

October 28, 1992

History of Kirkland Marine Construction, Inc.

By Philip E. Toman, (1924 – 2004)

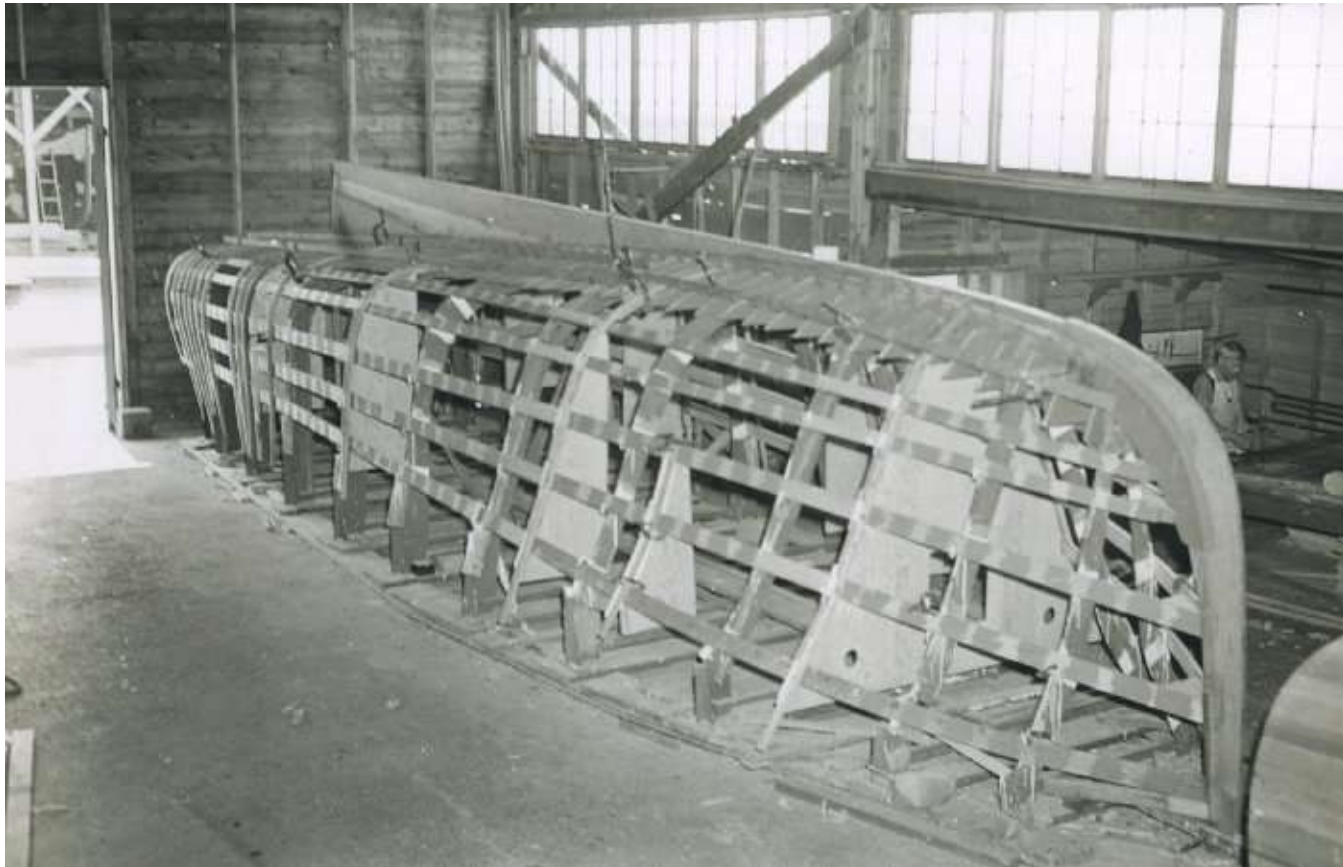
Son of Philip F. Toman, (1898 - 1968)

Kirkland Marine Construction began during the early part of WW II, probably 1942. The site was on the Kirkland waterfront about a third of the way from Kirkland to Houghton. I'm not positive, but believe there is a Dentist office there now. It was originally Ballinger Boat Works dating from the 20's or 30's. Philip F. Toman, Bellevue, developed the idea of buying the shipyard and procuring a Coast Guard contract to build boats. He was successful, and obtained a contract to build sixty-eight (68) thirty-eight foot wooden hulled Picket Boats, the largest Coast Guard contract up to that time. A partner, Carl Ballard, Seattle, became part of the firm.

