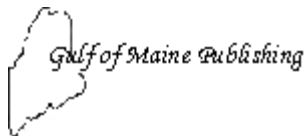


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NATURE,
THE
LOBSTERMAN'S
MASTER

BY

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DEDICATION

This volume is dedicated to all those who have gone to sea before me, and to those who now go to sea with me.

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INTRODUCTION

Doctors, lawyers, Indian chiefs, teachers, chicken thieves, and other shady characters engage in the commercial fishery. Most people engaged in harvesting the bounty that Nature has provided are people of character. They are all highly educated like the doctors, lawyers, and schoolteachers, etc., who fish alongside of them.

The best-qualified teachers, their fathers and grandfathers, educate those without formal education. Like the football player who always looks at the camera and says, “Hi, Mom,” the younger fishermen will document the accuracy of their statements by saying, “Gramps says...” If Gramps said it, then that is the final word in that discussion. The younger fishermen love their fathers, but they worship their grandfathers.

Grandfathers give grand advice. A grandson was telling me that the best advice he ever got to survive on the ocean was to know the difference between toughness and numbness.

On one occasion a couple of Gloucester men were talking on VHF channel 77. One was telling the other that he was not happy with the way his net was performing. The second asked him if he had taken it to the master net maker. He replied he had taken it to every net maker on the pier.

His friend then wondered, “Did you ask your papa?”

“Hell, no! I never thought of asking papa. He’ll know what to do, and that’s for sure; and if he doesn’t, gramps will!”

Lobstering is an extremely hard way to make a living. One's body is stressed to its limits. There are times it is stressed beyond its limits. The lobstermen are always in pain. Trap fishing is the most dangerous occupation of them all and at times, rewarding to the soul and wallet.

Thomas Paine believed Nature was God (Deist) and if he was right, then the fishermen are in intimate contact with Nature and its Laws. To be working that close to Nature/God one is aware of the power of Nature and derives much satisfaction from the intimacy and, above all, great respect for the mandatory demands Nature imposes on all of us.

There are land people who marvel when we tell them we go out on the North Atlantic in the wintertime. Actually, the most beautiful days of the year occur in the wintertime -- not often, but sometimes. The flat calm, gray water under a sunny sky can take a person's breath away -- or is it the sea smoke and the zero temperature? Of course, winter fishing is the most dangerous.

In the summertime many lose their lives in play boats because they are not aware of the power of Nature. Their ignorance of Nature and their lack of respect cause them to do foolish things. As an example, there was the husband and wife with their two toddlers in a canoe a half mile outside Wood Island Light. This is as dangerous a spot as one can find on the ocean. It can be flat calm for more than an hour when suddenly, three monstrous breakers will come crashing over the hidden ledges. I steamed over to them and threatened to call the Coast Guard if they didn't immediately head for the safety of the harbor.

The purpose of this work is to demonstrate the first lawmaker -- Nature. This is written into the Declaration of Independence, "...the laws of Nature and Nature's God."

Any manmade law that violates Nature's laws should be repealed by whatever means is available to the citizens. (Thomas Paine)

This is not a problem for the lobster. There is no "social scientist" or manmade laws that attempt to control its behavior. The lobster prospers in spite of the predators that constantly threaten it because Nature denies it the ability to violate its laws. The fisherman and all his land-loving fellows prosper in direct correlation to their obedience to the Laws of Nature. Violate the rules of Nature and the space shuttle would not have gotten off the ground, leave alone reached the moon -- a car would not start, planes would not become airborne, boats would not float. This we know for sure. Then why are there so many who are blind to the fact that we must subject ourselves to the dictatorship of Nature's laws?

To see God we are limited to looking at images that are created in the minds of others. To see the Laws of Nature one merely has to open one's eyes. Her splendor is a miracle in itself. Her power is obvious in rain, snowstorms, hurricanes, and tornadoes. It's also obvious in the explosion of Mt. St. Helen, and in the force of Niagara Falls. Her sweetness is seen in a sunny mid-September day in New England, and on the calm water of a mountain lake and its snow-capped peak. Her sweetness is also seen in the reflection of a full moon on a calm sea, and in a mountain meadow.

Freedom is the fuel that drives the economy and produces wealth. Gasoline is the fuel that gives one's car the power to function. One would not fill the fuel tank of his car with water, so then let's not let the government damage the economy by killing freedom through intervention and taxation. These are the poisons that destroy Natural Law Private Property Rights.

The Female Captain

CHAPTER I

I am the captain of the lobster-fishing vessel F/V *Kathryn Christina*. My vessel was built by Mariner Beal of Beal's Island, Maine. Mariner built it twice as strong as any pleasure boat of comparable size. This is the way all commercial fishing vessels from Maine are built. They go out in all kinds of weather, not just in July and August when it's nice enough to sit on the fly bridge and suck on a cocktail.

Our boats are workboats. They are equipped with all kinds of machinery and electronics so that we can control the vessel and make it do the work for which it was designed. However, that is the end of our control because now we come up against Nature. We are free, but we are not free!

As a commercial fisherman I have no control over the force of the wind or the direction from which it comes. The size of the seas is determined by Nature. The time of high and low tide and the direction and swiftness of the tidal currents are not mine to determine. I can only suffer, or enjoy, the consequences. When the sun is bright, making it difficult to read the electronics

in the wheelhouse, I can only grin and bear it. Clear sky, overcast, fog, heat, or freezing cold are all things that Nature imposes on me day to day. These are the Laws of Nature imposed on me just as Natural Law subjects every one to its rule, like it, or not.

