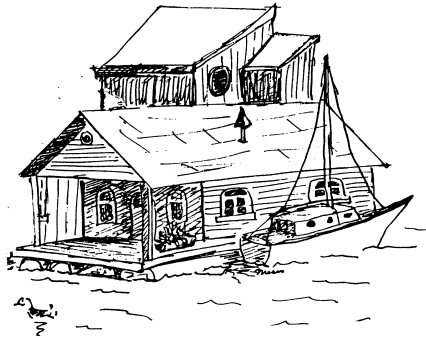


News for Seattle's Floating Home Residents plus our friends, neighbors and the floating curious.



### Around the lake

A Seattle floating home meets new resident & 3x NYT Best-Selling Author & culinary scientist Kenji Lopez-Alt. Check it out on [instagram.com/kenjilopezalt](https://www.instagram.com/kenjilopezalt)

With her humans, Portage Bay resident Luna often sails past Brian Demkowicz's home on the way to Ivar's. During one of these outings, Brian's dog guest Carly got so excited that she accidentally fell into the water.

End of October, Stephanie King opens the upscale Kitchen and Market in Eastlake, offering fresh produce and take-and-cook meals to brighten up your kitchen. Visit [kitchenandmarket.com](https://www.kitchenandmarket.com) for more.

Joez Bayside is moving into the old Little Market location off Portage Bay. They'll be serving up pizza, running a charming little shop, and their burgers are already a hit!

## Take it from a Guide

- By Karen Woodworth

See *Fall in Mount Rainier National Park*: As the summer days fade away the crowds at Mount Rainier National Park begin to disappear along with the entry reservation requirements ending September 2nd. Fall is the perfect time to plan a trip to Mount Rainier. Fall often brings clear skies showing off Mount Rainier's snow-capped peak standing at 14,411 feet. The subalpine meadows, particularly in areas like the Paradise and Sunrise regions of Rainier, are renowned for their vibrant colors. Here, the huckleberry and blueberry bushes transform to photogenic hues of red, purple and yellow. Animals are more likely to be visible as they prepare for the winter months: Marmots and Pika can be found running around gathering the last bit of food needed to survive. If you're lucky you might even

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### INSIDE

- ◆ Where to get unique floating home gifts for the holidays
- ◆ Meet the neighbors!
- ◆ Who was Umbrella Man?

## It's for Jann

by Linda Knight and Stafford Green

This newsletter stopped printing about ten years ago. Why? Last June, Jann McFarland explained "It was vetoed by a few powerful board members. That decision made me mad. Our community was linked by it. It kept people informed of issues and the gossipy stories kept people in touch with each other." Whatever happened ten years ago, it was a bad decision. So: Here. We. Are. And yes, this paper format feels good, right?

Floating home news is best when wet from a kayak paddle not blaring up from a screen. Plus, the Floating Curious can

Continues on page 2

## Ask Deirdre by Deirdre Cochran

"My neighbor is very kind but spends every winter in Southern California. During her absence, she often asks for help with tasks like picking up packages and dripping her faucet. If it snows, I'm concerned she'll expect me to clear snow off her roof too. I enjoy helping others, but I'm starting to feel overwhelmed. How can I handle this situation?"

*Deirdre Cochran has been a clinical social worker and therapist for 35 years before moving to a houseboat on Lake Union. If you have an issue you'd like addressed, drop it in the mail slot at Keasler Cottage, 2329 Fairview Avenue East, and you might see it featured in the next newsletter.*

Wow, you are certainly a neighbor most of us would love to have on our dock. But you have to take care of yourself too. My question to you is what do you WANT to do for this neighbor? Are you still OK to pick up packages and drip her faucet? Or would you rather take your own life back and not do even these tasks for her? You mention that she is very kind so perhaps she does some things for you, which you can take into account. Once you are clear what you want to do for her, you can let her know what you will do and what you won't, and at the same time give her some suggestions as to where she could send her packages during her absence, USPS.com for mail hold, and names of any handy persons or companies who could be on call to turn

*Continues on page 5*

## Jann continued - by Linda Knight and Stafford Green

eavesdrop (hello there, did you know you can join the Floating Homes Association (FHA), too? Check out [seattlefloatinghomes.org](http://seattlefloatinghomes.org)). But before you wander through this newsletter, reading up on Umbrella Man, "Houseboatique" sales or things about the neighborhood, we want you to know something of Jann McFarland.

It's really important to us that you know about her.

Jann McFarland's commitment to our floating home community spanned more than forty years: she was the heart of our organization, someone who made things happen and brought energy and resolve to every project she touched. She launched the first floating homes tour, turning a simple idea into a showcase of our floating, colorful lifestyle. She handled calls from around the globe -- from film crews searching for that perfect scene to people curious about this funny life we have - that is, with fish living under our floors.

