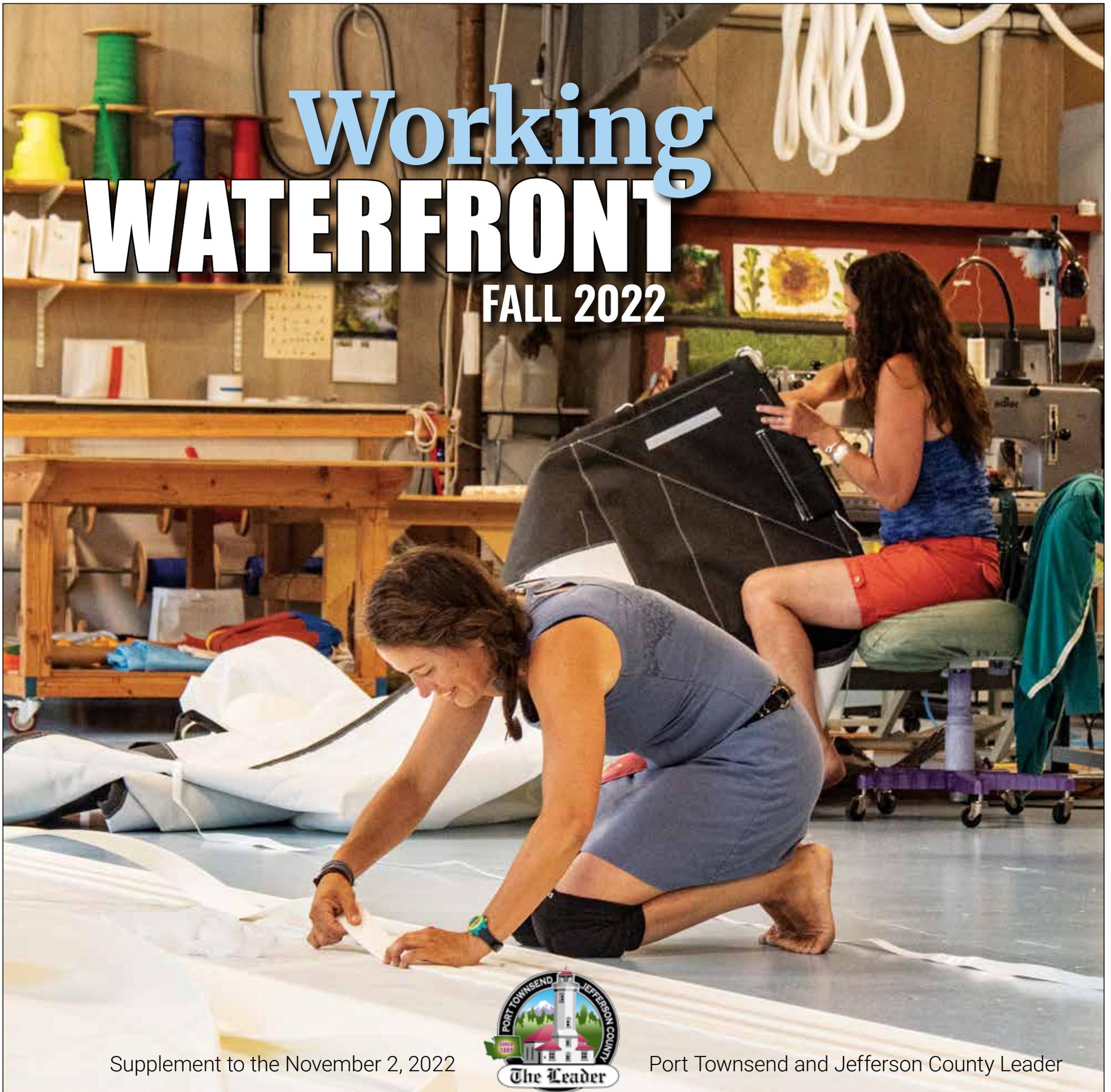


# Working WATERFRONT FALL 2022



Supplement to the November 2, 2022



Port Townsend and Jefferson County Leader

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# UNDERWAY WITH *Sail Port Townsend*

## The business of getting people out on the bay

by Taylor Austin, Photos courtesy of Amber Heasley

Local small business ‘Sail Port Townsend’, owned and operated by Amber Heasley, is wrapping up its third operational season of chartering sailing sessions on the pair of sage-green Thunderbirds named ‘Best Day Ever’ and ‘Days Like This’ out on Port Townsend Bay. What started as “a way for people to simply get out for an afternoon sail,” said Heasley, has grown into a two-boat business and access to American Sailing Association certification classes on the Olympic Peninsula.

