

# TRUE TO HER ROOTS AND HER MUSIC

Mary Garvey  
has always felt  
close to the water

Fisherpoet Mary Garvey, of Long Beach, Washington, has been involved and performing with Astoria's FisherPoets Gathering since its infancy.

In her own infancy and her formative childhood years, Garvey had an intimate closeness to rivers and seas, particularly the Columbia River. Raised in Longview, Washington, for as far back as she can remember, she's been an avid nature lover. The Columbia River and all that it provides was both her playground and her family's extended source of livelihood.

Her dad was a postman with delivery routes that wove along the banks of the river's disappearing canneries and active lumber mills. He also caught, smoked and sold plentiful salmon.

An innate understanding of the waterway's many virtues, values and vices, both past and present, are part of Garvey's imprint.

"The Columbia River and its tributaries are extremely important to me. Even though in my youth most of the sides of the river were owned by the mills and you had to go out of town to see the river you lived on, it made me stop and think about its power," Garvey said.

"Canneries are an era that's gone by. I remember going into canneries when I was 3 or 4. It was exciting for a little girl, though I'm sure if I ever did that repetitive cannery work, it wouldn't be," she said. "Every so often when I'm singing a song about canneries, someone comes up and shows me a scar."

Spending most of her adult life on or close to the water, she's lived in the Pacific Northwest, on the East Coast, and in Canada's oh-so-far northeastern provinces of Labrador and Newfoundland. Her involvement in the fisheries industry found her at different times in her life working with the University of New-



Submitted photo by Pat Dixon

A longtime performer at the FisherPoets Gathering, Mary Garvey sings about local places and history.

foundland's fisheries' research projects (ask her about sea cucumbers) and whaling; observing cannery workers; or in admissions at the University of Washington's graduate program in its School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences. Garvey has always felt close to the water.

"Though I'm not a commercial fisherman or a poet, I think my history is why I get invited to the FPG," said Garvey.

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Fortunately for FisherPoets Gathering audiences, she also has a knack for turning her vast array of stories relating to commercial fishing into song.

She will perform once again at the Gathering Feb 26, 27 and 28 in Astoria.

"Mary Garvey is a really remarkable, quirky person," said Jon Broderick, FisherPoets Gathering organizer and performer. "On stage she casts a spell. With her casual genuineness, it's not unusual for her to just hum as though she's lost in thought for a second or two then resume her song. She seems to sing like she speaks: without an in-

strument, absolutely a cappella, kind of in that Celtic tradition. It isn't Celtic by any means, but in that solo fashion. She's just fresh as a breeze."

She can play the fiddle but says "not very well." She has an accordion, too, but considers it too loud to sing with.

"My music is like fishing. You never know what you're going to reel in. It's an honor to be included in the FPG," said Garvey in her typically understated, genuine manner.

## Hear Mary Garvey at the FisherPoets Gathering

**Friday:** Garvey is the first performer at the Columbian Theater Friday night, kicking things off at 6 p.m. sharp

**Saturday:** She will emcee at the Fort George Lovell Showroom with Rich Bard on Saturday and perform at the start of the 8 p.m. set.

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Story by MARILYN GILBAUGH