

# Facebook meets fishing

By Jen Karuza Schile

One of my favorite things about working as a deckhand in Southeast Alaska years ago was steaming back into the harbor following a salmon opening. I'd hop over the bulwarks and walk down the dock in my Xtra Tuf boots, stretching my legs as I headed to the pay phone or the Laundromat.

Along the way, I'd encounter other crew members with information on which fishing vessels had loaded hatches, who'd gotten web caught in the wheel, and — most importantly — which bar we'd all be going to that night.

A decade later, I'm sitting with my parents discussing my latest fishing family blog post and industry tidbits I read on Facebook.

"I don't blog," Dad suddenly announced. "And I don't SpaceBook. Someone wants to talk to me? They can call me." Then he stood and went in search of an apple to eat.

I wisely decided to not point out that Dad had mixed up the social networking sites of My Space and Facebook; after all, Dad's an old-school fishing captain who prefers his dock talk the old-fashioned way — on the dock.

The Internet, however, is a useful tool for the commercial fishing industry, and I've found that Facebook has much to offer. Whether one is a fisherman, family member, politician, "Deadliest Catch" enthusiast, or in any other way involved with commercial fishing, there's a Face-

book group to join, friends to make, and information to glean.

For example, do you prefer American seafood to questionable imports? Do you have an opinion on regulations that limit the ability of fishermen to harvest our nation's seafood? Then you'd want to join the group *Family and Friends Who Support American Commercial Fishermen*.

You might become a friend of *Dungeness Ron*, the face of Astoria, Ore.'s Commercial Fishermen's Festival, billed as the most informative and fun-filled commercial fishing celebration in the world.

There's also the *National Seafood Marketing Coalition*, *Seattle Fishermen's Memorial*, *Support Louisiana Shrimpers and Fishermen*, *Commercial Fishing is a Way of Life*, *Friends Don't Let Friends Eat Farmed Salmon*, *National Fisherman*, and *Commercial Fishing Families and Friends*, the group I started with two other gals.

There, you can link to industry blogs and news, make a comment about how life is going in your fishing family, or publish obituaries, videos, and pictures.

This morning, I scrolled through the recent news as I ate breakfast.

After seeing a picture of a truckload of freshly caught mullet, I read a political update from *The Faces of California Fishing*, a group that promotes the stories and people behind California's fishing communities. I also read an update from my friend Amy Palmby, whose husband (Rick) has been working on a dragger in Dutch Harbor.

"Yippee!" she wrote. "The Ricker is

coming home! Four-and-a-half months is too long!"

I found an update by my friend Joel Little, who's been fishing for salmon and pollock in the remote reaches of Alaska the past several months.

"Snowin' and blowin' in Sand Point. Can't wait 'til I head home!!"

Next, I read an update from my friend Maria Rock of Newport, Ore.

"Going to be a very long day for me, I'm afraid. Hope my hubby fills the boat and comes home today!"

I recently asked Maria, as the creator and member of several Facebook commercial fishing pages and groups (including *Newport Fishermen's Wives*, *Commercial Fishermen Help You Live Better* and *The Original Stacking Belt*), how she finds Facebook most useful.

"I mostly use it to get the word out to others about the commercial fishing industry and to share a small piece of our lives with others," she replied.

"It's nice to be able to message so many people so easily with news and information."

NF

*Jen Karuza Schile lives in Bellingham, Wash., with two children and her husband, George. Read her blog at commercialfishingmom.com.*

*E-mail Dock Talk submissions to jfraser@divcom.com, or fax them to (207) 842-5603. Submissions should be approximately 600 words and include daytime phone number and Social Security number. Authors published in Dock Talk receive \$150.*

## Consequences

# Drill to survive

From U.S. Coast Guard reports

In the throes of an emergency, training increases your chances of survival. Instead of relying on panic response to get out safely, training drills give fishermen a course of action to follow in an emergency.

In February 2008 a 37-foot 1970

wooden-hulled gillnetter out of New Bedford, Mass., was fishing about 12 miles south of Fire Island, N.Y., with a crew of three. At about 8 a.m., the bilge alarm went off and activated one of the bilge pumps.

The skipper checked the fish hold and saw about 8 inches of water that was rising steadily. The second pump



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started sometime in the next half hour. The water level stabilized, and the crew set about trying to locate the source of the flooding. By 9 a.m., it was clear the

pumps couldn't keep up, and the crew quickly realized they were sinking.

With a third pump started, the skipper made his first call to the Coast Guard via channel 16. By 9:30, the water in the fish hold was waist-deep. The crew calmly readied their life raft, made a mayday call and slipped into survival suits. By 10 a.m., the crew abandoned ship into the raft and activated the EPIRB.

Just before 11 a.m., a Coast Guard H-60 helicopter left Air Station Atlantic City, N.J., and located the raft within minutes. All three were hoisted aboard by 11:16 a.m. with no injuries. The boat was a total loss.

## Lessons learned

At least one member of the crew had taken safety training in New Bedford on the use of survival equipment. A certified safety instructor, upon reviewing the events around the sinking, commented: "They did everything by the book, the way it was supposed to be done. That goes back to the training."

While this incident showcases the positive outcome of training, the need for training is often identified after a review of emergencies or mishaps without such successful outcomes. The Marine Board of Investigation report into the 2001 sinking of the Arctic Rose, with the loss of 15 lives, recommended requiring recurring safety and survival training. Additionally, organizations that advocate safety and survival training, like the Alaska Marine Safety Education Association, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, and the American Red Cross, recognize that training must be refreshed periodically to retain its value.

This interest in safety training is also being addressed in proposed legislation that would require individuals in charge of a vessel to complete a training program and demonstrate competencies, with refresher training at least every five years. Fishing vessel safety training programs could be supported through a grants program.

In the meantime if you are trying to

find safety and survival training, a number of training organizations offer classes (some free of charge) around the country. Go to [www.fishsafe.info/training-opportunities.htm](http://www.fishsafe.info/training-opportunities.htm) for more information. Training topics include use of life rafts, donning immersion suits, making proper mayday calls, use of flares, fire fighting, flooding/damage control, pump operation and vessel stability.

The crew that survived this flooding event represents what happens when everyone aboard shares an understanding of their safety responsibilities, equipment, and emergency procedures. The most thorough understanding among a crew comes from periodic training, instruction and drills. Train like you fish — fish safe. **NF**

*This article is based on U.S. Coast Guard reporting and is intended to bring safety issues to the attention of our readers. It is not intended to judge or reach conclusions regarding the ability or capacity of any person, living or dead, or any boat or piece of equipment.*



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