



MITLITE

The Original THEA FOSS A History

Compiled by Brad Bradford, Bill Schlink, & David and Dorin Ellis
with source material from:

Pacific Motor Boat; December 1933 page 16 & 17 plus cover
Foss Maritime "Tow Bitts"; vol.2, no.10; October 1986; page 4 & 5
Classic Yacht Association Historical Archives, Margie Paynton Historian

MITLITE/THEA FOSS

Launched 1933

Built by Foss Tug and Launch, Tacoma

Designed by G.E. Nyman

LOA 58 feet

Beam 13 feet 10 inches

Draft maximum 6 feet

Launched in 1933, 58 foot long *MITLITE* is the original *THEA FOSS*. In late 1931, with a view of owner Henry Foss to hold Foss workmen on the job as much as possible during the depression, work was begun on the only yacht listed on the Foss History web site to be built by the Foss Tug and Launch Company works at Tacoma. When other work was a bit slack, work on *THEA* was resumed, thus assisting the owner in keeping the company's well organized crew employed. Her lines were drawn by G.E. Nyman of Tacoma and her construction was under the supervision of Linas Berg. Hollow Tobin bronze wing shaped rudder and stream-line designed air-driven winch as well as all outer gear were cast by Tacoma Brass Company and finished by Fred Dravis of Hicks and Bull Company, Tacoma. All are still with the boat and functioning well.

MITLITE (THEA FOSS) was originally powered with a 66hp Washington full Diesel and she was also equipped with an Atlas Imperial lighting outfit with a belt driven Westinghouse 32 volt generator on the main engine. She was later repowered with a 4 cylinder Enterprise diesel of which pictures still exist (see attached), and finally repowered in 1964 with a WWII Navy surplus General Motors 6-71 Detroit diesel; still running like a fine watch. The Atlas lighting and Westinghouse generator system was replaced by a 7.5 diesel Onan generator. Her original paint was by Murphy Brothers and Fuller company materials were used to a great extent. In 1986 *MITLITE* was given a boot stripe of original Foss Green. (See attached article in Foss Maritime TWO BITTS, Oct. 1986.)

Ownership History:

MITLITE (THEA FOSS) was built for Henry Foss and named in honor of his mother. During this time Henry was a member of the Viking Yacht Club and a Tacoma civic leader and the vessel became the official Tacoma Christmas Ship. Henry also occasionally pressed *MITLITE (THEA FOSS)* into commercial use. Brad Bradford met one of her former captains who piloted her during the construction of the Grays Harbor breakwater, "where the vessel was used as a tender for the Foss fleet working on the breakwater." Brad also met another "very old gentleman claiming to have sailed on one of the last lumber schooners sailing from Tacoma and Puget Sound during the late 30's. He said each time they called for a Foss Tug to bring them in from the straits, the *THEA FOSS* would be sent to tow them into Tacoma." Brad also met another gentleman who was in command of her at the Bremerton Navy Yard During WWII.

During the Second World War *MITLITE (THEA FOSS)* was taken by the Navy for use as a barrage balloon tender with the designation J2036.

At War's end, J2036 was returned to Foss, but there were a lot of very fine vessels available as they came out of service and in 1948 Foss acquired the boat formerly known as *INFANTA*, originally built for John Barrymore. For the better part of two years there were two *THEA FOSS* vessels and when Henry was asked which he wanted readied for an outing he would refer to the original *THEA* as "My Little One" (As in the little *Thea Foss*) so that her name was eventually changed to *MITLITE*, which means "my little one" in Norwegian, and is the name she retains to this day. *MITLITE* is also a universal word in local tribal dialects meaning *GOOD FELLOWSHIP* and preferred by Brad Bradford. Her original prop and deck fittings still retain her original *THEA FOSS* markings.

Ownership transferred in 1950 to one of Henry Foss's attorneys, Mr. Metzger, who officially changed the name to *MITLITE*. Metzger kept *MITLITE* moored in a boathouse in Gig Harbor until he passed away.

In 1958 Mr. Sid Tozier of Port Angeles purchased *MITLITE* and her boathouse, which he towed with *MITLITE* from Gig Harbor to Port Angeles in one day; in January. Brad said, "Obviously the boat house must have been as sturdily built as *MITLITE*." Brad also reported that Tozier made annual trips to Southeastern Alaska, as well

as numerous trips to the west coast of Vancouver Island.