“I always loved transportation, and sailing is such a cultural part of Port Townsend. I most enjoy town from the water,” said Heasley. After working for years as a sailing instructor at the Northwest Maritime Center, and learning the

*Sail continued on page 9*

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# FROM PORT TOWNSEND TO SOUTHEAST ALASKA

Photos by Jeremy Johnson

## THROUGH THE LENS

Jeremy Johnson has been telling stories through his photographs for the past couple of years. When *The Leader* asked Johnson what got him started down this path he stated “The Marine Trades are an integral part of our community and our shared culture. Having been ignorant of the trades’ importance myself, it felt like a valuable opportunity to share the art, culture, and history of the trades. A vibrant and healthy working class is essential to the health and diversity of a community. I do this work hoping we’ll work together to preserve this tradition, and to serve as a witness and historian should they someday disappear.”

Johnson has traveled with the WA360 team, “With most of his life spent in the mountains, Johnson states that “WA360 taught me how much there is to learn about being on the water. More importantly, it taught me how much I’ve yet to learn. The ocean is a powerful teacher, and I’m excited to learn more.” said Johnson.

He also recently traveled to Southeast Alaska to visit the commercial fishing fleet to photograph vessels that call Port Townsend home (or at least where their haul out port is located.)

Johnson has currently produced two volumes of “Port Townsend Maritime”, his long term goal is to turn these photos and stories into a book.

When asked how he finds what photos to take and who to write about Johnson stated that “Diana Talley summed it up when she said that boats were “art, history, culture, and fun” he has taken some liberties and added education and commerce as some of the themes. Within these themes, he looks for stories that express those ideas, a collection of smaller stories to tell the bigger story.

Having done this for a few years now, Johnson has made friends and contacts who share relevant people or projects he might want to follow. There’s no shortage of stories around the trades, and according to Johnson he keeps a running list of ideas to return to and continually checks the “pulse” of ongoing stories.

In August, Jeremy Johnson travelled to Southeast Alaska to visit the waters of our commercial fishing fleet. By way of the Alaskan Marine Highway (ferry), his transit took him from Bellingham through Ketchikan, Wrangle, Petersburg, Juneau, and Sitka. It may take a bit longer, but the Inside Passage is the best way to travel to Alaska.

His hope was to connect with any of the fishing vessels that call Port Townsend home, or at least their haulout port. Without much planning, he left the opportunities to chance.

In Sitka, a “hydrological event”

a.k.a. rainstorm, was headed towards Southeast Alaska and consequently many of the boats he had been encouraged to connect with started showing up. An incredible stroke of luck on his part.

His first encounters were with the F/V Nerka and co-owners Tele Aadsen and Joel Brady-Power at the fuel dock alongside F/V *Arminta* and co-owners Amy Grondin and Greg Friedrichs. After brief introductions, Amy invited Johnson aboard for the offload of their salmon haul as soon as the hoist was ready for them – an hour later.

The next twenty-four hours turned into an introduction to the Port Townsend trolling fleet that fishes in Southeast

Alaska. After meeting the crew of Nerka and Arminta, he then met Jonathan Moore, who owns and operates Ocean Belle when he’s not doing naval architecture, and then F/V Grace owned and operated by Kat Murphy. The Backdoor Café in downtown Sitka, Alaska felt like a Monday morning at Sunrise Coffee with as many Port Townsend residents and regulars. “Port Townsend is more like an outpost of Southeast Alaska,” Amy told Johnson.

All of these boats use and rely on the services of the Port Townsend marine trades. A thriving community of trades people keep these small commercial fishing businesses going year after year.



August 15th, 2022. Sitka, Alaska - The fishing vessel Arminta is tied up to Sitka Sound Seafood during the offloading of their king and coho salmon catch from the past few weeks.



August 15th, 2022. Sitka, Alaska - Greg Friedrichs of Port Townsend, Washington steers his boat to the offload facility at Sitka Sound Seafood. After weeks at sea, the crew is ready to get the salmon out of the freezer and to the processor for packaging and shipment to the cold storage facility in Mount Vernon.



August 15th, 2022. Sitka, Alaska - Clara Rasmussen loads a tote with king salmon. When the fish are caught, they are quickly processed and thoroughly cleaned. The salmon are then put in the blast freezer and dunked in a salt-water brine several times to create an ice-glaze which helps preserve the fish.



