



The *Tatiana* ties up at the Castle Rock Seafoods dock in Crescent City, California.

# THE AMERICANIZATION OF HAKE

Years ago, in Crescent City, California, Tom Evanow foresaw a future in Pacific whiting for the shore-based groundfish industry. The West Coast whiting fishery is finally coming of age, but not without growing pains, including a burgeoning conflict between shoreside, joint venture, and ultimately, U.S. at-sea processors.





On the *Tatiana*, crewman Joe Arispe zips open a window of the midwater trawl net to release the Pacific whiting catch.

**T**here is a ritual that trollers observe when they run into those jut-jawed, sharp-toothed robbers that oftentimes blanket schools of salmon, stealing every bait off the hooks. With the offender attached, fishermen whirl the leader, lariat-style, then slam the thief hard against the rail. An expletive usually follows the act, uttered with appropriate disgust: "Hake!"

Other men hold kinder thoughts of the white-fleshed fish that migrate upcoast every spring—enormous schools of Pacific whiting, ostensibly a more palatable name, and the last big-volume fishery stock not fully utilized by domestic processors. (Pacific whiting's ABC/OY nearly doubles that of all other West Coast groundfish fisheries combined—225,000 mt vs. 128,400 mt in 1989.)

For decades whiting's potential has tantalized shoreside processors from California to Washington, albeit for want of money or markets or timing, few dreams ever panned out.

Tom Evanow, founder of Castle Rock Seafoods in Crescent City, California, foresaw a profitable future in whiting and made it work. Although he died before reaching his goal, his wife, Elise, their children,

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and associates persevered, and in 1988 Castle Rock processed, froze, and sold about seven million pounds of H&G (headed and gutted) whiting (roughly 45% of the domestic Pacific whiting harvest) and hoped to expand production to 10 million gross pounds, approaching plant capacity, in 1989. Castle Rock's success prompted Sea Products in Crescent City to start processing whiting in 1988; in 1989 whiting accounted for over 30% of plant production. Eureka Fisheries in Field's Landing, which for years reduced small tonnage for animal feed, began processing a few million pounds of H&G whiting each year for human consumption in the early 1980s. The three produce the bulk of Pacific whiting processed shoreside on the West Coast. But in 1989, for the first time, all three northern California whiting processors had a tough time getting fish.

"This is our first bad year," Tom Evanow Jr. (Tommy) comments, sliding the 90-foot *Tatiana* out of Crescent City harbor on a morning tide in mid-July. A small black-and-white snapshot of Tom Evanow Sr. occupies a prominent spot on the bridge. "Dad's dream was to build a processing plant," Tommy says. "He saw hake as a way of making it go—the salvation of the trawl fleet."

In 1984, facing increasingly restricted quotas for widow rockfish, Castle Rock started processing whiting on a production basis. "Our season lasts from April through August," Tommy notes. "We need 20 processing days a month—at least 80 days a season. It's important to be able to do at least 100,000 pounds a day to make a profit." Tommy has fished whiting for seven years—five for the plant and two for joint ventures. Quiet-voiced, he talks about changes he has seen in the 1989 whiting fishery—the first year in history that U.S. harvest capacity exceeded the amount of whiting available for harvest.

The 1989 OY quota was split 18,000 mt to domestic processors and 207,000 mt to eight U.S. joint venture companies representing five countries

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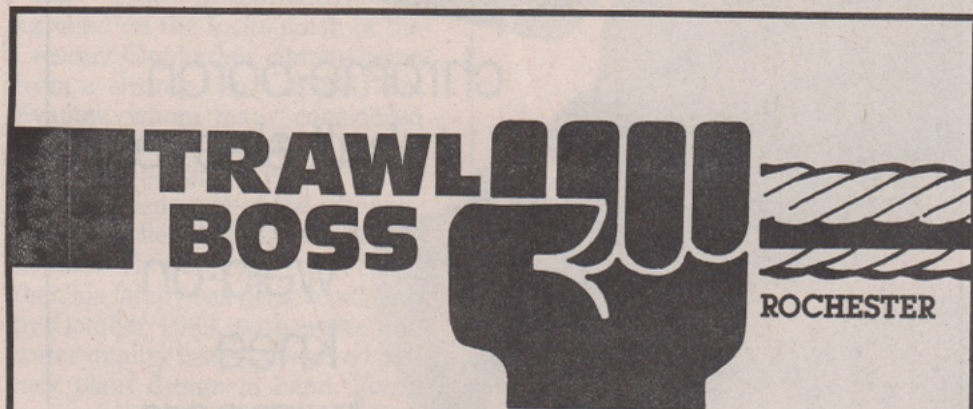
—USSR, Poland, Korea, China and Japan (who submitted requests totaling 321,000 mt of whiting). In 1989, ventures added 28 U.S. catcher boats, bringing the total to 69. Many came from Alaska, fishing the West Coast for the first time. Operating on the Olympic system—first come, first served—ventures began fishing earlier and farther south than usual. One ven-

ture fleet of six foreign processing ships and 25 U.S. catcher boats arrived off Crescent City on April 14. Two others followed, leapfrogging south. JVs filled their quota coast-wide in about 11 weeks, half the normal time, and the JV fishery closed by the end of June. Nearly half of the total JV tonnage was taken in the Eureka-Crescent City area.