Brad and Lena Bradford acquired *MITLITE* in 1972, after a three year search and became long time members of the Classic Yacht Association (Member 211 among the first PNW members). Brad said that, "It was LOVE at first sight," for him. "For Lena, it took a little longer! In the end LOVE triumphed over all!" Brad wrote in his history, "On July 1, 1973 we moved aboard and have lived happily everafter." The Viking Yacht club adopted *MITLITE* once again as their official Christmas Ship, a designation that lasted for another decade. Brad was instrumental in supporting the development of the oldest continuous rendezvous hosted by the PNW fleet of the CYA, the Pumpkin Cruise. In the 1980s, Blake Island was a great place to hold the event but one had to get there early and grab a lot of space. Brad would bring *MITLITE* in early and tie her up across as much territory of dock as possible. He would also bring all the wood for the fire pit and make sure there was plenty of Hot Buttered Rum available for all. Brad and Lena lived aboard *MITLITE* on the Foss Waterway directly in front of the old Train Station for many of their years of ownership.

William (Bill) Schlink acquired *MITLITE* in July of 1995 from Brad Bradford and for several years used her as a form of transportation between Anacortes and their position taking care of Vendovi Island, living aboard her when ever the family that owned Vendovi came to visit the island. When Vendovi Island was sold to the Island Trust, Bill was delighted to accept the head job at Blakeley Island and *MITLITE* was actually undercover for a couple of years. Not needing the *MITLITE* any more, neither as a part time home nor as transportation to paradise (they were already there) they decided to pass on the care of *MITLITE* to another.

Dorin Ellis, son of long time Classic Yacht Association members, David and Heather Ellis, stepped forward and accepted the challenge. No stranger to classic yachting, Dorin had grown up cruising on *PATAMAR*, *SPINDRIFT*, and *FOREVERMORE*. On Saturday June 22, 2013 Dorin, along with parents David and Heather were delivered to Blakeley Island by John and Ellen Murphey via *TENDER TO STURDY GAL*. Bill narrated *MITLITE'S* systems for Dorin then both joined Bills wife, Susan, David and Heather to ready the classic for departure on Sunday late afternoon, June 23, 2013. Heather returned to the mainland via *TENDER TO STURDY GAL* while Dorin and his dad, David, cruised south by way of the LaConner slew to Oak Harbor where they spend Sunday evening. Departing early Monday morning, June 24, 2013, in a fog that necessitated *MITLITE'S* dependable radar, the cruise south to Seattle was smooth and beautiful once the fog had lifted. Shortly after noon, Dorin had navigated his first locking under the watchful welcoming eyes of Gary and Cheryl Madsen (*BIG DIPPER*) making landfall at the Ballard Docks where they were greeted by Steve Moen (*ORBA*), Jim Paynton (*MARANEE*), and David Walker (*SCAUP*). After a fine Ballard lunch in town, Dorin's first voyage aboard *MITLITE* continued through the ship canal and into Lake Washington, then north up the lake toward Kenmore and Harbor Village Marina where *MITLITE* was again greeted by Gary and Cheryl Madsen, this time speeding around *MITLITE* in a Chris Craft Runabout they have enjoyed for forty years but never named.

MITLITE was hauled a few weeks later on the elevator lift at Larrison's Marine where the hull was tapped and determined to be in fine condition. Larrison's Gordy repaired some minor stem damage, replaced a piece of the anchor palate that was missing, cleaned and painted the bottom, and replaced the zincs. Steve Moen (*ORBA*), Dorin Robinson (*CLE ILLAHEE*; also Dorin Ellis's namesake) and David Ellis (*FOREVERMORE* and dad) joined Dorin Ellis for the return cruise to Kenmore's Harbor Village Marina where Dorin is Harbormaster.

There is some discussion as to changing her name back to the original, or perhaps *THEA FOSS I*. As it stands; however, we simply enjoy telling the story.

*Quoted material is from Brad Bradford's typed history of *MITLITE* which he submitted to the Classic Yacht Association upon his application.

When a Tug Boat Man Goes Cruising

ONE of the late additions to Puget Sound cruisers is *Thea Foss*, constructed at the Foss Tug & Launch Company works at Tacoma for Henry Foss, one of the Foss brothers, well-known Northwest tugboat operators. The new cruiser went into commission several weeks ago, but little details in the fitting out of the cruiser are still under way.

