

RANCHO BODEGA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

DID YOU KNOW?

George Boos

The weather can be flat calm on Bodega Bay but offshore is another story. Big swells and high winds endanger fishermen's lives, their boats and their catch. They need to assess risk before heading out. The offshore buoy measures wind speed, wave height and interval.

In the early 1990's, the Interior Dept. decided the buoys had outlived their usefulness. With the help of community, George Boos earned a big share of respect as the man who saved our offshore weather buoy. George mobilized a letter writing campaign by enlisting Fishermen's organizations and the Women's Coalition to back the cause.

A "barrage of letters" convinced Congress to shift funding and responsibility to NOAA. (www.windfinder.com/forecast/bodega_bay)

George (1924-2011) lived with his family on Bay Flat Road. Special thanks to George's daughter Shirley Hughes for donating her family's memorabilia to RBHS.



CELEBRATING BODEGA BAY'S 50TH ANNUAL FISHERMAN'S FESTIVAL

by Robin Rudderow, Archivist, Rancho Bodega Historical Society

Needing to raise money, in 1958 for their newly built volunteer fire house, the people of Bodega Bay began the annual festival first called "Discovery Day". Held in October, the festival honored the memory of Lieutenant Juan de Bodega y Quadra who, sailing down the coast from Sitka, Alaska in his tiny sloop the Sonora, thought he had found San Francisco Bay, which had not yet been entered by water. He learned, on October 3, 1775 that instead, he had discovered a smaller, but also beautiful harbor on what is now the Boadega Bay Coast.

Discovery Day featured carnival rides, including a Ferris Wheel and a Merry-Go-Round, at Doran Park; the Old Adobe Antique Car Club came out to the airfield; the Tomales High School band performed; and Saturday night there was a Dime-A-Dip Potluck supper at the Grange, followed by fireworks and a dance, featuring music from the likes of Gene Carter's five-piece orchestra, a San Francisco combo. The highlight of Discovery Day was the boat parade around the inner harbor. (*continued page 2*)

FISHERMAN'S FESTIVAL



At the first “Discovery Days” celebration, some 17 festively decorated boats participated in the parade. The parade was appropriately led by Eddie, William, and Steve Smith, members from the local Smith Brothers family, who began the commercial fishing industry in Bodega Bay in the 1920s. As the beautifully decorated boats made their way around the harbor, they passed a stand where they were blessed in a short religious ceremony. Local fisherwoman Mary Darling spearheaded Discovery Day’s committee until she became pregnant with her first child, and thus the event was discontinued after the 1964 festival.



The festival resumed in 1974 under the auspices of the Bodega Bay Chamber of Commerce. The date was moved to the beginning of the salmon season

in recognition of Bodega Bay’s hard working fishing industry, and the name was changed to the “Fisherman’s Festival”.

The Volunteer Fire Department continued to be a festival beneficiary, and in 1975 the community formed its own ambulance service, the “Bodega Bay Area Rescue”, so it too received money from Fish Fest (as the festival is called by locals).

The theme for each coming year was chosen by the Fisherman’s Auxiliary at its Golden Hook award ceremony in November. Themes have included “Mariner’s Mardi Gras” (1981), “Adios El Nino” (1984), “Salmon-Chanted Evening” (1992), and the somewhat controversial “Golden Hooker’s on Parade” (1996).

For over twenty years, the festivals were spread throughout the town, with the newly renovated Yacht Club the center of much activity, and fish and chips served at the Grange. There were foot races, kite flying contests, a Saturday night dance at the Grange, a juried art show, a “White Whale sale,” and a crafts fair. Clown Lagoon was for children, where they played games, got their faces painted, and looked at cuddly animals.

FISHERMAN'S FESTIVAL

During the early years of Fish Fest, there was a



“bathtub regatta”, with “bathtubs” of all varieties, from contraptions made of milk cartons to real bathtubs. Later, that event became the “Wooden Boat Challenge”, where groups have a limited amount of time to build

a boat with hand tools and materials provided by organizers, which they then have to float and race. Throughout, the Coast Guard has stood by, as not all vessels are seaworthy.

As with Discovery Day, the highlight of Fish Fest was, and still is, the Boat Parade and Blessing of the Fleet. Decorated fishing boats sail around the bay and out of the harbor to the outer bay off Doran Park. There, a bugler plays Taps as a wreath is cast into the sea to honor those who died wrestling a living from the sea. Then the boat carrying the clergy stations itself at the entrance to the harbor so each boat can be individually blessed as it sails back in.

For decades, vessels decorated in the theme of the year paraded past a reviewing stand of judges, and prizes were awarded to the best decorated boats.

