

THE MANY LIVES OF ‘TOURIST NO. 2’



The Astorian

While the future of the boat is unclear, its owner wants to keep Ferry No. 2 in Astoria.

By **KATHERINE LACAZE**
Seaside Signal

Several years ago, Kathy and Steve Gleaves were in the market for a new residence in Washington and considering a boat. They saw an ad for a defunct ferry and perused it several times before determining it wasn't a worthwhile financial venture and moving to Seaside instead.

Fast forward to 2016 when they heard about a group of individuals working to repair the historic Astorian ferry, Tourist No. 2. As Steve is an electrical engineer specializing in ferries, the couple decided to offer their assistance.

As they approached the Tourist No. 2, it struck them as strangely familiar and they quickly realized it was the same one they had considered purchasing.

"We just have this really weird attachment to this boat," Kathy said while presenting for the Seaside Museum and Historical Society's History and Hops lecture Dec. 26. During their lecture, the Gleaves shared a history of the Tourist No. 2, along with its current status.

"It has had so many lives, you just can't believe it's still floating," Kathy said.

Cpt. Elfving's tenacity

It all started in the late 1800s when the Astoria and Columbia River Railroad was built. Although freight was its original intent, tourism became popular as well. In 1920, Cpt. Fritz Elfving decided to capitalize on the dilemma of travelers needing to cross the mouth of the Columbia River to get from Astoria to Washington.

He developed the Astoria-McGowan Ferry Company, starting with a scow that could carry nine cars and then added a new ferry called the Tourist that could carry 15 cars and 30 passengers. As rail service increased on both sides of the river, Kathy said, summer tourism also increased. Elfving once again seized the opportunity to meet the demand by building the Tourist No. 2, a 22-foot ferry that could carry 20 cars and 155 passengers.

Seeing that Elfving was profiting off railway passengers, the railroad created its own competing ferry system. Their vessels took off from Astoria and went to Port Elise, north of Megler. In 1930, the railroad's ferry operations were sold to Cpt. Calvin E. Stewart who



Katherine Lacaze

Seaside resident Kathy Gleaves gives a history of the Tourist No. 2, a ferry boat built in 1924 in Astoria that has had several lives since, during the Seaside Museum and Historical Society's History and Hops on Dec. 26.



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Steve Gleaves presents on the Astoria Ferry Group's efforts to restore the Tourist No. 2 ferry.

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incorporated the business as the Columbia Transportation Company and launched a plan to put Elfving out of business.

Stewart began buying underwater land around Elfving's ferry terminal and, one night, he hired a crew to drive piles across the entrance. Although it could be folklore, Kathy said, the story is that Elfving, upon encountering the intrusion, "backed (his) ferry up, put it full speed ahead, and rammed right through those pilings."

The dispute between the two companies continued until Elfving bought out Stewart in 1932 and combined the two companies as the Astoria-North Beach Ferry Company.

Wartime efforts

The Tourist No. 2's second life was during World War II, when the U.S. Army purchased the boat and refitted her for military service. At first, she was used to transport troops but when a Japanese submarine made its way up the Columbia in June 1942 and fired on Fort Stevens, the military determined more protection was needed at the mouth of the Columbia. The Tourist No. 2 was put to work as a mine-layer along with other ships and renamed the Octopus.

The boat's military career came to an end with the conclusion of World War II. In 1946, Elfving purchased

me he was not in favor of that change."

Riding the ferry remained a popular family outing throughout the 1950s and up until the completion of the Astoria-Megler Bridge in 1966.

However, the Tourist No. 2 had plenty of life left in her. She was sold to Pierce County, Washington. Renamed the Islander of Pierce County, she spent 30 more years near Tacoma, carrying cars and passengers across the Puget Sound.

Back to Astoria

In 1996, the boat "slid into retirement as a show-girl," Kathy said. She was purchased by Seattle-based Argosy Cruises, given a glamour makeover, and once again renamed, this time as the MV Kirkland. She served as a dinner cruise boat for about 14 years until an electrical fire in the engine room put her out of commission.

Cpt. Christian Lint purchased the boat for \$10,000 and rented it out for parties and special events. It was under his ownership that the Gleaves considered purchasing the boat to live in. A few years later, Robert "Jake" Jacobs, owner of the Cannery Pier Hotel, initiated an effort to bring the ferry back to Astoria, which was agreed upon by Lint. A group of local community members and business owners joined forced to form the nonprofit Ferry Boat Group.

On Aug. 1, 2016, Lint and his engineer, Capt. Jim Pea-

cock, crossed the Columbia River Bar on the boat. The Ferry Boat Group, with the help of Lint, spent the next couple years trying to raise funds, organize volunteers, and renovate the boat. However, based on an evaluation from the U.S. Coast Guard, it would take more than \$1 million for the boat

to be made capable of carrying passengers and leaving the area, Steve said.

As it stands, the Tourist No. 2 has been turned back over to Lint. The future of the boat is unclear, but it is Steve's understanding the captain "wants to keep the boat in Astoria," where she belongs.

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