This 58' cruiser was laid down about eighteen months or more ago with the view of the owner to hold Foss workmen on the job as much as possible during these stringent times. When other work was a bit slack, work on *Thea* was resumed, thus the owner assisting in keeping the company's well organized crew employed.

Thea Foss is 58' 14" long by 13' 10 1/2" beam. Her mean draft is 2' 7" and greatest free board, 7' 4 3/8", with least free-board, 3' 4 3/8". The water line length is 56' 5 1/2"; water line beam, 12' 1 1/2", with extreme draft of 4' 8 1/2".

The planking of *Thea Foss* is 1 5/8" selected fir. The frames are 2 1/4" x 4" white oak; spaced 9" centers. The deck is selected fir, 2" x 2".

The speed of the cruiser is 8.5 m.p.h. with her Washington Diesel engine developing the full 66 h.p., and swinging a Godfrey propeller, 38" x 29".

The upper works show a combined cabin and pilot house of the conventional type, 10' x 10' and low trunk cabin aft. This is fitted with all engine controls and navigating instruments. A feature is the Ritchie underlighted compass. The cabin is fitted with a davenport that can be arranged as a berth if needed. On the port side of the cabin a companion way leads below aft and another forward. These are spacious and give ready access to the quarters below.

Starting forward in the extreme bow is a toilet, instead of the usual chain locker. The anchor chain is carried through a curved pipe between the toilet and stem, and delivered into a chain locker well forward beneath the cabin floor. This gear is handled by an air-driven winch, a stream-line designed machine, which easily handles almost any size ground tackle. This winch and all outer gear exposed to the salt water, including a Tobin bronze hollow rudder, were cast by the Tacoma Brass Company and finished by Fred Dravis of Hicks & Bull Company, Tacoma.

Forward are two single berths in an 8' x 8' state room. These are arranged upper and lower. Another state room adjoins this one just aft and is fitted with double berths, toilet and wash room. These rooms are finished

in solid Lauan mahogany giving a very rich finish.

Next is the engine room. This is 10' long by the width of the vessel. The power plant is a 66-h.p. Washington full Diesel and there is an Atlas Imperial lighting outfit coupled to a belt-driven Westinghouse 32-volt generator to the main engine. There is a Deming automatic pressure tank here which delivers water under pressure to the galley and various parts of the cruiser. The air bottles for starting, which are tested to 500 lbs. pressure, are under berths in the main cabin. The ventilating system in the engine room and galley is a scheme worked out by the owner and all fumes are carried out through the funnel.

The galley comes next. This is spacious and has accommodations for seating ten persons at the table.

On the starboard side is a Kohler double sink with mahogany drain-board with storage space beneath. The cooking utensils are steel of the "Savery" brand. There is an Electrolux refrigerator operated by a Flamo tank placed on the port side. The seating arrangement is in the after section of the galley.

In the after state room are two double berths; toilet and wardrobe on starboard side and on the port side a built-in dresser with upholstery of the double de luxe type from the Quality Upholstery & Shade Co. of Tacoma.

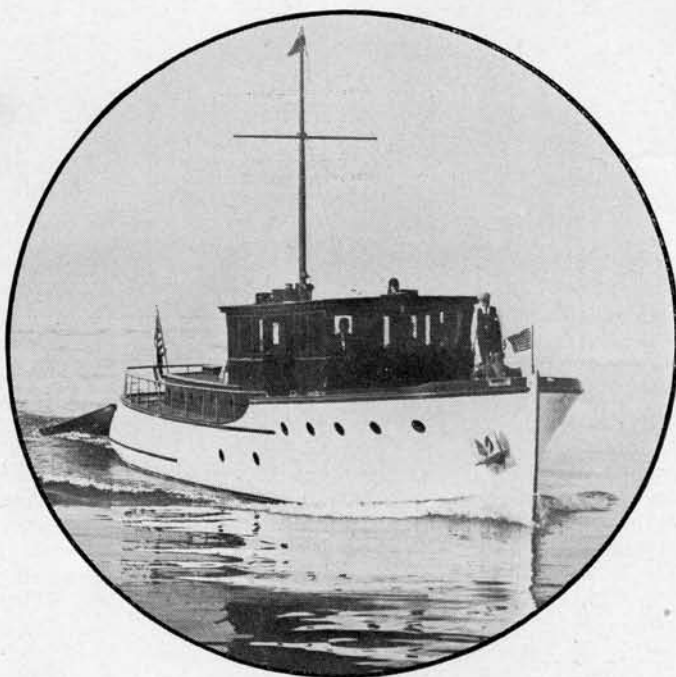
The water tanks, with a capacity of 500 gallons, are under the galley floor, and two fuel tanks of 450 gallons

each, are in the lazaret, assuring ample cruising radius.

