

At 75, Chihuly shares struggles with mental health

By GENE JOHNSON
Associated Press

SEATTLE — The private studio of glass artist Dale Chihuly reflects his long obsession with collecting. Sheets of stamps cover one table; pocket knives are marshaled on another. Carnival-prize figurines from the first half of the 20th century line shelves that reach the ceiling.

Amid the ordered clutter, some items hint at more than Chihuly's eclectic tastes: a long row of Ernest Hemingway titles in one bookcase, and in another an entire wall devoted to Vincent van Gogh — homages to creative geniuses racked by depression.

Chihuly, too, has struggled with his mental health, by turns fragile and luminous like the art he makes. Now 75 and still in the thrall of a decades-long career, he discussed his bipolar disorder in detail for the first time publicly in an interview with The Associated Press. He and his wife, Leslie Chihuly, said they don't want to omit from his legacy a large part of who he is.

"It's a pretty remarkable moment to be able to have this conversation," she said. "We really want to open our lives a little bit and share something more personal. ... Dale's a great example of somebody who can have a successful marriage and a successful family life and successful career — and suffer from a



AP Photo/Ted S. Warren

Glass artist Dale Chihuly poses for a photo in one of his studios in Seattle in March. Chihuly is a pioneer of the glass art movement and is internationally known for styles that include vibrant seashell-like shapes and ambitious installations in botanical gardens and museums. He lost sight in his left eye in a 1976 car crash. More photos online at DailyAstorian.com

really debilitating, chronic disease. That might be helpful for other people."

A pioneer

Chihuly, who began working with glass in the 1960s, is a pioneer of the glass art movement. Known for styles that include vibrant seashell-like shapes, baskets, chandeliers and ambitious installations in botanical gardens and museums, he has said that pushing the material to new forms, creating objects never before seen, fascinates him.

Even in the past year he has found a new way of working with glass — painting with glass enamel on glass panes, stacking the panes together

and back-lighting them to give them a visual depth. He calls it "Glass on Glass," and it's featured for the first time in the new Chihuly Sanctuary at the Buffett Cancer Center in Omaha, Nebraska, and at an indoor-outdoor exhibit opening June 3 at the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas.

But the flip side of that creativity has sometimes been dark. He began suffering from depression in his 20s, he said, and those spells began to alternate with manic periods beginning in his late 40s.

"I'm usually either up or down," Chihuly said. "I don't have neutral very much. When I'm up I'm usually working on



Chihuly Studio/via AP

Glass artist Dale Chihuly uses a broom to paint on the deck of his Boathouse facility in Seattle in 1992. Chihuly, who began working with glass in the 1960s, is a pioneer of the glass art movement.

several projects. A lot of times it's about a six-month period. When I'm down, I kind of go into hibernation."

He still works but doesn't feel as good about it. His wife noted that if he only went into the studio when he was up, he "wouldn't have had a career."

Asked what his down periods are like, Chihuly took a long pause. "Just pretty tough," he said. "I'm lucky that I like movies. If I don't feel good, I'll put on a movie."

His wife

Leslie Chihuly, who runs his studio, is more loquacious about the difficulties his condition has posed in their 25-year relationship.

They've tried to manage it as a family with various types of counseling, medication and a 1-to-10 scale system that allows him to communicate how he's feeling when he doesn't want to talk about it, she said.

Chihuly gave up drinking 15 years ago, and it's been more than a decade since he was "life-threateningly depressed," she said, though he's never been suicidal.

"Dale has an impeccable memory about certain things, but there have been certain periods of time when he's been hypomanic, as we call it, or depressed, and I'll be the keeper for our family and our business around those difficult times," she said.

She met him in 1992 after a mutual friend set them up. He was in a near-manic period, talking about an idea for bringing glassblowers from around the world to Venice, Italy, to display their art in the city's canals. He had no plan and no funding, but she was eager to help him realize his vision — one that would eventually be depicted in the public television documentary "Chihuly Over Venice."

Six months later, they traveled to an exhibit opening at the Brooklyn Museum in New York.

"It was like the lights went out," she said, choking back a sob. "All of a sudden the guy who was interested in everything ... that guy wasn't there."

Dale Chihuly remained

quiet as his wife described that moment. A tear fell from beneath the recognizable eyepatch he has worn since he lost sight in his left eye in a 1976 car crash.

Though the mood swings were new to Leslie Chihuly at the time, they were familiar to the other artists Chihuly worked with. Joey Kirkpatrick met him in 1979, when she attended Pilchuck Glass School, which Chihuly founded in the woods north of Seattle in 1971. It was a small summer workshop; the students constructed their own shelter. She and her partner, Flora Mace, spent many hours watching movies with him during his down periods.

"What amazed me about it is his persistence at picking the thing, his creative life, that would pull him along or keep him going through those times," she said. "When he was up, he could call you up at Pilchuck on a Sunday night and say, 'Meet me at the airport at 10 tomorrow, we've got a flight to Pittsburgh to go to some demonstration.' It was always exciting. When he was down, there wasn't that. It was quieter."

Chihuly said the message he'd have for others struggling with the condition would be to "see a good shrink" and to "try to live with it, to know that when they're really depressed, it's going to change, before too long. And to take advantage when they do feel up to get as much done as they can."

Newly built trawler may get grounded by old maritime law

Too much foreign steel

By KARA CARLSON
Seattle Times

The largest, most modern American-made trawler built in nearly three decades may be barred from fishing in U.S. waters, with financial repercussions to its local builder and buyer "so draconian that neither company may survive."

