

TAKE ME OUT TO THE OCEAN

By Fred Hobbs

Take me out to the ocean,
Take me out to the sea.
Show me the foamy waves rolling there,
As I breathe in the salty air.

That little children's rhyme from a poet by the name of Meish Goldish is an apt sensory description to express the thoughts of a Colorado teenager who at that point had never seen an ocean and who grew up to be essentially a man of the mountains, if not exactly a mountain man.

My first glimpse of the ocean occurred at a family reunion in Oregon where my older sister lived. The blue Pacific sea stretching as far as the eye could see. One of my sisters-in-law was in the vacationing group. She, too, had never seen the ocean in person. She remarked: "I thought it would be bigger." We laughed at that seemingly ignorant remark and yet when considered more carefully it begins to make sense. It was true, as the song title suggests, that "On a Clear Day You Can See Forever." The ocean is big, mighty big, and who knows how far that horizon really stretches.

Relaxing on the beach, watching the waves, marveling at the seagulls circling above, discovering starfish that had washed up on the sands. The experience was not only new to me, but also magical and mystical.

A few years later, my bride and I spent our honeymoon in San Francisco marveling at the glorious sunset over the Bay and watching the ships coming into port. We were to return again to the Oregon coast, this time for a different experience provided by the Pacific. It was January and the windswept beach was drenched with a cold and steady rain. We put on our slickers and bravely strode along the shore. The experience was thrilling in a way that is hard to express fully; the salty taste of the rain on the face, a special kind of adrenaline rush coming over the whole body.

The thrill subsided after about a half an hour, however, and we retreated, cold and wet, to the beach house. Warmed by a glowing fireplace and fortified by a hot toddy or two, we viewed the crashing waves and heavy downpour from a large picture window,

Between these two west coast sojourns was the opportunity to sail the Atlantic provided by the United States Army. The atmosphere was far less romantic, but still thrilling in its way. To be completely surrounded by water with only an occasional sea creature (probably dolphins) in sight during the eleven day "cruise" was a very impressive sensory experience, despite the fact that my companions were just recruits headed for overseas duty in Germany. Often, we would sit on deck just gazing at all that water around us and speculating what might lie deep beneath.

So... Take me out to the ocean,
Take me out to the sea.
Show me the currents and ocean tides.
Let me see where the seaweed lies.
But, always bring me back to the mountains