August 15th, 2022. Sitka, Alaska - Greg Friedrichs helps steer the tote from the fish hold. With such meticulously cleaned salmon, these fish are considered a premium food product, and command a higher price.



August 15th, 2022. Sitka, Alaska - Clara Rasmussen waits for the hoist clamp to pull another load of salmon out of the blast freezer.



August 15th, 2022. Sitka, Alaska - Greg Friedrichs helps steer the tote from the fish hold to the dock. The fish will be weighed, packaged, and then shipped to a cold storage facility in Mount Vernon. Greg and Amy will directly sell about 30% of their catch and the other 70% will be sold to a wholesaler. The direct sales by Arminta mostly go to restaurants around Seattle.



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Port Townsend Shipwrights Coop - The fishing vessel Seymour is moved from the Shipwrights Coop using the 300-ton travelift to the haul-out pier for launch.



Port Townsend Shipwrights Coop - With gloved hands, Brad Seamans rolls the oil-soaked hemp oakum that will be wedged into the gaps or seams in between the planks of the fishing vessel Vansee. The oil is a combination of rape seed, flax seed, and pine tar.

## HALIBUT SCHOONERS

Photos by Jeremy Johnson

**B**uilt in 1913, halibut schooners Vansee, Seymour, and Polaris have been commercial fishing since their first launch. Up until a few years ago, annual maintenance was done at the Fishing Vessel Owners Association (FVO) in Seattle. After years of attrition and declining profits, FVO closed its doors, leaving many of these boats looking for a new boat yard.

The first halibut schooner to visit Port Townsend after FVO closed was Polaris. After word got out about the high-quality work that was done in Port Townsend, soon Vansee and Seymour followed, then Grant. The Port Townsend Shipwright's Co-op now maintains almost half of the remaining fleet of the original halibut schooners.

Each boat is put on an annual caulking ("corking") schedule to do 3-4 seams a year, working from the garboards up. In addition to the regular caulking, other maintenance jobs are fit into the schedule. This year, Vansee is getting a new cover board at the well deck and Polaris is having her gear rebuilt along with 4 seams re-caulked. Before launching on Oct. 13, Seymour had 3 planks replaced and 13 deck strakes re-caulked.

At the Shipwrights Co-op, co-owner Brad Seamans leads a crew of shipwrights in the maintenance of these boats. Maintenance that has been ongoing for more than a century.

As several boat shops in Seattle have closed in recent years, a lot of that work has migrated to Port Townsend. The boat yard is busier than ever maintaining the vessels of the commercial fishing fleet, consisting of mostly independent businesses that fish waters all over the Pacific Northwest, from Oregon to Alaska.



Port Townsend Shipwrights Coop - Brad Seamans, co-owner and shipwright, spins oakum under the hull of the fishing vessel Vansee, a Halibut Schooner built in 1913. The Vansee is one of four similar boats that the Shipwrights Coop has started working on after the closure of the Fishing Vessels Owners boat shop in Seattle.



Port Townsend Shipwrights Coop - Crew, and son of the owner Per Odegaard, Nils Odegaard paints the upper rub rail of the fishing vessel Vansee during its annual haul out. The halibut schooner, built in 1913, has been a working fishing boat since it was launched.



Port Townsend Shipwrights Coop - Moses Dane cuts a cover board for the well deck of the fishing vessel Vansee, a Halibut Schooner built in 1913 that is now being maintained by the Shipwrights Coop.



Port Townsend Shipwrights Coop - Brad Seamans uses a corking mallet and irons to wedge cotton, and then oakum into the seams in-between the planks of the fishing vessel Vansee. The boat, built in 1913, is on a regular maintenance schedule at the Shipwrights Coop to caulk three seams a year as well as any other touch-up work.



Port Townsend Boat Yard - The fishing vessel, Seymour, a halibut schooner built in 1913, is moved to the heavy haul out pier for launching. This year's haul-out included replacing three planks and re-corking 13 deck strakes along with the regular corking schedule of of four seams a year.

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*Sail continued from page 3*

tourism industry as a captain on whale watching boats in Alaska and charters in the Caribbean, she decided to make a go of it locally. In 2017 she typed “sail port townsend” into GoDaddy and bought the domain, knowing eventually she would like to open a charter business. “I am a tour guide at heart,” laughed Heasley. It wasn’t until 2020 that ‘Sail Port Townsend’ began to take shape. With tourism work in Alaska coming to a halt in early 2020, Heasley said, “It was the time to make a change and go for it. This was my pandemic project.”