That's the scenario painted by the law firm that Anacortes, Washington, shipyard Dakota Creek Industries has hired to seek a rare waiver from a century-old law called the Jones Act, which they acknowledge wasn't properly followed when the shipyard began building the state-of-the-art, \$75 million vessel America's Finest.

The shipyard's mistake — using too much foreign steel that was modified before coming into the U.S. — could mean the advanced ship must be sold abroad at a big loss.

According to the law firm's May briefing paper on the situation, that could "eliminate two Washington companies (and) more than 500 highly paid and skilled trade jobs."

Big upgrade

Fishermen's Finest, a fishing company based in Anacortes and Kirkland, hoped the 264-foot catcher processor would represent a big upgrade from its two 40-year-old vessels, and help make the fishing industry here safer and more sustainable.

But as it nears completion, the vessel threatens to sink both the fishing company and the shipbuilder.

Charlie Papavizas, a Jones Act expert at the Winston & Strawn law firm in Washington, D.C., who's not involved with the case, said that without a waiver there are no good options for the companies.

Legislation passed early this decade opened the door for replacing the nation's aging fishing fleets. That led Fishermen's Finest to take the plunge, deciding to replace



Mike Nelson/Dakota Creek Industries

The trawler, named America's Finest, is being built for the fishing company Fishermen's Finest by Dakota Creek Industries shipyard in Anacortes, Washington.

one of its two nearly 40-year-old ships.

It has already spent \$62 million of the estimated \$75 million cost of the ship, which is 86 percent complete and expected to be ready in November.

"Someone has to go first," said Dennis Moran, president of Fishermen's Finest. He compared it to penguins lining up at the edge of the ice, ready for one to venture in and test whether the water is safe.

"We're the penguin and now everyone is waiting to see if we pop our head up," he said.

Jones Act

The Jones Act, the common name for the Merchant Marine Act of 1920, regulates a wide range of ship-related laws, from workers injured at sea to when passengers can board cruise ships.

In order to fish or transport goods and people within U.S. waters, a ship must be assembled in the U.S. by American workers, and all major parts of the hull must be made with American materials.

Steel plates, beams or bars can be bought abroad and still qualify, but work on these materials must be done in an American shipyard.

"A foreign worker drilling a single hole, or making a single bend on a 2-ton steel plate will automatically disqualify the entire weight of that plate" as American-made under the Jones Act, no matter how much additional work is done on it in the U.S., according to the briefing paper by Jon Waldron, a maritime lawyer at Blank Rome in Washington, D.C.

Such foreign-made parts are limited to 1.5 percent of a ship's weight, under U.S. Coast Guard rules.

But because Dakota Creek had parts of the hull cut and bent in Holland before being processed in the U.S., America's Finest has about 10 percent foreign parts by weight, according to Blank Rome.

Waldron's brief says the actual value of the foreign work on the steel was only \$275,000, or 0.4 percent of the ship's cost — but "because the foreign work was done on many different plates, all those plates are disqualified."

Jim Gilmore, director of public affairs of At-sea Processors Association, a Seattle-based industry group for the Alaskan fishery, said he's never heard of a similar situation with a ship coming out of an American shipyard without qualifying under the Jones Act. It's a rule most shipyards should know, he said.

Dakota Creek Vice President Mike Nelson said the company was unfamiliar with details such as the 1.5 percent standard. Company officials were also unaware that compliance could be checked beforehand by submitting plans to a Coast Guard office, he said.

Industry shifts

Moran of Fishermen's Finest said there's a lot riding on the completion of the catcher processor — a ship that uses long nets for catching fish and then processes them and stores them onboard.

Dakota Creek built the last 200-plus-foot Jones Act-compliant catcher processor in the United States — the Starbound in 1989.

After that, regulations designed for fishery conservation limited which vessels could fish and made it difficult to replace or add ships to a fleet. In the past decade, fresh rules began allowing a new vessel to be added to a fleet if it replaces another.

Moran said America's Finest would be a "big step" in bringing the industry updated technology that reduces greenhouse emissions, improves safety and uses more of the fish that are caught. Nelson believes the new technology would end up saving fishing companies money in the long run.

Moran said Dakota Creek does have a contractual obligation to give Fishermen's Finest a Jones Act-compliant ship.

Waldron said this isn't an attempt to set a precedent for more ships to gain exceptions, or to overturn the Jones Act; Dakota Creek is trying to get a case-specific exception for this ship only.

Political salvage effort

Jones Act waivers have been granted before, but a situation like this is extremely rare, said Papavizas, the independent attorney.

For example, someone who buys a 10- to 12-person com-

mercial passenger vessel at a boat show might not know the Jones Act requirements and later find out that the vessel would be considered foreign, not American. In order to legally operate the ship in U.S. waters they would need to be granted an exemption.

Papavizas said he didn't expect the case to set any precedent. Even if Dakota Creek obtains a Coast Guard waiver, "There's not a high chance of this flying a second time," he said.

The lobbying effort has gained support from U.S. Rep. Rick Larsen, whose district includes Anacortes. The House transportation and infrastructure committee in May approved a Larsen-sponsored amendment to the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2017 that would allow an exemption for America's Finest.

Larsen told his colleagues Dakota Creek is vital to his district and "a lifeline to the U.S. maritime industry," adding, "It's not a mistake we made, but one we can solve."

Douglas Wagoner, a Larsen spokesman, said the congressman had learned about the issue with the trawler the week before, and 225 Dakota Creek workers urged him to take action.

The waiver would still have to be passed by both houses of Congress.

Nelson is hoping that happens by late summer or early fall, before the expected delivery of the ship. If the companies can get past their current mess, he believes the America's Finest embodies technology that would end up saving the fishing industry money in the long run.

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