

Tug o' the Month  
Three Sheets Northwest

by Les Eldridge  
South Sound Maritime Heritage Association (SSMHA)  
For  
Olympia Kiwanis and Olympia Harbor Days  
November 2016

Based on "Tugboats on Puget Sound," by Chuck Fowler and Capt. Mark Freeman, Arcadia Publishing, 2009, available at bookstores, boating stores and other retail outlets throughout the Pacific Northwest

The *Joe*, and Foss Launch and Tug Company

The *Joe* (formerly, the *Joe Foss*, *Little Toot*): The *Joe* was built in 1942 in Tacoma and at the Foss Yard, and christened *Joe Foss*. Foss sold her in 1972. A new owner renamed her *Little Toot*. Two owners later, in 1986, Robin and Kae Paterson of Gig Harbor bought her. Robin was the long-time president of the International Retired Tugboat Association. She was renamed *Joe*. A new trunk cabin and wheelhouse were designed and constructed in 1987 by master boat builder Al Glaser of Bainbridge Island, a former member of SSMHA. *Joe* was the logo tug for the Olympia Harbor Days race and festival in 2010. Her length-over-all is 45', beam: 14', and she draws 6'.



*Joe* is now owned by Brynn (Foss) Rydell and her husband Harry Rydell, homeported in Gig Harbor. She participated in the Harbor Tug class (Under 400 Horsepower) race at the 2016 Olympia Harbor Days races, and finished third, completing the 1.8-mile course in a time of 11 minutes, fifteen seconds. *Parthia*, the winner, had a time of 9:46. The event drew 20 boats, thirteen of them competitors in the three heats of the contest. This was the 43<sup>rd</sup> annual Olympia Harbor Days race, and is the oldest such event on the West Coast.

Foss Launch and Tug Company was established in 1889 by Andrew and Thea Foss. Thea, the beloved matriarch of the company, was an energetic, well-organized and inspirational part of the enterprise, which had grown, by 1931, into the largest tug fleet in Puget Sound. It was headquartered for 43 years at the floating office at Dock Street,

Tacoma, when it burned. It was rebuilt at the same location, and towed, by the *Joe Foss* in 1943 to its current location at F Street, Tacoma.

Foss boats have been strong players in Washington maritime history for 126 years. When the USS *Constitution* (“Old Ironsides”) visited Puget Sound in 1933 as part of her coast-to-coast tour to celebrate her preservation, she was towed by *Lorna Foss*, *Peter Foss*, *Foss #18* and *Foss #19*. *Arthur Foss* was built in 1889 as the *Wallowa*, coincident with statehood, and survives to this day. Foss bought her and named her *Arthur Foss* in 1929. She served in the US Navy in World War II, and in 1968 became an historic tug owned by a maritime foundation. She served as a Washington Centennial Flagship in 1989.

In 1935, a fire swept Tacoma’s Waterside Milling Company’s warehouse on Old London Dock. Four Foss tugs served as firefighters; *Justine Foss*, *Henrietta Foss*, *Foss #12*, and *Foss #17*. Foss tugs have been a recurrent thread in the fabric of Puget Sound tow-boating since statehood.

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Tug o' the Month is sponsored by Olympia Harbor Days, Vintage Tugboat Races and Festival which has been held annually over Labor Day Weekend for 43 years. Olympia Harbor Days is a non-profit free community event presented by the Olympia Kiwanis Club. The event takes place on the Olympia waterfront from the Port of Olympia south to Percival Landing with tugboat racing in Budd Bay. More information about the festival and where to stay can be found at [www.HarborDays.com](http://www.HarborDays.com) or on Facebook @OlympiaHarborDays. For questions about tug or vendor participation in the festival, please contact the Executive Director at [info@HarborDays.com](mailto:info@HarborDays.com).

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