

Introduction

This is the Story of Rudolph Pallas growing up in Mukilteo. He watched windjammers from far away places arrive and depart from this port, and his dreams of a life at sea began.

Rudolph and his Boat



At age seventeen, Rudolph purchased his little Mukilteo Skiff and began exploring Possession Sound. Later his horizons were broadened when he embarked on a maritime career. He traveled to ports all over the world but always returned to Possession Sound, his little skiff, and his cozy cabin on Whidbey Island.

Rudolph died just short of ninety years of age living a life close to the sea. The small boat that gave him so much pleasure remains his legacy, reflecting the history of Mukilteo, as well as his life.

We are indebted to The Northwest School for Wooden Boat Building at Port Hadlock. We are grateful to the teachers and students whose skills restored the skiff for display at the Mukilteo Museum. A special thank you goes to Tim Lee and Adam Bays who saw the value in its preservation. Without their dedication to wooden boat building, an art so vital to Puget Sound would be lost. We also appreciate the Mukilteo Historical Society for their willingness to bring this piece of history back to life for all to enjoy.

Come and see the skiff that tells the story of a boy growing up in this community.

The Mukilteo Skiff

*Dedicated to the Great Grandchildren of Rudolph
Pallas Ashley Barrera
Kristine Haroldson
Sarah Haroldson
Aine Waterson*

Rudolph Growing Up



Pallas Family about 1915 Back row: *Ella, Rudolph, Margretha, Louise* Front row: *Alice, Richard, Esther, Elise*



Rudolph Pallas was born in 1900 in Phillips Wisconsin. In 1906, the family moved to Mukilteo Washington, a small town twenty miles north of Seattle. Elise and Richard Pallas had six children. Rudolph was the third child and only son. The family bought land overlooking the water and built their home. The home still remains within the family today. It is a beautiful home which shows the years of loving care it has had. The yard with its many shrubs and flowers is like a park. In later years Rudolph recalled as he and his sisters walked the tide flats at low tide for the first time. They learned about the sea creatures that inhabited the beach. *"Never Molest a large crab backing into the sand or poke your finger into an open horse clam."* Every day there was something new.

Possession Sound is located on an arm of Puget Sound. Mukilteo served as a deepwater port for windjammers and steam schooners that filled their holds with timber products. The Crown Lumber company, a large sawmill, provided lumber for the rapidly growing west coast of the United States as well as other ports across the Pacific Ocean. The mill paid good wages for local workers including Rudolph's father.

Steamboats of the Mosquito Fleet, which went to all of the ports on Puget Sound fascinated Rudolph. He came to know all of them by name. He remembered the large steam tug Tyee that towed some of the large windjammers into the Crown Lumber Company dock to load lumber. He told of the smell of tar and teakwood around the ships. There were Line. Chinese crews and white officers manned them. The Chinese wore the old style skullcap and had long pigtailed. As children, they were kind of afraid as the Chinese would grin and wave at them.

Tug boats like the Tyee would meet sailing vessels headed for Puget Sound at the opening of Straits of Juan De Fuca, some one hundred forty miles west of Mukilteo. These engineless windjammers would sail toward port until they lost the wind and the tide. They would then be forced to take the tow of tug which would bring them safely to the dock. It was game played between the skippers of the tugs and windjammers. The farther the windjammer could sail without a tow, the less money the tugboat owner could earn. One day a windjammer, followed by a tug, rounded Possession Point and with a favorable breeze, sailed into Mukilteo without the assist of the tug. Crowds on shore cheered the Captain of the ship. The tugboat captain went home without earning a dime.

Scenes like this made young Rudolph dream of going to sea. He and other children attended Rosehill Elementary School. There were perhaps many days when his attention would have been focused more on the docks than on the three R's. What adventures could be found there?

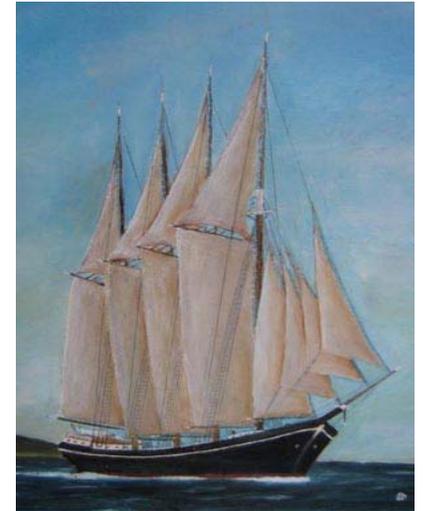
A windjammer that regularly called on Mukilteo was the "Alice Cook." When Rudolph was about fourteen, the lure of the sea became too great. He tells the story of going aboard the ship and signing on with the captain as "cabin boy." When his father heard about it, he put an immediate stop to it. Rudolph would have to wait a few more years before he could set sail beyond Possession Sound.

