victory Tug's design and construction details.

ness. Customer satisfaction played a part in the success of the Victory tugs. Each delivery was made by a crew that went to the various receiving locations and cleaned the tugs up and outfitted them before turning them over to the owner.

These tugs have become classics in the pleasure boat world. Although their numbers are few, after over 20 years many are still enjoyed by the original owners. That is testimony to the desirability of owning a Victory Tug. Well, that and being a part of this vivacious group which continue to give classic care to a truly classic yacht.

to say, the following tugs were built in a different location that avoided a repeat of that exercise.

Though originally designed in the Seattle Westlake office as a Northwest boat, the popularity of the Lord Nelson Victory tugs really took off at the Miami Boat Show. In time, that popularity came back home to the Northwest and in 3-4 years a competing pleasure tug, the Sundowner, was out of busi-

