

GIG HARBOR NET SHEDS, BUJACICH NET SHED
3625 Harborview Drive
Gig Harbor
Pierce County
Washington

HAER WA-186-C
HAER WA-186-C

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING SURVEY
GIG HARBOR NET SHEDS, BUJACICH NET SHED

HAER No. WA-186-C

- Location:** 3625 Harborview Drive, Gig Harbor, Pierce County, Washington
- UTM Coordinates:** 10, 531169.11 E, 5242385.59 N
The coordinate represents the approximate center of the building. It was derived from Google Earth Pro v5 on November 12, 2010. The imagery dates from June 12, 2010.
- Present Owners:** Jack (“Jake”) and George Bujacich
- Present Use:** Nets, tools, and miscellaneous fishing gear storage
- Significance:** The seventeen extant net sheds in Gig Harbor, Washington, are significant as remnants of the community’s cultural heritage and economic development. Families, mostly of Croatian ancestry, have passed down the net sheds and fishing vessels for several generations. Many of the extant net sheds are an integral part of successful commercial fishing operations and are used for storing and mending fishing nets as well as repairing the equipment used for commercial vessels. Except for the remaining commercial fishing boats in the harbor, net sheds are the only surviving architectural connection between the community and what was once one of the most successful fishing fleets on the West Coast.
- Historian:** Shelly Leavens, summer 2009
- Project Information:** The City of Gig Harbor has taken steps to provide incentives for property owners who retain historic net sheds, and in 2006, conducted a general survey of the seventeen remaining structures lining the harbor’s waterfront. In 2008, Mildred Andrews of the Andrews Group completed an independent survey of Gig Harbor’s historic downtown. The city secured grant funds from the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation to document the net sheds with the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), a division of the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior in 2009. Todd Croteau, HAER Maritime Program, supervised the documentation team, which consisted of Brian Diveley and Shelly Leavens, both Sally Kress Tompkins Maritime Documentation Interns. A survey team of students from Bates Technical College in Tacoma, Washington,

also lent support to the documentation effort. The documentation team's liaison to the net shed owners is the City of Gig Harbor's Special Projects Coordinator, Lita Dawn Stanton.

Other net sheds documented as part of the Gig Harbor Net Shed survey include the following:

Gig Harbor Net Sheds	HAER No. WA-186
Gilich Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-A
Morin Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-B
Bujacich Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-C
Ivanovich Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-D
Ancich-Tarabochia Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-E
Ancich Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-F
Castelan-Jerkovich Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-G
Puratich Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-H
Stanich Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-I
Gilich Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-J
Novak Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-K
Ross Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-L
Skansie Brothers Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-M
Babich Net Shed (Rickard)	HAER No. WA-186-N
Babich Net Shed (Pont)	HAER No. WA-186-O
Skansie Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-P
Mojean Net Shed	HAER No. WA-186-Q

Part I. Historical Information

A. Physical History:

1. **Date of Construction:** 1950
2. **Architect/Engineer:** Unknown
3. **Builder/Contractor/Supplier:** George and Jake Bujacich
4. **Original Plans:** None found
5. **Alterations and Additions:** New low floats were installed at an unknown date.

B. Historical Context: Jack Sr. and his two sons, Jack Jr. (“Jake”) and George, were in the fishing business and built the shed in 1950. Jake partnered with childhood friend George Ancich (see HAER No. WA-186-E) in multiple fishing endeavors through the 1970s. Jake’s primary source of income was not fishing; he also worked in the public sector as a policeman and as Gig Harbor’s mayor, among other jobs. Jake’s son fished with them but ended up going into the tugboat business instead.

The Bujacich Net Shed has always been used for storage and for mending nets. Jake would also host social events, including pre-season and post-season community picnics with barbequed salmon, clam bakes, cocktail parties, and poker games, at the shed.

Adjacent to the net shed is a tar pit that many local fisherman used to tar their nets, which they would then lay out to dry on the upland fields. The Bujacich family still owns several of the adjacent properties.

Part II. Structural/Design Information

A. General Description: The Bujacich Net Shed sits on a parcel of land measuring 27’-6” wide x 72’ long. The building itself is 34’ wide x 94’ long and is nearly 3,200 square feet.

The frame shed has a gable roof and is clad in corrugated metal. It sits on pilings and extends into the harbor. On the front façade of the building is a large sliding door on upper rollers. The walls extend three-quarters of the shed’s length, and there are three six-light casement windows piercing each wall. The remainder of the walls consists of posts and beams with netting hanging down from outside the roof. The shed’s interior is entirely open, and there is no rear wall. Instead, the

shed opens to a dock space in the harbor. Shelving for tools lines the walls of the shed, and the rafters still hold old cotton nets and cork floats. At the time of the survey, the shed was primarily being used for storage and was not in active use. A ramp and low float extend from the northeast side of the dock, and several boats are moored there.

