In 2011, Elliott Bay Design Group employees bought the company back from private owner American Commercial Lines, making the firm an employee-owned company. The move, while unprecedented, wasn’t surprising if you’re familiar with EBDG’s history. Twenty-five years ago John Waterhouse, at the time an employee at Nickum and Spaulding Associates (N&SA), along with two other partners, purchased N&SA’s assets—launching what would become one of the most well known names in the marine engineering and naval architecture field—Elliott Bay Design Group. Waterhouse, PE, Chief Concept Engineer, Elliott Bay Design Group LLC, understood the value behind N&SA’s legacy.

That legacy began nearly 60 years prior when in 1931 W.C. Nickum and his sons Bill and George founded W.C Nickum and Sons. The firm would notably go on to design the Evergreen State Class for Washington State Ferries (WSF) in 1953—vessels which to this day remain in operation.

Around that same time, Philip F. Spaulding established his own architecture firm, Phillip F. Spaulding and Associates, sparking fierce competition between the two entities over the next two decades—but in 1972 the firms merged to create Nickum and Spaulding Associates. Phillip Spaulding, as some may know, was the brain behind WSF’s Jumbo Class design—the 440 ft, double ended ferries continue to carry 2,000 passengers for the state operator today.

That thorough understanding is one of the hallmarks of EBDG’s accomplished record. For instance, its ability to keep up with regulatory environments helps EBDG staff to better understand the regulatory process and its changes, and facilitates the information flow.
to its clients. This openness has enabled EBDG to work with NFPA on fireboat standards, ABS on small vessel rules, PVA on passenger vessel issues, and Inteferry on IMO regulations, says Waterhouse.

PROJECTS
From its start EBDG has been unafraid to push the envelope on the design front. When asked what five projects best exemplify EBDG’s innovative spirit, Waterhouse notes:

1. **The 54-Car ferry Christine Anderson**—Designed for Pierce County, WA, the 214 ft, 150-passenger vessel was the firm’s first complete ferry design and established it as a leader in ferry boat design.

2. **The Ship Docking Module (SDM)**—What started out as a napkin sketch evolved into a very unique ship assist tug. The SDM, designed on behalf of Hvide Marine and developed with Seabulk Towing, Inc., is a maneuverable, efficient and flexible 90 ft tug that produces 100% of its ABS-certified bollard pull of 120,000 lbs in any direction, says Seabulk.

3. **The Mare Australis**—The 230 m, 128-passenger cruise ship was designed for one-week excursion operations through the Straits of Magellan and around Tierra del Fuego between Chile and Argentina. This project, says Waterhouse, shows EBDG’s willingness to support clients from around the world.

4. **The well stimulation vessel for India’s ONGC** may have been among the most challenging and educational projects for EBDG.

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AET Innovator—The firm designed what would become the world’s first purpose-built lightering support vessel (LSV) for petroleum tanker owner-operator AET. Waterhouse explains that the 185 ft vessel’s design was based on a unique hull form that would meet the need for constant freeboard at the stern, regardless of vessel loading conditions.

(5) Well Stimulation Vessel for ONGC—Its work with well stimulation vessels garnered EBDG the attention of India’s Oil and Natural Gas Company. Recently the firm completed design work on a 350-ft, 38 megawatt well stimulation vessel for ONGC. The project proved to be among the firm’s most challenging because the vessel needed to “meet strict dynamic positioning standards when operating in the Bay of Bengal during Monsoon season.”

Another project in EBDG’s portfolio is the Alaska Class Ferry (ACF). Since 2006 it has worked with the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT &PF) on the highly anticipated Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) ACF project.

“It has been very interesting and exciting participating in the public process shaping the mission requirements for the Alaska Class Ferry,” says Brian King, PE, Vice President of Engineering. “Recently there has been a change in course for this project when it became apparent that a vessel designed to meet the stakeholder needs and still operate as a conventional Alaska ferry simply could not be built with the available funding.”

The new design includes a bow door, and integrates terminal and operational changes, providing a faster loading and unloading process. “By focusing on fast turnarounds, the vessel can be smaller and does not need to be as fast,” says King. Additionally, the design enables the vessel to “be built with the available funding and will cost less to operate.” The Alaska DOT&PF has stated that it intends to build two Alaska Class Ferries within the appropriated budget.

ALL ABOUT THE PEOPLE

“One of the things that 25 years has taught us is that people are what’s important. They do the work, keep clients happy and help create a productive atmosphere,” says Waterhouse. “We’ve worked hard to be the employer of choice by treating people with respect.”

“We wouldn’t be where we are today without each employee, past or present. When you sell professional services it truly is the people that make a business what it is,” says Christina Villiott, CPSM, Director of Marketing, EBDG. “At EBDG, we not only hire the best and brightest, but also the most dedicated. And each employee that has graced us with their passion and expertise has helped EBDG become the successful, employee-owned firm that it is today.”

Joe Pritting, President, EBDG, John Waterhouse, Chief Concept Engineer, EBDG, and Brian King, Vice President, Engineering