

you know you're in washington when...

... folks reminisce about the King of Clams

Ivar Haglund was a 20th-century five-star character, the type that's noticeably absent now. Seattle's irreverent King of Clams created publicity stunts that turned his Acres of Clams restaurant into a must-stop for waterfront visitors.

Haglund, a folksinger who counted Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger as friends, created Seattle's first aquarium in 1938 (it closed in 1956); started his now-famous waterfront eatery in 1946; began the "Fourth of Jul-Ivar" fireworks tradition in 1965; and in that same year bought Pier 54, becoming a "a member of the Elliott Bay pierage, a dock duke 54th in a line of piers!" In 1976 he bought Smith Tower, the city's oldest skyscraper.

No slick ad campaigns for Haglund. His brain worked overtime on pranks and stunts. He could get away with so much in part because his roots ran deep into Seattle soil: His maternal grandparents bought Alki Point from pioneer Doc Maynard.

In front of the aquarium, Haglund performed songs while sitting on a stool and wearing his trademark captain's hat. In 1940 he even dressed a seal in a pinafore and lace baby hat and took it to see a department store Santa Claus.

To promote his restaurant Haglund printed clam stamps, but the U.S. Post Office confiscated the stamps and plates. He was dubbed the Crown Prince of Corn when he

Haglund, Ivar:

Seattle's five-star character, aka Mayor of the Waterfront, ruled with clams, songs, and stunts.



rushed outside the eatery with a plate of pancakes and scooped up some of the syrup spilled from a railroad car.

In 1977 Haglund raised a 16-foot-long Rainbow Salmon windsock over Smith Tower, violating a municipal building code. The city protested but eventually gave in.

Haglund's quips were legendary; they included "Seafood is Brain Food. Be Wise at Ivar's" and his motto, "Keep Clam." He turned the "Old Settler's Song" into his theme song, thanks to these lines:

*No longer the slave of ambition
I laugh at the world and its shams,
As I think of my happy condition
Surrounded by acres of clams.*

In 1985 Haglund went to the Big Clam Acre in the Sky, but he is forever immortalized in local lore and as a bobblehead doll.