Jann treasured her trips to Mexico with her husband, her collection of antique South American jewelry, her two cats and those quiet moments spent tending to her garden. Yet, Jann's happiest times were perhaps those spent with a good friend on a raft, hovering gently over water next to the city and people she loved.

Jann's fearless nature and genuine curiosity about people defined her. She was our community's confidante and cheerleader, always ready to offer a listening ear, sound advice, and heartfelt encouragement. She championed Grand Community Missions and supported those who dared to challenge unfair norms, leading us all toward a better and stronger community.

*We lost Jann this past Fourth of July. Jann's legacy is a reminder of the power of working together, giving back and the strength of a passionate heart. She is dearly missed.*



Jann McFarland June 6th at the FHA Annual Meeting

# Umbrella Man

by Adam Woog

Out of all the blue-collar workers, political radicals, Bohemian artistic types, crooks, and general scalawags living on Seattle’s houseboats in the early 20th century, probably the best-known was Robert W. Patten, the Umbrella Man.

Born in 1832 in New York, the deeply bearded Patten adopted Seattle floating life sometime in the 1890s. Settling on Lake Union’s south shore, he made his living in a variety of ways, including fishing, selling newspapers on the corner of Second Avenue and Union Street, and performing odd jobs. His hefty frame made him especially popular for carrying heavy loads or freeing carts stuck in the mud.



Patten was by all accounts friendly, a good predictor of the weather (people called him “the human barometer”), and an extravagant storyteller. He claimed, at various points, to have fought in the Indian, Mexican, and Civil Wars, to have been adopted by a chief of the Winnebago tribe, and to have personally known Abraham Lincoln, Buffalo Bill, and Kit Carson. (One of the few verified truths about Patten’s life is that he did, indeed, serve in the Civil War, for which he drew a modest pension later in life.)



But Patten’s most distinctive feature was the home-made umbrella hat he always wore. The Umbrella Man was such a familiar figure around town that for years, beginning in 1909, the Seattle Daily Times (as it was then called) featured caricatures of him in its front-page weather reports, accompanied by a pet duck that sometimes wore a matching hat. Cashing in on his popularity, the newspaper offered for sale items like Umbrella Man statuettes, post cards, spoons, and calendars. He was also the subject of several books of collected drawings by Times artist John Ross “Dok” Hager, who created the daily weather cartoons.

At one point, Patten’s popularity emboldened him to ask city authorities to make him harbormaster. (They declined.) Undaunted, the Umbrella Man continued to live on Lake Union and enjoy his celebrity status until a stroke forced him to leave his houseboat. (“UMBRELLA MAN STRICKEN WITH APOPLEXY -- CARTOON ORIGINAL VERY ILL,” read the newspaper headline.)

*Adam Woog is writing a history of Seattle’s floating communities, due out in the fall of 2025 from Arcadia Press. The author of dozens of books for middle-school readers and a handful for grownups, he was conceived on a Portage Bay floating home and now, in retirement, lives on a small Lake Union houseboat.*

Patten’s last years were spent in a National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, and he died in 1913. However, he lived on as a cartoon character in the Times as late as 1925.



# Reviving Keasler Cottage: A Call to Preserve Our History

By Stafford Green

I fell in love with the Floating Home Association by receiving a key last year to a small, yellow cottage just outside Tenas Chuck Moorage. Opening its door gave access to a dusty collection of old documents and photos that told the story of our Floating Home Association. These records revealed a community that has long fought to protect our unique way of life, and among the names that stood out was Bill Keasler.

Bill Keasler became president of the Floating Homes Association in 1981 at a time when Seattle's floating homes were facing an uncertain future. Developers were eager to reshape the area, and without Bill's leadership, many of our beloved floating homes would not exist today. His dedication and hard work over three decades as FHA president played a key role in preserving our community.

Several decades ago, the Association named the this little building "Keasler Cottage." It stood as a tribute to Bill's selfless contributions to our community and a reminder of the battles he fought to keep our homes afloat.



Unfortunately, in the past several years, Keasler Cottage has fallen into disrepair. The Floating Home Association board is now eager to restore it to its former charm – especially with our home tour just a year away! The FHA Historic Preservation and Design Team has already made progress in cleaning up the interior (thank you Catherine Major and Megan Hall), but the cottage still needs structural repairs expected to be upwards of \$30,000+.

This is where we need your help. We invite you to volunteer (help paint?) and contribute to this important restoration effort. Please visit [seattlefloatinghomes.org/fha-volunteers](http://seattlefloatinghomes.org/fha-volunteers) to sign up. Donations from individuals or businesses are happily accepted, and can be earmarked specifically for the cottage.

