

**Steve Monrad, known among the Tollycraft boating community as its biggest collector of memorabilia, shows Libby Whittmann a photograph at Saturday's reception in Port Ludlow.**



JULIE McCORMICK/FOR PENINSULA DAILY NEWS

# Tollycraft fans turn out to fete designer's 100th

BY JULIE McCORMICK  
FOR PENINSULA DAILY NEWS

PORT TOWNSEND — People who own Tollycraft boats, which haven't been made for 17 years, seem to agree they have a special bond.

But they don't always agree on exactly what it is.

"It's a bit of a cult. Actually, it's a lot of a cult," asserted Terry Murphy, a burly Canadian from Furry Creek, British Columbia,

who organizes north-of-the border Tollycraft events and owns a 1979 40-foot Tollycraft called *Papa Ken*.

Murphy and about 175 Tollycraft owners and admirers descended on Port Ludlow on Saturday to honor the founder of the boatbuilding company that bore his name for 41 years, R.M. "Tolly" Tollefson, who will turn 100 on Monday.

TURN TO **BOATS/A5**



# Boats: 'To me, these things are like Picassos'

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Tollefson, who is physically fragile but mentally alert, held up well during the birthday luncheon, reported organizer Donna Coffey, but his stamina tends to give out after about an hour.

He still drinks a daily scotch at 5 p.m., but on Saturday he took it at 3, she said, and then had a lie-down.

## Maritime center display

The younger crowd — like the tall, tanned and white-maned Jerry Romney, 81 — took the party to the Northwest Maritime Center in Port Townsend, where a display of everything Tollycraft adorned the walls.

Romney, of Salt Lake City and cousin to Mitt, the Republican presidential hopeful, is finally ready to let go of his 44-foot Tollycraft, moored on Lake Powell.

He's owned six over the last 51 years — "my boats are all called *Why Not?*" — but "I'm getting too old to take care of it," he said with a frown.

The Tollycraft tradition is more than a bond between people, it seems to be a bond between people and their boats as well.

Some say Tollycraft own-



DONNA COFFEY

**Tolly Time II, owned by Jane and John Semasko of Gig Harbor, is an example of the famed boats.**

ers like to bond together just as owners of certain vintage cars do, with an emphasis on admiring beauty, reliability and, as Caren Holtby, put it "timelessness."

There's something about its shape," said the Canadian, who owns the 43-foot *Seawind*.

"It's modern. Its shape has held the test of time," she said.

For Steve Monrad of Anacortes, Tollycraft boats are art.

"To me, these things are

like Picassos," he said, and so are all the vintage brochures and other memorabilia the company produced in its heyday.

Monrad is known as the quintessential collector of all things Tollycraft among members of the two U.S. Tollycraft clubs, one in Portland, Ore., and one in Seattle, and the northerners who are less formally organized but just as enthusiastic.

Lynn and Mark Vanderwall of Mercer Island and

their three adolescent daughters have been making the 1981, 48-foot *Margaret Rose* the focus of their summers for nearly a decade.

"We call it camping on water," Lynn said.

Mary, who is 10, "learned to crawl up the stairs on that boat," her mother recalled with a smile.

## Bought boat in 1967

Not only are the boats known to be well-built, attractive and timeless,

## Exhibit on display

A SPECIAL EXHIBIT about legendary boat-builder R.M. "Tolly" Tollefson's life and work is on display on the second floor of the Northwest Maritime Center's Heritage and Resource building, 431 Water St., Port Townsend.

The exhibit will be open to the public from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays through March.

It honors Tollefson, founder of Tollycraft Yachts, who will turn 100 on Monday, and contains drawings, news clippings, photographs and stories about him.

For more information, see [www.nwmaritime.org/](http://www.nwmaritime.org/) or phone 360-385-3628.

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they're also family-friendly.

Tolly is credited in many stories for his interest in customer service, soliciting feedback which resulted in windowed galleys so wives in charge of meals could see out and converse with everyone on board.

Tollycrafters believe Marge Fulton of Redondo Beach, Calif., is likely the person who has owned the same Tollycraft for the longest period of time, and so does she.

Fulton moors her 23-foot cruiser in Anacortes now, and comes up for four months every summer.

But she had been traile-  
ring it since she bought it new at the Los Angeles Boat

Show in 1967, and she's known Tolly nearly as long.

"I so wanted to meet him and when I did, he did exactly what people do with cars. He kicked the hull of my boat the way they kick tires.

"We've been friends ever since."

Fulton said she's not sure of the origin of the Tollycraft's aura.

"I don't know what it is except it's an extremely nice, well-riding boat," she said. "And I've been in some rough waters with mine."

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