

# GOLDEN HOOK AWARD

## The Golden Hook Award

by Andrea Granahan

The once all-important salmon season used to start in April with the Fisherman's Festival. Those festivities also included a very solemn ceremony of the Blessing of the Fleet honoring those who died at sea the previous year. It was especially solemn the year Bodega Bay lost eleven men. But thanks to a few hard-working women, the season ended joyously with a boisterous Golden Hook Award potluck party. It awarded the fisherman who landed the biggest fish of the season. For catching the biggest salmon of the season, George Boos won the Golden Hook Award in 1979 & 2004

2004 Golden Hook Winner - George Boos  
(43-1/2 lb Salmon)



Before the season started, Beverly Burton would get a list of those who held commercial salmon licenses. She'd offer them a chance to buy in. Few fishermen could resist, and there was always a cautionary tale of one who didn't buy in, caught the biggest fish and missed out on all the money which went to the second biggest fish.

Once Beverly had her contestants in hand, she and some other women like Donna Freeman would go to all the fish buyers, fishing equipment suppliers, restaurants – anyone who had anything to do with the fishermen and get them to pledge a certain amount of money per pound.

By the time the end of the season rolled around official fish tickets were obtained from the Weigh Master. The Weigh Master was employed by the fleet, not the buyers, whom no one trusted. The position didn't pay a lot and was a boring job. It was usually filled by a retired fisherman. The important thing was the trust the fleet held for the position. The Weigh Master recorded the weight of every single salmon. It was easy to see who had landed the biggest salmon by checking his fish tickets.



On the big night things could get a little rowdy because everyone was in a celebratory mood. It was a very informal occasion. The Golden Hook winner would be crowned with a homemade, fishing hootchie-laden paper crown, and handed a big fat check to a fanfare and standing ovation. The check could easily be for several hundred dollars for a massive fish that had already been sold at market weight and eaten. There'd be dancing, lots of back slapping, and some moans from those that had come close but were short a few ounces.

Politicians involved in fishing legislation tried to get to the party or sent a staff member the fleet knew. Ernie Carpenter, our local county supervisor for some years, always attended and always claimed to be Earl Carpenter's (The Captain to the fleet) long lost illegitimate son, to roars of laughter.

Beverly Burton always found someone to create the award. Design and materials varied but it always included a giant golden hook and recipients treated it with great pride.