



Michele Eder's book on Oregon Crabbing best book on fishing I have read in years

SEAFOOD.COM NEWS by John Sackton - Sept. 17, 2008 - Michele Longo Eder, the wife of Oregon fisherman Bod Eder, has written the best book about fishing and the seafood industry that I have read in years.

The book, **Salt in Our Blood**, tells the story of the dungeness crabbing seasons in 2000 and 2001 from the pages of Michele's journal. She introduces us to Bob Eder, whom she married in 1988, who became one of the highliner fishermen on the West Coast for dungeness and sablefish, and who owned two boats, the larger one which he fished himself, and the smaller one with a hired captain.

With her marriage, Michele became the mother of Bob's two sons, Ben and Dylan, aged 7 and 5, and a partner in their fishing business. She said sometimes her marriage felt like a corporation where the shareholders slept with each other. But what shines through the book is the love and devotion that existed in her family.

Fishing is a full time family occupation - and although Michele was, and still is, an accomplished lawyer in Newport, she cut back her practice to give herself time to run the shoreside of their fishing business.

From making food for the crews, handling the books, managing insurance, buying groceries and meeting the boats, collecting money from their fish buyers and just adjusting when her husband and sons were passed out on Thanksgiving from exhaustion, her memoir gives a flavor of what it is like to give everything to fishing.

She tells of busted trips to California, where local crabbers refuse to fish until the larger boats from up North are forced to leave. She tells of Eder jogging out at sea, waiting to learn whether the Oregon crab fishermen have decided to set pots or go on strike -- knowing some don't trust him not to fish if they call a strike.

She talks of her anger when their fish buyer to whom they sold to get a higher price than Pacific Seafoods would pay, takes off for the Brussels Seafood show bouncing checks and owing them money - traveling on her dime, she says, while she has crew payments, boat payments and tax deadlines to meet.

She talks of going in and out through the bar - how the weather dictates what is possible and what isn't.

But above all what shines through is the satisfaction of winning at fishing: setting crab pots on just the right spot to come up with a huge catch. Finding black cod when few others are getting any. Knowing that the economic success of your own business, your crew, and their families all depend on the knowledge and skill of your husband and his crew.



Capt. Bob Eder unloading the F/V Nesika knee deep in crabs because his hold was full, in happier times. (Photo Michele Eder)

Being in the seafood industry for so many years, I have often noted that everyone in this business, from the owners of the largest companies, to the newest fish salesmen - one guy had "fish pimp" on his license plate in Seattle - even to the guys who sell foodservice and are wrapped up in menus, restaurant demands, -- all of them go back to fishing. Most everyone you meet in this industry has fished at some point in their life - as a crew member, on their own boat, or even at a remote salmon set net site. It's the thrill -- the adrenaline rush -- that comes with fishing that has kept so many close to the industry, even years after they have left the deck or the dock.

Michele's story palpitates with this sense of adrenaline, and risk. And then the worst possible happens. In December 2001, their second vessel the 40' F/V Nesika is reported capsized just outside the Yaquina Bay bar on the first day of the crab season, literally right outside the window of their home.

Her son Ben, just home from college the night before, was on the boat. Four men were lost. It was one of the worst fishing disasters to hit Newport, and the town was in shock.

Michele then describes the unimaginable pain the loss of Ben, the other crew members, and the sinking had on her family, her marriage, her life. For the next year and longer, Bob, Dylan and Michele, the three survivors in the family, have to deal with their loss; with their long time marine insurance company trying to accuse Bob of negligence in maintaining the boat or in how it was loaded, and with the fact that Ben's body was never found.

And then Bob continues to fish.

Michele is full of praise for the Coast Guard, and how they conducted the search and rescue, and their

investigation. The Nesika was found to be properly loaded; in excellent mechanical condition; and the capsizing is just unexplained. Weather was deteriorating at the time, and a squall may have passed through.

What makes this book such compelling reading? It is that Michele exposes to us all what that sense of risk on the sea is all about. All of us think disaster cannot happen, even when we worry about it. Michele proves this wrong.

As a parent of children just about the ages of Ben and Dylan, reading about the loss is difficult and emotional. But the grace of this book, eight years later, is that Michele has found the courage to write it, and share with not just the crab industry in Newport, but the wider world, the story of her son Ben, her husband Bob, and the life of a fishing family.

This book is available at www.saltinourblood.com and can be ordered directly from the website.

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