Rudolph Going to Work

At age 16, Rudolph went to work at the Crown Mill in Mukilteo. by the time he was seventeen, he had earned enough money to buy a boat of his own. As the story goes, the Mukilteo skiff was built with a hull resembling that of a windjammer. He identified the builder as Charley Valero. It was built in 1917. I searching census records as well as city directories nothing can be found out about Charley Valero. It is assumed that Mukilteo had several carpenters familiar with boat building and repair.



Rudolph and family in his new boat 1917



Right: Windjammer Alice Cook

The building of small boats in Mukilteo was an important industry. The Losvar family began building small boats for recreational fisherman in 1905. Fishermen from as far away as Seattle would rent these boats. Mukilteo was the launching point for lots of small boats and fisherman seeking the abundant salmon runs of Possession Sound. This was the history of the Mukilteo Boat House where the Condominium stands today. The Losvars, who built small boats in the community for almost fifty years, did not build Rudolph's skiff. According to Art Losvar, his grandfather built lap strake or clinker type rowboats at that time. Later they built the classic "Mukilteo Built" boat with a flat transom modified for outboard motors. Rudolph's skiff has a smooth hull.



Rudolph with first outboard motor, a Koban



Pipe and Oars



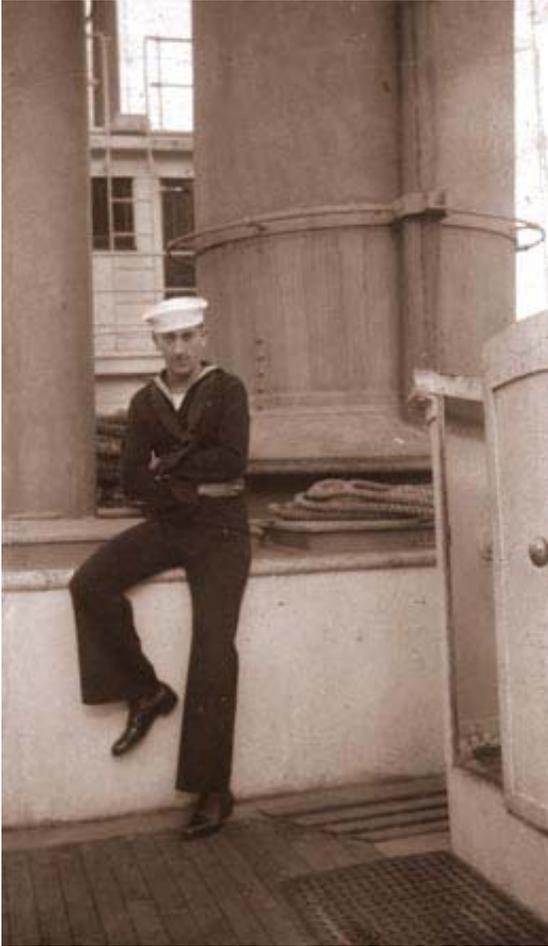
Rudolph with oars and sail



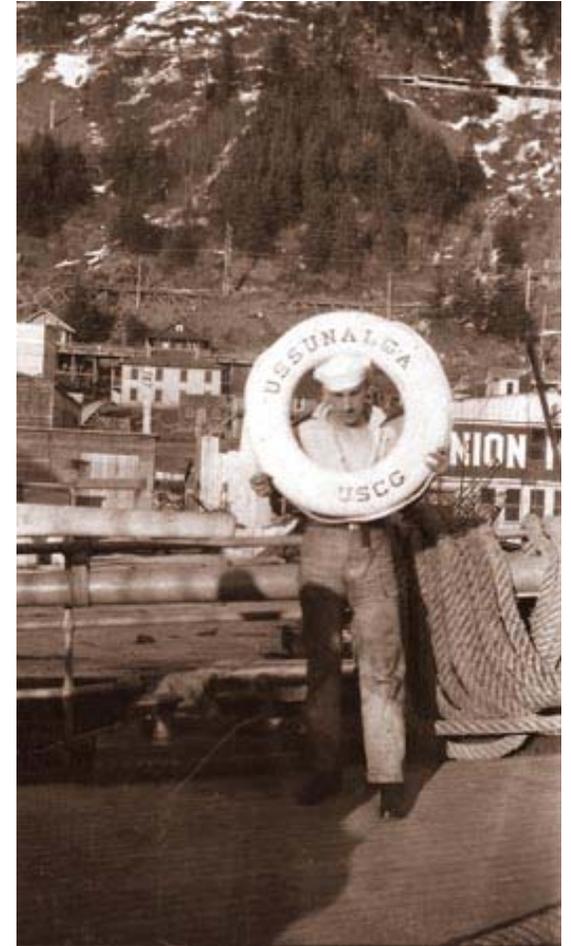
Sister Alice on the Bow

The boat would go on to provide Rudolph, his family, and friends many opportunities to explore and enjoy the water. As a teenager, the skiff became his ship and the waters of Possession Sound became his ocean. Whidbey, Hat, and Camano Islands were his port of call. The three miles to Whidbey Island took the place of sailing to China. Sometimes a sail was hoisted and provided a rest from rowing. Later he purchased an outboard motor. He claimed it was the first outboard motor in Mukilteo. The motor, a Koban built in Milwaukee, proved to be too heavy and the vibration was hard on the little boat.

