

> SEASIDE CHAT

# Troy Trombly, Trailblazing Hull Cleaner

BY GRAY BELTRAN



Troy and Tammy Trombly

POINT LOMA – Boat owners seeking environmentally sound methods of stripping bottom paint from vessels can turn to the services of Advanced Restoration Co., which blasts hulls clean with pure baking soda. Troy Trombly, the company's founder and advocate for better hull cleaning methods, has worked with the Port of San Diego to educate boaters about the benefits of removing bottom paint with soda-blast, a process

that's both environmentally friendly and cost-effective.

With Trombly's help, the Port of San Diego is now testing the effectiveness of non-copper hull paints, by having Advanced Restoration Co. remove old copper-based paint with soda-blast before new coats of copper-free paint are applied to vessel hulls.

**Sea:** When did you start Advanced

**Restoration Co.?**

**Trombly:** We started the company about four years ago. Right now, it's just me, my wife and my father-in-law who run it. Before I started Advanced Restoration Co., I did contracting work on my own.

**Sea:** When did you begin using soda blast to clean hulls?

**Trombly:** I started when I formed Advanced Restoration Co. Soda-blast-

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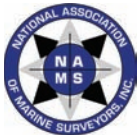
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ing is huge on the East Coast because of how it reduces drag, saves fuel and helps you get longer life out of a boat. I saw there was an opportunity over here on the West Coast, a niche that no one had tapped into.

**Sea: What are some of the benefits of soda-blasting compared to other paint removal methods?**

**Trombly:** Sandblasting can damage a boat's props and rudder, because the heat it generates warps metal. Soda-blasting, on the other hand, won't generate any damaging heat.

**Sea: Do you use any special equipment?**

**Trombly:** We got our soda-blasting equipment from SodaBlast Systems in Houston, Texas. I flew my family out there a few years ago, and they trained us and taught us how to run a soda-blast system. Since then, we've refined our technique and fine-tuned our own soda-blast system.

**Sea: What kind of boats do you service?**

**Trombly:** A lot of the boats we work on are around 50 feet. We clean boats up to 32 feet at our facility in Point Loma, where we've been for the last three years. For boats larger than that, we travel to boatyards. We've worked on boats up to 75 feet in the past.

**Sea: How long does a soda-blasting job take?**

**Trombly:** It takes two of us a full day, about 12 hours, to soda-blast a 50-foot boat. We start early in the morning and finish around 5 p.m. Each vessel is tented before the process begins. Someone does the blasting while the other person stays outside the tent cover to make sure everything is secured. The tent contains the dust and runoff, which is collected and safely removed when done. With chemical stripping, it can take two or three weeks to remove the bottom paint on a 50-foot boat. Soda-blast-

ing takes a tenth of the time. Plus, it's environmentally friendly.

**Sea: How did you get involved in the Port of San Diego's Alternative Hull Paint Project?**

**Trombly:** Katy Wolf (from the Institute of Research and Technical Assistance) contacted us, because we are one of the few operators in the area trained and certified to remove bottom paint with soda-blast. So far we've done six boats for the project. It's really a win-win situation for boaters and the environment.

**Sea: Besides boats, what other projects has Advanced Restoration Co. taken on?**

**Trombly:** We've done a lot of work on cars. Unlike sandblast, soda-blast won't damage windshields and chrome. It's also great at removing fire damage from buildings. Baking soda is a natural deodorizer so it can get rid of most odors. It's very versatile.



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