In deciding what type of boat to use, it came down to “what was affordable and available,” said Heasley. She had previous experience sailing on Thunderbirds while working at the NWMC, “they are light and fast, easy to single-hand, and great in 5 knots of wind which is perfect for summer light breezes,” said Heasley. She had initially wanted a larger boat so that she could fully use her 6-pack license, which allows for 6 passengers to be on board, but when the opportunity to buy a Thunderbird came up she went for it. “I always held the idea that eventually the business could be run by other people, other captains, and pretty much every sailor in Port Townsend has been on a T-Bird,” laughed Heasley, “I realized how awesome of a choice the Thunderbird was over time, so I bought a second one.” Since starting the business, she has been able to employ a few other captains to assist with charter bookings with ‘Sail Port Townsend’, creating a way for locals to use their license and pick up work.

Since acquiring the boats, Heasley has modified them for having guests aboard. “I put in a jiffy reef system in the main sails to simply reef and shake out a reef while

underway,” said Heasley. Reefing a sail is reducing the sail area to preserve the vessel’s stability during stronger winds. It also aids in sailing the boat as flat as possible for passenger comfort. “Force 10 Sailmaking over on Marrowstone reefed the mainsail for ‘Days Like This’ and Northwest Sails in Port Hadlock for ‘Best Day Ever,’” Heasley said, “I spend a lot of what comes in from charter bookings at local marine trades businesses, it’s nice to be able to show support and have them involved in the growth of my business.”



This summer, Heasley installed an electric hydro-regenerative pod drive in ‘Best Day Ever’, which can charge itself with a decent breeze. “I am always trying to solve the problem of outboards, I’ve got backups to my backups. With this pod drive I don’t have to buy gas, the boat can charge at the dock, and it is quiet,” said Heasley. She hopes to install one on the other boat as well.

A big addition to ‘Sail Port Townsend’ this summer has been offering ASA classes for those seeking technical sailing instruction and certification. “There is a lot of demand for ASA courses, I think boating and sailing in particular has gotten really popular in the last couple years. People want to learn,” said Heasley.

As for next season, ‘Sail Port Townsend’ hopes to keep offering an immersive experience. “I like to try and get people involved with handling the boat if they are interested,” said Heasley, “No wine and cheese, it’s not some kind of fancy thing. I’m hoping to bust some of the stereotypes around sailing culture— just to keep it about sailing.”

