

Aaron ZARSKÉ

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As it turns out, working on fishing boats in San Diego has distinct similarities to working at the Paramount Hotel.

"I would take people rod and reel fishing on charter boats," said recently promoted, Director of Facilities Aaron Zarske who worked on the vessels through his 20's before moving to Seattle in 2015. Today, he oversees Paramount Seattle's engineering and housekeeping departments and their combined teams of more than 30.

"When the boats are not running, you do a lot of boat work," he said. "You fix all kinds of stuff." In addition to the variety of hands-on skills that Zarske brought north—like general handiness, electrical work, painting, and plumbing—he learned some things about customer service along the way too. "I cut my teeth on the fishing boats," he said, "and hospitality fit into it. When you're working on a rig, you entertain people, you cater to what they need. To an extent it's like a floating hotel."

Though the Paramount is Zarske's first official job in hospitality, he said it's worked out well thus far. "I really like the people that work here. And my old boss (former Paramount team member, Al Abadilla) that ran the engineering department was fantastic," he said. "When it boils down to it, the bonds are forged in the trenches. From time to time, you have fires to put out and it gets crazy, but you make close bonds with people that you work with. It's a community, a kind of family."

Zarske explained that despite the hotel's best efforts at presenting outward-facing perfection, that there is always something—whether mechanical or staff related—that needs tended to. "If you really know how much it takes to keep it looking nice, it's a tightrope. It takes a lot for everyone to work together and to put forward that product." When work gets hectic, Zarske said he relies on being coolheaded, ready and open to take on whatever the day brings.

On his days off, he enjoys watching the Phoenix Suns, bowling with friends, and playing the guitar and bass. "I've been a musician since I was in high school. I have a couple of people that I jam with." Zarske grew up watching his dad's bluegrass band and says he still likes the genre as well as, folk, rock and even hip-hop. When pressed, he said his favorite band is Pink Floyd, but holds great esteem for Jimi Hendrix, Aerosmith, and Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers too.

Zarske also has a love/hate relationship with working on his own cars and currently has a project—a BMW e30—that was once owned by his family that he tracked down to restore.

Outside of work, Zarske thinks highly of the Emerald City. "I love Seattle," he said. "It took a while for me to settle in, but now this is home 100 percent. The summers are the best and I like to get outside and run around the Olympic Peninsula," where he said he enjoys hiking, whitewater rafting and hanging out with friends and his dog Bacchus, the (mostly) border collie.

Looking to the future, Zarske sees lots of potential for growth professionally. "I love hospitality," he said. "I could stay in hospitality for the rest of my life." But beyond that, life doesn't sound bad either. "For retirement, I'd love to own a bed and breakfast or a little place with a couple of rooms for rent in a beautiful spot somewhere, probably up here in the Northwest on a river with trees. Like the old guy that manages a little inn."

But Zarske doesn't get too hung up on what's yet to come. "You can make a lot of plans, but there's a long meandering to get where you're going. It's how I live my life that's more important than where I'm going."

We're Zen with that.

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