“Last year there was a solid pancake of hake 10 fathoms thick,”

Tommy remarks, eyeing his electronics—sonar, color sounder and paper meter. “I think there would have been that many this year, too.” The *Tatiana* had been fishing for two weeks on a large body of fish when the first venture arrived. A few days later, the hake schools appeared broken and scattered—spooked. Twice during their normal peak production period, both Crescent City whiting processors went blank for three weeks at a stretch, coinciding with the height of JV effort in the area. The three northern California shore-based whiting processors still felt the impact in mid-July, finding only “scattered bits and pieces” of schools. “We were planning to expand but our volume now is only half of last year’s,” Tommy says. “Joint ventures still have a purpose here, but they shouldn’t be allowed to restrict shore-based industry. Domestic processors have preference over foreign interests in quota allocations, but it doesn’t matter how much quota we’re given if JVs come in first and catch the fish—intercept the migration.”

**F**orming dense schools during the daytime, dispersing at night to feed, coastal Pacific whiting (different from Puget Sound Pacific whiting) cut a wide, transient arc from central Baja California in winter spawning months to Queen Charlotte Sound during the summer feeding period. “Most of the volume we see extends from the three-mile line to 200 fathoms, although hake go out to 500 fathoms sometimes,” Tommy notes, this day prospecting along the 40-fathom line. Coastal whiting tend to range deeper in spring, move shoreward in June, then backtrack westerly and southward again by fall. (Most of the U.S. harvest occurs on the northward leg.) They possess the broadest distribution and greatest abundance of the four major spawning stocks identified. The largest fish tend to make the longest northerly migrations, arriving first, followed by smaller, younger fish. Migrating three to six miles per day, schools can be found off Oregon and Washington by the end of April. Hake first appear off Vancouver Island in late May. While adult whiting migrate, juveniles remain concentrated mainly



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south of central California.

Like Pacific cod and Alaska pollock, whiting have shorter lifespans and wilder stock fluctuations than higher-valued groundfish such as rockfish and flatfish. But Pacific whiting differ from most whitefish in a critical way: a myxosporidian parasite present in the muscle tissue of about half the population triggers an enzyme, after the fish dies, that turns the meat to jelly unless the catch is quickly chilled on board, then processed and frozen within 30 hours after the harvest. (Freezing stops decomposition of the meat, and rapid, high-temperature cooking prevents further decomposition.) Consequently, Pacific whiting typically bring lower prices than cod or pollock (also lower prices than Puget Sound and Atlantic whiting)—the archetypal high-volume, low-value fishery.

**P**inched by low profit margins, shoreside whiting operations also are limited by the delicacy of the fish. "Fish must be caught and delivered the same day," Tommy says. "That cuts our operating flexibility." Tommy figures he has a 50-mile-radius operating range for daytripping. In 1988 and prior, however, that was no problem. The *Tatiana* consistently made 15-45 minute tows for 20-40 tons of fish, which were speedily slush-iced in the hold, unloaded by mid-afternoon, and processed and frozen by the following day. "Now we're towing up to two hours sometimes to get 10 tons." Yesterday he had to run five hours south before he found a school he could set on, and he didn't return until 11:00 p.m. This morning's run is into its second hour when deep red splotches begin to appear on the sounder, little schools of hake hanging just off the bottom. "Fishing isn't consistent," he says, frowning. "Argentinian and Chilean whiting compete for our markets. We need to keep them supplied or we'll lose them."

When Tom Evanow geared up Castle Rock Seafoods to process hake in 1984, he gambled every uncommitted dime on the necessary freezers and equipment. Along with general manager Terry Rosaaen, he developed national whiting markets. Because the existing plant was nearing capacity, he

brainstormed plans for an expanded, modernized processing facility at the harbor. And when PCA seized his boats in April 1985, he worked like hell to save the dream from bankruptcy and lift it back on track.

Four days before his death in April 1987, predicting that the growth of JVs would scatter hake stock and hamper domestic production, Tom Evanow Sr. reluctantly crafted a resolution that the Crescent City Council,

Board of Supervisors and Harbor District also endorsed. All signatories expressed strong opposition to continued joint venture and foreign-directed fisheries for whiting south of the California-Oregon border. In the fall of 1987, Tom Evanow Jr. presented the resolutions to the PFMC and asked for protection for shoreside industry, suggesting that the existing JV boundary at 39° north latitude be moved up to 42°. The Council rejected



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# THE AMERICANIZATION OF HAKE

the proposal.

"I also asked for any protection the Council could give, short of moving the line," Tommy relates, "but nothing was done. Now it's happened—the factory trawl fleet has pushed JVs out of the Gulf of Alaska and they're shifting down here, squeezing us out." Many of the venture boats are larger and, with more horsepower and bigger nets, more efficient. "The faster you go, the more you catch," Tommy says. "We can't compete in that respect."

But this is a magical day. The paper meter shows a row of small "white line" schools, the irregular black-rimmed circles indicating dense concentrations of hake. Around 9:30 a.m. Tommy signals his crew to deploy the rope-wing trawl net. Main wires whining, doors clanging, the set is complete in minutes. The tow lasts an hour, Tommy monitoring the net on his electronics, adjusting course to pick up schools that appear on the sonar. "This is a real sonar show," he



