



Katrina Porteous, of Beadnell, United Kingdom, attended the 17th annual FisherPoets Gathering last year after first learning of the event from reading a New York Times article.

miss still you, Smitty). Maryna Ajaja, Erin Fristad, Billie Delaney and Annie Orr come down from Port Townsend, Washington. Mary Jacobs is up from Ophir, Oregon. The indomitable author Irene Martin will be there from Skamokawa, Washington. Holly Hughes, Vicki Horton and Sue Hanson are coming from Indianola, Olympia and Poulsbo, Washington. Margaret Doyle is coming from Orcas Island.

One crowd favorite, Moe Bowstern, won't be able to attend this year. "Moe has aggravated an old football injury and needs to rest this year — everybody enjoys Moe," says Broderick, "so it's hard on her and hard on us, too, that we won't see her on the schedule."

River politics

Fishing seems to be in the news a lot lately with the politics of fisheries ecology and conservation still a contentious topic. And our fishermen and women are on the front lines of this debate.

One of the features of this year's Gathering will be the duo of Astoria fisherpoet Dave Densmore and musician Alexa Wiley, who are teaming up for a concert sponsored by Columbia Riverkeeper, an advocacy group. Hear them on stage at 4 p.m. Saturday at the Astoria Event Center.

"FisherPoets is an amazing and inspiring event," says Columbia Riverkeeper Executive Director Brett VandenHeuvel. "We're united by

a love of the Columbia River and salmon with Dave and Alexa, who volunteered for several years to bring soul and music to our Riverkeeper events. We put together this concert to highlight poems and music by people who care about the river and want to protect it. Salmon and the people who fish for them are such an important part of our region.

"One of the greatest threats to the Columbia River estuary's wetlands and endangered salmon populations is the massive Oregon LNG — liquefied natural gas terminal — proposed near Warrenton," VandenHeuvel says.

The FisherPoets Anthology

Another recent development is the compilation of fisherpoetry into a seven-volume anthology, "Anchored in Deep Water: The FisherPoets Anthology." The brain-child of Portland artist Chelsea Stephen, who combined her art with the poetry, the anthology was edited in a labor of love by fisherpoet Patrick Dixon. Over 40 writers from the U.S., Canada and Japan are represented. It also includes seven interviews with fishermen and women. The anthology will be available at the FisherPoets Gathering Gearshack, located this year at 1144 Commercial St., all during the festival.

"There is a range of writing," says Broderick. "It's a little uneven, but I like that. It's true to the mission of fisherpoetry. It delivers the real stuff, just like our stages. If you hear

someone you don't like, just stick around for five minutes, and you'll hear someone else you might like better. The FisherPoets Gathering's not a slam; it's not about competition. It's inclusive."

And the truth of the matter is that now the FisherPoets Gathering is attracting its own stars. Gordon Bok, legendary maritime singer-songwriter from Maine, called up and asked if he could participate again this year. According to Broderick, "That's like having Mickey Mantle ask you if you want to hit some fungus with him." (For you baseball non-fans: A fungo is a ball the batter throws up and hits.)

Jon Campbell from Narragansett, Rhode Island, is another heavy hitter.

It speaks volumes that the FisherPoets Gathering is attracting such a wide audience nationally. And as Broderick adds, "These guys are basically on their own dime. We give them a little gas money, but we can't pay their way. We never started FPG to make money."

A new genre

When asked if fisherpoetry has evolved over time, Broderick pauses. "I think what has evolved is that we have created a genre. The word 'fisherpoet' belongs to the English language now. A lot of people are writing and performing and sharing about their work in the fishing industry, and there's an audience for fisherpoetry that didn't exist before. That's where the evolution is happening."

Creating a new genre of poetry is historic; it's ground breaking. So we have our local team of FisherPoets Gathering founders and volunteers to thank for putting the North Coast on the literary map.

Broderick has to laugh when asked about his own work, "I haven't a lot of time for that just now. The FisherPoets Gathering is my poem. It's an ethereal, living, unpredictable, authentic event. It's poetry in action; it's a creative act in and of itself."



Alaskan folk musician and fisherpoet John Palmes, right, leads a songwriting workshop called at the Columbia River Maritime Museum during the 2014 Gathering.



James and Julz Kasner, of Blodgett, perform on stage at the Wet Dog Cafe during the 2012 FisherPoets Gathering.



Pamela Miller, of Eugene, receives help making a sheet bend knot from FisherPoets Gathering organizer Jon Broderick, a Bristol Bay fisherman, during a class on maritime knots called "Exactly right or horribly wrong?" at the Columbia River Maritime Museum.

FisherPoets Gathering

Where: Astoria, various venues

When: Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Feb. 27, 28 and March 1

Admission: \$15 buttons are good for all venues and workshops all weekend long. Get yours at the FPG Gearshack (1144 Commercial St.), in advance at Lucy's Books (348 12th St.), KMUN's Tillicum House (1445 Exchange St.), Wet Dog Cafe (foot of 11th Street), Old Town Framing (1287 Commercial St.), and during the Gathering at all venues. Students 18 and younger are free.