

Boatyard bustles amid covid-19 closures

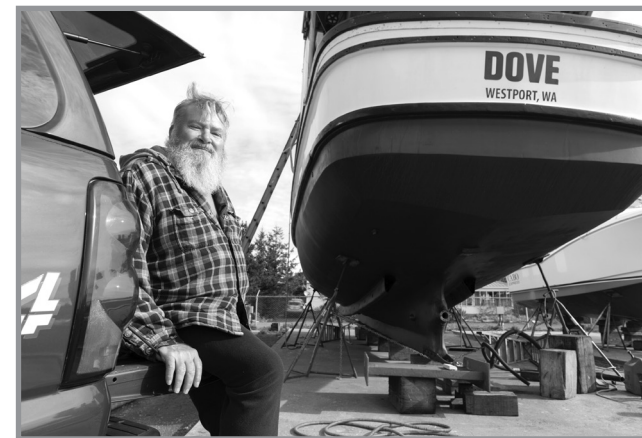
While some recreational and commercial fishing seasons continue to be sidelined by the coronavirus many are seizing the opportunity and staying busy at the boatyard.



Jerry Matzen III, 34, bought F/V Ocean Conquest in January, his first as sole owner. The 40-foot, 25-ton boat, was built in Canada in 1967 'by an old Finlander'. Matzen planned to replace the deck, add a crab block, fix the roof, reconnect the steering, remove the stabilizers and repaint the hull in preparation for the upcoming commercial fishing season.



Harvey Cosky, 80, fished for more than 50 years before an accident in August 2019. He was returning from a tuna-fishing trip in the Ilwaco Channel, his final on the F/V Koko. "It was blowing 35 or 40 knots and raining heavy. We slowed down because we couldn't see anything. We were also having electrical problems on the boat too. When we slowed down, the current and the wind pushed us over into the pilings.



Rick Johnson, 65, is a commercial tuna and salmon fisherman and makes a regular pilgrimage to the Port of Ilwaco Boatyard ahead of each season. "I come down here every year," Johnson said. "We've been begging them at Westport. They had one, then they turned it into crab processing. The Ilwaco Boatyard is a godsend. This place is wonderful."

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ILWACO — The Port of Ilwaco Boatyard had been bustling with fishermen eager to get their vessels in shipshape for the upcoming seasons.

Jerry Matzen III, F/V Ocean Conquest

Jerry Matzen III, 34, bought F/V Ocean Conquest in January, his first as sole owner.

The 40-foot, 25-ton boat, was built in Canada in 1967 "by an old Finlander," he explained.

Matzen planned to replace the deck, add a crab block, fix the roof, reconnect the steering, remove the stabilizers and repaint the hull.

"They (stabilizers) were used to stabilize the vessel when it was used as a sport boat, but we can't run fishing gear like that," he said. The most labor-intensive work will be replacing the deck and painting the hull, Matzen said, adding that he expects the repairs to take about a month, finishing in June. Assisting Matzen in the undertaking was Ross Kary.

The vessel has an International diesel engine, a platform that's powered everything from city buses to farm tractors.

"It was originally a tractor engine, it runs like a top," Matzen said.

The vessel, originally from British Columbia, will be homeported in Ilwaco.

"The couple that bought it brought it here and moored it," Matzen said. "It was an older couple not living in the area that didn't want to handle the boat anymore and it had started to fall into disrepair. The port helped me connect with them. The owners wanted it to go to someone who was going to love it."

Matzen is eager to get the boat on the water and begin earning a bigger paycheck as a captain instead of a deckhand.

"It's usually twice as much," he said. "It makes a guy want to get his own. This is a good one to start with."

Harvey Cosky, F/V Koko

Under a warm April sun, Harvey Cosky, 80, worked to break apart the boat he built and operated for more than 40 years.

"It costs too much for what it's worth now. I'm tearing it apart so they can finish breaking it up," he said.

It was the final chapter for the F/V Koko, a 47-foot vessel named after his pet parrot.

"All sea captains have a parrot don't you know?," Cosky joked.

"I made my first delivery to Jesse's in 1969. I fished everything, but mainly tuna for the last 15-20 years."

Cosky built five boats over the course of his fishing career, he said.

"I built my other boat (F/V EZ 1) for about \$130,000. The insurance company said I have to have a crew build it in the yard now and it would be about \$1.5 million. You have to follow new regulations and have a Coast Guard approved plan certified every step of the way. You have to do it in the boat yard, you can't do it at home anymore."

The rising regulatory costs have made it harder for young fishermen to pursue the profession as a career, Cosky said.

"There's not much you fish for anymore and still make money. With all the regulations and permits, you can't even build a boat because they make it so expensive. When I started fishing, I started in a skiff. For a young man now, a salmon permit is \$20,000 in Washington alone. If you want to fish all three states — Washington, Oregon, California — as most do, it's \$60,000 just in the permission to go do it. You don't have to have permits for tuna, so that's the only thing a young man can get into now and it's spotty at best. So it's time for me to retire, I guess."

Cosky fished for more than 50 years before an accident in August 2019. He was returning from a tuna-fishing trip in the Ilwaco Channel, his final on the F/V Koko.

"It was blowing 35 or 40 knots and raining heavy. We slowed down because we couldn't see anything. We were also having electrical problems on the boat too. When we slowed down, the

current and the wind pushed us over into the pilings. It's hard to go forward when you can't see anything. That's life."

Cosky was initially optimistic the vessel could be salvaged, but soon discovered repair costs would be too expensive.

"I started tearing all the wiring out and we found it had gotten moldy behind the paneling, so we had to pull everything out including the tanks. It was just on and on,"

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Cosky estimated it would cost more than \$240,000 in parts alone.

"I would have to pay for three new engines, and a tier-3 engine is \$50,000 a piece. You have more than \$120,000 just in engines, not including gearboxes and all that. Sonar would be another \$15,000."

He now plans to part out the boat before it's crushed up and hauled to the dump in the coming weeks.

"The two-inch shaft is desirable. The propellers are \$1,000 each. You start adding everything up."

Rick Johnson, F/V Dove

Commercial tuna and salmon fisherman Rick Johnson, 65, makes a regular pilgrimage to the Port of Ilwaco ahead of each season.

"I come down here every year," said Johnson who lives in Puyallup and homeports his vessel in Westport.

"We've been begging them at Westport. They had one, then