



# Waterlines

Spring 2016

## KMM Plans Expanded Harbor Tours in 2016



*KMM tour guide Ani Thomas explains a salmon seine net to tourists from the Holland America*

After five years of presenting walking harbor tours to hundreds of tour ship visitors each summer, KMM will be expanding the tours this year to accommodate other visitors to Kodiak.

Beginning in May, the museum plans to offer the tours to B&B guests, visiting relatives of island visitors, and anyone else who is curious about Alaska's fishing industry.

The expanded tour will likely be initially offered on a weekly schedule until the museum can gauge interest.

KMM's 90 minute guided tours take visitors along the floats in the harbor, educating visitors about the different kinds of boats and gear which work around Kodiak. The tour also presents information about the various fish and crustaceans caught by commercial fishermen around Kodiak and in the Bering Sea, and helps people appreciate the marine ecosystem which supports Kodiak's fishing industry.

Ani Thomas, the museum's main tour

guide, has been showing people around the harbor since 2011, when the museum began the tours.

A fisherman and Alaska Department of Fish and Game employee in years past, Ani, knows the boats, the gear, and the people who work out of the Kodiak harbor, and is passionate about passing that knowledge on to visitors.

Ani leads guests through hands-on examinations of boats and fishing gear, including crab pots, longline gear, and trawl nets. The tour ends in front of the Fishermen's Memorial at Fishermen's Hall, where visitors learn about the risks of being a commercial fisherman in Alaska and are invited to try on a survival suit.

The tour is well known in the harbor, and it is not unusual for fishermen to engage tour guests and to relate their own personal stories of working at sea.

On one memorable tour in 2014, local fisherman Ed Monkewicz stepped out on the deck of his boat, Monk's Habit, to give KMM tour visitors a detailed run down on the longline operation on his boat.

While showing the visitors halibut hooks and explaining how the deck machinery worked, he also talked about how fish and fishermen were managed through the IFQ system.

The museum will update its webpage this spring to feature information about the tours and how to sign up for them.

For more information, contact KMM at: [info@kodiakmaritimemuseum.org](mailto:info@kodiakmaritimemuseum.org).

## KMM at Comfish 2016

Kodiak Maritime Museum will again be part of Kodiak Comfish, from Thursday March 31 to Saturday, April 2nd.

KMM board members, staff and supporters will man the KMM booth at the Kodiak Harbor Convention Center.

Information will be available about the Thelma C Project, KMM's Harbor Tour, and the May opening of the "West Side Stories," exhibit at the Baranov Museum.

KMM will also participate in a Comfish forum from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 31, at the Kodiak Inn conference room. The forum, sponsored by the Alaska Cannery Initiative, will host three presentations on Kodiak cannery history.

KMM Executive Director Toby Sullivan will talk about the 1981 murders of two Filipino cannery worker activists, and the anti-discrimination lawsuit they were part of, which reached the Supreme Court.

Anjuli Grantham, from the Alaska Cannery Initiative, will talk about Kodiak's early cannery history. Megan Kouremetis, an Alitak Bay setnetter, will talk about the history of the Alitak cannery.



*Visitors at the 2015 KMM Comfish booth.*

## From the Wheelhouse —

Earlier this year, the Kodiak Daily Mirror ran a story under a KMM byline about the John and Olaf, an 86 foot Kodiak shrimp boat which got into trouble in a severe winter storm in Shelikof Strait more than forty years ago. I got an important fact wrong in that story, and for record, I'd like to correct it here.

On January 17, 1974, the Coast Guard spotted the boat aground in Portage Bay, on the mainland across from Kodiak Island, sheathed in tons of ice. The four men on board were gone, apparently having abandoned ship in the belief that the vessel was in danger of rolling over from the weight of the ice on the hull and superstructure.

The boat's empty life raft was found the next day on Tugidak Island, 60 miles downwind from Portage Bay. Exactly what happened to the men remains a mystery.

Lost were Captain John Blaaid, 47 of Kodiak, Arthur Gilbert, 47, also of Kodiak, Arthur's son, David, 22, and Ivar Gjerde, a Norwegian national, whose age in 1974 is unknown.



*John and Olaf, January 17, 1974*

but he had actually been 47 in 1974.