- 1. Character:** This shed is typical of the net sheds in Gig Harbor.
- 2. Condition of Fabric:** The structure is in good to moderate condition.

B. Site Information: The Bujacich Net Shed is one of a cluster of four sheds along this section of the harbor shoreline. The cluster includes the Ancich Net Shed (see HAER No. WA-186-F) dating to the 1920s as well as the Ancich-Tarabochia Net Shed (see HAER No. WA-186-E). The neighboring Ivanovich Net Shed (see HAER No. WA-186-D), with whom the Bujacich Net Shed shares a dock, was built in ca. 1939-40 directly to the southeast. A wide gravel driveway leads to the shed from Harborview Drive.

Part III: Operations and Processes

A. Operations: The Bujacich Net Shed was used in commercial fishing operations, specifically purse seining, and for storage and repair. A purse seine is a large net hauled out by a smaller boat or “skiff” to form a large circle. Fishermen pull the bottom of the netting, “pursing” it closed to capture schools of fish. Once the net is pulled aboard by a “power block” or “reel,” the final length of net full of fish is pulled on-board or a smaller “brailing” net is used to scoop the catch and load it into the vessel’s hatch. A cannery boat or “tender” typically transfers the fish to the cannery. Historically, fishermen of Gig Harbor have used this method to catch salmon, sardine, and herring.

In the 1930s and 1940s, fishermen tarred their cotton seine nets in order to maintain the shape and prevent rotting. The community had a large vat at the site of the Millville Marina (see HAER No. WA-186-G) where fishermen would soak netting in hot tar, wring it in rollers, stack the netting in the back of trucks, and transport it to a nearby field to be spread out. As the nets dried, the crew would take the net strips and tear them apart to prevent the pieces from sticking together. Typically, a crew would tar and mend nets every two to three months prior to leaving to fish, as part of overall preparations. Cotton nets required more mending and patching than nylon nets, which did not come into use until the early 1950s.

B. Machines: The net shed has a large Puretic power block, which was invented by Croatian fisherman Mario Puratić and patented in 1953. An article originally published in *Fishing News International* noted the power block “has mechanized

the hauling of nets in the tuna, anchovy, sardine, herring, menhaden, pilchard, mackerel and salmon fisheries” and has been used on a number of vessel types. The Puretic power block was a “free-swinging, mechanically-powered, V-shaped pulley with a rubber-coated sheave” into which a net could be fed. This invention, “became the linchpin in the mechanization of purse seining” and “combined with fluid hydraulic power technology and new large, synthetic nets, it changed the whole character of purse seine fishing.”¹

C. Workers: A crew of five men generally operates each purse seiner. Prior to restrictions on large vessels, the advent of the nylon seine net, and the power block in the 1940s and 1950s, seine vessels usually had crews of eight to ten men.

D. Associated Vessels: George and Jake Bujacich operated the purse seiner *Majestic*, a 65’ boat built in Skansie Shipyard and sister ship to *Shenandoah*. The family fished with this vessel from 1951 through the 1970s.

Part IV. Sources of Information

A. Primary Sources

Ancich, George, George Bucacich, Nick Tarabochia, and Andy Blair. Video-taped interview by Whitney Ross, August 27, 2008.

Bujacich Jr., Jake. Interview by Shelly Leavens, June 18, 2009. (Copy in field records accompanying this documentation)

B. Secondary Sources

Ancich-Stanton, Lita Dawn. “Gig Harbor Net Sheds Survey.” City of Gig Harbor, 2006.

Andrews, Mildred. “Andrews Group Report.” The Andrews Group, 2008.

Harbor History Museum photo archives. Accessed June 2008.

Lepow, Hannah. “Washington’s Fishing Sheds Get Boost.” National Trust for Historic Preservation. July 8, 2008. Available at <http://www.preservationnation.org/magazine/2008>, accessed June 2, 2009.

“Living on the Edge: Most Endangered Historic Properties List – 2008.” Washington Trust for Historic Preservation, 2008.

¹ “MARCO, the Puretic Power Block, and Purse Seining,” originally published in *Fishing News International* and available from http://www.marcoglobal.com/pdf/History_MARCO_FNI.pdf, accessed July 2010.

“MARCO, the Puretic Power Block, and Purse Seining,” originally published in *Fishing News International*. Available from http://www.marcoglobal.com/pdf/History_MARCO_FNI.pdf, accessed July 2010.

C. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated

The remaining relatives of the Bujacich family may be able to provide additional information.

ADDENDUM TO:
GIG HARBOR NET SHEDS, BUJACICH NET SHED
3625 Harborview Drive
Gig Harbor
Pierce County
Washington

HAER WA-186-C
HAER WA-186-C

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001