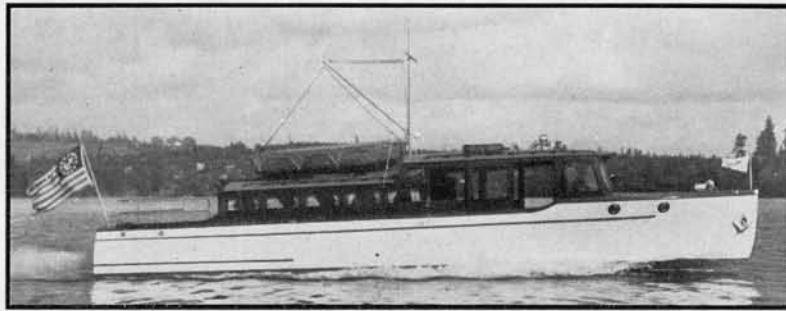
In the paint work and varnish job on the vessel Murphy Brothers and the Fuller company materials were used to a great extent. Linas Berg has charge of the construction work and G. E. Nyman, of Tacoma, drew the lines of the boat.

Thea Foss, named in honor of the owner's mother, is all through a fine little ship, sturdy as the best of them and should afford much enjoyment to her owner, as well as to the many guests the little vessel is capable of accommodating.

Henry Foss, the owner of this boat, has been in the yachting game for many years, and makes boating his pleasure as well as his business, as do both of his brothers. He was formerly the owner of an auxiliary yacht which he sold to W. L. Stewart of the Union Oil Co. of Los Angeles, and has owned other craft. He comes from a sea-going family as the great Foss towing business was established by his father two generations ago.



"Thea Foss", New Cruiser owned by Henry Foss of Tacoma



"Silver Spray", new 42 ft. Cruiser owned by J. H. A. Puckett of Seattle

New Cruiser For Salmon Examiner

RECREATIONAL motor boating draws from all fields for its devotees. On the opposite page in this issue is shown a new pleasure boat for a man who is interested in a large fleet of tow boats. On this page are the pictures of a new cruiser for a man prominent in the salmon industry, Mr. J. H. A. Puckett of Seattle, who makes a business of salmon-pack inspection, and who has been known in this business throughout the Northwest for years.

Mr. Puckett has long made boating his hobby and his new boat replaces another smaller one which he recently sold. The new cruiser is a 42½-ft. V-bottom Trimmer Ship, a stock model produced by the Shain Manufacturing Co. of Seattle. She has 10 ft. beam, a draft of 2½ ft. and is powered with an eight-cylinder Gray engine which gives her a cruising speed of 20-25 m.p.h. The installation is in the stern, with a v-drive and a 19 to 14 reduction. While this boat is not beamy for her length, she has stability due to the fact that she is built low, and the waterline beam is carried clear through to the transom.

There is a large cockpit aft, with a double rail of chromium for protection. From this, there are steps

down over the v-drive into the salon in which there are two large dressing tables with mirrors, and clothes lockers beneath. A double spring constructed lounge is provided on either side, with backs that fold up and make upper and lower berths.

The lavatory includes wash bowl or shower (optional), toilet, and medicine cabinet, and is roomy and has good ventilation.

The galley, pictured, has an ice box, a Flamo full range, drawers,

lockers, shelves and pigeon holes finished in cream color, with mahogany trim. Walls are done in cream tile work with borders of black.

In the pilot house, which is done in mahogany, is a fireplace with a mantel. The fireplace has a marine decoration of tiles with ship designs in the corners. Facing the hearth is a mahogany davenport, and furnishings also include a folding table that extends into a dining table or folds up to smoking table size. The dashboard carries radio controls, tachometer, oil gauge, ammeter, switches, and clutch controls. The pilot house is twelve feet long.

Crew's quarters forward have two single pipe berths, and are ventilated through 4 by 6-inch port holes and a large hatch overhead.

Equipment of this boat is completed with an electric anchor hoist and chain locker. Although fine in the bow, this Trimmer Ship can still maintain high speed in rough water, without spanking or pounding, because of the weight aft.