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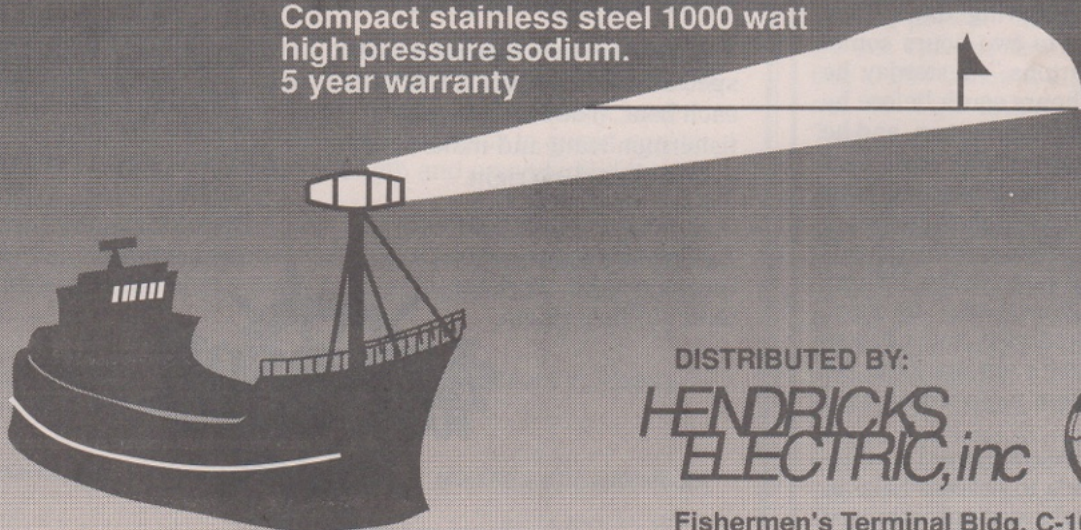
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At Castle Rock, workers stack trays of boxed H&G whiting, readying them for the plate freezers.

remarks. "We wouldn't catch fish without it."

On the haul-back, though, he is surprised when the codend pops to the surface ballooned with whiting—a 60,000-pound tow, he figures. Tommy mans the deck winches while the crew lift the net aboard in sections, opening at least half a dozen zippered windows to release the catch. Hustling, they shovel tons of silvery hake into iced bins below deck, slushing them while winching, unzipping and spilling the next section. Within the hour, the *Tatiana* is underway, her hold half-filled with fish.

"Another tow like this and we can call it a day," Tommy grins, returning to the hunt. "It took us a while before we came to like fishing whiting," he says after a while. With his father, Tommy fished salmon years before, imbued with the trollers' prejudice. "Now we like hake," he says. "It's

given us stability—paid the bills." Whiting has become Castle Rock's bread; everything else is butter.

**A**fter searching for a couple of hours, Tommy finds another pile of fish and sets the gear. "If we get 'em. . ." he says, maneuvering over the school, straightening the main wires guiding the net. "When they're spotty like this, it's easy to miss." The *Tatiana's* crew begins hauling back around 2:45 p.m. The second tow produces about 50,000 pounds of pure whiting. "90% of the time we get clean tows," Tommy notes. Before 4:00 p.m. the *Tatiana* is steaming back to the harbor, plugged. The next day, it's back to scratching.

At the end of July, however, fishing finally improves. Tommy attributes the upsurge to new schools migrating into the Crescent City area from down south. Castle Rock puts in some ban-



At Castle Rock Seafoods in Crescent City, California, Pacific whiting are headed and gutted, then frozen for market. A top cutter can cut close to 6,000 fish a day, putting out about 200 trays, each containing roughly 30 fish.

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# THE EVOLUTION OF THE PACIFIC WHITING FISHERY

BY D. B. PLESCHNER

Until the advent of joint ventures on the West Coast, the U.S. Pacific whiting fishery bagged more dreams than product, but not for lack of effort. In the mid-1960s, NMFS, nee the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, helped finance a pilot fishery to deliver whiting for reduction in Aberdeen, Washington, after catching as much as 30 tons of whiting in 30 minutes using newly-developed midwater trawl gear. The agency also tried producing a powdered food additive from hake, but both ventures ultimately failed. Around the same time in California, Eureka Fisheries also reduced small tonnage of hake and other low-value species for mink feed. But buyers stopped wanting hake—reportedly, it made the animals' fur fall out.

The USSR began exploiting the West Coast whiting resource in 1966, and for the next decade foreign fishing, eventually by six nations—USSR, Poland, Japan, Bulgaria, East and West Germany—bagged a total harvest in the millions of tons. At the height of fishing, over 100 vessels took some 231,331 mt in 1976, most harvested by the USSR. The same year Congress passed the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management

Act, mandating a 200-mile U.S. fishery conservation zone.

Sold on the Magnuson promise, over 400 new trawlers entered the West Coast fleet in the years 1976-79, looking to cash in on groundfish and "underutilized species" development. Midwater nets sparked the "brownie" boom, the rise and fall of the widow rockfish fishery. Midwater gear already had proved itself suitable for hake.

In 1977-78, based on the efforts of the Astoria-based catcher/processor *Willapa Bay*, which had experimented with hake for several years, Pacific Hake Fisheries in Oregon testified that it hoped to build a fleet of six catcher/processors to produce 80 million gross pounds of whiting—if markets developed right. But they didn't. And ultimately, after first heeding domestic opposition to joint ventures, the fledgling Pacific Fishery Management Council voted to authorize the first venture, set up by Marine

Resources Company, joining Bellingham Cold Storage and Russian fishing interests.

Joint venture fishing commenced in 1978; also in 1978, Congress amended the FCMA to give domestic processors preference over foreign interests in allocations of fish. Barry Fisher had a hand in both actions: His *Lady of Good Voyage* was one of two vessels contracted by MRC. "I helped coin the domestic processing preference amendment in 1977," says Fisher, "so I could go to work."