Joining the Coast Guard

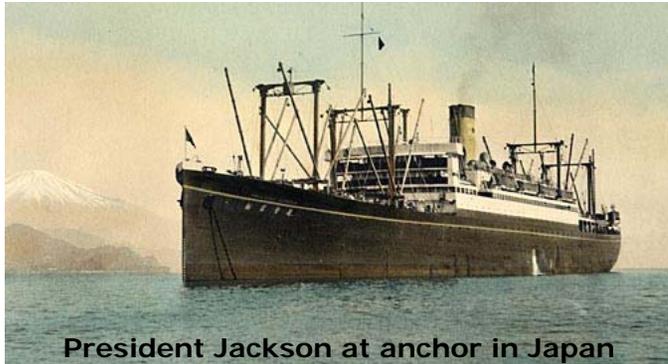


In 1922, Rudolph joined the Coast Guard. He was assigned to the revenue cutter, Unalga, stationed in Port Townsend. For the next two years, he experienced the life at sea with several trips to Alaska. The Unalga called on ports such as Seward, Juneau, and Skagway and went to such places as Cook's Island, Slime Banks, the Pribilofs and St. Matthew's Island. She transported mail, supplies, and gave medical help to both natives and fishermen in remote areas. Her main responsibility was to enforce the provisions of the 1911 convention between the United States, Great Britain and Russia for the protection of fur seals.



Licensed Marine Engineer and Seeing the World

In 1924, Rudolph began a working career, which would last for over forty years and take him to all of those ports he dreamed of as a boy. The American Mail Line employed him as a licensed marine engineer. His responsibility was to keep the steam engines of the large ship running smoothly. His initial trip began on August 14, 1924, aboard the *President McKinley*. This would be the first of many voyages that would take him to the Orient as well as the East Coast via the Panama Canal.



President Jackson at anchor in Japan

He later transferred to the *President Jackson* which became his home at sea for more than forty voyages. The American Mail Line was based in Seattle and maintained twice monthly service to the Orient. Raw silk was often the cargo on the eastward crossing and all types of American goods were carried westward. Mail was carried in both directions.

