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### Alvin and the Laura S

by *Charity Winters*



The Laura S is about to harbor for the rest of the year. Well, almost. Alvin Swick, captain of the Laura S has been trying to end his fishing season for the year but the weather just hasn't been cooperating. Long-lining for black cod and halibut has been open since April but the Laura S has yet to catch her quota. Since the price of fish goes up or down depending on what is coming into the harbor, fall is a better time to bring in your catch for a good price, so Alvin waited. But when you are fishing out in Cook Inlet and 50-60 miles offshore of the Gulf of Alaska, it is important to have the weather on your side. So the Laura S is still waiting to head out onto the water again to make her final catch of the year.

Alvin Swick has loved fishing ever since he was 10 years old, when he first starting going out with his dad. Every summer, Alvin would spend his summers in Seldovia, fishing with his dad before heading back to Tacoma, Washington for the school year. Four days after graduation in 1981, Alvin moved to Seldovia and he has been here ever since, working as an Alaskan fisherman. His dad, Ken Swick, retired and made Alvin captain of the Laura S. Now he works the boat with a small crew: Keith Swick (his son), Doug Giles, Keith Gain, and Brian Chartier. Alvin makes little of his position as captain saying, "We all work as a team. All I do is drive the boat and say where we're going to fish."

In the summers, Alvin takes his family to the place he grew up fishing for salmon, Kalgin Island. The island is in the middle of Cook Inlet, right between Mt. Redoubt and Kenai. Everyone looks forward to the summers there – where lack of electricity gives them plenty of time to spend out of doors and doing things together as a family. Even though there's only rough little cabin with no running water, they love it there. Alvin and Roberta met out on the island, too. Since her family fished there in the summer as well, the two basically grew up together.

Alvin has loved his life here in Seldovia where, "there's not very many people, and peace and quiet," as he puts it. It has been a great place to raise his children, where they can spend plenty of time outdoors and away from the chaos of the busier life outside of Seldovia. As for fishing, he's not pressuring any of his kids to take over. "Who knows what the fishing world will bring in the future – good or bad," he replies. But for now, Alvin will keep on fishing.





The Laura S resides in Seldovia Harbor when she's not fishing. Upper right: the crew is loading cod pots on a chilly day in January. Lower right: last year, Coach Swick got plastered by some of his fun loving students at the Sports Awards Ceremony. ( We wonder if his crew on the Laura S could get away with that???)

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