*Together, we can ensure that Keasler Cottage remains a proud part of our community's history.*

*Stafford is the president-elect of the Floating Home Association. He can be reached at [president@seattlefloatinghomes.org](mailto:president@seattlefloatinghomes.org)*

What's the history behind this cottage? Julie North tells the story: "Before 1963, the Dahl-Hendricksen Co. acquired the property where Keasler Cottage stands, initially planning to expand their Alaska barging business. At that time, houseboats were already present, but the dock expansions using state-leased lands had not yet begun."

"By the early 1960s, Dahl-Hendricksen shifted focus, abandoning plans to expand their business at 2331-2339 Fairview. This opened the door for Terry Pettus and George Neale, the first FHA president, to advocate for state lease extensions that would allow more houseboats to be added. Their efforts were successful, and permits were granted for 12 additional houseboats, laying the foundation for what is now Tenas Chuck."

"Around the same time, the construction of the I-5 highway led to the dumping of clay-like soil where the current shoreside parking lot exists. Previously, the area was open water, where houseboats were moored. One of these houseboats was retained and gifted to the FHA, likely as a token of gratitude for Terry Pettus's role in expanding the moorage."

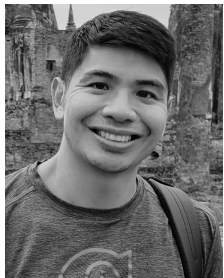
"The office was aground in 1968 when I first went there, but there was open water on the east side of the building (by Fairview), so the office appeared to be floating. It was quite a charming place then and was well-maintained." - Julie North

**HOUSEBOATIQUE SALE:** Courtney Cooper Neese will be hosting a special event of FHA items on Monday, December 2nd 4-7pm in the bright yellow Keasler Cottage, 2329 Fairview Avenue East. The sale will feature a wide variety of items, including books, cups, and other merchandise. All proceeds from the sale will go to the renovation of Keasler Cottage.

## Meet The Neighbors



Melissa Ahlers has lived on a floating home for almost 25 years. As a deeply rooted member of our community, she was on the FHA board for over 10 years in the 2000s. She is married and a proud mother to a wonderful 14-year-old daughter and a sweet Havanese dog. By profession, Melissa is a realtor, with appearances on two reality TV real estate shows & she’s quick to note that they’re scripted! Melissa is back on the board and will be chairing the 2025 FHA Tour. Planning will begin in October, and she’s currently seeking volunteers for the leadership team, Volunteer Coordinator, Sponsorship, PR, and Ticketing. If interested, please call/text 206-356-2262 or email [melissa.ahlers@compass.com](mailto:melissa.ahlers@compass.com).



Jason Rungsigul, a lifelong Pacific Northwest resident, has been enjoying life in the floating home community for the past three years. A proud UW alum with degrees in electrical engineering and business, he balances his time between work and family life. Jason and his wife, Yao, are raising their energetic daughter. When he's not out exploring new places or savoring great food, Jason loves cheering on his favorite sports teams, playing tennis, and spending time outdoors with his family. Jason, along with John Tabb, are the newly appointed co-chairs of the Floating Home Association’s Safety Committee.



LA/Seattle based Writer-Director, Rainy Kerwin, having spent five summers on her houseboat in Eastlake, is totally enamored with this city and determined to figure out how to shoot her next film here. Her goal is to showcase this magical, romantic city as the backdrop. Previous works include “The Wedding Invitation” (Amazon Prime) and “A Neighbor’s Vendetta” (Tubi). Have ideas, connections, or insight in the Seattle film space? Reach out to her production company, *It’s Raining Films...* [itsrainingfilms@gmail.com](mailto:itsrainingfilms@gmail.com)

## ...and a non-human ones



Beaver resident Chewie has made a cozy home in the waters off Eastlake. Known for his love of willow tree branches, he can often be seen gathering ones that fall into the water naturally or from tree haircuts by local residents. Chewie builds lodges on the lake without regard to the City’s building codes, ordinances, or regulations. Seattle government officials do not mind, because Chewie adds a touch of wild charm to the Eastlake neighborhood, reminding everyone that the natural world is right off, and right under, Seattle’s floating homes.

### Ask Deirdre continued...

on her faucet and shovel her roof. We need to know these options in the winter. Some people won’t go away in the winter because of these issues.

You can also thank her for anything she has done for you out of kindness, which might make it easier for her to hear you and easier for you to draw a line around which tasks are OK and which are not. If you don’t want to do anything for her, you could suggest she put out a notice to her other dock denizens to see if someone is willing to do these things for her. Good luck. *This situation has come to you to help you take care of yourself.*



# Floating Home Renovations: What to Know Before You Dive In.

by Heidi Eagleton

Could This Be You? You took a job with Google, recently moved to Seattle, and bought a floating home with a log foundation on an older dock. You fell in love with the more “traditional less modern” floating home design. It all started with the movie, “Sleepless in Seattle.” There’s only one problem. It’s not big enough for your family of four and your Great Dane. It needs an addition and maybe a few interior renovations here and there as well.