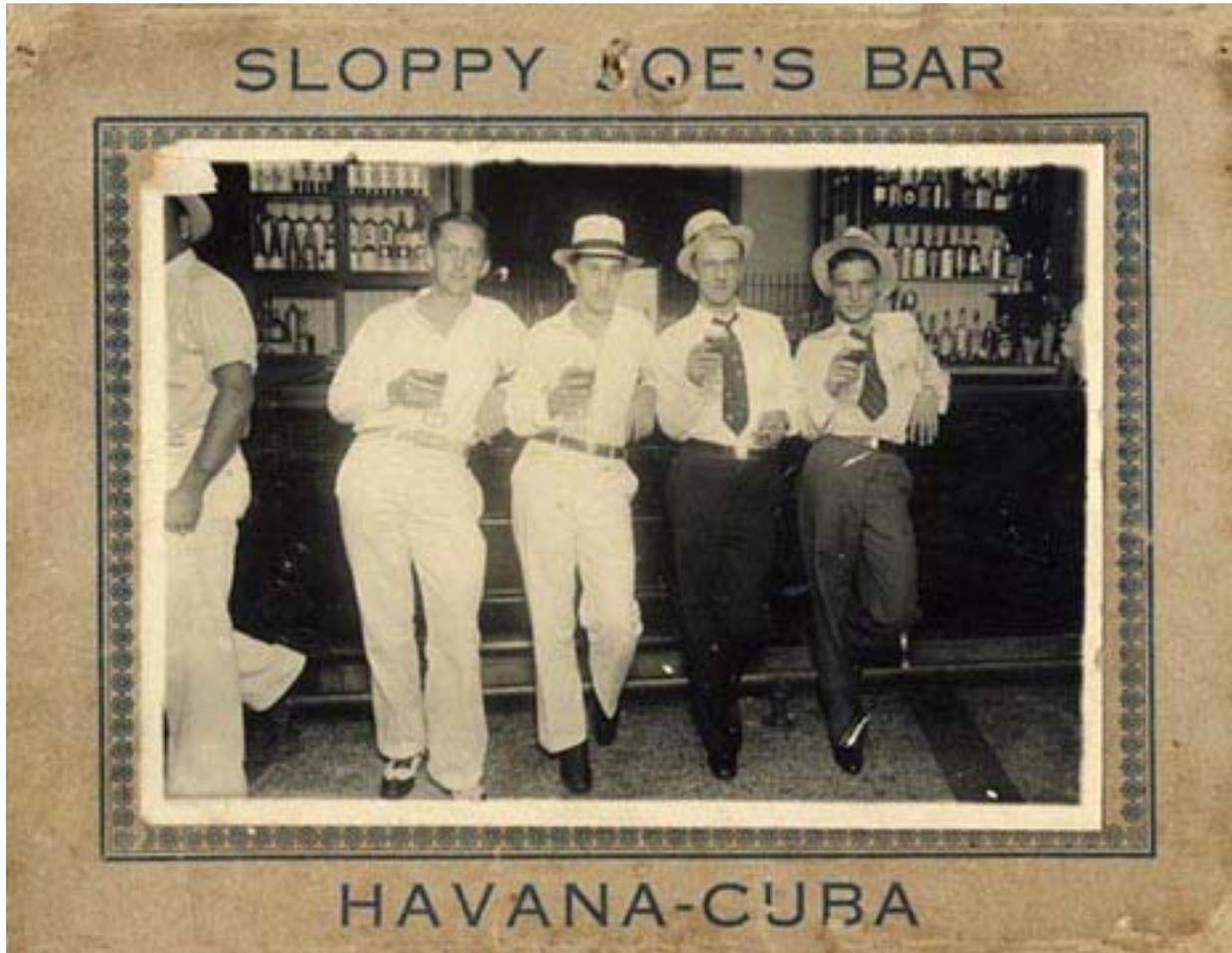
The President Liners also offered passengers a luxurious mode of travel. Until 1935 this was the only means of crossing the Pacific. Airplane service to Manila began in 1936 and gradually the mail traffic was lost. By 1940, the entire line was tied up. The war was approaching and the airplane was replacing the ocean liner. Following World War II, he made additional sailings to ports in the Orient and Indian Ocean. The family today still treasures the many beautiful pieces brought back from his travels.



Riding a rickshaw in China



Marine Engineer at home in Mukilteo



Rudolph - second from left, with crew in Sloppy Joe's Bar - Havana Cuba 1932

Returning Home

When he returned home from his ocean voyages, the small boat became his vessel of choice. During the 1920's he would pack up the boat and with his friends Francis Bemis or Al Biersch, go camping on Whidbey Island. Good times were held with family and friends at the beach on Mukilteo.



Goofing off with sister Ella



Enjoying the sunshine



Going Camping



Camping on the island

As time went on, Whidbey Island was becoming developed and good camping sites were getting harder to find. He decided to purchase property of his own on the island. There he enjoyed digging clams, fishing and working the land.

In the early thirties, he began to build a cabin. The materials were carried across the sound in the trusty little boat.



Because there were no phones, he and his father worked out a unique communication system, which involved the old leaning alder tree.

On the following page is his account...

The old Leaning Elder.

Between youth + retirement this old tree has been the telephone that called me back to sea. Many a day when I'd take the old boat thinking I'd have a few days to burn + clear + I'd walk up the old leaning tree + see a white sheet on Dads chicken coop which meant I'd have to forget the beach head home + off to sea again. But between the two I loved every minute of it anyway when I could dig a bucket of clams with a stick in one hand. The old tree is gone, memories remain.

During World War II, all boats were required to be registered and numbered. Additionally, an operating license was required. The two documents shown below give us information about the original history of the skiff. Note the restrictions imposed on the use of the boat.

