



Pioneer Son at Sea: Fishing Tales of Old Florida

Gilbert L. Voss

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Long before tourism dominated Florida's coastline, the state was home to dozens of commercial fisheries and ethnically diverse communities of rugged individuals who made their living from the sea.

In *A Pioneer Son at Sea*, Gilbert Voss, a celebrated marine biologist, recounts his early days of fishing on both coasts of the peninsula during the Great Depression and World War II. Here are vanished scenes from old Florida, almost unimaginable to modern residents of the state: gill-netting for mackerel off Jupiter, the early days of charterboat fishing for sailfish out of Stuart and Boynton, the snapper fleet at Carrabelle, sponge-diving at Tarpon Springs, the oyster fishery at Crystal River, and mullet fishing from airboats at Flamingo.

Oversized personalities inhabit these pages, including Voss's brothers, who were themselves seminal figures in the early days of Florida big-game fishing. Voss's anecdotes feature Crackers, rum runners, murderers, Conchs, wealthy industrialists, now-legendary charterboatmen, Greek spongers, and Cuban *vivero* captains. These stories are not just spirited portraits of fishermen from a bygone era, they are also remarkable tales of the formative years in the life of a scientist and conservationist who later worked tirelessly to preserve our dwindling marine resources.



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