

# The season ashore

BY JEN KARUZA SCHILE



Jen Karuza Schile is the author of "Captain of her crew: The commercial fishing mom's guide to navigating life at home" and runs [www.commercialfishingmom.com](http://www.commercialfishingmom.com).

Two days into the New Year, I stood on the dock and waved goodbye to my husband, George, as he blasted the foghorn and headed to sea for the Washington Dungeness crab season. Once the boat was out of sight, I walked back up the dock and drove home in silence.

I know myself well enough to take it easy the first couple of days after George leaves, so I always make things as uncomplicated as I can, doing only what has to be done and building up to the rest. Just as the fisherman must plan and prepare for the season ahead, so must the fishing wife and mother.

When George is home from sea, we divide up household tasks based on who enjoys them and who is most efficient. For example, George likes to cook, so he makes most of our family's dinners. He is quicker at paying bills, so he collects and sorts the mail. I enjoy vacuuming and am in charge of the unending loads of laundry.

When George goes back to sea and I look at the wall calendar filled with appointments and activities for three children and me, the stack of bills that need paying, and all of the meals ahead that need preparing, I feel overwhelmed. After a few days, when I have recaptured my spunk, I move forward with my usual optimism and energy.

I connect with other moms and wives like me, online and in person, who consider their time alone an opportunity to try new things, renew personal strength, and enjoy special time with the children. Equally importantly, I steer clear of individuals who spend their time alone complaining. Our husbands going back to sea is not punishment; it is their job.

There are definitely moments, however, when it helps to

have the other parent around! Two days after George left on this last season, I woke up in the middle of the night to four dreaded words spoken by my 6-year-old son: "I just threw up."

Oh, no. I rose, bracing myself for what I would find in the next room. It was worse than I'd imagined. Vomit spread over two beds, splattered over the hardwood floors, embedded in bedframes, entrenched in and around the end table.

I froze.

Thoughts raced through my mind. Although I'd been in this position many times before, I stalled. What should I do? What would George do? What would I do if George were here? Well, I knew exactly what I would do if George were here. I'd go get him, that's what I'd do. And then I would stand by offering encouragement as he cleaned up the mess.

Of course, that wasn't an option. So I did what I always do; got my little guy in the bathtub and went about cleaning it all up.

As far as the cooking, since resuming the role of house chef, I thought it would be fun to try a new recipe. Hey, how about pub-style potato skins? Like the kind

George and I used to eat at the Highliner Tavern during our early years in Ballard! Those were always good!

My potato skins did not turn out exactly the way I remembered from the Highliner Tavern, but they were close. More importantly, the kids had a blast making them with me. They eagerly grabbed handfuls of grated cheese and crumbled bacon and gleefully filled each potato before the entire batch went into the oven.

A few days later, I thought about what we might try mak-



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ing next. How about deviled eggs? I've always liked those! The kids and I got to work. The deviled eggs turned out so delicious that we simply stood in the kitchen and ate the entire platter for dinner.

Of course, I'm not suggesting one make potato skins or devour deviled

eggs for dinner on a regular basis, but it is a fun diversion once in a while. In addition, because cooking does not come easy to me, attempting two new dishes was an accomplishment I was proud of. Most importantly, the children shared a special memory with Mommy that they will always remember.

If you are lonely at home while your spouse is at sea, stay strong. Try something new! Join a gym, start a book, or take a class. Make a new friend or volunteer at your children's school. Try a new recipe. Sometimes your effort will work out and sometimes it won't... just like the fishing. ■

THE LONG HAUL

# Back to the future



Roger Fitzgerald has been covering the U.S. fishing industry since 1976.

By ROGER FITZGERALD

I climbed a ladder to a row of boxes lined up along the top shelf in my basement arranged in chronological order from 1977 to 1998, and extracted the first issue of the *Alaska Fisherman's Journal*, dated December 1977, Vol. 1 No.1.

On the front page is a panoramic shot of two fishermen in an open skiff, trolling poles extended, the sea flat calm, a lone seagull in the foreground. "Open Skiff Fisherman," the lead feature by Joe Upton: the dream we all had of Alaska, the solitude, the beauty, owning our own boat... drawing a rueful smile from me, considering what's ahead in those other boxes — limited entry, halibut derbies, gear conflicts, high seas pillaging, the king crab collapse.

Nonetheless, the image defined the *Journal* because if it was anything it was the champion of small boat fishermen (even as the boats kept getting bigger and bigger until today they are launching ships), but serenity... well, an elusive luxury to say the least, but Leaky Boot (more about him later) had something just as good to offer fishermen: humor. This from his opening editorial:

"We want the *Journal* to have, not least of all, humor. We've made many a fishing trip where humor made it easier to get over the tough spots... when you just weren't on 'em. Like a day when just about nothing was coming up on the line and then finally one solitary, flea-bitten, undersize halibut came up to

the surface and the man at the roller sang out, "We're on 'em now, boys!"

Optimism. There was a lot of that. You can't go fishing without it. Okay, now I'm reading from the second issue. I have the cover story in this one, "The Raising of the St. Peter" off Salmo Point in Prince William Sound. Took three tanker cars to lift her up. The article lat-



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