Pioneering the first West Coast venture, Barry Fisher fought in Washington D.C. for 22 months to get JVs legalized. "The entire fishery was against us when I started," he says. "Even now we're looked at as foreign warlords. But remember, JVs were a great step on the way to Americanization." In 1989, for the first time, the entire Pacific whiting OY was taken by U.S. catcher boats. The following table illustrates the fishery's evolution:

Pacific Whiting Landings (in metric tons)

Year	Foreign Fishery	Joint Venture	Shore-Based	Total Catch	Optimum Yield	Foreign Vessels		U.S. Vessels JV Trawl.
						Direct Trawlers	JV* Proc.	
1978	96,827	856	689	98,382	130,000	36	2	2
1979	114,910	8,834	937	124,681	198,900	49	11	11
1980	44,023	27,537	793	72,353	175,000	24	11	16
1981	70,366	43,557	838	114,761	175,000	31	20	21
1982	7,089	67,465	1,024	75,578	175,500	4	15	19
1983	0	72,100	1,051	73,151	175,500	0	16	19
1984	14,772	78,889	2,721	96,382	175,500	17	20	21
1985	49,853	31,692	3,894	85,439	175,000	22	15	18
1986	69,861	81,639	3,463	154,963	295,800	24	23	25
1987	49,656	105,997	4,796	160,448	195,000	33	30	31
1988	18,041	135,781	6,876	160,698	232,000	18	31	41
1989**	0	204,038	incomplete		225,000	0	45	69

Source: PFMC, PacFIN, NMFS

\* Some foreign vessels participated in both directed and JV fisheries during the season, and not all vessels necessarily operated at the same time.

\*\*JV fishery quota of 207,000 mt was estimated taken and fishery closed by June 30, 1989.

## THE AMERICANIZATION OF HAKE

ner weeks, boosting 1989 production close to 1988's volume by the close of fishing in late August. The late spurt seems to reinforce the issue: shore-based processors catch fish except when joint ventures are present.

At its July 1989 meeting, the Pacific

Fisheries Management Council again grappled with the controversy over hake—a time and area conflict (and a visibility problem)—involving not only shoreside whiting development but now JV incidental catch of salmon in the Klamath Management Zone. Salmon trollers were irate because JV catchers and processors working just three miles from shore (and some, in-

side) were legally (and illegally) dragging wide open in Klamath troll grounds, likely catching salmon (a non-retention species with no set bycatch cap), when trollers themselves were shut out for all but a few days this season. NMFS reports, based on extrapolated observer data, estimated the total coast-wide JV salmon bycatch in 1989 at 9,431 salmon for 204,038



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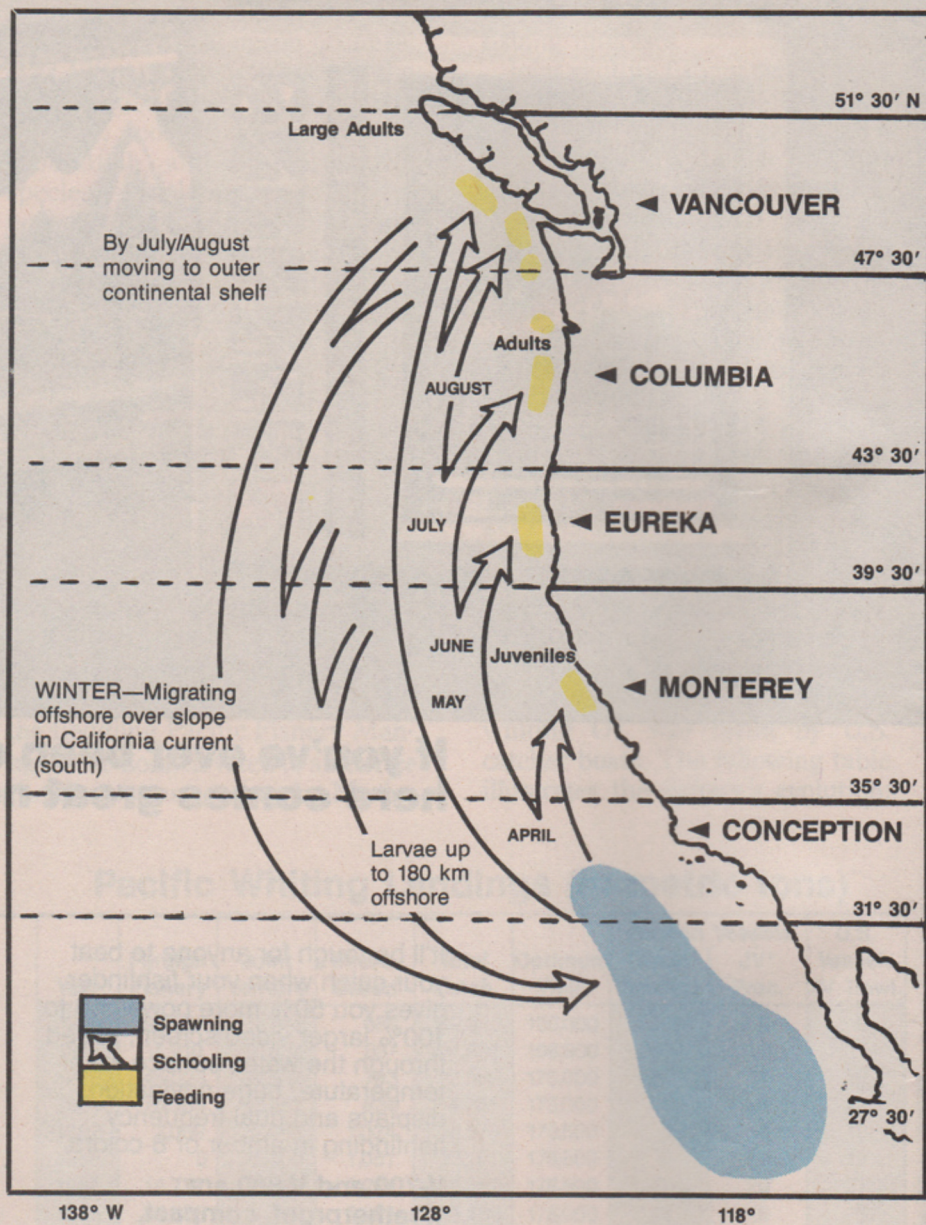
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## THE AMERICANIZATION OF SALMON



mt of whiting—.056 salmon per ton. In the Eureka INPFC area, extending from Cape Blanco to Cape Mendocino, the salmon bycatch was 3,676 salmon (all species) for 99,791 mt of whiting—.036 salmon per ton. Despite assurances, however, trollers remain unconvinced.