I'd researched the tragedy from a series of 1974 Kodiak Daily Mirror articles, but the Mirror had gotten Arthur's age wrong then, and because it is the newspaper of record here, the error had lived on in citations like mine. For the family, the error had been a minor but ongoing part of the greater tragedy for the family for four decades.

We've corrected Arthur's age in the online version of the article, which you can read here: <http://kodiakmaritimemuseum.blogspot.com>. Local history is the stories of people's lives, and we take it seriously at Kodiak Maritime Museum.

-Toby Sullivan, Executive Director

Some weeks after the story appeared, I ran into Sue Gilbert Byers, whose father and brother were lost on the John and Olaf.

She told me I'd gotten her father's age wrong- the piece listed Arthur Gilbert as 45,

## Are You Interested in Helping to Preserve, Present, and Interpret Kodiak's Maritime History?



*Kodiak Maritime Museum's Board of Directors*

From the very beginning in 1992, when four local fisherwomen sat down and began planning for the creation of the Kodiak Maritime Museum, the organization has depended on volunteer citizens to keep Kodiak's maritime history alive.

Sue Jeffrey, Virginia Adams, Lacey Berns and Wanda Fields were concerned that, while commercial fishing was central to the story of Kodiak, much of that history was in danger of being lost. They organized the museum and began looking for ways "to recognize, preserve, and interpret Kodiak's maritime heritage." They also recruited like minded people to help guide the new museum toward those goals.

The KMM Board of Directors has been that guiding force for twenty four years. Twelve volunteer citizens currently sit on the board, but with various life changes, several of our board members are moving on to other things.

KMM Board members do vital work in the community and are rewarded with the satisfaction of being part of something important to Kodiak and larger than themselves.

We also have opportunities for volunteers on several of our maritime history projects.

If you have an interest in maritime history and a desire to contribute to the Kodiak community, we encourage you to get in touch with us and come on board.

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### KODIAK MARITIME MUSEUM

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## Thelma C Exhibit Interpretive Plan Finalized

In January, KMM Board of Directors and Staff finalized details in the draft interpretive plan for the Thelma C Project. The plan narrows down the themes and language for the interpretive panels which will be a part of the exhibit.

Several public meetings were held in 2014 to identify important narratives for the exhibit. The 1964 earthquake and tsunami, a brief history of salmon fishing on Kodiak, and the technology of salmon fishing emerged as the main themes of the exhibit.

KMM staff and board members are also currently fine-tuning the text for the interpretive panels. The text will accompany photos supporting the stories the exhibit will tell. Photos will come from the KMM archives, as well as from the Kodiak Historical Society.

In January the Kodiak City Council approved the final reading of a long term lease for the Thelma C Exhibit site, on the spit adjacent to Kodiak's small boat harbor. The 25 year lease applies to a small parcel encompassing the exhibit, and includes a provision for two five-year extensions.

Obtaining the lease was a vital part of the project, allowing for the museum to have legal site control when construction commences.

A geotech survey of the site was also conducted in December to help PND Engineering identify the underlying soil and rock in



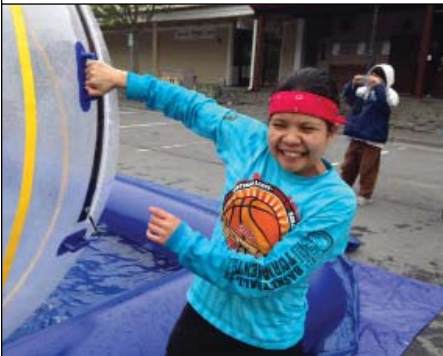
*Plunging off the Karluk Spit, August 1961. Photo: Eli Malutin*

order to configure the underpinnings of the exhibit platform.

The museum has also approved a draft proposal from Brechan Enterprises Inc. to build the exhibit, although actual construction is on hold as the museum awaits further funding.

The museum has applied for funding from several foundations and Federal agencies, and hopes to know more about the status of these requests later in the spring.

## Gerbil Balls at Crab Fest 2016



KMM will again host "Gerbil Bay," at the 2016 Crab Fest. The water walking balls were a hit at the festival in 2015.

This year, due to a no-compete covenant between the Kodiak Chamber of Commerce and Golden Wheel Amusements, the attraction will be set up a short distance away from the midway. We'll keep you posted on the location as we get closer to Crab Fest.