Out on the ocean with all its sweetness and violence I am the master. Like the paradox of humanity that is capable of great sacrifice for its fellow humans on the one hand, and of unbelievable atrocities on the other, I, on the ocean, am soothed into blissful joy on those days when the sea is at peace. Its restfulness is only disturbed by an occasional sea mammal or bird.

Then I become a raging maniac when the sea becomes violent. She strikes at me as if she is out to kill me. I fight her for all I am worth. I scream at her, "There you bitch. You thought you had me." She has struck my vessel broadside with a particularly nasty breaking sea. The fear that filled my being turns to exhilaration as I realize I beat her one more time. But my arrogance is soon subdued. I know, without any shred of doubt that her power is beyond human comprehension. Here, in her domain, she is the ruler. Her will is imposed without intelligence. Just as the Nature of water is to be wet, so then the sea is bound by Nature to be a subservient daughter.

From bow to stern, portside to starboard, I am the captain. The sea covers two-thirds of the planet. Even so, there is a great sense of security when I feel the firmness of the deck under my feet. The cockpit fences in my hundred and fifty square feet of work area so that I can move about my space as secure as walking across my living room floor. Out of the corner of my eye I can see the ocean on all sides. I know that if the few feet of

deck upon which I stand were to suddenly disappear below the waves, my vessel, which was visible for miles in all directions, would then be a memory. The only reality would be overwhelming loneliness and fear. For then I would not be looking at the sea from my perch on deck, I would be alone with nothing in sight. I would be at eye level with no way to save myself. In that last moment, the strongest of my natural inclinations, survival, would go into overdrive. No matter how hopeless the situation, if there were a way to survive, I would find it. I have been on the verge of drowning three times. The greatest danger to survival, under those circumstances, is that in the last moments of consciousness the experience becomes very pleasant. One is overcome by a sense of peace, no longer aware that life is all but over. Consequently, the struggle to survive ends in a sense of euphoria.

The Spirit of Being Alive

CHAPTER II

It is odd how the greater the risk to life, the greater the sense of being alive. Commercial fishing is the most dangerous occupation. People tire of the danger. They leave to do other things, only to come back several times in their lifetime.

The fisherman is always wet and cold. Most of the time he has serious infections to his hands from fish bones. His legs and feet are killing him after long hours on a heaving deck. Yet he comes back for more. Even at an advance age, when most sane people have retired, the fishermen keep going to sea. Finally their bodies are totally broken. Willpower alone no longer forces it to function. Even then, they will take menial jobs on a boat, in a lobster pound or fish house until, mercifully, no one will hire them, and then they die. Just as General MacArthur said, "Old soldiers never die, they just fade away." So it is with old fishermen. Nature will bless them all with eternal peace.

There are those who will ask, what if God overrules Nature and condemns them to hell and

damnation for all eternity? I would not do that no matter how much they “sinned”. Nor would any other right-thinking person. Therefore, are we greater than God? There are things even God cannot do. He cannot overrule Nature, for they are one and the same. He cannot sin. He cannot create a being superior to himself. He cannot bear false testimony, etc.

It has to be pleasure! Humans and other creatures have three natural inclinations -- survival, reproduction, and to acquire knowledge. One could debate for a long time as to which of the three gives the greatest pleasure. Good food contributes to survival. One cannot reproduce without sex, and reading is pleasurable, or one would not bother.

“It’s in their blood,” proclaim those with little or no experience at sea. It is said so many times that many fishermen, who do not understand what drives them, begin to believe it.

Actually it’s our nature. It’s the pleasure of being in harmony with the way humans have lived even before we were human. The way hominids, Homo Erectus and Homo Sapiens survived. Other than the few primitive tribes who survive to this day, we are the only truly natural culture left. We are the lasts of the hunter-gatherers living in civilized society. Except for the Laws of Nature, we are as close to being free as humans can be. The only time we have to abide by the tyranny of the clock is when we have to keep medical appointments and the like. Do I ever hate having to be someplace at a specified time, especially because it is someone else who determines the time.

“A bad day on the water is better than a good day on land.”

Miller Johnson
Biddeford Pool, ME

John Waldron, Jr., of Kittery Point, Maine, tells the story of a friend of his who has a small shop behind his house. In his shop he manufactures one product – top-of-the-line canoe paddles.

An out-of-stater visited the shop and asked how much he charged for his paddles. He was told that they were seventy dollars each. The prospective buyer thought that the price was rather high. He asked if there were any seconds available, and was told there were.

“And how much are they?” he asked.

“One hundred and forty dollars,” was the reply.

“Ouch!” he gasped. “Why so much more?”

“Because there is twice the demand for the seconds,” he was told.

“A rough sea is one that rolls the cream out of my coffee.”

“To survive at sea one must know the difference between toughness and numbness.”

Referring to his driving -- “The only thing I never hit is the State lottery.”

Chink McKay
Cape Porpoise, ME

“A commercial fisherman is a fella who when he’s onshore, wishes he was at sea, and when he is at sea, wishes he was home.”

Author unknown