

PARTHIA

The Tug of the Month, PARTHIA, 1992 Logo Tug for the Olympia Harbor Days Festival and Races

by Les Eldridge

The venerable tug PARTHIA was built in Winslow, Bainbridge Island, Washington by James Hall in 1906. She towed for the Pacific Tugboat Company in 1910, and was then owned by a man named Lermond in 1912. At this time, she had a 50 horsepower gasoline engine, later increased to 75 horsepower.



Parthia arrives at Olympia Harbor Days 2016, photo courtesy of Olympia Harbor Days

In 1934, she was purchased by the prominent tug company owner Delta V. Smyth of Olympia, and she joined his six-boat fleet, which included the tug SAND MAN. She was listed by Gordon Newell in his "Ships of the Inland Sea," as boasting an 80 horsepower engine in 1951. In 1961, Smyth Tug and Barge Company sold her to Foss Launch and Tug Company, the largest towing firm on Puget Sound. Her Smyth Company consorts were also bought by Foss, including AUDREY, HOONAH, OYSTERMAN, and RUFUS. They were painted the Foss green and white, but retained their Smyth names.

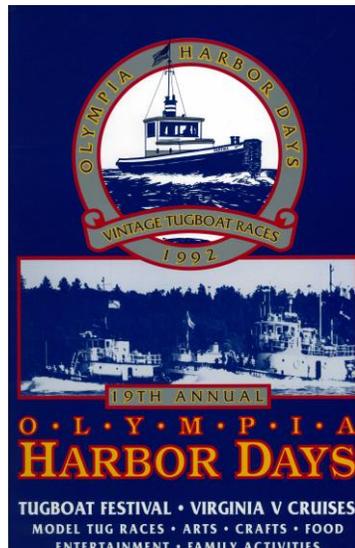
In 1965, towing for Foss, she ran aground near Priest Point, Budd Inlet, while towing a raft of logs. According to reports, the skipper had fallen asleep at the wheel. Log raft towing, particularly against the tide, could be a boring enterprise with the tug and tow making only two or three knots over the ground. The Foss tug RUFUS put a line aboard PARTHIA and towed her off at high tide.

In 1975, Foss sold her to Steve Moen, who converted her to a fishing vessel. In 1977, Gary Sanford, now skipper of the Dunlap Towing Company tug CEDAR KING, bought her and she reverted to a tug.



Parthia Races Olympia Harbor Days 2012, photo courtesy of Karla Fowler

In 1992, owned by Scott Bokland of Burton on Vashon Island, she was named Logo Tug by Olympia Harbor Days Races and Festival (OHD). She is 50 feet length over all, with an eleven foot beam, and draws 4'9 feet of water.



PARTHIA has been a frequent competitor in OHD races, winning the Small Tug race in 2016 over RANGER, JOE, and TEAL. Prior OHD appearances included 1997 as well as a 2005 win over MARLIN II and EARNEST. In 2009, PARTHIA and R.W. CONFER were unable to catch OLMSTED in the OHD Small Tug event.



Tug Parthia in the lead OHD Races 2011, photo courtesy of Karla Fowler

The Seattle Maritime Festival tug races, no longer being held, saw a triumph for PARTHIA in the Class C event in 2009, and a second place finish in that event in 2008, losing to OLMSTED which finished in 7 minutes, 44 seconds.

Not only did PARTHIA win her race at OHD in 2016, she was sold by her 11-year owner, George Hill, of Vashon Island. Her purchaser was Robert' Shashinda of Pleasant Harbor near Brinnon on Hood Canal. Mr. Shashida is a collector of wooden boats, and formerly lived on Alameda Island in San Francisco Bay. His collection includes two sailing dinghies, a 1934 motor-sailer, an 1895 sail-powered German coastal freighter, and a keel sloop. His Hood Canal home includes docks and a workshop, and he intends to do extensive deferred maintenance on PARTHIA including deck work, beam replacement, and shoring up the supports for a heavy bitt just aft of the pilot house. The result will be faithful to her original configuration, and ready for future Puget Sound events. Welcome to the northwest, Robert'!

About Les Eldridge: Les is president of South Sound Maritime Heritage Association and author of a number of maritime histories as well as five novels of the American Civil War at sea. He lectures frequently ashore and afloat, and narrates the OHD races each year. For more, see EldridgeSeaSaga.com.

Sources: The design and art works of Karla Fowler, “Ships of the Inland Sea” by Gordon Newell, “Tugboats on Puget Sound” by Chuck Fowler and Capt. Mark Freeman (Arcadia Publishing), parthia.com/ships/parthia, The Olympia Newspaper, the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, interview with Robert’ Shashinda.

Tug of the Month is sponsored by Olympia Harbor Days Tugboat Races and Festival, an Olympia Kiwanis Club event. It is edited by Carol Riley, OHD Executive Director. OHD is a free community event that takes place every Labor Day weekend on the Olympia waterfront. It is in its 44th year. For attendance information see www.HarborDays.com, or on Facebook, @OlympiaHarborDays. Questions to the Executive Director at info@HarborDays.com.