## Tom Sweeney: Insurance Man to the King Crab Fleet

Tom Sweeney had an insurance business in Kodiak for years, and insured much of the Kodiak King Crab in the golden days of the fishery.

KMM spoke with Tom earlier this year about the boat insurance business, as part of the museum's oral history series, "When Crab Was King."

The museum also worked with photographer Alf Pryor to create Tom's photo portrait for the "Faces of the Kodiak King Crab Fishery," project.

One story Tom told us involved a new man at one of the insurers which held the policies on the entire Kodiak crab fleet.

"He didn't like fishing boats and he canceled all their insurance in the middle of crab season. I had to call all the boats to tell them to get back to the dock. We went to court and the judge straightened it out, but it was a mess, I'll tell you."



*Tom Sweeney, March 15, 2015  
Faces of the Kodiak King Crab Fishery*



*The Prinsendam listing in the Gulf of Alaska  
October 4, 1980*

## The 1980 Prinsendam Disaster

Just after midnight on Saturday, October 4, 1980, a fire broke out in the engine room of the 427 foot Prinsendam, a Holland America cruise ship with 320 mostly elderly passengers, and 200 Indonesian crewmen and Dutch officers on board. The ship was 150 miles south of Yakutat on a cruise from Vancouver to Singapore.

The crew sealed the engine room and flooded it with CO<sub>2</sub>, but the fire went quickly out of control.

A few minutes before 1 a.m., 52 year old Captain Cornelius Wabeke ordered his radio officer, Jack Van der Zee, to send out a distress call. On hearing it, Coast Guard Communications Station Kodiak requested that the Prinsendam send a coded SOS message which would ring an alarm bell on any nearby ships. The Captain however, concerned that an SOS would give away

salvage rights to the Prinsendam, directed his radio officer to hold off on the alert. Van der Zee made the SOS broadcast anyway, saying later that "If I lose my license, get fined, and go to jail, at least I will be alive and so will the passengers and crew, God willing."

At 1 a.m. Captain Wabeke informed the passengers of a "small fire in the engine room," and ordered them to the promenade deck. They arrived dressed in everything from tuxedos to night dresses. Some were barefoot.

The Coast Guard meanwhile began coordinating a rescue with helicopters and C-130s from Sitka, Kodiak, and Anchorage, and the cutters Boutwell in Juneau and Woodrush in Sitka, and the Mellon, near Vancouver. The Exxon tanker Williamsburg, 90 miles south of the Prinsendam, turned around and headed for the burning ship.

By 2:00 a.m. the smoke in the promenade lounge had forced the passengers outside. Underdressed people wrapped themselves in draperies torn from the dining room windows. By 3:30 the fire had burned through the wiring to the ship's fire fighting pumps and the ship had developed a starboard list as water entered the hull through portholes blown out by the fire. Sometime between 5 a.m. and 6:30 a.m. Wabeke gave the order to abandon ship.

Lifeboats, life rafts and a ship's tender were lowered. While the officers tried to maintain order, many of the crewmen climbed over the passengers in a panic to get aboard the boats. Several boats, designed for 60 passengers, were launched with 90 people aboard. Captain Wabeke, a fire fighting crew, several Coast Guardsmen who had helicoptered in, and some of the ship's entertainers remained behind.

The Williamsburg arrived around 8 a.m. and Coast Guard helicopters began ferrying people from the lifeboats to a helipad on the tanker. A Coast Guard doctor triaged the passengers and put those in poor shape onto helicopters headed for Yakutat to refuel. Various passengers were afflicted with malaria, epileptic seizures and terminal cancer. All of them were cold, wet, and hungry.



*Prinsendam survivors, October 4, 1980.*

Winds at dawn were 10 knots with five foot seas, but by 5 p.m., the wind had increased to 50 knots and the helicopters could no longer manage the lifts. The cutter Boutwell lowered a small launch, but the Prinsendam's crew again trampled the passengers, so the effort was abandoned. The cutter then lowered a 40 foot Jacob's ladder, but this was more than many of the passengers could manage. Eventually, they were winched onto the Boutwell's deck with a sling.

