

Meet Robert Peterkin, II

CIRCAC's Tourism Stakeholder Group representative and 2017 "Glen Glenzer" Volunteer of the Year

Robert Peterkin, II, comes from Alaska pioneers. His great-grandfather, Thomas, was from Bobcaygeon, Canada, and was the first Peterkin to plant roots in Alaska in the early 1900s. His great-grandmother, Anna Packebusch was from Nebraska. Together they raised a family and established businesses that have left their mark here. (You can read all about them in Cook Inlet Historical Society's [Legends & Legacies](#).)

Robert was born in Anchorage and is the oldest of four boys. He grew up in Kenai and graduated from Kenai Central High School in 1987. Before graduation, his father put him to work in the family business, teaching him how to power wash trucks. (In fact, Robert's mother and 76-year old dad are still running Peterkin Distributors which they opened in 1960.) After graduation, Robert started his own power washing business, R&K Industrial, in 1988.

Robert describes R&K Industrial as a one-man show consisting of an old dairy truck with a power washer mounted in the back.

What started as a modest truck-cleaning business in 1988 grew

into something much bigger in 1989 with the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill. Robert and a buddy drove to Seward in a truck, pulling a fishing boat behind. It turns out Exxon didn't need any more fishing boats. But they were very interested in the power washer and contracted with Robert on the spot to keep his truck for the next 4 months.

"They craned the truck onto a boat. I didn't even have a ride home," Robert recalled. Before the end of the month, he had retrofitted two more trucks with power washers and delivered them to Seward to assist with the clean-up. With three trucks in play, Robert returned home and grew a local truck washing business, eventually hiring more than 300 employees. In 2006, Robert sold R&K Industrial. He started new ventures. He sold them. And started new again. Robert currently runs several companies in and out of state, including Northwind Properties, gravel pits, Metalizing Inc. and Triangle Recycling.

Because of his line of work, Robert has been involved in many clean-ups, including on the Kenai River. He has done work on every Cook Inlet platform. He has done tear downs, clean ups, and rebuilds of refineries. All these experiences have given him an understanding and knowledge of the basic underlying construction of Cook Inlet's oil producing facilities. And he knows the people.

In 2001, CIRCAC's then-Executive Director Jim Carter, recruited Robert. Carter, along with his wife Sue, were active in the Kenai Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center and recommended the Alaska State Chamber consider him as a candidate for election. Robert credits his mentors, John Douglas and Captain Glen Glenzer, both of whom he still misses, as teaching him how to be an effective board member. He succeeded Ron Rainey and has been a member of the Board ever since.



Board President John Williams (left) presents Robert Peterkin, II, with Volunteer of the Year Award Certificate

Currently, Robert is CIRCAC's Vice President and Chairs both the Protocol Control Committee and Credentials Committee. While he brings an industry perspective that he says provides a necessary balance to the board, he also believes it's important to stay objective and not get too near sighted.

"I'm a third generation Alaskan. Kenai is my back yard. I always err on the side of the environment, health or well-being of the people of the community. I would never put industry in front of those interests," he said. Among his concerns is that many of the state's most experienced regulatory staff are leaving departments or retiring at a time when strong regulatory oversight is more important than ever. On a positive note, he said, is CIRCAC's commitment to developing and maintaining strong relationships with agencies and industry to promote open and transparent communications.

Robert met his wife, Shannon (pictured at right), in Kenai and together they have five children, three of whom still live on the Peninsula. They prefer not to venture too far from Alaska for recreation. They keep a boat in Homer and enjoy touring Kachemak Bay and Prince William Sound, spend a lot of time in Seldovia and have a cabin in Caribou Hills.



For his part, Robert tries to limit his volunteer time to things he is passionate about. And he sees CIRCAC as an organization that has made, and continues to make, a difference.