At a crossroad, the whiting fishery is stuck in a Catch 22 loop. The 1989 fishery contradicted a Council goal to extend the JV season as long as possible. The good news is that the June closure limited salmon and yellowtail bycatch, keeping ventures off the grounds in July and August, when

effort shifts north and bycatch is higher. The bad news: intense early effort in the Eureka-Crescent City area broke up whiting schools, reportedly soured fishing grounds, and restricted domestic access to the resource—contravening the Magnuson Act.

Still, not everyone agrees on the severity of the impact. "While the ventures were in California they had very good fishing," says Craig Cochran, a board member of the Midwater Trawlers Co-op from Newport, Oregon, with two JV boats. "If domestic boats couldn't catch fish



when the JV boats were there, then they have a problem catching fish." Cochran points out that, working under the Olympic system, the impetus is to get fish early—and being first in line helps. "In past years there was no problem," he says. "The fleets were smaller; they had all summer to fish. Now that hake is fully utilized, there will continue to be intense competition.

"I don't think the real problem is joint ventures," he continues. "The real problem will be DAP allocations—U.S. shoreside vs. U.S.-flag at-sea. If the hake fishery goes at-sea, all the hake and half of West Coast [groundfish] tonnage will go to Seattle. That would be disastrous for the entire coast. The Midwater Trawlers Co-op favors shoreside processing. If fish were protected for shoreside, there would likely be several plants going in up and down the coast."

**T**he dichotomy of MTC's position is ironic: To lengthen the JV season, the group proposed that the Council implement a 20-ton codend and adjustable daily delivery limits for JV catchers and require full utilization of whiting by foreign processors, prohibiting dumping. A similar proposal by the Council's Groundfish Select Group added allocations to foreign nations instead of the Olympic system (which MTC opposes), and limited access in the JV fishery (which MTC supports). "We need to give priority preference to shoreside processors over at-sea," Barry Fisher, president of MTC, reiterates. "We'd like to get Capital Construction Funds freed up to invest in shoreside plants. But I don't believe in a town or fleet being given a quota or radius: That promotes holy war." As long as JVs are entitled to fish, U.S. catcher boats want a level playing field. Yet their future prosperity—future survival—relies on shoreside (or floating processing) development.

Shore-based plants provide a far greater economic return to coastal communities than do at-sea processors. Whiting has proven itself economically important to Crescent City, already supplying over 130 direct jobs in a town with a chronically high unemployment rate. The harbor and

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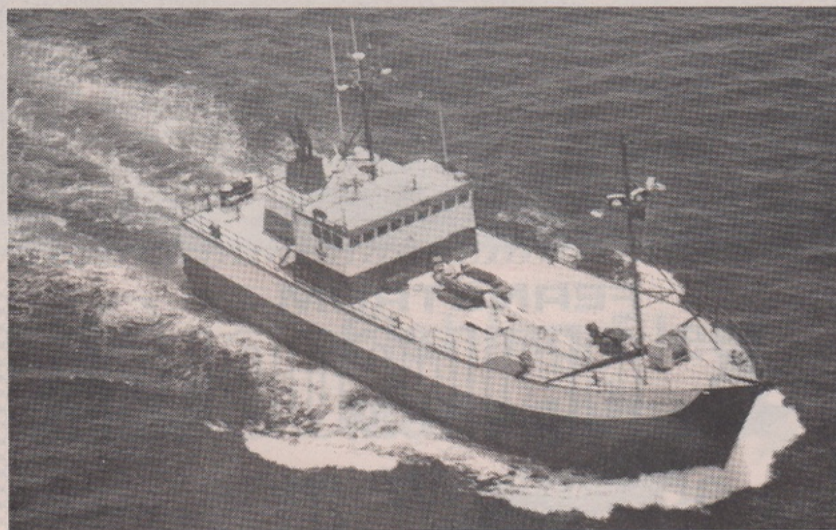
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county invested a lot of money assessing the feasibility of a new plant. Indeed, the future for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people hangs on how the whiting conflict evolves and is resolved. "The questions we're attempting to answer here apply to Newport, Astoria . . . the entire industry," Terry Rosaaen declares.

In the David vs. Goliath conflict, Castle Rock again petitioned the Council at the July meeting to prohibit JVs south of the California-Oregon border. "Wherever you draw the line," says Rosaaen, "what little fish we catch won't impact JVs or anyone else. We're trying to avoid the Alaska experience in the lower 48. It's a painful process and it involves politics, but hopefully, we'll arrive at a solution we can live with."

**I**n reality, JV competition is just one aspect of a multi-faceted conflict: Concentrated effort (by JVs, factory trawlers or any other super-efficient operation) tends to disperse fish; fish move. At present, shoreside boats are less efficient. But a key reason for developing shore-based whiting potential is to find alternate markets for the existing trawl fleet.

To discuss all the options, the PFMC requested NMFS southwest regional director Charlie Fullerton to organize a meeting between factions, planned for October in Eureka. "Our goal is to protect shoreside processors," Fullerton states. Asked if fishery managers had begun to address looming conflicts with U.S. factory trawlers, he said no, adding, "We want to get through this one step at a time."