Captain Wabeke, the last man on the Prinsendam, was lifted off the deck around 6 p.m. The Williamsburg headed for Valdez with 450 passengers. The Boutwell went to Sitka with the rest. On October 11, a week after the fire began, the ship rolled on its side and sank in 8,000 feet of water.

A Dutch Court of Inquiry reprimanded Captain Wabeke and some of his officers for mishandling the emergency, effectively ending their careers. Radio Officer Van der Zee was awarded the Order of the Netherlands by Queen Beatrix for doing the right thing.

As in most disasters there were moments of greatness and of ignominy, but in the end, remarkably, 520 people were rescued from a burning ship 150 miles from land, in October, in Alaska, without loss of life. In number of lives saved at sea, it is the U.S. Coast Guard's finest rescue effort. (Note- The exact count of passengers and crew varies depending on which source is used. The numbers cited here are from an August 4, 2007, Coast Guard Report, "Top Ten Coast Guard Rescues.")



# “West Side Stories” Exhibit to Open in May

A new exhibit about the people who live and work on the west side of Kodiak Island opens in late May at the Baranov Museum.

The exhibit, produced by the Baranov Museum with help from Kodiak Maritime Museum, KMXT radio, and the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge, will feature photos and audio recordings of the people who live and work on the west side, as well as photos and artifacts from setnet cabins, lodges, and canneries. A mock-up of a setnet cabin, using items gleaned from working setnet cabins, will also be displayed.

The exhibit is designed to give visitors a better understanding of the lives of salmon setnet fishermen and others who make their livings on the west side of the island, including guides and lodge owners.

While the Baranov Museum, and Baranov Curator of Collections Anjuli Grantham, have done much of the leg work in putting the exhibit together, KMM has been



*Raingear hanging on the porch at Gull Light setnet site, Uganik Bay. Photo: Breanna Peterson*

providing technical advice and will also contribute several objects for the exhibit. Several members of KMM’s staff and board have recorded oral histories and donated photographs about the west side setnet fishery.

Interviews for the exhibit were conducted last summer in Uyak and Uganik bays by Anjuli Grantham, and edited versions of those recordings will be available at the exhibit through a touch screen panel.

Photographs of buildings and people at setnet sites, lodges and the Larsen Bay Cannery, were taken by local photographer Breanna Peterson. Historical photographs from the personal collections of a number of west side setnet families will augment the exhibit.

The west side setnet gillnet fishery has been a part of Kodiak’s salmon industry since the late 19th century., and dozens of Kodiak fishing families continue to participate each summer.



*Directions to a grave site on the wall of the Uganik Cannery wood shop. Photo: Breanna Peterson*

## Kodiak Pioneers Donates \$500 to KMM

Pioneers of Alaska Kodiak Igloos 17 and 18 recently approved a \$500 donation to KMM “to support the various programs of the museum,” according to Kodiak Igloo Historian Carmen Lunde. President Howard Peterson signed the check March 26.

The museum will use the funding toward construction of the interpretive panels around the Thelma C exhibit

The Pioneers of Alaska is a fraternal organization formed in Nome in 1907 to preserve and promote the history and best interests of the State of Alaska. The Kodiak igloos have funded scholarships for many years, and have recently also begun funding local non-profit organizations.



*Jean Burnham and Jerry Everman aboard the V/V Nyiad i the Kodiak Small Boat Harbor in the mid 1970s. Jerry died March 26 in Oregon. Photo: Claire Madsen*

A new traveling exhibit, about a mass murder on board the fishing vessel Investor in 1982, is currently touring the state. Produced by Brittany Retherford, a young researcher and storyteller now living in Fairbanks, the exhibit uses photographs and text to tell the story of the murders and the lives of the people who lost their lives.

