

Day Of Shrimping Holds Adventure For Young Fishermen

BY MARJORIE MEGIVERN
A full day of shrimping in South Carolina waters, narrated and heavily illustrated with photographs, sounds like a winner for a kids' best seller list. Surely that's what Ching Yeung Russell had in mind with her book *A Day on a Shrimp Boat*, just published by Sandlapper Publishing Co.

The day's events, beginning with a 5 a.m. boarding of the *Abbie R.* shrimp boat, and concluding at dusk, when the fishermen bring in

their catch, are thoroughly detailed. The writing style and language are appropriate for ten-year-olds, about the age of Jeremy and Jonathan who appear in the photographs as first-time shrimpers.

The story should be spell-binding but somehow it isn't. It needs either the excitement and fun of childhood to appeal to the ten-and-under crowd, or a more sophisticated approach, suitable for pre-teens. As it is, boys like Jeremy and Jonathan would find the language demeaning and kids better suited to

BOOK REVIEW

A Day On A Shrimp Boat

by Ching Yeung Russell
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Sandlapper Publishing
Orangeburg, S.C.

the vocabulary and sentence structure would find it a crashing bore.

That being said, credit should be given Mrs. Russell and her photographer husband Phillip Russell, for a thorough-going lesson in the art of shrimping. It's a balanced one that shows us the tedium of waiting for something to happen with the thrill of heavy nets being lowered onto the deck. She covers every aspect of commercial shrimping, from licensing and legal limits on time and place to the climactic sale of the catch to wholesale seafood dealers.

The shrimp boat is described, including such accessories as the homing device and turtle excluder devices. The latter, Mrs. Russell points out, saves turtles but hurt the shrimpers' profits by allowing 20

percent of the catch to escape. The wing-like outriggers with attached shrimp nets are captured in beautiful photographs that show the spreading function of the nets' doors.

Captain Bob shows Jeremy and Jonathan how he surveys buoys through his binoculars and talks to other shrimpers on his marine band radio, and he demonstrates the use of his depth recorder and radar.

The boys experience some seasickness when the waters turn choppy, and as the boat travels up and down the coast, dragging shrimp nets behind it, they grow tired of waiting and nap a little.

Finally the drama of raising the nets is at hand. Pulled up by a winch, the heavy nets drop their load, not just shrimp but a veritable stew of blue, pink, grey, brown, red and silver sea creatures. Jeremy and Jonathan are impressed by the sight of crabs, squid, conchs, sand dollars and horseshoe crabs among the pink and grey shrimp, and they help crew members begin the culling process.

Big shrimp get their heads pinched off and smaller ones are scraped into a separate basket. When the sorting is done, shrimp heads and all other sea creatures are dumped back into the water.

This move attracts the most dramatic activity of the day, a descent by a flock of seagulls and pelicans who had been following the boat and now swoop hungrily down to the water's surface for a feast from the culling basket.

The boys are depicted as having great fun sorting shrimp holding bundles of them by the whiskers, and daring to touch the "horn" on a live shrimp. They get quite a lesson in marine diversity, finding a couple of strange and funny-looking fish among the catch. One is identified by the crew as sturgeon, the source of roe (eggs) used in caviar. There was even a different kind of shrimp, a mantis, with little fluttering flippers along its belly.

As the *Annie R.* heads for shore, Captain Bob explained economics to them, listing all the expenses a shrimper has to meet along with the falling price of shrimp. Although he says it's harder nowadays to make a living this way, he assures Jeremy and Jonathan, "I still consider myself rich, because I like what I'm doing."

Malfunctioning doors, difficult and smelly clean-up and slow passage through a swing bridge are part of the anti-climax to the trip for the youthful crew members, but when the captain asks if they'd like to make the trip again, they say yes. It is a day of beautiful sights, delightful rolling waters, even though troubling to the tummy, and amazing lessons in the world down under the sea.

A teenager with a hankering for marine life would put up with the juvenile language and enjoy learning from *A Day on a Shrimp Boat*. Ten-year-olds would like the plentiful instructive photographs. Neither group would find the total product completely compelling.

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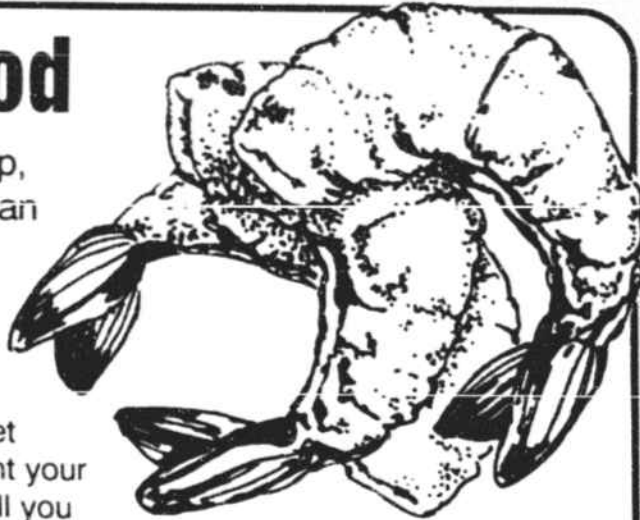
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