

# PATRÓN

The Tug of the Month: PATRÓN, 2016 Logo tug for the Olympia Harbor Days (OHD) Festival and Races.

by Les Eldridge

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PATRÓN is unusual, if not unique, in two aspects: She was purpose-built (for a specific project) and, after construction, she was cut into four sections so she could be shipped by railroad flat car to the project site, high in Washington State's Northern Cascade Mountains. Further, she was first of her type on Puget Sound, designed by the noted naval architect and engineer H. C. Hanson of Seattle.

Hanson declared, with justifiable pride, that her steel construction at the Commercial Boiler Works of Seattle in 1937 combined "great strength and lightness with low cost," like the well-known Hanson-designed steel barges.



Photo Courtesy Olympia Harbor Days

She was constructed for the General-Shea-Columbia Construction Company for work on Seattle City Light's upper Ruby Dam, at the head of the Skagit River. The two dams at this mountain location, later named Ross and Diablo, formed Ruby Lake, later Ross Lake, a reservoir. She was built in five weeks, cut up, and reassembled at the lake. After her years at the lake, her work there complete, she was disassembled, shipped back to the Seattle waterfront, reassembled, and made ready for more conventional towing duties.

PATRÓN'S length-over-all is 52 feet, with a 15 foot beam, and she draws six feet. She is still equipped with her original 160 horsepower Washington diesel engine. Her construction type mirrored the low-cost Hanson scows because of simplified design, welded steel construction and rapid completion, all designed to keep costs comparable to those of wood construction.

PATRÓN later worked in Alaska on the Valdez oil spill, where she also refueled helicopters transporting logging camp workers in SE Alaska, by means of a helicopter landing pad mounted on her bow.



Photo Courtesy Olympia Harbor Days

Her skipper, Brian Parke, bought her from Western Tow Boat Company of Seattle in 2012. Western Tow Boat was founded in 1948 by Bob Shrewsbury, Sr. with a single tug, and now boasts 22 tugs and seven barges, many of them ocean-going tugs of more than 100 feet in length. Shrewsbury's son Bob and his grandchildren are now active in running the company, and the bright blue and yellow trimmed boats can be seen from Panama to Hawaii to Alaska, where the company partners with Alaska Marine Lines, and tows rail car barges to Whittier for Alaska Railroad. Occasionally, you'll find them on their way to or from Alaska in the Inland Passage. Western Tow Boat is unusual among tug companies in that it has its own shipyard in Seattle's Ballard district, and has for many years built its own boats.

As PATRÓN enters her eightieth year, her present skipper, Brain Parke, home-ports PATRÓN in Everett on the Snohomish River. He is an enthusiastic participant in Olympia Harbor Days Festival and Races, having entered PATRÓN in the Harbor Tug event in 2015 and 2016, where she finished fourth in a time of 12 minutes, 2 seconds. She can frequently be found at maritime events and celebrations throughout Puget Sound.



Patron Racing Photo Courtesy LG Evans Maritime Images

PATRÓN was selected as the 2016 OHD logo tug. The annual logo tug for OHD is selected based on participation and age. A tug can only be selected as a logo boat once. For a list of our logo boats please HarborDays.com. We look forward to many more years of Olympia Harbor Days encounters with PATRÓN.

**Sources:** Pacific Motor Boat Magazine, The Olympian Newspaper, westerntowboat.com, Tugboats Illustrated by Paul Farrell, W.W. Norton, 2016.

**About Les Eldridge:** Les is president of South Sound Maritime Heritage Association, and is author of a number of maritime histories and five novels of the American Civil War at sea. His maritime articles have appeared in several on-line and print outlets, magazines and journals. He lectures frequently ashore and afloat, and narrates the OHD Races each Year. For more, see EldridgeSeaSaga.com.

**Tug of the Month** is sponsored by Olympia Harbor Days Tugboat Races and Festival, an Olympia Kiwanis Club event. The articles are edited by Carol Riley, Executive Director, OHD, with many illustrations by noted marine artist Karla Fowler. The free community event takes place every Labor Day weekend on the Olympia waterfront. It is in its 44<sup>th</sup> year. For attendance information, see [www.HarborDays.com](http://www.HarborDays.com) or go to Facebook@OlympiaHarborDays. Questions to the Executive Director at [info@HarborDays.com](mailto:info@HarborDays.com).