Mr. Puckett formerly owned a 28 ft. boat of the same make, also powered with a Gray engine. This, he recently sold to Mr. A. G. Richardson, who has her employed in survey work for the U. S. government on the Coulee Dam site.



A Peep Into the Galley

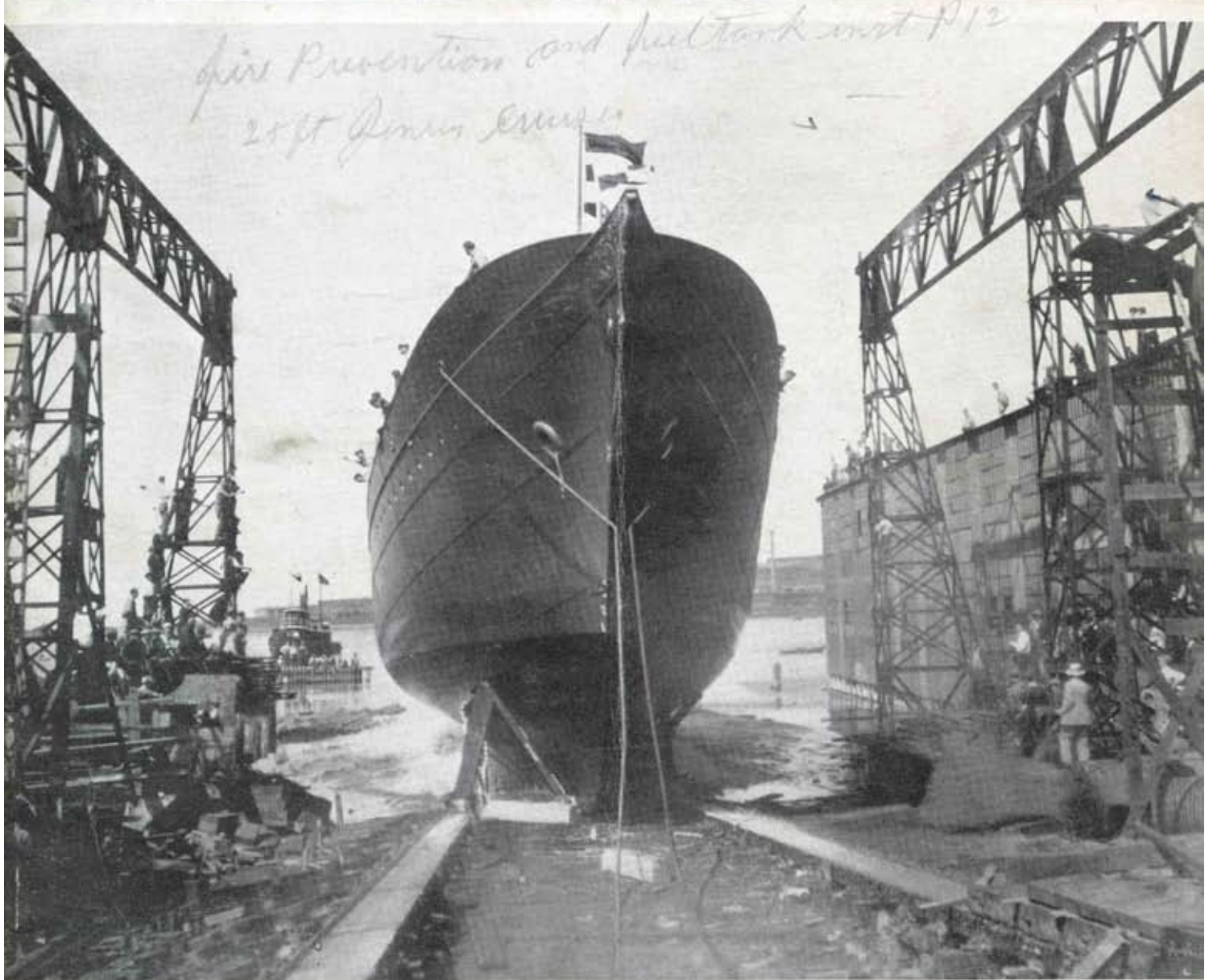


Deck Saloon, looking forward

The Main Cabin

Deck Saloon, looking aft

PACIFIC MOTOR BOAT



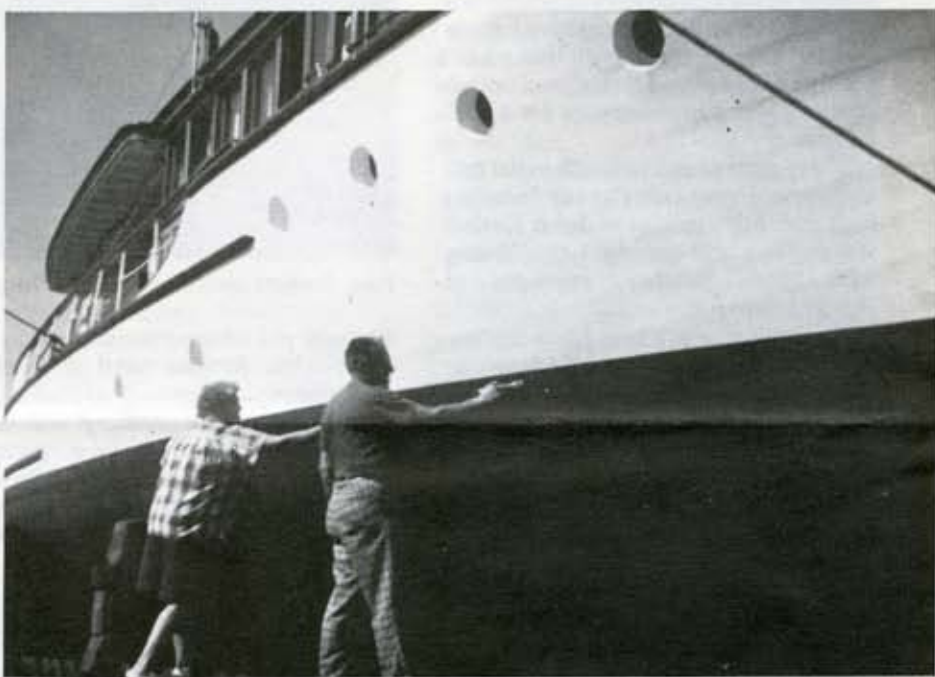
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First *Thea* sports Foss green again



Ralph and Lena Bradford of Tacoma, live-aboard owners of the former *Thea Foss*, now the *Mitlite*, painted a Foss green boot top on the hull of their 57-foot wooden yacht during an annual haulout this summer next door to the Foss office at Tacoma.

"The ocean towing business is where the oil exploration downturn has the greatest overall effect over the longer term," Van Dawark noted.

All five of these critical issues, he em-

phasized, need to be seriously addressed by every employee at Foss Maritime.

"These are issues," he said, "that all of our people need to be aware of, plan for and take action upon."

Thanks to **Don Hogue**, Tacoma manager, the original Foss company yacht *Thea Foss*, now the *Mitlite*, sports a boot top painted in Foss company green.

The 57-foot wooden yacht, built in 1933 by the former Foss yard at Tacoma, was hauled out for her annual bottom maintenance at Cook's Marine Specialties next door to the Foss office at Tacoma.

Ralph and Lena Bradford, the live-aboard owners of the meticulously maintained *Mitlite*, had decided to paint a boot top on the hull during this summer's haulout, but they could not decide what the color should be.