Oct. 1818
August 1935

30S918
(Number awarded)

Rudolph W. Pallas

(Owner)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
BUREAU OF MARINE INSPECTION AND NAVIGATION

(1) Pleasure
(Service)

Certificate of Award of Number to an Undocumented Vessel Under the Provisions of the Act of June 7, 1918, as Amended by the Act of August 5, 1935

This is to certify that **30S918** has been awarded to the vessel called the _____, owned by Rudolph W. Pallas, whose present address is (2) 3221 West 61st, Seattle, Wash.

This vessel is a (3) outboard, built of (4) wood, at (5) Makiltee, by (6) Charley Valero, in 1917, has an overall length of 12 ft., beam of 4.17 ft., is of the type generally described as (7) open, and is equipped with a (8) Johnson engine, serial No. (9) 107357 and of 4 h. p. Depth 2 ft.

This certificate constitutes a document in lieu of enrollment or license and **MUST BE KEPT ON BOARD AT ALL TIMES.** Failure to do so will subject the owner to a **PENALTY OF TEN DOLLARS.**

Given under my hand and official seal at the port of Seattle, Washington this 14th day of May 1940.

[SEAL]

Oscar W. Dam

Oscar W. Dam, Deputy Collector of Customs.

- (1) State whether freight, passenger, fishing, towing, pleasure, etc.
(2) Mailing address. Change of address must be reported promptly to the collector.
(3) St. a., Ol. a., Ga. a., outboard motor. L
(4) Wood, iron, steel, or composite.
(5) Place of build.

- (6) Name of builder.
(7) Open launch, full cabin, raised deck, etc.
(8) Maker's name.
(9) Serial number to be inserted, if possible to ascertain it.

11-11583

NAVY DEPARTMENT



UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

License No. 1935-CVessels No. 30 8 918

APPLICATION FOR SPECIAL LICENSE

To operate a pleasure vessel in local waters
of the
UNITED STATES

Vessel No Name 12' Open Outboard (G.S.)
(Length) (H.P.) (Promission) (Motor Number)
Owner Rudolph W. Pallas 1323237-A Rf. 3221 West 61st., Seattle, Wn.
Master Same Same Same
(Identification Card) (Number and Color) (Address)

To navigate the following waters under the jurisdiction of the Captain of the Port. (Under regulation prescribed by authority of 50 U.S.C. 191, 191a, b, c, 492, Proc. 2412, 5 F. P. 2419, 6 F.P. 5581.)

FUGET SOUND AND TRIBUTARIES THERETO. NOT VALID IN RESTRICTED AREAS AS PER NOTICE TO MARINERS. NO FIREARMS, BINOCULARS OR CAMERAS.

A license is hereby requested to operate the vessel described above for the purpose and on the waters specified. I certify that the statements made in this application are true, to the best of my knowledge and belief.

14 August, 1943(Date)W. Ella PallasW. Ella Pallas, by direction.(Signature of Applicant)

SPECIAL LICENSE

Pursuant to Sections 6.16 and 6.17, 33 C.F.R., the vessel described above is hereby authorized to operate for the purpose and on the waters described in the application during daylight hours of sunrise to sunset from the date indicated below until revoked with the following exceptions: (Date of Expiration)

NO EXCEPTIONS

Everett, Washington14 August, 1943(Date)Donald H. Lee, C.R.M.(A)(R)Executive OfficerBy direction.John DelsethUSCG (Captain of the Port)ACOTPEverett, Wash.

Vessels operating in Defensive Sea Areas under this license are "proceeding under United States Naval authorized supervision" as prescribed in Executive Order #8970 of December 11 1941, issued on authority of Title 18, Section 96 of the U. S. Code and subject to all regulations thereof.

Later Years

In later years, Rudolph, his wife Esther, and daughters Carolyn and Elissa Ann used the cabin as they spent leisure time on Whidbey Island. The cabin without electricity gave Carolyn and Elissa Ann, as well as the grandchildren (in later years), a taste of yesteryear.

Water was hand pumped from a well. Esther cooked tender pot roasts on the wood stove and a kerosene lantern provided a night-light. On a rainy day, the cabin was a cozy haven as the rain on the roof could be heard. There are many memories of waking to the sound of a crackling fire in the stove and the smell of coffee perking softly in the pot.

Even though the ferry was used to get to the island, everyone had to hike down to the cabin. Electricity and a road were brought in several years later.