Or? You bought your floating home over twenty years ago. Your kids have graduated college, moved on, and your nest is empty leaving you with a little extra cash. Now, you can pay, no pun intended, a little more attention to your floating home. It needs updating and more energy efficiency, new thermally protected windows, new decking to replace the time worn existing deck and maybe a bathroom and kitchen upgrade.

Or? You bought vacant floating home at the end of a Lake Union dock. As a native Seattleite, you’ve had your eyes on it for years, since you were a kid in fact. It’s a teardown, it’s falling apart, its structure is shaky, and it has little historic value. Its site is spectacular. The view toward downtown, Queen Anne Hill, the Fremont Bridge, and the Cascade Mountains, is amazing. You’ll build a new floating home off site, and once it’s finished, you’ll move out the old and bring in the new. Your friends think you’re crazy, but you’re going for it.



Eastlake renovation in progress by  
Donnally Architects and SBI Construction

So, what do you do now? *PANIC*...definitely not. Hire an architect and/or contractor...*NO, NOT YET*.....

Your first step: Read your dock’s Articles of Incorporation, By-laws, Lease Agreements, if any, insurance requirements, lender agreements and mortgage provisions with respect to floating home foundations, maintenance, renovations, upgrades, additions, and new construction.

Your second step: Check out the Floating Homes Association (FHA) website. By the end of this year, the website will have a compendium (links) of the City of Seattle’s Shoreline (SMP) exemptions, rules and regulations, which regulate properties within 200 feet of the shoreline, and the City’s building codes, ordinances, regulations and directors rules regulating land use, construction, housing, and other codes administered by the City of Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections. The compendium isn’t intended as a forum for legal advice or advice of any kind. Its sole purpose is informational. It will be updated periodically or as necessary.

Your third step.....Hire a design professional, architect, engineer, or contractor. On second thought, hire divers, the folks who keep floating homes afloat, to evaluate your foundation. Put them first on your list, ahead of the others. If you don’t know it already, balancing a floating home takes a bit of their “practical magic.” Oh, and one more thing.... *Have fun and keep smiling!*



*Heidi chairs the Legal and Compliance Committee at the FHA. She is a writer and a former lawyer, architect, and contractor, residing on Eastlake with her husband and dog.*

**Take it from a Guide - Karen Woodworth continued....**

spot a black bear munching on some berries!

**Trails to Explore**

Mount Rainier offers a variety of trails that are particularly enchanting in autumn:

- Nisqually Vista Overlook Trail: An easy 1.10 mile trail offering views of Mount Rainier and the Nisqually Glacier. See if you can spot any of the crevasses that have formed over summer!
- Skyline Loop: The most popular trail in the park and fall is the best time to go. Starting at the Paradise Visitor Center this hard 5.7 mile loop leads you through the subalpine ecosystems with views stretching as far as Mt. Hood.
- Burroughs Mountain trail: Want to get above the treeline? Then head over to the burroughs on the Sunrise side of Rainier! A total of 10 miles over three different burroughs and ends at 7,800 ft above sea level. Be prepared to spend the whole day tackling the trail and don't be surprised if you're sore the next day.
- Silver Forest Trail: Want something easier near Sunrise Visitor Center? This 2.5 mile out and back trail slowly meanders through stands of silver firs dotted amongst the fall foliage. With minimal elevation gain this trail is perfect for those with little ones.



**Tips for Autumn Hiking**

- Prepare for Weather Variability: Autumn



weather at Mount Rainier can be unpredictable. Pack layers to stay warm and dry, and bring rain gear just in case.

- Start Early: The days are shorter in autumn, so start your hikes early to make the most of daylight hours.
- Leave No Trace: As always, follow the Leave No Trace principles to help preserve the natural beauty of the park for future visitors.



*Karen Woodworth is a Seattle floating home resident and a Certified Interpretive Guide at Evergreen Escapes (evergreenescapes.com) leading hikes to all of the national parks around Seattle. These are some of her favorite trails to hike both by herself and with guests.*

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**Wondering what your floating home is worth?**

I live on a floating home at Mallard Cove and know the lake market well! So if you're curious about your floating home's value, or you're thinking of selling, I'd be happy to chat.

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Floating Home Association's mission is to celebrate and protect Seattle's Floating Home Life. Come be a part of our community at [seattlefloatinghomes.org](http://seattlefloatinghomes.org)! Everyone is welcome to join - we'd love to have you with us!

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