

'Salt in Our Blood'

Newport fisherman's wife publishes her memoirs

"Go, go, go!" the deep voice shouted, right near my ear. Bob's calloused hand, which had just been caressing my thigh, grabbed the source of the sound: a black, hand-held VHF radio, located on the rickety nightstand next to the bed in the booty room where we lay. The digital clock, lit with red numbers, showed 2 a.m.

"I'm coming," Bob said, having flipped the radio into transmission mode. He jumped out of bed and grabbed his blue jeans, pulling them on.

"What are you doing?" I asked. "I just got here!"

"Time for me to go, honey. That was Spellbink on the radio. He's been watching the wave heights. The bar is safe to cross." Bob leaned down, kissed me, and left me sitting upright in bed. Taking a long, last look, he said, "Have a safe drive home," and closed the door right behind him.

Local signings

Michele Longo Eder, author of "Salt in Our Blood," is scheduled to appear at the following local bookstores.

Saturday, Oct. 4

11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Sea Towne Books
1670 N. Coast Hwy.
(Hwy. 101), Newport

Saturday, Oct. 25

11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Nye Beach Books
727 NW Third St.,
Newport

Sunday, Nov. 19

1-4 p.m.

Lincoln County
Historical Society
Burrows House
545 SW Ninth St.,
Newport

... and so begins the story of a fisherman's wife, a life fraught with long absences of loved ones, abundant bounty or empty pots, and the ever-present threat of death on a perilous sea: "Salt in Our Blood: The Memoir of a Fisherman's Wife," written by Michele Longo Eder and published by Newport-based Dancing Moon Press.

Michele Longo Eder is a well-respected attorney, based in Newport and known statewide for her involvement in the Curtis Mayfield civil rights case. She's also part of the fishing community of Newport, and has been since she married Bob Eder in 1988.

About eight years ago, she began keeping a journal, to record what daily life was like for her while her husband and sons were out commercial fishing off the coasts of Oregon, Washington, and northern California. Her first entry was on Monday, Dec. 11, 2000: "Forty-three a.m. I'm awake. The F/V Michele



Michele Longo Eder

Ann is being loaded with the last of its crab pots, ready to leave Newport and head north to Astoria, a port on the Columbia River."

But personal tragedy struck just before Christmas 2001, when her son Ben Eder and three other men were lost in the wreck of the Nesika, just outside the Yaquina Bay Bar.

This book is an offer of healing to her family, her community, and to fishing families everywhere. It's a personal account from a fisherman's wife, from inside this risky yet alluring profession that is every bit as dangerous as its counterpart in Alaska. Crabbing, as an industry, has navigated through many political, economical, and cultural changes in the last 40 years. Still, not many outsiders know what the workday looks like to a commercial fisherman and his family, nor what it takes to actually harvest the bounty of the ocean.

Despite her grief and despair, Eder and her family still find inspiration in the 1962 quote from John F. Kennedy: "I really don't know why it is that all of us are so committed to the sea... All of us have, in our veins, the exact same percentage of salt in our blood that exists in the ocean, and, therefore, we have salt in our blood, in our sweat, in our tears. We are tied to the ocean. And when we go back to the sea, whether it is to sail or to watch it, we are going back from whence we came."

"Salt In Our Blood: The Memoir of a Fisherman's Wife" is available online at www.saltinourblood.com, most local bookstores, amazon.com, barnesandnoble.com and a variety of fishing supply stores along the coast of Oregon, Washington and Northern California. ★

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