Hearing that, Hogue offered to donate a quart of Foss green paint so



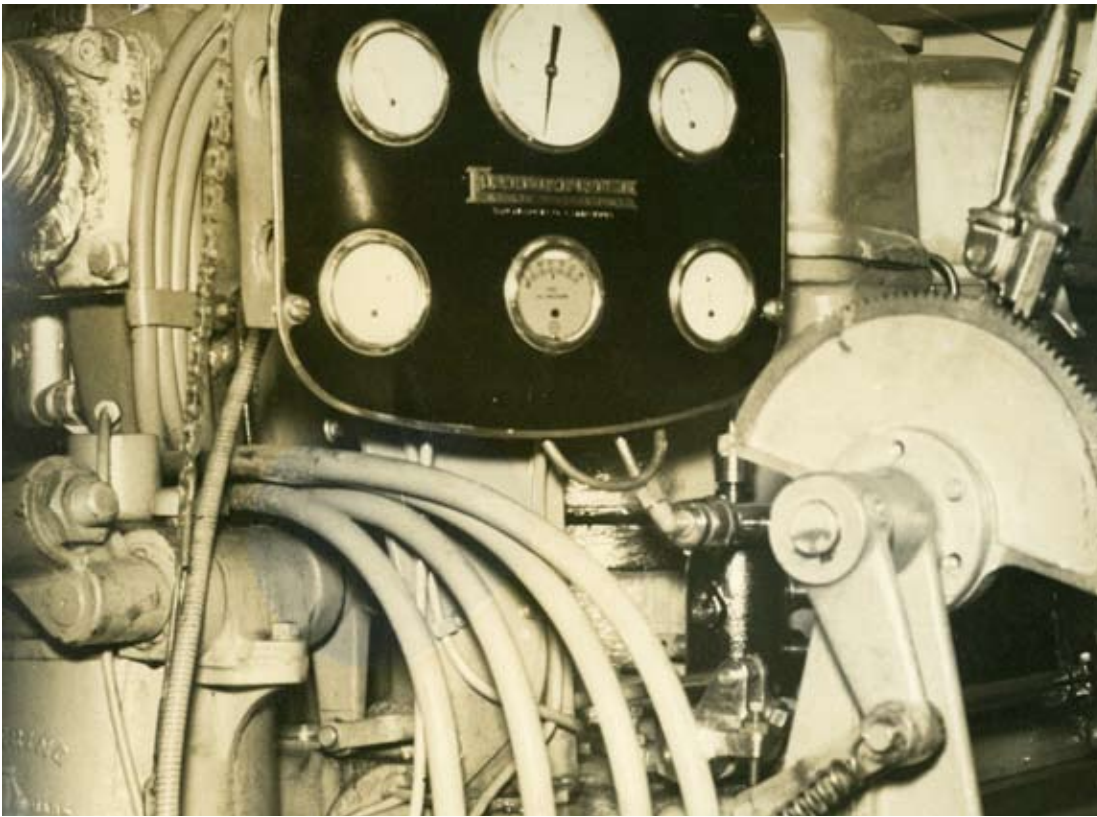
the first *Thea Foss* yacht would once again carry the company's color.

Soon after the offer was made, **Stu Cook**, the yard's owner, called and said the Bradfords would accept. Before the day was done, the *Mitlite* had a Foss green boot top.

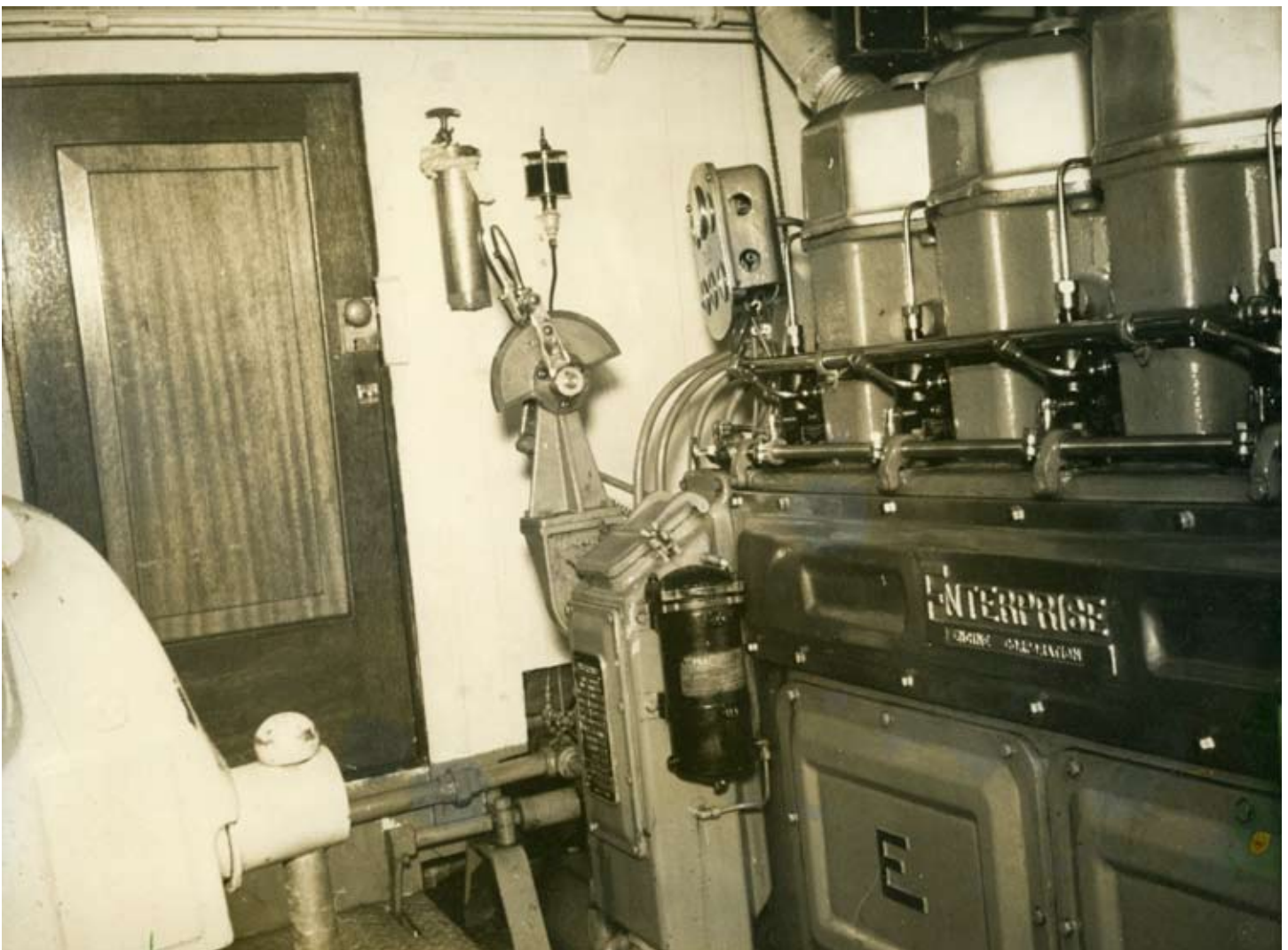
The Bradfords, who moor the yacht in Tacoma's City Waterway, are the fourth set of owners. They purchased the vessel in 1972 at Port Angeles and have continued the tradition of navigating the yacht into the San Juans, through British Columbia and to Southeast Alaska.

