

Life as a Fisherman's Wife

Collector: **Ann O'Brien**

Contributor: **Winnie O'Dell**

Ann O'Brien:

Today is September 14th, 2009, my name is Ann O'Brien and I'm at the home of Winnie O'Dell. Winnie is going to share a story about ah... life as a fisherman's wife. Okay Winnie, you can go ahead.

Winnie O'Dell:

I was married to Ronald O'Dell on October 25th, 1959. We had eight children, Ronald was a fisherman. The first seven or eight years, he fished in Schnoorer Cove during the summer months, it was a good fishing area especially for cod trap and salmon.

We moved up there in June because the children was in school and ah... the ice was in the Straits. Fishermen was unable to start fishing some summers because of the ice, I remember one year they had to ah.... haul capelin through the ice along the shoreline.

Ron had three share man and they stayed with the family. We would go out in....they would go out in the morning to tuck the trap around five o'clock after they came in and pronged the fish up on the wharf, sometimes a trap was filled and they would put some fish in the cod bags. Sometimes like a something like a holding bag that was kept in the water after the men had the fish put away. That was in the boat which took some time. There was a splitting table on the wharf on stage head where there were three people, mostly.

One to cut throat, and take the guts out, one to break of the head and one to split the fish and take out the salmon bone. The fish was washed in a fish tub, then pronged in a wheel barrel and wheeled up to the stage and salted where people...when people started fishing at first they would go Pinware River and cut logs and build a stage head, sometimes like a box. Then they would fill that with rocks, then the top was nailed down with some smaller logs which was called liners.

A splitting house was made to house the fishermen from the water spray, rain and wind then the stage was built from logs, being sawed also from a wharf to wheel the fish on from the stage head to where it was brought to the stage and salted.

The liver from the fish was also stored in punchin's on the stage head and sold for cold oil. Most parts of the fish was used, cod tongues, sounds from the sound bone, jowels, heads, fish hearts. The fish itself was cooked in many ways, stews, fried, baked, boiled.

When we had capelinthen we had capelin. A small fish was caught and sometimes I would cut the head off, clean the guts and fry them. Roll the capelin in flour before frying. During the summer, most of the food we eat was fish cooked in some way.

Sunday meal was birds, salt beef or rabbit, Caribou, that was in salt left from the winter because there was no fridges, Potatoes, which was grown from our own garden year after year, white pudding and peas pudding.

Monday we usually had left overs from Sunday.

Tuesday - Rice soup and dough boys.

Wednesday - Fish and potatoes.

Thursday – Jigs dinner or stew or baked beans.

Friday – Fish and potatoes.

Saturday – Pea soup and dough boys.

My day would start ah....I would mix bread in the night and let it rise all night. Cover it with all the quilts I could find, so that it wouldn't get cold. Then in the morning I would put it in the pans that was to bake the fish.....bake the bread. Make about ten to twelve loaves at a time. As soon as I got up, I would put the bread on, then put water on the stove to heat up because there was no electricity or running water.

Ron or one of the share men would carry water and fill up the barrel. I had to wash clothes everyday by wash tub, and a board, and a bar of sunlight soap. The last few years up to Schnoorer Cove, I had a gas washer with a ringer on the top. One of the children got his arm caught in the ringer but cute enough to hit the top and the ringer opened. He was not hurt badly. The day that I mixed bread, which was every second day, I put the flat irons on the stove because it would be hot and I was able to iron their clothes. We ironed all their clothes in them days.

After the water was on the stove, I would go and empty the pail. No toilets. Then wash and dress the small children, give them breakfast, then get breakfast ready for the men who just came in from fishing. Then wash the dishes, clean the lamps, sweep the floor, put the tub up and wash the clothes, cook dinner, put the clothes on the line and bushes to dry. Get dinner, wash the dishes, put the little ones down for a nap, wash up the floor, then get something prepared for supper. Wash and dress the children from bed. Iron the clothes at night, sometimes after I undressed the children at night, I would wash their clothes and put it out to dry. If I saw that the weather was going to be nice.

Ann O'Brien:

Did you have gardens too Winnie?

Winnie O'Dell:

Nope.

I had a few potatoes but that was it.

And we had the dogs. We use to bring the dogs up to Schnoorer Cove then but dad's brother Uncle Art, he always took care of the dog. He cooked the meal and fed them and of course, no one was allowed to touch the dogs. We had the dogs up to Schnoorer Cove in the summer and they were fed with cods heads, capelin, or herring or whatever Uncle Art could find.

Uncle Art was up with us to Schnoorer Cove during the summer that we were there. We would buy..... I would buy flannette and cotton to make pajamas and cotton for shirts for the boys, dresses and slips for the girls. But my mom was the sewer.

T-Eaton's catalogue was from Toronto and Doby's from Toronto. Doby's carried mostly household items but Eaton's carried clothing, furniture and other things. Then Simpson Sears put out a catalogue and I would get my parcels come COD. I could order coats and boots for the children.