Music has always been a part of Fish Fest, starting with high school bands and the Sonoma County Sheriff’s Bagpipe Band. By 2002, there was a full line up of music both days across a variety of genres, such as celtic music, folk-rock, jazz, county rock, swing, and blues.

1997 was the first year that Fish Fest charged an admission fee, \$3. Discouraged that in 1996 they had grossed \$60,000 but only had \$17,000 left to distribute, festival organizers saw an admission fee as a money maker. Park rangers were pleased with

the plan to charge admission, as the park would receive a percentage of ticket sales, and alcohol sales and consumption were easier to monitor when the area is fenced. Thereafter, all festival activities were consolidated to West Side Park, except the art show continued at the Yacht Club for several more years. The admission fees dramatically increased net proceeds, and the community was happy.

The 25 year alliance between the Bodega Bay Chamber of Commerce and Fish Fest organizers ended in 2000 due to liability insurance and tax concerns. Fish Fest then formed its own non-profit organization. The net proceeds of Fish Fest have always stayed in the community. As the amount of money to distribute has grown, so have the number of local nonprofits seeking money.

In 2022 Fish Fest distributed \$58,000, including 6 scholarship to Tomales High students and funds to 18 local organizations, including Tomales and Bodega Bay schools, the Bodega Bay community center, the Rancho Bodega Historical Society, and firefighting, charitable, fishing and safety organizations.

Volunteers are the heart and sole of Fish Fest. Each year dozens of committee chair persons oversee the set up and supplying of Fish Fest, and hundreds of volunteers show up on the days



of the event to sell tickets, fry fish, paint faces, pick up trash ... whatever it takes to put on a great party and help the Bodega Bay community prosper.

Be sure to come celebrate this year’s 50th Fisherman’s Festival, on April 22 and 23, 2023 in Bodega Bay! (www.bbfishfest.org) ■

FISHERMAN'S FESTIVAL POSTERS

Tales of Fish Fest Posters

The annual Fisherman's Festival is a whole community effort and local artists are a part of that. Local artists synthesize the character and culture of the fish fest into an inviting image that says 'come join us'. Fish Fest posters illustrate Bodega Bay's Fisherman's Festival character in vivid and colorful detail. The festival celebrates Bodega Bay's fishing fleet, that has been "Anchored in the Community", for over a century.

In the 1970's, the posters were black and white illustrations of silhouetted boats drawn against familiar shorelines. They transform in later years into beautiful colorful watercolor renderings of fish, crabs, workers onshore, and boats, including the parade of decorated fishing boats (2015) gathering at Fish Fest for the Blessing of the Fleet, to receive prayers of good luck, calm seas, and safe return.

Imaginative themes in the posters set the stage for good times. In the 1980's, cartoons were the style with party themes, such as Mariner's Mardi Gras (1981) and a guitar-playing mermaid for the "Harbor Hoedown" (1982). A companion map showed Fish Fest activities spread all around Bodega Harbor, day and night, from the art show at Bodega Harbour Yacht Club on Smith Brother's Road; to the dance at our Grange Hall from 8:30 pm - 2 am!, to the Trap Shoot below the old Fire Station in Porto Bodega, to kite flying, food and fun in Westside Park.



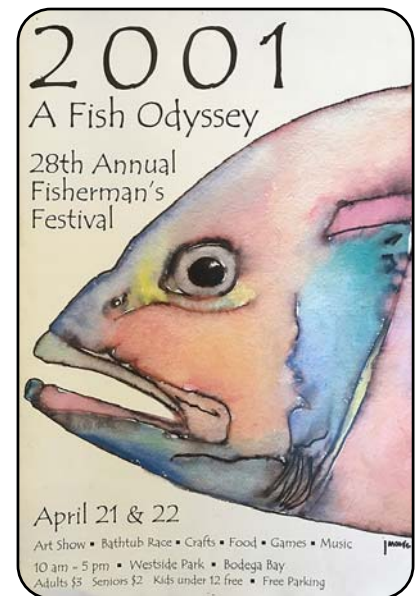
In 1985, the "Jolly Rodger Jamboree" poster exhibits a muscular, smiling pirate with pieces of eight overflowing his treasure chest. The decade finishes with "Nautical Nonsense" (1988) and "Marine Madness!" (1989). "Where There Is Always Something Fishy Going On" (1995),

Humor made an appearance in the year 2000. Catching the mood of the country at the turn of the century, "How and Y2Katch a Fish" brought in the new millennium. In 2001, knowing grins turned to smiles with echoes of the 1970 science fiction film "2001 A Fish Odyssey".

"Fish Full Thinking" (2002) echoed the Fisherman's hopeful wishes for a bountiful harvest, as the colorful watercolor crabs by artist Olga Storms

drifted across the poster, reminding the community of the fishermen's difficult negotiations for a fair price on crab.