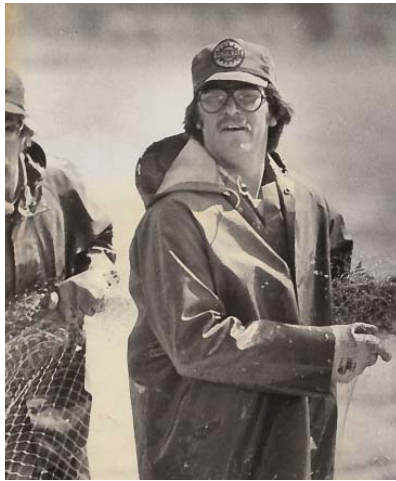
## Traveling Exhibit Tells the Story of the 1982 F/V Investor Murders

Near the end of the Southeast Alaska salmon season, on Tuesday, Sept. 7, 1982, a young Washington state fisherman, his pregnant wife and two children, and their four deckhands were found murdered on the F/V Investor, near Craig, Alaska. The victims had been shot and the boat set afire as it lay at anchor in a cove near the small community. The victims were last seen alive in Craig two days before their bodies were discovered.

Dead were Mark and Irene Coulthurst, both 28; Irene's unborn child; Kimberly Coulthurst, 5; John Coulthurst, 4; Mike Stewart, 19; Dean Moon, 19; Jerome Keown, 19; and Chris Heyman, 18.

The crime remains unsolved, despite two trials of John Kenneth Peel, who had previously worked for Coulthurst. The state contended in both trials that Peel had killed Coulthurst and his family and crew in rage over being fired by Coulthurst on a previous boat of his, the Kit. In 1986, the jury deadlocked after a six month trial. A second trial in 1988 ended with Peel's acquittal.

Peel's attorneys raised the possibility that the murders had been committed in connection with Coulthurst's involvement in a drug deal gone bad, but no solid evidence of this was produced at the trials.



Mark Coulthurst  
Photo: thenorthernlight.com

The trials were the most expensive in Alaskan history, the first costing the state more than \$2 million, which included fees for Peel's public defender. The second trial cost the state \$900,000 to prosecute.

In 1990 Peel filed a \$175 million suit against the State of Alaska for malicious prosecution. Peel settled for \$900,000 in 1997.

While the end result of the crime has always been clear, how it happened has remained a muddle.

After interviewing more than 150 people, Alaska State Troopers came to understand that Coulthurst and his family and crew had delivered 77,000 lbs. of salmon on Sunday, September 5 and then tied up on the outside of the seiner Decade, which itself was tied to another boat which was secured to a dock in Craig. That evening the family had celebrated Mark Coulthurst's 28th birthday at a restaurant in Craig, while the crew members partied and made calls from nearby pay phones.

The crew of the Decade saw Coulthurst and his family return to the Investor around 9:30 p.m. A Decade crewman also saw four-year old John Coulthurst in a porthole at 10:30 p.m. With a loud party going on the Decade however, the crew was not overly observant after that, and no one noticed when the Investor's crew members returned to their boat. Troopers believe the people on the Investor were shot, probably one or two at a time, that night and early in the morning as they returned to the boat while it was tied to the dock.

At 6 a.m. the next morning, a crewman on the Decade came outside and saw the Investor drifting away in the fog, leaving her tie up lines behind. The crewman saw someone in the wheelhouse and waved. The person on the Investor waved back.

At 7:30 a.m. a crewman on another boat saw the Investor anchored up near Fish Island. The anchorage was within sight of Craig in clear weather, but the day was very foggy and the boat was invisible from the town. As the fleet headed out for the last opening of the season, few noticed the Investor anchored in the mist. The Investor's skiff was seen that morning tied up to the dock in Craig.

On the morning of Tuesday the 6th, the fog cleared, and Troopers say this is when the person who shot the Investor's crew saw the boat from the Craig dock, still afloat, presumably after trying to sink it the day before. This person bought 2 1/2 gallons of gasoline, skiffed back to the Investor, and set it afire. Around 4 p.m., the troller Casino headed toward the burning boat to render assistance. On the way, they met the Investor's skiff coming toward them and spoke briefly to the man driving it, as he headed for the dock in Craig. After tying up the skiff this man disappeared.

Troopers say that man was John Kenneth Peel. With four years between the murders and the first trial however, and six years gone by the time of the second trial, witness' memories were blurry. The juries were never wholly convinced Peel was the man who shot the victims and burned the boat. The crime remains officially unsolved to this day.

Retherford's exhibit was shown in February at the Fisher Poets Gathering in Astoria, Oregon, and previously in Sitka, Ketchikan and Blaine Washington. The exhibit is scheduled for the Prince of Wales Whalefest in Craig, Alaska April 1.

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# Kodiak Maritime Museum

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