

Q & A WITH CRAIG PERRY

TWA members and others are talking to writer Sharon Babcock about enduring inspirations, life lessons, and perspectives from their experiences on the working waterfront.

This month is the sixth installment in the series: Craig Perry, the general manager of three marinas in Commencement Bay.



Craig Perry oversees the day-to-day operations of Delin Docks, Dock Street Marina, and the Foss Landing Marina and Boat Storage on the Foss Waterway. The three marinas are owned by parent company Elliot Bay Marina, the largest privately held marina on the west coast. In that role, Craig experiences the practical side of boating on Commencement Bay, looking after hundreds of boats from 16 live-aboard vessels and 10 boats belonging to a dwindling fishing fleet to concierge boating with the ability to make hotel and mechanic reservations for visitors and provide them with maps and other local amenities.

Q: What makes for a good day in your work? And what not so much?

A: A good day is pleased boaters—owners of boats of all sizes from yachts to rowboats, telling me how their boat was smoothly handled as they launched or docked, hearing a story about a specific thing an employee did well for them. A not-so-good day is discovering a sheen of oil spreading from a boat in one of our marinas and having to contact the owner about how to resolve it. We're a national Certified Clean Marina with a five-star Pierce County Envirostars rating, so clean water matters to us. Staying on top of the regulations, educating staff and tenants, and working with the City of Tacoma is a large part of my work.

Q: How did you come to this work?

A: I have been involved in racing boats up and down the west coast, in Hawaii, and the Caribbean from age 5. My family ran marinas and restaurants, I had a breakfast shift at age 14. I grew up with sailing, crabbing, and fishing. My hope is that our family connection with the water will afford future experiences for my own children, now 7 and 9 years old. It's a great way for anyone growing up to access the world.

Q: Are there collective efforts Commencement Bay marinas are collaborating on?

A: They have participated in National Marina Day that included dinghy races, bands, food, and safety inspections. They work together on new products for addressing oil spills and on regulation projects. And there is a Grow Boating Campaign to allocate resources for future projects.

Q: What is a burning issue in your world?

A: Boating officials are speaking out about a little-known tax that they say scares away large yachts from Washington. Here, a 10 percent tax is imposed on the value of the boat if an out-of-town yacht is

docked in state waters for more than 60 days. The Department of Revenue says the tax is a way to prevent wealthy people from avoiding taxes. There is a similar tax on RVs, but the tax is not imposed until after six months. Therefore, a lot of boats do not stop in Tacoma. The Northwest Marine Trade Association estimates that \$30 million is lost each year in the regional economy due to the tax. The association is gaining support for a marine tourism bill that would increase the stay time for an out-of-town yacht to 180 days.

Q: What would surprise most people?

A: The impact of boating on the Tacoma economy. The marinas provide 61 jobs, \$1.5 million in labor income, and \$2.4 million in value added (income accruing to households in the region, rents and profits of business, and indirect business taxes).

Q: What is special about Commencement Bay for you?

A: We have the largest number of big boat builders in Puget Sound here, great people, and beautiful boating waters. Given the choice to work in Tacoma or Seattle awhile back, I chose Tacoma.