Surimi likely will be the flame that sets the allocation pot boiling. Presumably, Nippon Suisan in Japan has already developed an enzyme inhibitor for whiting. (The Nippon Suisan JV requested 100,000 mt in 1989.) With patent pending on NMFS' long-awaited enzyme inhibitor, and with commercial production conceivable in 1990, U.S. processors may soon be able to produce high-grade surimi from hake as well. And with pollock quotas and seasons shrinking (1989's

Gulf of Alaska pollock quota was filled by March 23), at least a few U.S. catcher/processors appear interested in the West Coast whiting resource.

"The Council recognizes the potential of offshore processors and sees a need to begin discussion of future problems," says Jerry Thomas, partner in Eureka Fisheries and a member of the PFMC. "We recognize that joint ventures are temporary," reaffirms Jim Glock, groundfish specialist on the Council staff. "For a long-term solution to this conflict, we have to look at the at-sea vs. shoreside issue." That confrontation is already stewing in Alaska, pitting Americans against Americans: the Magnuson Act, which is up for reauthorization this fall, as yet makes no distinction.

Another problem, the coastal whiting resource appears to be heading into a downcycle. Strong year classes correlate with warm ocean temperatures, and poor recruitment is associated with strong upwelling and cold water. The last strong year class recruited in 1984: 1988-89 were cold water years. Reflecting this trend, the new preliminary ABC/OY range is reduced from 1989's level by about 30,000-60,000 mt; final numbers will be adopted at the November PFMC meeting. Competition for whiting will be even hotter in 1990 than it was in 1989.

**"S**ource of supply is the biggest issue now," says Castle Rock's Terry Rosaaen. "If you can't catch fish, you lose markets. Drawing a line is arbitrary and unfair, but it's the confidence level that promotes investment. If there's another solution that gives the same protection without drawing a line, then that's fine. But if your source of supply is in question, how are you going to encourage investment?"

The question holds particular relevance for Castle Rock. After years of hake hype and red tape, Tom Evanow's dream plant is close to reality. Revised preliminary plans include a 125-foot by 200-foot processing facility designed to meet future sanitation standards and do at least 40 million

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pounds a year—four times Castle Rock's present capacity. (The plant also provides capacity for future surimi production.) Also incorporated are a wastewater treatment plant with dissolved air flotation system to process seafood processors' liquid waste; and a solid waste transfer station to be operated, and half funded, by a private tallow company. The Del Norte Economic Development Corporation expects preliminary grant approval for the wastewater plant before the end of 1989, after which loan applications can be finalized for plant construction. The processor will be expected to repay the loan on a long-term lease. But due to increasingly stringent building and sanitary requirements, construction costs have escalated in the intervening years. The price tag for the new processing facility now exceeds \$3 million—a huge commitment in light of uncertainties in the supply of fish.

"I personally believe a plant of this size will go in," says Terry Rosaaen. But with no protection imminent for the whiting resource, the gamble may be, finally, too big for Castle Rock. "One way or another, we'll be involved in whiting," Rosaaen hastens to add. "We want very much to expand—but we don't want to go broke doing it."

**F**or personal reasons, the Evanow family wants the plant to succeed with the Castle Rock name attached. Either way, it will be a tough business decision. "And 1990 will be a key year," Tommy declares. "We'll see a mini-Bering Sea out here—JVs, Alaska catcher boats, factory trawlers and shoreside—catch 'em as fast as you can. But hake could still be the salvation of the trawl fleet," he asserts, "with shoreside processing preference." **PF**



# REMEMBERING TOM EVANOW

BY D. B. PLESCHNER

**O**n April 4, 1987, a calm, moonless night, the *Miss Lisa* inexplicably ran aground on the rocks north of the Crescent City harbor, coming home from a shrimp trip. Captain Tom Evanow, whom many considered the sparkplug of the harbor besides the force behind Crescent City's long-planned state-of-the-art whiting plant, died that night as did his nephew Tim, his only crew. Since then his family has persevered, and by October 1989, with waste and water-quality issues answered and new plant design in hand, Tom's goal appears close to reality. Here's the story—and a tribute to the man behind the dream.

Evanow is a popular name in the communities of both Cornucopia, Wisconsin and Crescent City, California. From a Great Lakes fishing family, the five Evanow brothers—Gene, Bud, Jack, Tom and Jim—came to Crescent City when fishing declined back east. Tom arrived in 1959, accompanied by his wife, Elise, three young sons and little else.

The Evanow boys did well fishing salmon, crab and albacore. They, too, produced large families, and most of their children became fishermen. (At least 10 boats in Crescent City are owned by Evanows.) Tom and Elise Evanow raised five children: Tom Jr. (Tommy), Don, James, Lisa (for whom the *Miss Lisa* was named), and Andrew—all of whom fished at an early age.

Tom built a reputation as one of the best, most successful fishermen in Crescent City. Unflappable, good-natured, an inveterate tease, with his ever-present cigarette or chaw he "Colombo'ed" a lot of peo-

ple. He had a multitude of friends, from politicians to plant workers to fishermen from Seattle to San Diego. He earned respect as a hard driver who began by working for brother Bud, then fished his way up to a four-boat fleet. The 56-foot *Miss Lisa*, acquired in 1971, was the third steel hull in Crescent City and the boat his children grew up fishing on. Then came the *Bristol*, the 75-foot Gulf shrimper *Frank & Maria*, and in 1981, the 90-foot Gulf shrimper *Tatiana*.