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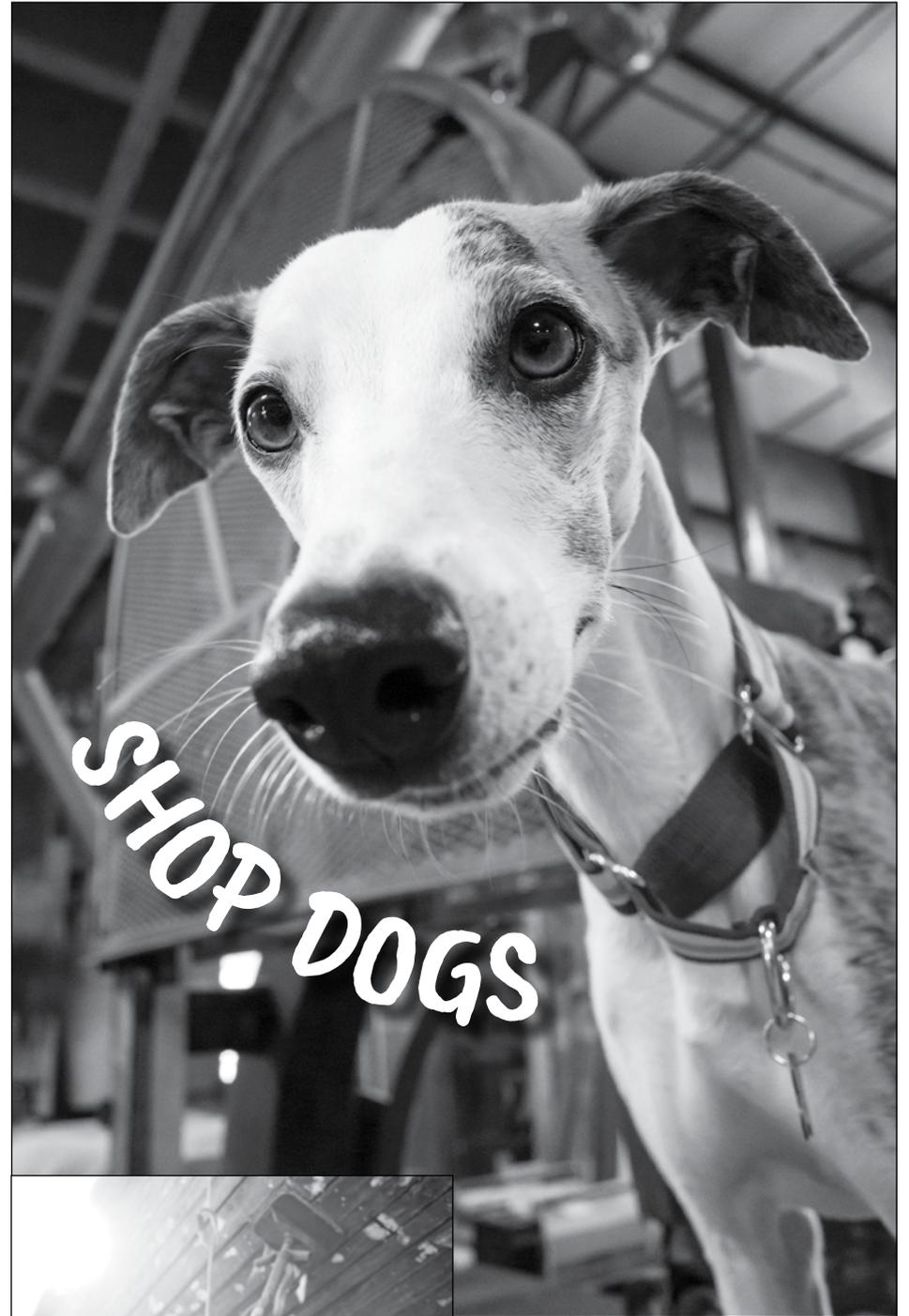
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Photos by  
Jeremy  
Johnson

▲ Port Townsend Boat Yard - Daisy, a pit bull/boxer mix aka Chuck Feaz, aka The Feaz, aka Big Chuff belongs to John Smith who is working on Reliance with Matthew Brink in the boat yard.

► Port Townsend Sails - Rosie, part dragon, part pig, part Falcor. "She looks like a paint roller, she'd probably be a finish worker. She's very particular." Lacey, Rosie's caretaker, insists that Rosie belongs to the sail loft.



▲ Port Townsend Shipwrights Coop - co-owner Jeff Galey's whippet, Ziggy in front of the iconic ship saw at the coop.

◀ Port Townsend Boat Yard - Hayden, a black labrador belonging to Matthew Brink, works as security while the crew works on the motor vessel Reliance. Hayden dutifully alerts his owner anytime some one approaches.

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◀ Backtrack, Pete Stein's Pit Bull mix has been a loyal companion for thirteen years. According to Pete, Backtrack would probably work in a fish processing plant if he worked in the trades, "he loves to roll around in fish guts."

Photos by  
Jeremy  
Johnson



◀ Port Townsend Shipwrights Coop - Hollis, a yellow lab belonging to Coop co-owner Brad Seamans, sleeps near the stern of the aluminum sailing vessel Wayfinder.

▲ Port Townsend Shipwrights Coop - Dory, a 10-month old schipperke belonging to Ben Feldman, a shipwright at the Coop, shows off her spider legs in preparation for Halloween.



▼ Port Townsend Bay - EJ, a 7-year old pit-mix is obsessed with the beach and swimming. Her owner, Jordan Bard, is an independent shipwright in the boat yard.



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Shipwright Lou Geraghty scrapes pitch caulking from the aft deck of "Sea Wolf." Photo by Keith Thompson

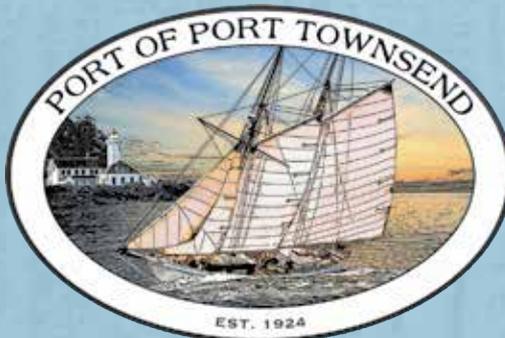
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