In addition to the original Ballinger building, a new building was constructed which housed office space, parts storage as well as two side-by-side assembly lines for construction of the boats.

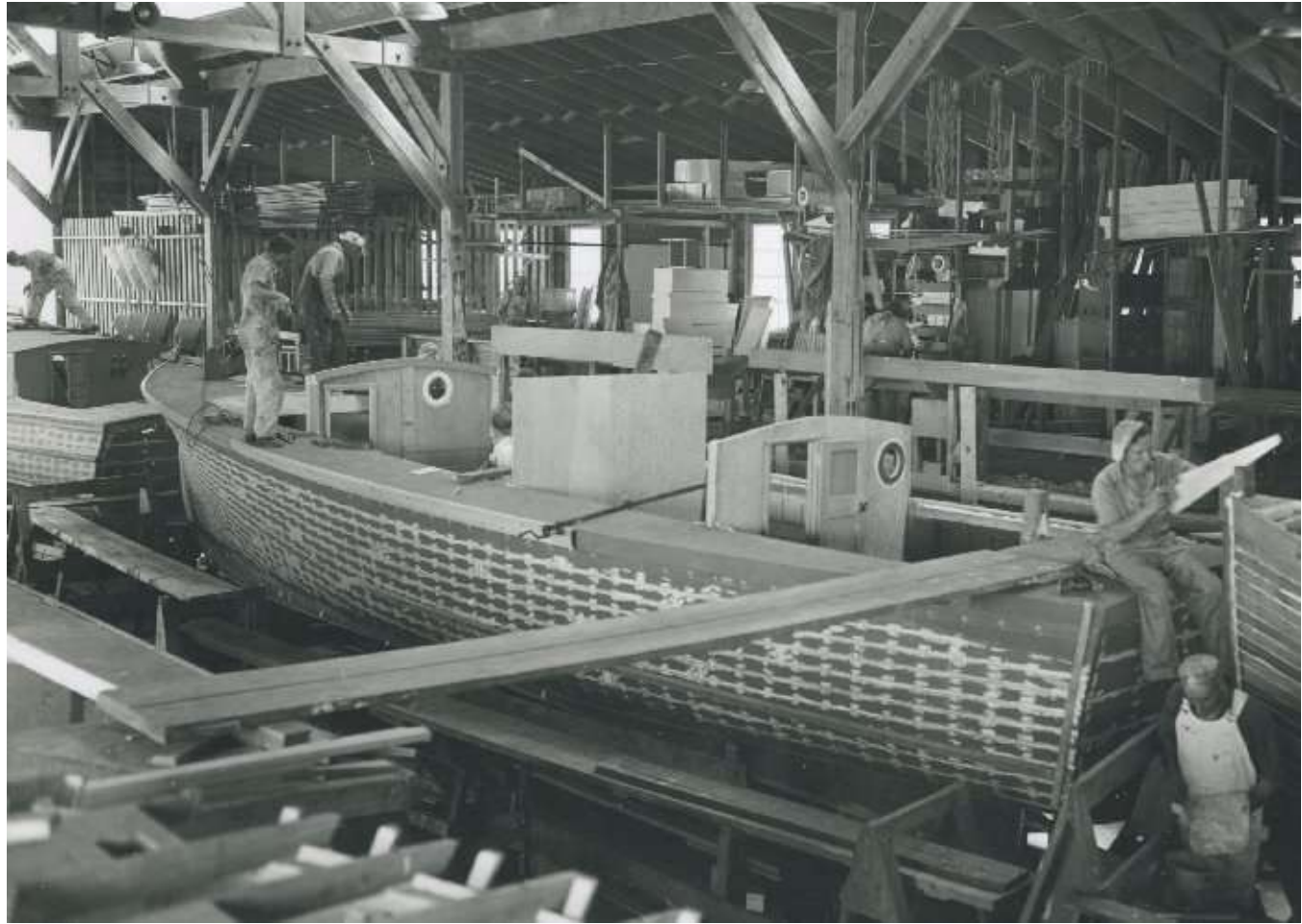


The hulls started at the south end of the building and were built upside down, which was a new technique at that time. When the hulls were completed they were flipped over and the engines were installed, wiring put in, decks put on and the pilot house and deck house installed.









