

Bend man to be featured on 'Deadliest Catch'

By **JOE SIESS**
The Bulletin

When Capt. Rip Carlton was just a lad, he dreamed of swashbuckling adventures. Skiing mountains, hitchhiking in Mexico, racing cars in Europe. But he was broke.

That's when he left his home in Seattle for Dutch Harbor, Alaska, where, at the age of 18, he lived in a tent he pitched inside an abandoned military barracks. From there, he combed the harbor looking for work on one of the many fishing vessels moored at the docks.

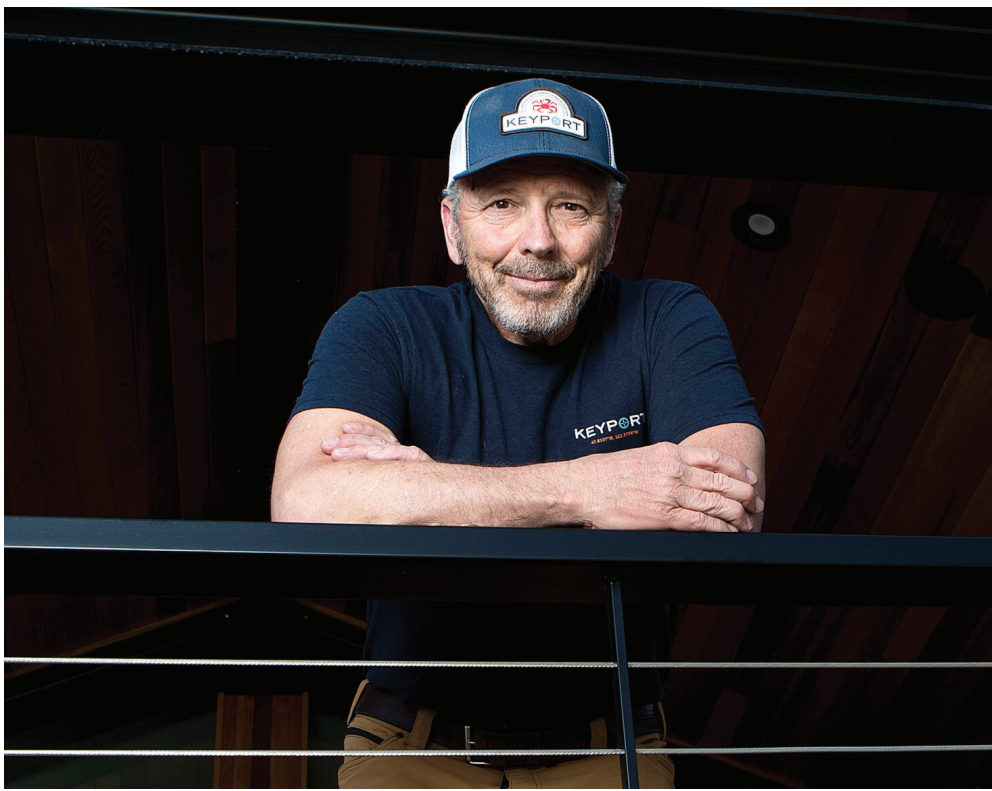
He got his foot in the door of the lucrative fishing industry and proved he was worth his salt, working his way up from bait boy, to deck hand, engineer, and eventually to captain.

Today, the 64-year-old Carlton lives in Bend with his wife, Cindy King Carlton, but is a captain of two ships in Alaska he uses to catch king crab. It's a profession he loves but never expected he would wind up doing this long. He's worked in the fishing industry for 46 years, 35 years as captain, and has fielded numerous requests from the Discovery Channel to allow a film crew to capture him and his crew in action for the network's popular show, "Deadliest Catch."

He resisted for the longest time, and it wasn't until his son, Derek Carlton, finally convinced his father to say yes, and so he will be featured, along with his crew on the Patricia Lee, in the upcoming season of the show airing on Tuesday.

"They've asked me and my boat to do it for quite a few years," Carlton said of the "Deadliest Catch." "And I've always said no ... I really didn't have the desire to do it."

The journey from a youth in search of adventure to the "Deadliest Catch" all started in the 1970s when Carlton,



Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin

Capt. Rip Carlton and his crew will be featured in the upcoming season of 'Deadliest Catch' on the Discovery Channel.

who is truly a ski bum at heart, wanted to drive race cars in Europe. That's when he caught wind of Alaska, the fishing industry and the big payouts that come with a hefty haul.

"I didn't know anything about fishing, and I mean anything," Carlton said. "I knew nothing."

When Carlton got his start, he was doing factory work in Alaska while he searched for a job on a boat. He wound up unloading shrimp, and going out on king crab fishing trips. Eventually he got on to a Norwegian fishing vessel, which took him back to Seattle. After two months working on the boat in Seattle, he took his paycheck from the Norwegians and bought a one-way ticket back to Alaska.

"I had a backpack, a sleeping bag, a loaf of bread, and peanut butter and jelly," Carlton said. "Because there were no restaurants. There was nowhere to stay up there

at the time, and I lived on the beach for four weeks, in an abandoned barracks from World War II."

He pitched his tent inside the barracks and used a rock and some rusty nails to hammer plastic over a window that overlooked Dutch Harbor. When it got really cold, he burned things in a 55-gallon drum.

Once he got back on a boat, he couldn't get enough of the adventure, and the paychecks.

While the job is lucrative, and exciting, it comes with an element of danger. Carlton said he and his crew fish in harsh conditions roughly 200 to 600 miles away from the nearest town.

"You are working on the ocean in the winter, right in the middle of the Bering Sea, which that in itself is dangerous," Carlton said. "We get huge currents. We get even more wind. And where we fish around these islands is all rocky, craggy ... It's just unbelievable the weather we

work in and what we do to get the job done."

Carlton told of one close call while out on the sea fishing.

"I was driving a 165-foot

boat and the wheel house was three stories up," Carlton said. "And we took such a big wave, the wave came through the wheelhouse windows, came through with so much force it was like a bomb blowing up."

"Then the back door got blown off the door hinges, the whole boat flooded up to the wheel house. The guys were three stories down eating breakfast when it happened, and they thought I was dead because the boat just blew up," Carlton said. "But I ducked, I saw the wave coming and I ducked down and it went right over my head through the windows and out the back door."

The monstrous wave knocked out most of the equipment on board, Carlton said. Carlton and his crew set up the plexiglass storm windows kept on board for exactly this kind of scenario. While not entirely ideal conditions, the storm windows gave Carlton a chance to check the steering and lights on the ship, which were still intact. He also fetched his emergency radio from his

stateroom.

The voice on the other end of the radio asked Carlton if everything was OK, and what he and his crew needed after a close call with the giant wave.

"Do you have any more bait?" Carlton asked over the radio. "Bait?" the voice on the other end responded in confusion.

Carlton said he and his crew needed the bait to keep fishing despite almost becoming fish food themselves.

Situations like these are common in the fishing industry, Carlton said, and the upcoming season of "Deadliest Catch" is a chance to catch a glimpse of what goes into getting the king crab legs from the sea to the buffet table.

"When you see the show, you won't even believe it," Carlton said.

Carlton and his family plan to invite their friends over to their home in Bend to celebrate and watch the season premiere. To keep an eye on Carlton while he's out at sea, follow him on Instagram, rip_carlton.

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