Vickie JENSEN, *Saltwater Women at Work* (Vancouver, Douglas and McIntyre Ltd., 1995, 184 p.)

Reference to saltwater work conjures up images of men in sou'westers, men "manning" oil rigs, men sweating it out in engine rooms. Women who work

on saltwater are bucking a tradition.They know it and so do the men they work with.

This collection of stories and anecdotes by one hundred and ten women, then, has a side that a book by "saltwater men" wouldn't have. It has the work descriptions but the book is also about how the women were treated by their male colleagues, and how crucial this treatment was to their sea careers.

The stories are organized under three headings, the second of which is "Fishboats." Often the stories in this section begin "My husband Ron and I...," or "Dad and I..." but once the women step on the boat the transformation to genuine fishers starts: they become deckhands, fish handlers, trollers. As Cindy Matson puts it in her story, "I got tired of being looked at as just the cook, just the baiter, just this or that. Now when we're trolling I catch the fish. I use my brain. I make it happen.. . When we come to town and off-load those fish, I know that I dressed, I washed, I iced every one of those fish we brought in. That's my produce there and it's nice! It's about time women got some recognition for what they do." (85)

The women fished a wide variety of seal life including shrimp, urchins, mussels, crabs, and prawns as well as the usual salmon and halibut. And each demanded untold hours of backbreaking labour, dangerous sea conditions, cramped work space and, for many of the women, care of their children they had taken along as well. But the words they often use to express their feelings about their work are "thrilling," "exciting," "exhilarating," and "I would never change it for an office job."

Fishing women typically learned their trade on the fish boat, but women working on government boats or on freighters, tugs and so on often gained their berths through a combination of sea experience and study. For some their careers began in cadets, or in a radio communication course, at Coast Guard College or schools such as the Pacific Marine Training Institute. It was in the Institute that Watchkeeping Mate Vivian Skinner got her training and where Yvette Myers gained her Ocean Navigator title. After graduating, Yvette "worked her way up from third mate to chief mate aboard western-based Coast Guard ships engaged in ice-breaking, buoy tending (aids to navigation) and search and rescue." Joy Thompson is one of the few mariners in Canada to have her first-class engineering certification; many women have been employed in DFO enforcement patrols and according to Vivian Marchand, Enforcement Officer, "There should be a lot more fishery officers, too. It's well-known that pairing a male and female officer gives maximum enforcement capability. Yet there are probably no more than 20 to 25 female officers in a force of 1,500 Canada wide. After nine

years, I felt I had hit the glass ceiling and the job would go no further." (50) Women in the "Workboats" section of the book do everything from being deckhands, to crane operators, mechanics, firefighters, lifesavers, teachers, to being captains of tug boats, radio officers, engine room workers -- and yes, cooks and stewards.

The third section of the book is called "The Realities of working on the Water" and deals with issues such as "Relationships," "Sex," "Injuries and Close Calls," and "Children and Family." One of the longest stories and the most harrowing and tragic adventure in the whole book, is told by Maxine Matilpi crew on the herring fishing boat Miss Joye. Trapped in the capsized boat for over two hours, the water up to her chin, she is saved in probably the last few minutes left to her. Her friend Betty, Betty's baby and a crew member died in the accident. Shortly after the accident and after the birth of her son, Maxine went back to sea again: "But it was with great difficulty, and it was with great pain and fear. Surviving the capsizing has made me appreciate life." (150)

A major theme of the book involves women's responses to their male counterparts on ships. There are several stories of sexual harassment, of porno videos, even rape in one case; there are constant references to how being a woman affected the work place at least initially. As Nancy Oliver put it, a frequent male remark at the end of a trip would be, "Gee, you did a much better job than I expected from a woman." (23) Shiney O'Neil, "a mate on the bridge" of a ferry boat, has hopes "more women will come into the industry, but they have to be the right kind of women. I used to believe that we needed more women. Now I don't see it that way at all. What I would like is really good women in the industry, people who are really comfortable with who they are. Women with confidence. Confidence is important so women don't feel they have to use their sexuality. And I also feel that it's time to educate men about how to relate to the workplace. They need to forget stereotypes and look for the weak and strong points of all crew members. What you really want is to be a person in your occupation, not male or female, just a person." (35)

Kathleen TUDOR
Roseway Publishing
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