

## Crab'n with Grandpa

Fishing with your grandpa creates special memories, but crab'n with grandpa is unique. Relatively few kids get to go crabbing because the season is so short, and grandpa must own a boat, have special equipment, and live near salt water.

Two of my grandsons joined me on a hunt for Dungeness crabs during a period in my life when all those conditions were met. I lived on Camano Island north of Seattle in great crabbing waters. Carter, my daughter Michelle's second son, came to visit for a week and I took him crabbing with Jeannette, my wife.

I broke out the life jackets, the crab pot, the weighted rope, a large bobber, and my boat and headed to the launch ramp near our house. I backed the boat and trailer down the ramp with Carter in the boat and Jeannette standing on shore holding the bowline to keep it from drifting away while I pulled the trailer into the parking lot.

I returned to the boat near the ramp a few minutes later to push off and start crabbing when Carter said, "Grandpa, is there supposed to be water in the bottom of the boat?"

I replied, "Sometimes there's a little water that gets in from the rain. That's normal, don't worry about it. " I started to help Jeannette into the boat when I looked back to see Carter standing in about 4" of water.

"Whoa, that's not right," I thought, puzzled why there was so much water in the boat. Then it hit me. I had forgotten to put the drain plug in before I launched the boat. I looked at the oarlock on the back of the boat where I normally stored the plug when on land. Sure enough, there it was. I jumped into the boat and desperately attempted to lean over the transom in back and screw in the drain plug under the water without falling into the drink, head first.

After three or four tries I finally got the threads to catch and screwed the drain plug in enough to stop the flow. By that time there was probably a hundred gallons of water in the boat and the gunwales were less than six inches above the water outside the boat. I told Carter to crawl across the bow and get on dry land.

I went and retrieved the van and trailer and backed down the ramp a long distance into the water to allow me to get the trailer under my partially submerged boat. After some extra effort to get the boat over the trailer and standing in water up to my chest to do it, I pulled the boat and trailer back into the parking lot. I unscrewed the drain plug and water gushed out for fifteen minutes before the boat was seaworthy again.

Everything was anticlimactic after that. We motored out into the sound, dropped the crab pot down to about 80 feet, and waited for an hour for crabs to locate the bait inside. We pulled the pot up twice with six to eight crabs each time and kept four that were large enough. The day was a success except when grandpa got home, he was so tired he had a difficult time staying awake long enough to cook the crabs for dinner.

A few years later my son, Daniel, and grandsons, Ian and Noah, came to visit for several days. We repeated the same adventure, but without all the drama this time. Grandpa had become more proficient at launching his boat and had learned how long to wait between dropping the crab pot and pulling it out again to collect the crabs.

We dropped the pot several times, and between pot retrievals searched for geocaches around the north shore of Camano Island. Geocaching was a popular activity in 2012 where you search for a stash of prizes and a logbook buried in a tree or underground and locate it using a smartphone.

When you locate a cache, you select one of the objects others have left inside and replace it with one of your own--things like toy soldiers, gum, or other trinkets. You also annotate the logbook that's placed in the cache with your name, date, and comments. The objects are commonly stored in a water-proof container, but sometimes just stuffed into the crack of a tree. One cache we found was stored in a large plastic cat painted with an evil grin. I don't know what Daniel, Ian, and Noah thought, but the cat gave me quite a scare when I first saw him. We found and pillaged pirate booty at six sites along the shore.

That day lives in my memory as one of the best times I've spent with my grandsons. I hope they remember it and treasure it as much as I do. We caught lots of crabs, but only one big enough to keep. One crab isn't enough for a feast, so

dropped him back into the water to grow more. Maybe next time he'll be twice as big.