Whidbey Island Cabin 2000. It can be seen from the Mukilteo Lighthouse.



Boat rides with teenage daughters and their friends



Granddaughter Leslie with Esther and salmon



Carolyn, Leslie, Elissa on beach



Grandchildren Eric, Patty, and Mark

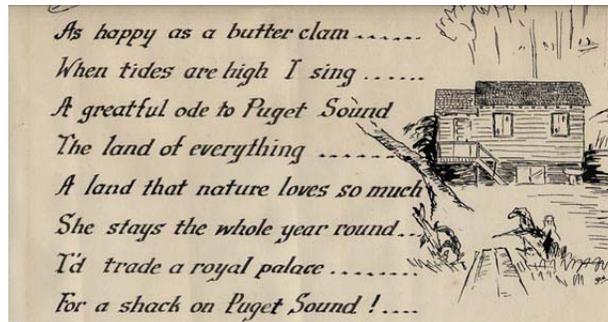


Cooking crab on the beach with wife Esther

In the late sixties the little boat was showing its age. Where the stern and keel met was worn to the point where the boat could not be used. The boat was taken and stored in Seattle where Rudolph would often gaze at the idle boat and recall for use one of his many adventures. Many of his recollections would begin with the phrase: "*Me and Francis Bemis...*" Then he would continue "*we rowed all the way to Hat Island, put up the sail and caught the north wind all the way back to Muk*". Many of those stories have been told here.

Rudolph died in 1990 just short of his ninetieth birthday. He lived a full and rewarding life. Although he traveled to those far away ports dreamed of when young, Puget Sound was closest to his heart. He left his boat of 73 years with many a story to share and a tale to tell.

As happy as a butter clam
When tides are high I sing
A greatful ode to Puget Sound
The land of everything
A land that nature loves so much
She stays the whole year round
I'd trade a royal palace
For a shack on Puget Sound!



Rudolph in the 1980's on Whidbey Island

Restoration of the Mukilteo Skiff



Restoration began by pulling the bow together for a new stem. Repairs then began to the transom and rub rails. The old paint was removed. Once most of the restoration was complete, the boat was braced so the original measurements could be recorded.



Adams Bays pulling the bow together

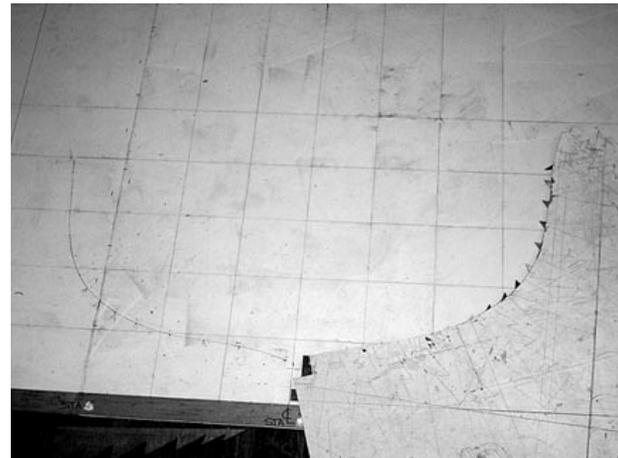
Measuring the Mukilteo Skiff



Tim Lee and Adam Bays preparing to take measurements of the skiff



Taking the measurements of the Mukilteo Skiff



Measurements are carefully recorded for construction of the new Mukilteo Skiff



Construction begins on the new Mukilteo Skiff



Making Minor Adjustments

As the old boat is displayed, you will be able to observe the restoration process. Half of the boat will look as it did when in use. The other half will be left unfinished to show the original construction as well as the restoration. You will gain an appreciation for the skill of the boat builders of the past and those being trained today. The Mukilteo Skiff with its many memories imbedded in its planking may never sail again, but will provide a glimpse into the past.

The new boat will be an exact copy of the original. A boat not just to look at but also to use and enjoy, will give the feel of the classic wooden boats used on Puget Sound. The new boat, with its lines now preserved, will allow the great grandchildren of Rudolph Pallas and others to experience his love of the water.



Students of the NW Wooden Boat Building School who have worked on the restoration of the Mukilteo Skiff

This project is a tribute to not only the skilled boat builders of yesterday but to those of today and the future. The family of Rudolph Pallas owes a debt of gratitude to the staff and students of the Northwest School for Wooden Boats. Without their dedication to this endeavor, a small piece of Northwest History would have been lost. It has given all of us an appreciation for the skilled craftsmen of the past as well as those being trained today.