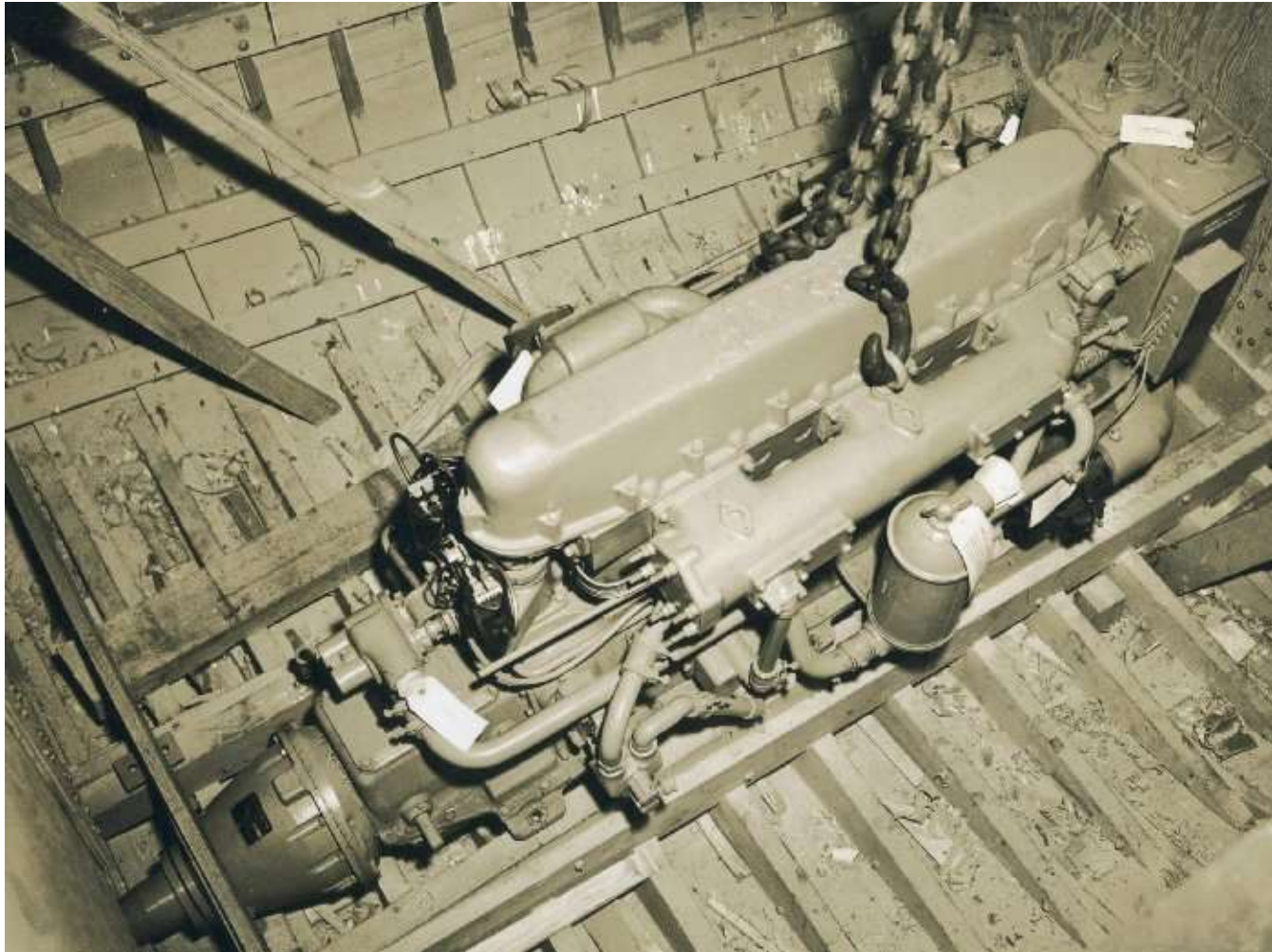
At the end of the line they made a 90° turn onto the tracks for launching. Each boat was inspected throughout the manufacture and test runs by resident Coast Guard inspectors who were on site during the whole time. There were two officers and one enlisted man.





The Patrol Boat is ***On The Ways*** for launching

The 38' picket boats were single-screw with a Hall-Scott engine and were relatively fast. They were intended for use as harbor patrol vessels and were widely used in ports throughout the U.S.



Following the completion of the 68 vessels, several large fishing boats were built by Kirkland Marine Construction. At the peak I believe there were probably 50 men employed at the yard. I think the firm went out of business in 1945 or 1946. I don't recall when the building was razed.

I recall that Art Needham and his son were the electricians and Dimne Wright was secretary and all around girl Friday. Mr. Phil Ballinger and his son were also employed at KMC.