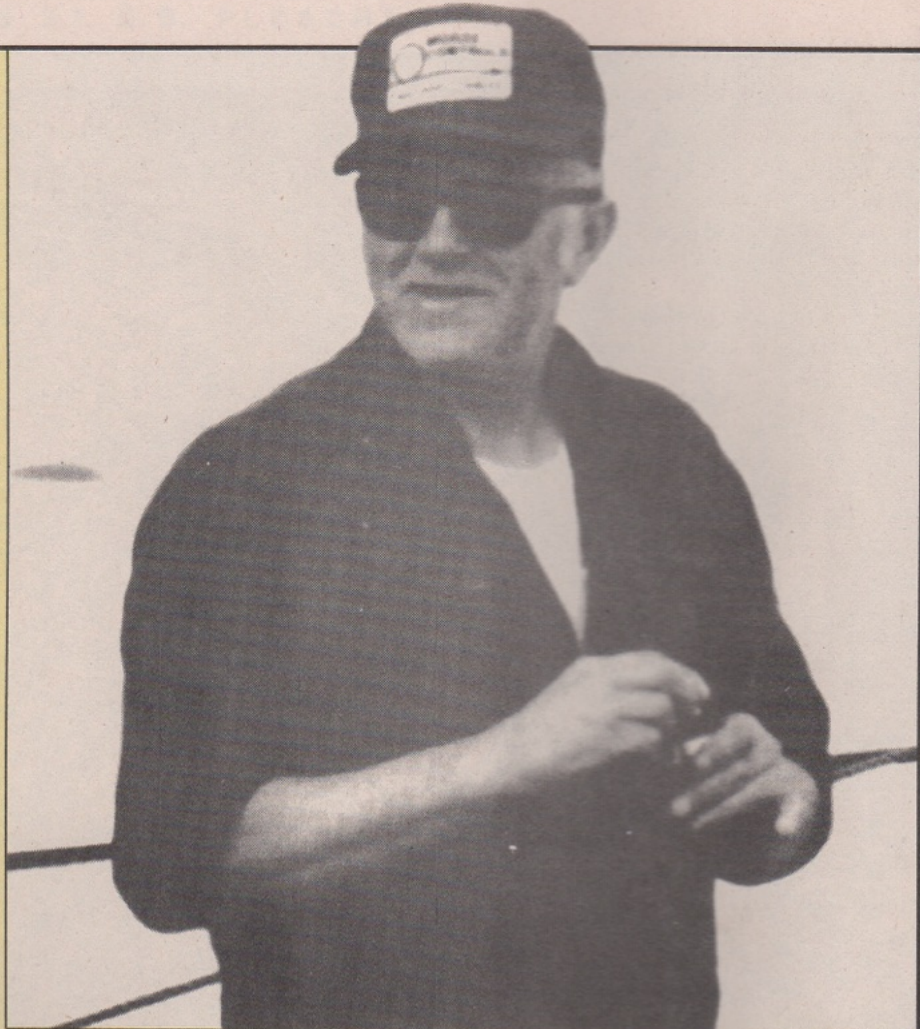
**W**hile others hedged their bets playing fishery roulette, Tom doubled up. "He was the best businessman I ever was involved with," says Terry Rosaaen, Castle Rock Seafood's long-time general manager. "He had a sixth sense . . ." son Tommy says. Never afraid to take a chance, Tom Sr., with help from brother Jim, founded Castle Rock in 1976 in what had been his

gear shed.

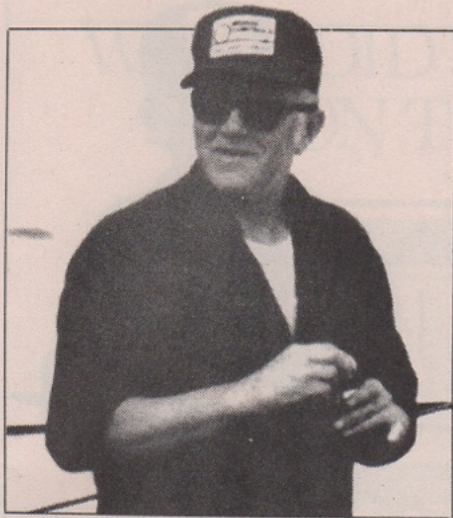
The year 1976 was a boom season for Dungeness and markets were scarce, so Tom began packing his own catch, hauling it to Berkeley in hand-built crates. Son James remembers sitting on the floor of the shed, scrubbing crab until 3:00 a.m. "Dad would come in about 10 p.m. after fishing, load crab in the back end of the pick-up and drive them to Spenger's Market," Tommy reminisces. "We took turns driving—Dad, cousin David and I." Crab peddling provided the impetus to open Castle Rock Seafoods, which began by cooking crab in large stainless pots over tanked propane.

Tom got into shrimping, dragging, a couple of years after Castle Rock opened for business. And he added a second building to process shrimp. He brought the *Tatiana* around in 1981 to shrimp, but shrimp were scarce that year. In

continues on p. 91







**TOM EVANOW**

continued from p.78

1982 Tom tried midwater trawling for widow rockfish, "brownies," and "...knocked hell out of 'em." He added a third building to the Castle Rock complex to process H&G and fillet. When the PFMC slapped quota restrictions and landing limits on widow rockfish, Tom began looking closely at hake.

Tom first targeted whiting with midwater gear in 1982; in 1984 Castle Rock began processing H&G whiting on a production basis. "The El Nino years precipitated Castle Rock's move into whiting," notes Terry Rosaaen. "We took all the funds we could generate and improved the plant to do whiting." That meant moving away from California's traditional fresh-market emphasis and jumping into the freezer—seven plate freezers, to be exact, because processing H&G whiting requires the capability to freeze in volume.

