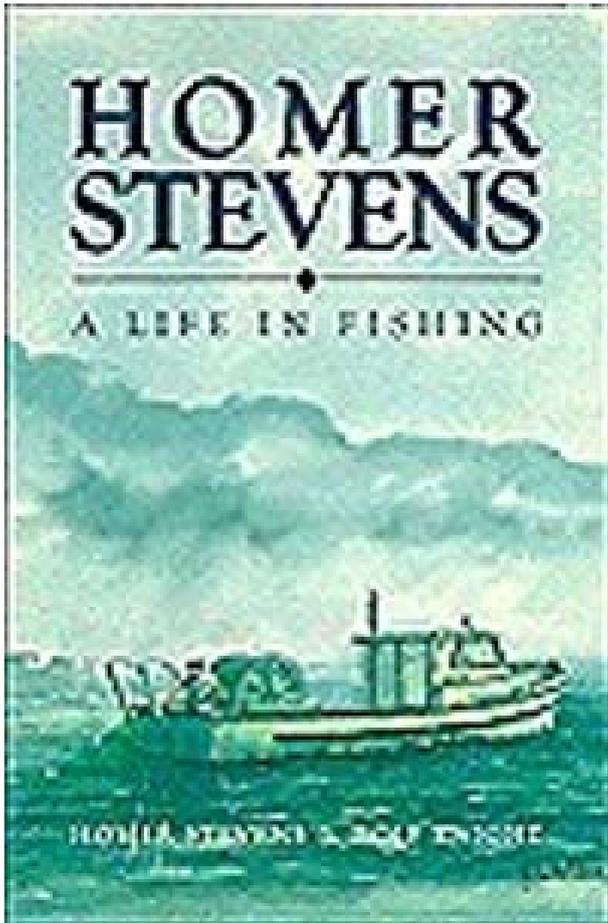


Homer Stevens: A Life in Fishing



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Homer Stevens spent half a century in the BC fishing industry, both as a working fisherman and as a leader of the United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union. His story, an oral autobiography, was recorded and compiled by Rolf Knight. Stevens grew up in Port Guichon, a poly-glot fishing community on the Fraser River delta. He was one of an extended family of working people who argued constantly about the issues of the day.

In 1936, when he was thirteen years old, Homer started fishing on his own in a leaky gillnetter called the "Tar Box." Six years later, his uncle John said, "One of these days I'm going to have to take you down to a meeting of the United Fishermen's Union in Vancouver. It's run by a bunch of Reds but they're pretty good people." By 1946, Homer was a full-time organizer for the United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union, going around "float to float, man to man" to sign up new members. Included here are Steven's ominous description of the Cold War years, and an evocative log of travelling the central BC coast during the 1950s, with its bustling fishermen's ports and canneries. There are accounts of the 1967 strike in Prince Rupert, Homer's year in jail for contempt of court and his drive to organize Nova Scotia fishermen, and there is a moving personal description of relearning how to fish in a modern and very different salmon industry.

"All and all," he says, "if someone were to ask me, 'Would you do it again?' I'd say, 'Yeah, I'd do it again. I'd try to do it better if I could, but I'd be willing to tackle it.'"