I thought this history should be preserved, as it was a significant Kirkland employer at that time, although the larger shipyard at Houghton was of course more widely known. I worked at the shipyard as an electrician prior to entering the service in February 1943.

Philip E. Toman

Photos from the Philip E. Toman Collection
Kirkland Heritage Society

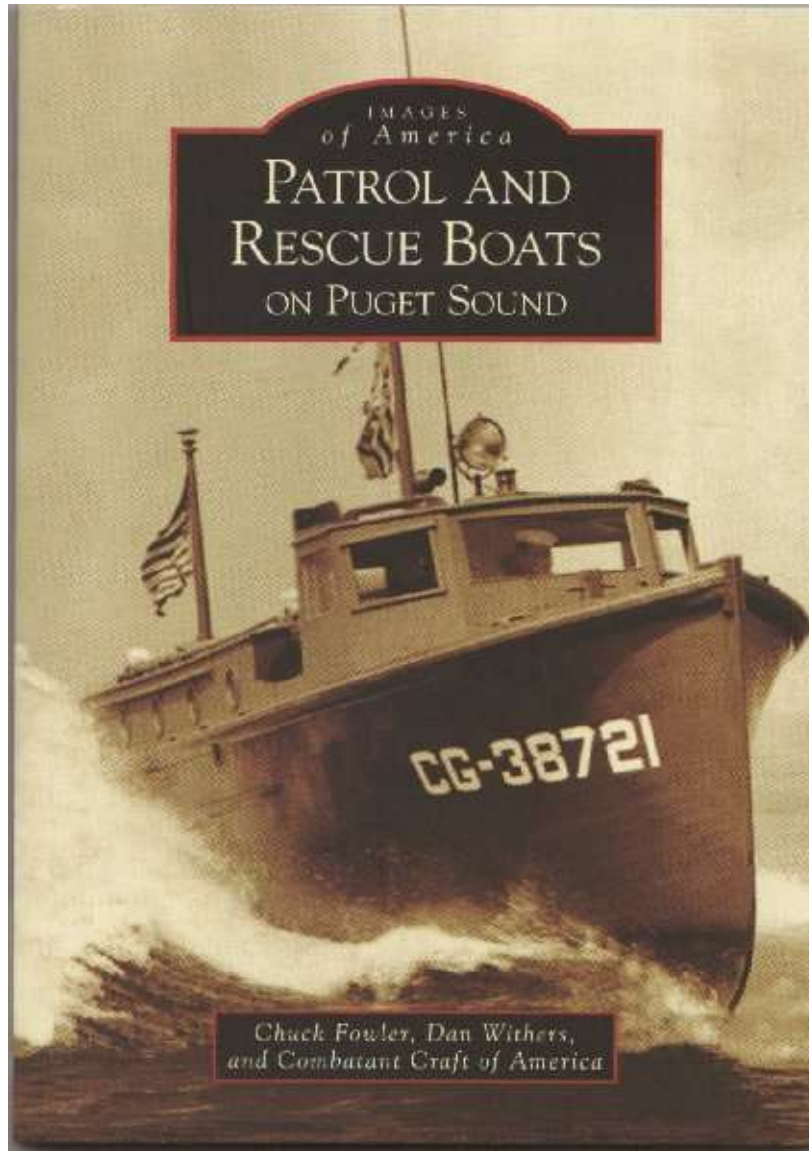
Editors Notes:

Kirkland Marine Construction, Inc. was called the wooden boat yard by Kirkland residents. The building was later used by a cabinet maker.

The “ways” were the tracks that launched the boats into Lake Washington.

When Roger Johnson played down by the wooden boat yard, he and his friends always saw what they thought were railroad tracks that went directly into the lake. He said they just dangled there. These tracks were the “ways” as seen in the photos.

Once vacant, the abandoned building was a favorite play area for local boys. It was long and on the water. They would run up and down the length of the building and shoot their cap guns. One evening after the boys had gone home, the building burned to the waterline. Roger Johnson always wondered if it was the sparks from caps that had ignited the sawdust on the floor. It was not considered a great loss at the time of the fire. Taken from the oral history of Roger Johnson (1935 – 2009). Loita Hawkinson, editor.



Patrol and Rescue Boats on Puget Sound

By Chuck Fowler, Dan Withers
and Combatant Craft of America

This book features 5 photos in
the Philip Toman Collection held
by the Kirkland Heritage Society.
The cover photo is not in the KHS
collection but CG-38721 was
built at Kirkland Marine
Construction.