

and heavy  
swells  
brought the  
wind-blown,  
sun-dried

# FACES TO PORT



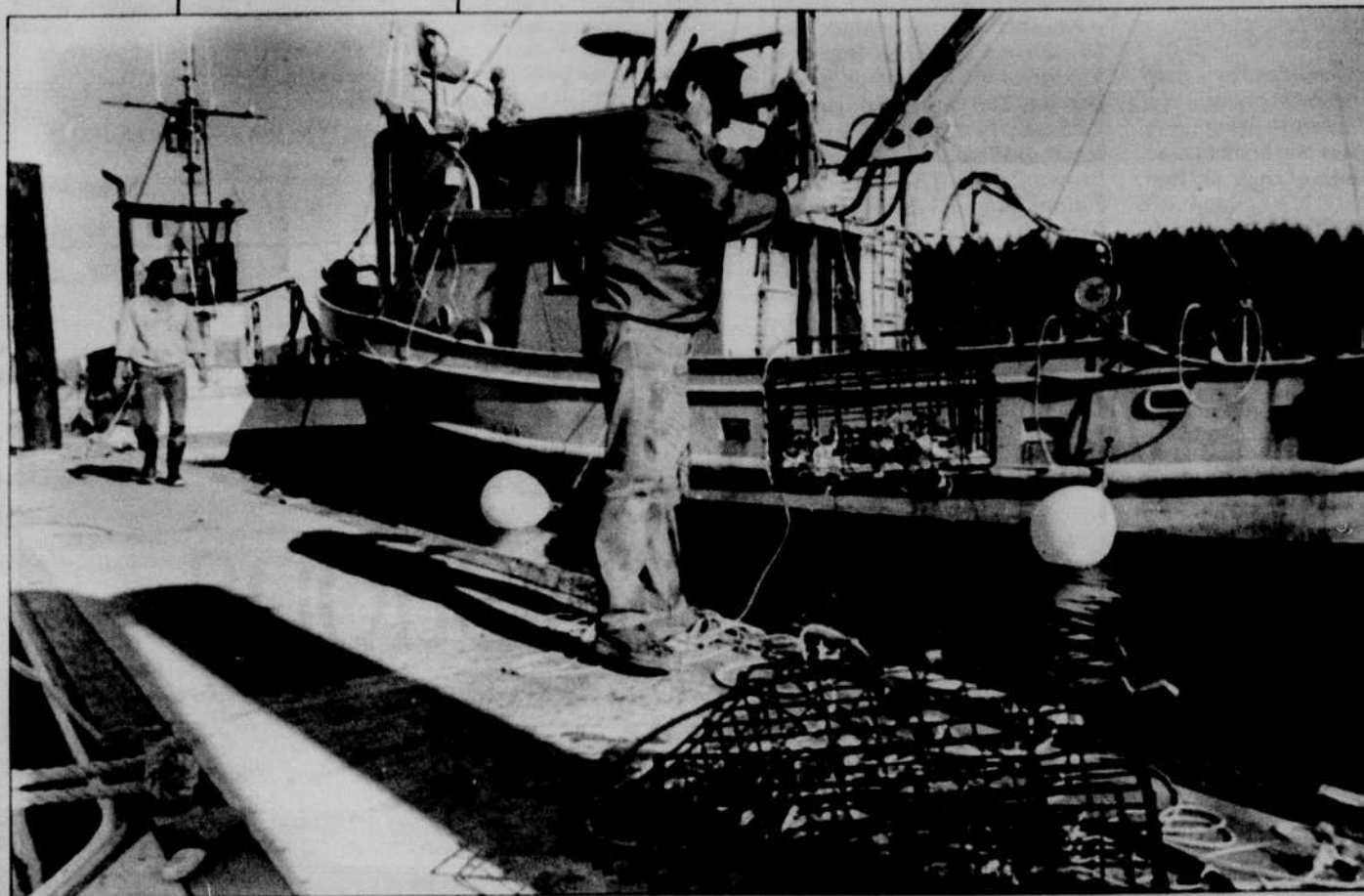
The Port of Siuslaw is quiet during the evening sunset.



Dock hands weigh fish and then transfer them to salt ice crates.



A dock hand pours salt in the crate used to preserve the fish.



Gene Free grabs his lines and crab nets before an incoming vessel parks on the docks.



Fisherman Mark Meteler skins and fillets a tuna. Using a sharp knife, Meteler cuts off the fins, strips back the skin (above) and removes the meat (below).



FLORENCE — At the Florence harbor rests a crew of three fishermen who had been out three days and 40 miles off the Oregon Coast, just short of a would-be five-day venture over the great blue. High winds and heavy swells brought the wind-blown, sun-dried faces to port.

Raw courage and instinct guide the fearless workers through salt waters; you're working on the edge day and night, one fisherman said.

Upon entering or leaving the harbor, the fishermen of Florence face sandbars that build up regularly. This presents a problem because the length of the keel on the

boat sometimes runs aground, causing serious hull damage. As a result, constant dredging is required.

Because of the lack of state funds, dredging of waterways is not consistent. Therefore, fishermen must

trust in the reliability of tidal change upon entering or leaving the harbor. Some fishermen challenge the bar. One great captain in particular is Whitewater Wilson — when he goes out, as other fishermen describe it, his eyeballs are out of his sockets, and he is going full throttle and praying that he doesn't hit the bar.

Some fishermen have an aquatic sixth sense, allowing them to venture through thick fog and still find a catch. Most fishermen follow sea birds, whales, porpoises and garbage upon which smaller fish like and therefore attract larger predators that are a decent catch for fishermen.

Hardship faces many fishermen today. Fishing regulations, lower market values and higher gas prices have forced many fishermen to live aboard their fishing vessels. Many end up broke, not able to pay the gas bill, and in turn they are forced to sell everything they own, including their boat.

Some of the more fortunate fishermen are able to venture out of the way to places like Newport or Coos Bay where the fish value is much higher and profit turnaround is greater.

Florence has grown toward a more tourist-based industry, where one can enjoy cafes, novelty shops, gourmet restaurants and much more.

Florence's coast, with great mountains of sand dunes, is a sunset of many stories. On the Florence docks one is able to enjoy the mouth-watering taste of sashimi fillet, Albacore Tuna Coho salmon, halibut and, not to mention, the King Crab.

**FOCUS ON**

**FISHING ON THE OREGON COAST**

Story and Photos by Norman Mesman