

Photo by Matt Love

Matt Love led a Blood, Beer and Typewriters speed writing workshop during the Festival of Dark Arts Feb. 13 at Fort George Brewery.

A GLIMPSE INSIDE

An occasional feature by MATT LOVE

Festival of Dark Arts

They traveled from as far away as Vancouver B.C., Seattle, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, Klamath Falls and who knows where else, perhaps the land beyond the Styx River where Budweiser and Coors flowed. A couple hundred waited in line before the noon opening while classic winter rain ripped through Astoria and shredded many of the useless umbrellas. Some people dressed in costume. One woman came on stilts and wearing horns. Many moms and dads carried small children.

All this to taste stout beers, one of them peanut butter flavored, one

of them named after the Devil himself.

Now, I like beer, even dark beer, but the Fort George Brewery's Festival of Dark Arts smacked of obsession — no — make that a pilgrimage, a pilgrimage that featured a DJ spinning heavy metal music, belly dancing, clowns, a tattoo artist, tarot card readings, a blacksmith, macaroni and cheese, fire dancing, rock and roll, and a lot more I didn't see because the brewery was packed like the way salmon used to be canned in Astoria.

It was my first visit to the festival, and I was ensconced like a Captain Nemo aboard the Nautilus among the gleaming silver vats, kegs, sinister tubing and bubbling beer to teach my Blood, Beer and

Typewriters speed writing workshop/contest to anyone who wanted to crank out noir fiction under pressure on vintage typewriters and drink stouts.

Sixteen quasi-sober people signed up and wrote with macabre gusto under the dim glow of red light. About half of them had never used a typewriter before and I had to teach them on the spot, not an easy thing to do when stout is involved. The writers all channeled the late great sportswriter Red Smith, who once said, "Writing is easy. Just sit in front of a typewriter, open up a vein and bleed."

The noise of five typewriters pounding madly away reverberated in our area of the brewery and drew a curious crowd. Several onlookers remarked how soothing the sound was, like the familiar voice of a long lost friend from a bygone era when grandfathers wrote letters on typewriters instead of watching Fox News or carried assault weapons near wildlife refuges.

The writing was superb, at turns wicked and hilarious. A couple pieces were certainly worth publishing as Astoria noir flash fiction. I see a whole new trend for this town: leave typewriters in taverns, bars and taprooms, put some paper in them, provide a list of profane and savage prompts, and let the noir stories pour forth like so much stout from a keg at a party for a powerful coven working their magic on who will become the next President of the United States.

Matt Love is the author/editor of 14 books about Oregon, including a detective novel called "The Great Birthright." His books are available through coastal bookstores or his web site, nestuccaspitpress.com

Wild SIDE

Hippoglossus stenolepsis

Pacific halibut

By LYNETTE RAE McADAMS

The world's largest flatfish, *Hippoglossus stenolepsis* can be found throughout the waters of the northern Pacific Ocean — from California to Alaska in the east, and all along the coasts of Russia, Japan, and North and South Korea in the west. Known commonly as halibut, the fish's name derives from two words of late middle English origin: "haly," meaning "holy," and "butte," meaning "flatfish," and was so called for its popularity on Catholic holy days.

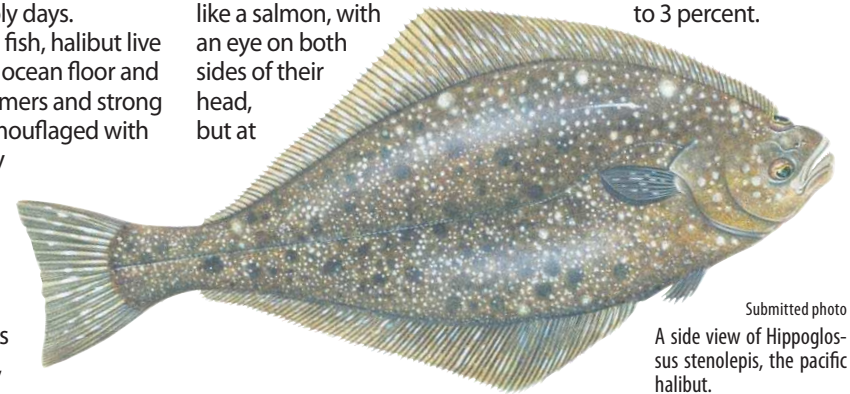
A demersal fish, halibut live on or near the ocean floor and are swift swimmers and strong predators. Camouflaged with sediment, they lie in wait for their prey, which include other fish like sardines, cod and rockfish, as well as shrimp, crabs, octopus, and, quite

unabashedly, other halibut. Known to live as long as 55 years, *H. stenolepsis* can grow to more than 8 feet long and can weigh nearly 500 pounds. In 2014, a 76-year-old man caught a 482-pound halibut in Glacier Bay, Alaska, but the catch was stricken from record when the fish had to be shot during landing for fear it would cause injury to others on his boat.

Pacific halibut are diamond shaped, and their scales are embedded in their skin, nearly invisible. At birth, they swim like a salmon, with an eye on both sides of their head, but at

six months of age, one eye migrates over to the other side. At the same time, the side of the fish that now holds both eyes, darkens in color to a deep brown with handsome speckles, becoming the halibut's topside, while the underside turns a creamy off-white. This color effect, known as countershading, allows the fish to be disguised from above (the dark color blends with the sea floor), or below (the white blends with the light from the surface). Most halibut swim with their right side uppermost, but for 1 in 20,000, the opposite is true.

A favorite fish for those with a taste for seafood, halibut is light and flaky when cooked, with a buttery nut flavor whose richness belies its fat content: Compared to salmon's 30 percent fat, *H. stenolepsis* weighs in at only 1 to 3 percent.



Submitted photo

A side view of *Hippoglossus stenolepis*, the Pacific halibut.

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