In 1984, both the *Frank & Maria* and the *Tatiana* fished hake for Castle Rock, skippered by James and Tommy, respectively. Tom Sr. and Terry developed national markets for frozen H&G Pacific whiting, out-competing imports from Argentina and Chile. Processing whiting shoreside proved feasible, although finances were stretched thin in the aftermath of the El Nino years. Nevertheless, Tom spearheaded a drive for a futuristic, expanded plant on the waterfront. The project won a

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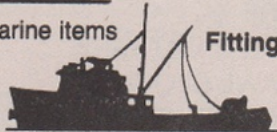


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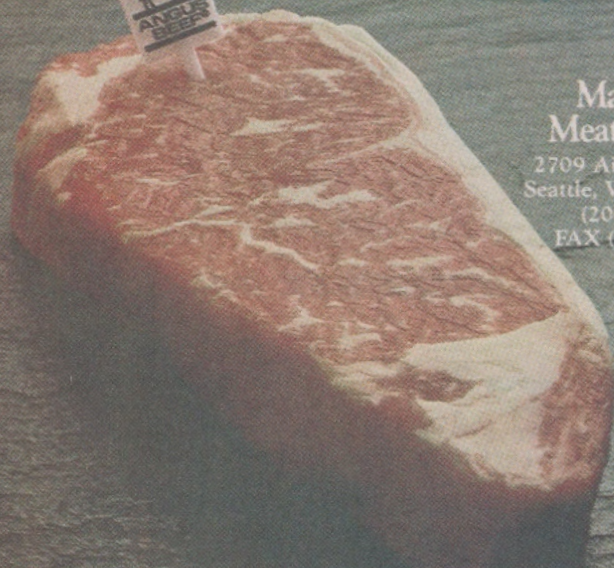
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**TOM EVANOW**

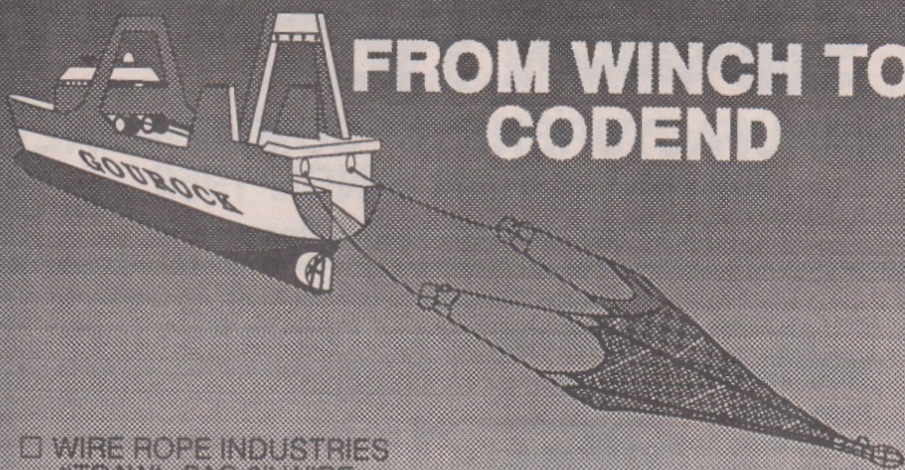
\$600,000 grant, and a construction bond was in the works, but progress came to a sudden halt when, in April 1985, PCA seized all four of Tom Evanow's boats.

"16 boats were scheduled to be seized in Crescent City, and our four were first," Tommy recollects. PCA tied up Castle Rock's boats for two weeks, during contract renegotiations. The bank panicked, devalued his property, and back to the wall, Tom Evanow filed Chapter 11. A year later, the action was dismissed. "We got into bankruptcy trying to do whiting," says Terry Rosaaen, "and we got out by producing it."

The ensuing years saw Tom Evanow, along with his family and associates, buried in hard work, pulling all four boats and the company back to profitability. Fishing improved. Then, two years after the PCA seizure and one year after Tom regained financial stability, the *Miss Lisa* ran aground, her hold plugged with shrimp. The accident stunned Crescent City; shock ripped the length of the coast. "I don't know what happened," Tommy says. "Nobody will ever know, but afterwards everybody figured if it could happen to him, it could happen to anyone."

After the accident, with James captaining the *Frank & Maria* fishing shrimp and hardheads in summer, and Tommy on the *Tatiana* fishing whiting, Castle

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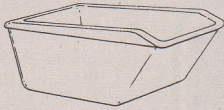




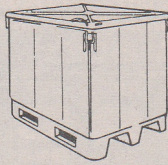
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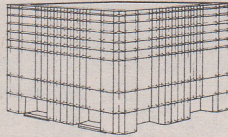
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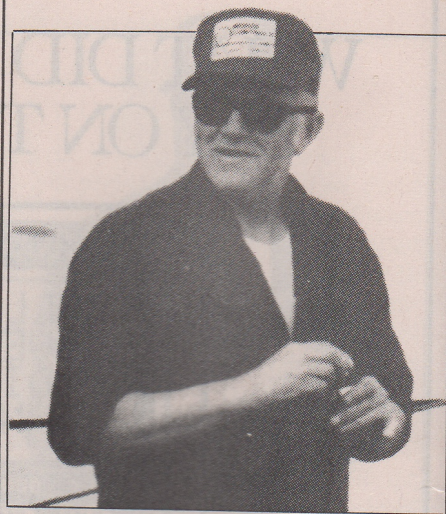
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**TOM EVANOW**

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Finally, the questions are answered, and preliminary blueprints for the new plant are complete, an all-encompassing venture combining seafood processing with a wastewater treatment facility and transfer station for solid waste. The project is now moving toward funding construction. The major stumbling block, from Castle Rock's point of view, is the need to protect shoreside processors' access to local whiting stocks. The Evanow family, as well as Crescent City's town fathers, hope an equitable solution can be found.

"It takes three or four of us to accomplish what Dad could do single-handed. He set this thing up. But if we keep filling boxes, we'll keep it going," Tommy says. "Tom Evanow was a proud man who wanted to make things work for his family," James declares. "The bottom line for our company is, we'd like to see it all work for our Dad."

PF