

Interview with Ivan Olson

By: Roger Sherman

January 8, 2000

This interview was in reference to a ship's wheel (helm) which Ivan sold to Roger Sherman on this date. The helm is built with eight spokes and is 36" in diameter with a brass hub. It has brass rings front and back. The stain is a mahogany color (very dark) and has been varnished. The only unique feature is a brass cap on the king spoke. There is no manufacturer's name or serial numbers.

R-----Let's talk about the ship's wheel.

I-----Well, it was on the "Acorn" ferry that ran over to Utsalady to Whidbey and had it built in 1924 and dad couldn't find a steering wheel that he liked, so he went down to the junk stores on first avenue, in Seattle, and he found that. It come off of some yacht and I can't remember which one now. But it's a beautiful wheel. It's got the brass hub and then the big brass circle around the whole wheel. Now, I shined that brass on there for fourteen years.

R-----It looks like somebody shined it since too.

I-----Well, I have shined it. We had it at home above our fireplace and I used to shine it once in awhile. We had a beautiful rock fireplace out at Dewey. We had it hung up for twenty five years, I guess. When we came here, we hung it on our other fireplace. It's just a keepsake and a beautiful workmanship. When they make them for those fancy yachts, it had to be first class.

R-----Oh, that's just absolutely beautiful.

I-----Yes it is and it was well kept. We shined brass, like on the ferry, we shined brass every Friday, cleaned up the boat and then on the weekends we didn't have time, we hauled cars, we were busy hauling cars so we always cleaned up the boat real good on Friday.

R-----It would be interesting to know where this was made?

I-----I wouldn't have any idea.

R-----A lot of them, most of the good ones, the early ones, were made in Scotland.

I-----There might be some stamps there you could chase down.

R-----I don't see anything. The ones that were made in Scotland had printing on the

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brass hub. When you come over, I have two, in my collection, that were made in Scotland. Ok, so the "Acorn" was built in 1924 and your dad found this downtown someplace.

I-----Yeah, in one of the----they had a lot of second hand stores on first avenue, in Seattle, and he got it around there someplace. But, I wouldn't know. I can't remember. But that was put on the "Acorn" and dad and his three brothers they run that until 1935 when the bridge went in. That wiped out both ferry runs. And then the "Acorn" went to the Port Gamble-Shine.

R-----I have all that in the interview from before.

I-----That's just a picture of the "Deception," but it's the Port Gamble-Shine ferry Schedule. But this is when we hauled the Indian canoes across for the festival.

R-----The canoes are almost as long as the ferry.

I-----They must be 60 feet long because the ferry was 65.

R-----Ok now, did you take this ship's wheel when your mom sold the "Acorn" and retired.

I-----My mother went and got another wheel and she told me, she bought a nice wheel and then I took this one off and put the other one on and then we kept this one.

R-----Do you know where the "Acorn" was built, who built her?

I-----Fiberg, Fiberg Ship Yards, Ballard Marine Railway, the same one that built the "Deception." Henry Fiberg was the owner. That shipyard is still there but I think it's a different name now. I can't remember the names of the streets now, in Ballard anyway. We had a lot of work done, we had boats rebuilt at Fiberg. They had a good shipyard and they were real nice people. We got to be real good friends. The fact is, they used to come up here and visit us and then latter on when they retired they went over by Snee Osh and bought a home or had one built.

I-----Well, lets see now, that was on the "Acorn" from 1924 to 1935. That's when the bridge wiped both ferry runs out and that was on the "Acorn" up until 1950 when we sold out to Blackball.

R-----Yeah, 26 years and it was probably old when your dad bought it.

I-----Yeah, I imagine. I don't know why they take it off of a yacht----

R-----So this could be over a hundred years old.

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I-----Well,

R-----Because, why would it be taken off of a yacht unless it was wrecked or old and scrapped.

I-----Yeah, I suppose it's at least-----a hundred would be a good one to start at.

R-----Now, you cheated though, you didn't polish the ring in the back.

I-----Oh no, we couldn't polish it in the back. We couldn't reach it. We had a lot of fire extinguishers to shine. We had the two and one half gallon ones and we a couple of quart size, all brass, they had to all be shined.

R-----Yeah, they varnished over this.

I-----I suppose. Well, nothing has ever been done to it in all the time we've had it and it's been 80 to 90 years. It's a beautiful wheel.

R-----That is probably, what do you think, 36 inches.

I-----Pretty close. I got a rule here someplace. Yeah, it's 36 inches.

Note-----I did not transcribe the entire tape, wanting to stick to the subject, which was the ship's wheel from the ferry "Acorn." Ivan did talk about the conversion of his father's ferry, the "Tahoma," and a few other things. The tape is available if anyone wishes to borrow it.

Signed by:

Ivan Olson _____ date _____

Roger Sherman  _____ date Feb. 2, 2001