The original *Thea*, which was retired from Foss duty when the former John Barrymore yacht *Infanta* was acquired as the present-day *Thea*, now is powered by a World War II Navy surplus General Motors 671 Detroit diesel.

"We cruise at nine knots and at nine knots, we burn about five gallons of fuel per hour — with the galley stove running," Bradford reported. "For the size of boat, she's fairly economical."



MITLITE 4 Cylinder Enterprise, replaced in 1964 under the ownership of Sid Tozier of Port Angeles who had these photos taken. The photos came to Brad Bradford along with the classic when he acquired it, and have been passed along through Bill Schlink to Dorin Ellis who now possesses the original photos.





Bill and Dave Ellis



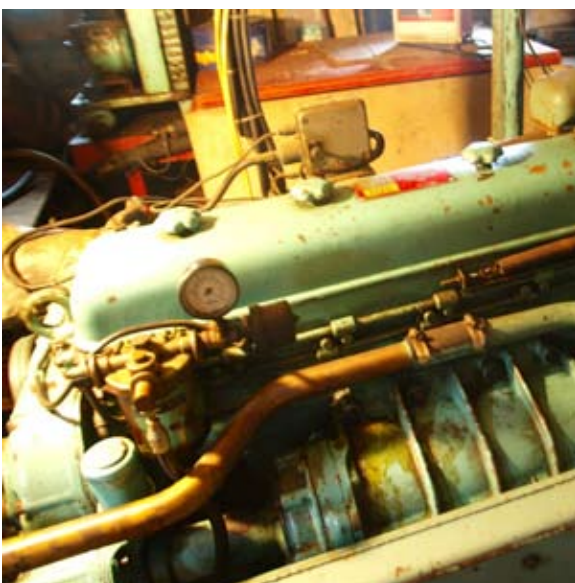
Bill in the galley



Tobin Bronze Air Driven Windlass



House with original hardware



WWII GMC 6-71 installed 1964



Original Controls



A New Skipper's First MITLITE Voyage:
Clockwise from top left: New Skipper, Dorin Ellis; Stern view at Harbour Village Guest Dock; Bow view at Guest Dock; Galley Dining area looking aft; Galley dining area looking forward; *MITLITE* Engine Room.





First Voyage Continued:

Clockwise from top: Aft Double Double State-room; Main Saloon with Helm; Saloon looking aft; Underway from Blakley Island; Skipper's first MITLITE locking in small locks.











