

In Memoriam: Ennis Family Fishermen



L-R: John Ennis, Ralph Ennis and Arnold Ennis, ca 1990s. Photo courtesy of Beth Pallai.

The eldest of the three Ennis brothers, **Arnold Ennis** (1912-2006), started fishing on the Columbia River and in the sloughs around their hometown of [Knappa](#), Oregon, when he was about 12 or 13 years old. His mentor was a wonderful man by the name of John Lind. John taught Arnold all he knew about gillnetting. While Arnold was still in his teens, Lind provided the financing for him to buy gear and run a boat for the Columbia River Packers' Association.



Captain Arnold Ennis on his F/V Gladys E, Morro Bay, ca 1960. Photo courtesy of Beth Pallai.

Arnold Ennis married Gladys (Sphar); they had three children, Carol (Dahlquist), David (1941-1972), and Paul. While he was still very young, Arnold bought a boat for fishing in the ocean, which he renamed *Carol E* after his daughter. In the late 1940s, Arnold decided he needed a larger boat and arranged for the 48-foot wooden F/V *Gladys E* built by Adolph Lindstrom at [Alderbrook Station](#) on the Columbia River, near Astoria. The *Gladys E*, launched in 1951, allowed Arnold to fish salmon and albacore, which at times took him far from home.

In about 1954, Arnold moved his family to Morro Bay, California. He continued to fish

albacore off the California coast and down into Mexico. In addition, he fished salmon in the spring and summer off the coasts of California and Oregon. Arnold's sons, David and Paul, often accompanied him during summer vacations.

When he was about 70 years of age, Arnold sold the *Gladys E* to Richard Bolton (who renamed it the *Tasu*) and retired; this was 1981. He passed away in Longview, Washington, at the age of 93.



L-R: Carol, David, Arnold, Paul and Gladys Ennis, ca 1950, Astoria. Photo courtesy of Beth Pallai.



The *F/V Renabel* in its slip in Morro Bay. Photo courtesy of Beth Pallai.

John Ennis (1915-2005) was Arnold's younger brother; he married Beryl (Sphar), Gladys' sister, and they had three children, Richard, Barbara and Kenneth. John was the first of the Ennis brothers to move to Morro Bay, bringing his family down in the very late 1940s.

John also began his fishing career on the Columbia River. His first ocean-going vessel was the *F/V Signe S*, which he later sold to John Grotting. In 1950, John had the forty-six-foot steel *F/V Renabel* built by William P. Johnson. On the *Renabel*, John fished for salmon and albacore. In 1982, John sold the *Renabel* and retired. The boat was taken to Seattle; before long, John had to travel to Seattle and repossess the boat; in 1985 he sold it to Ed Sylvester.

Richard Ennis (1937-1990) was the eldest son of John and Beryl (Sphar) Ennis. Richard fished with his father for many years before buying the wooden troller *F/V Viv*, built in Astoria in 1935. In the late 1960s, Richard had the steel *F/V Viva* built in Los Angeles. Although only documented at forty-seven feet long, the *Viva* was built to fish albacore, with large tanks that could be used to carry either live bait or extra fuel. Richard died when the *Viva* capsized off Mexico.



L-R: Richard, Kenneth (in front), Beryl, John and Barbara Ennis, ca 1950, Astoria. Photo courtesy of Beth Pallai.

Arnold and John's younger brother, **Ralph Ennis** (1923-2009), also fished the Columbia River as a youth. Unlike his brothers, however, he attended college and went on to teach and coach in the Parkrose District in Portland, Oregon. His heart remained with fishing,

however, and Ralph fished every summer on the Columbia River and in Alaska until his retirement in the early 2000s. Ralph was married to Doris; they had six children, Diana (Dee-Dee), Don, Jay, Brad, Jeff and Laura.

In addition to the 3 Ennis brothers, there were also 4 sisters. All of the siblings, in the order of their birth, were: Velma, Elsie Mary (who died in infancy), Arnold, Gertrude, John, Grace, Clara and Ralph, the youngest.

The eldest sister, Velma, married Harold Martin, and they had two children, Floyd and Ruth. Gertrude, the second sister, had a son, Edward Allen Davis, by her first husband, who was killed in a logging accident only four years into the marriage. She then married Leslie Croy and together they adopted a daughter, Mary Lou Croy. Gertrude's second husband died after 22 years of marriage, and in 1960 she married a third and last time, to William L. Howard. Velma and Gertrude's families were not involved in the fishing industry.

However, the other two Ennis sisters remained linked to commercial fishing. Grace married a Finnish man named **Edward "Mike" Savola** and they had three children, Roy (deceased), Linda and Wilma. The Savolas had a fishnet weaving operation in Hoquiam, Washington, for many years.

The youngest Ennis sister, Clara, married **Arne Grotting**, who originally fished out of Astoria. In the 1940s, the Grottings relocated to Eureka, California. They had four children, Dennis, Charles, Steven, and Karen. **Charles Grotting** and **Steve Grotting** (deceased) both fished. Charles is now retired and living in Redding, California. Charles' son, **Brian Grotting**, is still fishing out of Ilwaco, Washington.

As of Ralph's death in 2009, all of the Ennis siblings are now deceased except Gertrude, who is in the state hospital in Salem, Oregon.

Additionally, Arnold Ennis's stepfather-in-law, **Chris Henry, Sr.**, fished gillnets for many years from Pillar Rock and later Astoria. His son, **Chris Henry, Jr.**, fished with his father. Chris Henry, Jr. was the younger half-brother of both Gladys and Beryl. Both of the Henrys are now deceased.

October 2010

Special thanks to Arnold Ennis's daughter, Carol (Ennis) Dahlquist, and his granddaughter, Beth (Dahlquist) Pallai.