Artists' beautiful watercolors, skillful woodcuts, artful photography. Janet Moore, as a scientist for NOAA SeaGrant, on the Russian River salmon habitat restoration project at the UC Davis Bodega Marine Lab created "2001 a Fish Odyssey". It portrayed a single, beautifully rendered rockfish head in transparent watercolor. Her painting of a school of brightly colored salmon highlighted the 2005 poster.



FISHERMAN'S FESTIVAL POSTERS

Janet is Fish Fest's most featured artist. She created five posters exhibiting broad talent, combining art with her scientific background and dedication to education. Her posters show a nimble brush in watercolor, transparent acrylics, and talent in graphic design.

Janet's work appears again in 2008 with a historical photograph of Harold Ames Sr. doing the heavy lifting as he pulls crab pots onto his boat, the Sea Farmer. This year, as we celebrate the 50th year of Fisherman's Festival, Janet's 2005 salmon artwork was selected again as the choice for this year's poster.

Among those who we can locate, the talented artists who contributed to the collection and set the tone for the annual Fish Fest came from San Quentin to Sonoma, Petaluma, Santa Rosa and west to Bloomfield and Sebastopol.

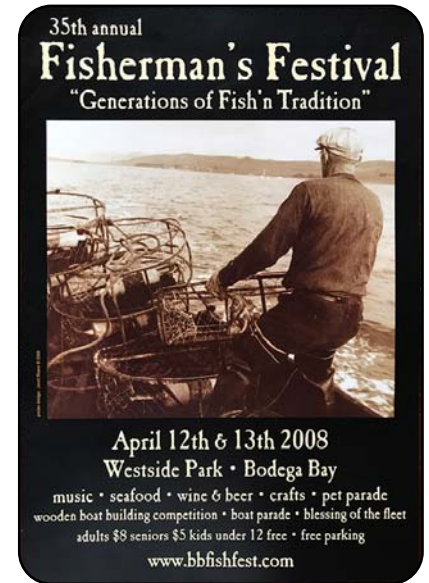
Rik Olsen of Sebastopol is a printmaker whose linocut carvings produce incredible illustrations that say so much, creating prints that succinctly and beautifully are worth more than a thousand words. His prints heralded King Salmon and California Fresh Fish in 2007 and 2009.

Often featured on the posters are fishing boats, including the beautiful watercolors by Sarah K. Good (2018) and Bodega Bay artists Jean Warren (2014) and John Hershey (2015). Importantly, through the years, Shona Weir at the Business Services Unlimited shop in Bodega Bay (www.bodegabaycopy.com) added the graphic arts on the Fish Fest posters that you'll see at the Tomales History Center from March 19, 2023 through April 30, 2023.



What fun and food! The posters display amazing array of pure fun and frolic. Locals remember when the ladies brought their knitting and homemade crafts to sell. The bathtub races gave way to the somewhat "sturdier" wooden boat race that participants manage to build and float on the spot. Other fun included Live Llamas, a Costume Ball, a Toy Balloon Distance Contest, a Kiddie Carnival, Live Music by the Pebbles, Kite Flying, Harbor Tours from the Tides and Marine Lab exhibits. And festive food including local oysters, lamb and beef. And don't forget the ever-popular Fish & Chips!

Fish Fest posters from 1974 to 2023 are on display at the Tomales History Center from mid-March to April 31st.



GOLDEN HOOK AWARD

The Golden Hook Award

by Andrea Granahan

The once all-important salmon season used to start in April with the Fisherman's Festival. Those festivities also included a very solemn ceremony of the Blessing of the Fleet honoring those who died at sea the previous year. It was especially solemn the year Bodega Bay lost eleven men. But thanks to a few hard-working women, the season ended joyously with a boisterous Golden Hook Award potluck party. It awarded the fisherman who landed the biggest fish of the season. For catching the biggest salmon of the season, George Boos won the Golden Hook Award in 1979 & 2004

2004 Golden Hook Winner - George Boos
(43-1/2 lb Salmon)



Before the season started, Beverly Burton would get a list of those who held commercial salmon licenses. She'd offer them a chance to buy in. Few fishermen could resist, and there was always a cautionary tale of one who didn't buy in, caught the biggest fish and missed out on all the money which went to the second biggest fish.

Once Beverly had her contestants in hand, she and some other women like Donna Freeman would go to all the fish buyers, fishing equipment suppliers, restaurants – anyone who had anything to do with the fishermen and get them to pledge a certain amount of money per pound.

By the time the end of the season rolled around official fish tickets were obtained from the Weigh Master. The Weigh Master was employed by the fleet, not the buyers, whom no one trusted. The position didn't pay a lot and was a boring job. It was usually filled by a retired fisherman. The important thing was the trust the fleet held for the position. The Weigh Master recorded the weight of every single salmon. It was easy to see who had landed the biggest salmon by checking his fish tickets.



