

My first time fishing in Lofoten with a live piglet in the return luggage

I was what they at the time called a Skårunge - yearling seagull, the youngest crew member. It was 1952, and had not had my 16th birthday. I was hired on by Sverre Rosvoll on his boat, which was about 35 feet. I remember we were six men on board. The cook, a girl, lived ashore in the fisherman's shanty. We rowed in Stamsund and fished with nets. We had a fisherman's shanty in Hartvågen, which is also where we sold the fish. We came to Lofoten early in January and returned home in the beginning of April. I remember it was difficult to get out of the bunk in the morning. It was a firm rule that no one could go to bed before the fishery broadcast was ended on the radio. That was around ten thirty pm and then we had to get up at five am.

We had to row out to the boat. It was moored on the bay. It was usually very cold and I was the youngest on board, and at 15 I was not as hardy as the older men.

I can remember that the oilskins were always a little wet and cold when I pulled them on. It wasn't easy to find a place to dry them on the boats we used in those days. It took about an hour to get to where we had the net set out.

Initially in the winter we operated on the edge of the continental shelf. That was the edge of the deep in the Vestfjord. The trips back and forth to shore were not always pleasant. I could rarely go down below because I was usually sea sick, and it was also not warm in the cabin. But, sometimes the weather was good and then I could sit in the cabin. There was one crewmember that was a year older than me, and we were typical boys, but our antics were not always very well thought out. It was one of those times when the weather was good and we were in the cabin. It so happened that one of the older guys used chewing tobacco, and in a cupboard in the cabin he kept a small stock of the ready cut variety. This became too much of a temptation for us, and we could not resist. Initially it wasn't that bad, but we were affected by the nicotine, and then we were trying to get each other to swallow what we were chewing on. It is probably unnecessary to say how that turned out, and we were both white as ghosts in the face.

And then it was the piglet. It was the pig I was supposed to talk about. It was the custom at the time that when the season was over, we were supposed to buy gifts for the ones who were left at home. We called it Lofot-gifts. It wasn't easy to come up with ideas, but then I thought I could probably buy a piglet. They had a pigfarm way up in the village at Hartvågen. Then I had to figure out how to get this piglet home without it suffering any harm on the way across Vestfjorden. I got my hands on some boards and nails and nailed together a box that was three times the size it needed to be. I borrowed a toboggan and set off to the pig farm. I still remember to this day what an exhausting venture it was. The pig squealed terribly, and I was not a big and strong kid so I was probably a comical sight on my way back to the fisherman's shanty. The crate containing the piglet was placed in the hold on the boat until we were back home, and then it was brought ashore. It was an unusual Lofot-gift, but those at home were very happy for the gift.

Garle

(Translated by Sveig Dreyer)