

# Lifestyle

Mercer  
Island **REPORTER**

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## *Islander creates 'map to the stars' for Lake Washington homes*



**By Elizabeth Celms**  
Mercer Island Reporter

Islander David Dykstra has published a truly unique book. The first of its kind, Dykstra recently completed "Lake Washington 130 Homes," a guide book to the lakeside mansions of the illustrious – whether Microsoft CEO Bill Gates or Seattle Seahawks owner Paul Allen.

The idea for the guide book, which includes waterfront photographs of more than 100 homes as well as directions for boaters to find the properties, came to Dykstra casually.

A recreational Lake Washington boater, the Islander and his friends would often "cruise" along the Mercer Island, Seattle and Eastside shores, pointing out expensive homes of local CEOs, Northwest entrepreneurs and real estate tycoons. But often little was known about the properties and their owners. And the back stories, Dykstra discovered, were often fascinating.

What's more, these were the individuals who helped mold Seattle and the Eastside into one of the nation's most prominent business landscapes.

Dykstra's guide book is not just a "map to the stars" for Lake Washington; it's a document of history, geography and commercial industry.

The *Reporter* sat down with Dykstra, who has lived on Mercer Island with his wife, Susan, since 1994, and talked to him about his passion for writing, photography, cruising and the quirky idea that was born from the three.

*You wrote, photographed and published this book entirely yourself. Is this the first time you've done anything like this?*

I've actually written books before. I spent the first part of my career in financial accounting and management. My last position was chief financial officer of the TreeSweet Corporation, a major juice producer in California. Then I went into consulting. I started my own consulting firm in the early '80s, when small businesses were transitioning from manual to computer systems. I wrote three books for businesses on this transition. Prentice Hall published my last book, "Computers for Profit." Earlier books I self-published were "Manager's Guide to Computer Terms" and "Easy Data Computer Comparisons." So I have had some experience with writing, editing and publishing.

*What about your photography?*

That was just kind of a hobby that I've had for many years and I ended up with a bunch of cameras. I started making multimedia DVDs out of the pictures I took. This is my first time doing anything professionally. I transferred my hobby and skills into this book.

*Where did you get the idea for "Lake Washington 130 Homes?"*

I go cruising a lot with friends, and we often check out all the [well-known] houses. Everybody was always saying that there should be a guide book, so I started digging into it and discovered that there wasn't any. I looked if there was anything comparable anywhere else, and the only thing that comes anywhere close are the guidebooks for the movie stars' homes in Los Angeles, which basically just gives their addresses. They don't even have a good map, and a lot of the pictures in those guides are just of a bunch of trees, shrubs and gates. And that's how I began this project. I just started researching.

*What were your sources of research?*

I relied strictly on public information from the Internet. I looked at everything that's available online. Sometimes, trying to put all the pieces together – about some individual, their house, who they were – turned into a huge project. I used the local papers web sites – the *Mercer Island Reporter*, the *Seattle Times*, the *Seattle P-I* or the *Puget Sound Business Journal* – I looked through archives that they had online. I was kind of surprised how hard it was to pull all the information together. The Internet search engines – many of them didn't have the information I needed. I thought about going to the library to look details up in those archives, but the project just got too big. So I mostly kept to the Internet.

*Were you happy with the overall outcome?*

Very happy. I got excited toward the end, as it all started to come together.

My original intent was for the book to be a boater's

guide. But as I got into it, the people I had reviewing [the book] all said, 'You know, this is really fascinating stuff.' Even friends and family that live out-of-state found it interesting; looking at the houses, learning about the people, the area and the history.

*Did you take all of the photos yourself? How was that process?*

Yes, all of the photos are mine. My water craft is a Yamaha Waverunner, which gets around fast. I needed to be out on relatively calm days because you can get pretty wet on [a Jet Ski]. Sometimes, a wave would come up and splash my camera. You have to watch out for that. I have a Nikon with a 28 mm to 300 mm lens, which has a very good zoom. Then I have a small Panasonic. I used both cameras.

Sometimes, the houses were hard to pick out. If you look at the Internet sites, the houses look a lot different from the water than they do from the satellite pictures. My original goal was 100 homes. My first screening was about 160 homes. I focused on Madison Park, Mercer Island, Bellevue, Medina, Hunts Point and Yarrow Point. All of the communities I feature are number one in the state for places their size in per-capita income.

*Did you ever have property owners come out and yell at you, or maybe wave to the camera? Did you feel a bit like the paparazzi out there?*

No, not really, because people who live on the water are used to a lot of curious boaters. Cruising is a very popular thing on Lake Washington. In fact, Argosy Cruises actually features many Lake Wash-

ington houses. They do a lot of the Medina coast, by Gates' house. In 1998, I saw Bill Gates and his daughter on their dock, but now – ever since 9/11 – now, you just see security guards. You rarely see the owners any more.

*How was the publishing process?*

There's a couple of reasons that I decided to self-publish. One is because nobody's ever done this. I tried to ask why, and the publishers said, 'Well, we just don't do that [publish waterfront pictures and stories about houses and their owners].' This guide book is more important to me than it is to a major publisher.

*What is your hope for this book?*

I'm finding that there's a lot of interest here for people who like to look at homes. This is a great way to get a background of the area. This has the histories of how Seattle and the Eastside were built.

Many people who don't live in Seattle know about the Puget Sound and the Cascades. But most don't realize that there's this beautiful, glacial-carved lake to the east of Seattle, and that the population center of the area is right in the middle of the lake. In my opinion, Lake Washington is the biggest secret to the Northwest.

*"Lake Washington 130 Homes" is sold at Island Books, Amazon.com and at www.hundredhomes.net.*

*Dykstra will be at Island Books at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 12, for a book signing.*

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**August 14, 2009** – Island Books reported *Lake Washington 130 Homes* had the store's most first week sales of any book in the last ten years.

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**August 14, 2009** – Interview on KIRO radio – sound track with book's highlights are on Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vkm9fHmmQ8Q&feature=related>

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**September 2009** – Commercial cruise-tours featuring book.

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**October 7, 2009** – Featured on KING 5's Evening Magazine.

<http://www.king5.com/archive/64598997.html>

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**2009-2010** – Seattle's premier mansions blog features new homes, listings, sales, owners in the news, book updates, etc. <http://seattle-mansions.blogspot.com/>

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**May 2010** – Begin cruise-tours with Anchor Bay Charters featuring the book. <http://www.anchorbaycharters.com/index.html>

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**2010** – Book available most book and marine stores throughout the PNW and online at Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble (BN.com): [www.amazon.com/Lake-Washington-Homes-David-Dykstra/dp/0984059105/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1248623521&sr=8-1](http://www.amazon.com/Lake-Washington-Homes-David-Dykstra/dp/0984059105/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1248623521&sr=8-1) & [search.barnesandnoble.com/Lake-Washington/David-C-Dykstra/e/9780984059102/?itm=1&USRI=lake+washington+130+homes](http://search.barnesandnoble.com/Lake-Washington/David-C-Dykstra/e/9780984059102/?itm=1&USRI=lake+washington+130+homes)