On the big night things could get a little rowdy because everyone was in a celebratory mood. It was a very informal occasion. The Golden Hook winner would be crowned with a homemade, fishing hootchie-laden paper crown, and handed a big fat check to a fanfare and standing ovation. The check could easily be for several hundred dollars for a massive fish that had already been sold at market weight and eaten. There'd be dancing, lots of back slapping, and some moans from those that had come close but were short a few ounces.

Politicians involved in fishing legislation tried to get to the party or sent a staff member the fleet knew. Ernie Carpenter, our local county supervisor for some years, always attended and always claimed to be Earl Carpenter's (The Captain to the fleet) long lost illegitimate son, to roars of laughter.

Beverly Burton always found someone to create the award. Design and materials varied but it always included a giant golden hook and recipients treated it with great pride.

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Robin Rudderow
Attorney at Law

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Bodega Bay, CA

(415) 298-6925
rrlaw@bodegamoon.net



D. REN BROWN
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Enjoy the history of Rancho Bodega. Please join us. Subscribe for a year and receive the RBHS newsletters, \$15 individual (\$20 family). Support the stories of Bodega Bay.
http://www.ranchobodega.org/membership_form.pdf

If you have artifacts or stories of Bodega Bay History to contribute to the Rancho Bodega Historical Society, please contact Robin Rudderow, our Archivist at RBHS@bodegamoon.net

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BOARD MEMBERS

Archivist

Robin Rudderow
rbhs@bodegamoon.net

Treasurer

Linda Mark
LJMark2@comcast.net

Newsletters

Melinda Pahl
Melinda.Pahl@comcast.net

Webmaster

John Maestri
JohnMaestri@comcast.net

Member at Large

Ren Brown
rbc4art@renbrown.com

Member at Large

Andrea Granahan
granahan10@gmail.com

Member at Large

Tom Petek
trpetek@gmail.com

Member at Large

Jeanette Petek
jwpetek@gmail.com

Rancho Bodega Historical Society, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation
PO Box 1027, Bodega Bay CA 94923



Rancho Bodega Historical Society
 Post Office Box 1027
 Bodega Bay CA 94923
 www.RanchoBodega.org

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**FISHERMAN'S
 FESTIVAL**

50th Annual Fisherman's Festival
April 22 & 23, 10 am - 5 pm
Westside Park, Bodega Bay

Golden Hook Award



Thanks to a few hard-working women, salmon season ended joyously with a boisterous Golden Hook Award potluck party. It was awarded to the fisherman who landed the biggest fish of the season.

SPRING EVENTS

A CELEBRATION OF BODEGA BAY'S FISHERMAN'S FESTIVAL, Sunday, April 2nd, 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM, Bodega Bay Community Center, 2255 Highway One. It's the 50th Anniversary of Fish Fest. How did it begin? Hear unique stories from over the years! For reservations, email (RBHS@BodegaMoon.net). **DON'T MISS!** A special exhibit of 50 years of Fish Fest posters will be on display at the Tomales History Center from mid-March to April 31st.

50th ANNUAL BODEGA BAY FISHERMAN'S FESTIVAL. Saturday & Sunday, April 22 & 23, 10 am-5 pm, Westside Park, West Shore Road. Featuring Live Music, Entertainment, Wine Tasting, Beer Booth, Local Cuisine Food Booths, Art Show, Crafts Fair Exhibits and Children's Events. Tickets available at (www.bbfishfest.org)

SCIENCE UNCORKED. Gourmet au Bay, 1412 Bay Flat Rd. Every other Wednesday in April & May. Happy Hour @ 4 pm, Food until 6 pm. Presentations begin at 6 pm. **April 12th:** Follow the Limpets what we can learn about the geographic range shifts of the Giant Owl Limpet, **April 26th:** I know what you did last summer: using plasmas and lasers to illuminate the clandestine lives of fish, **May 10th:** Climate change and migration: What's going on out there?, **May 24th:** Advances in Abalone Conservation and Production Aquaculture. (www.facebook.com/ScienceUncorked/) ScienceUncorked@gmail.com

SNOOPY'S ICE SKATING LESSONS. Each eight-week Lesson Set, skaters progress through one Level within a Skating Track. At the end of a Lesson Set, skaters are evaluated to determine whether they pass their current Level or will need improvement and to repeat their current Level. The Tracks follow the curriculum set forth by Learn to Skate USA, endorsed by United States Figure Skating. For detailed curriculum, please contact: Snoopy's Home Ice: 1667 West Steele Lane, Santa Rosa, California 95403 or 707-546-7147.

For more local events, visit our website. <<http://www.ranchobodega.org/events.html>>