



# small wonders

A series of booklets published by Asplandesign



In pitch black, the doryman's day begins, awash in sea and solitude.  
Ahead, the marketplace and the hurly-burly of a different sea. Commerce.

**S**teve Escobar rounds the tip of the Newport Pier and points his 20-foot dory toward the shore. After gliding through the surf, his bow slaps the sand as a final exclamation of arrival that echoes through more than 100 years of local history. A waiting queue of customers can almost taste the crabs and lobster, octopus and urchins as he hauls them to a pierside spot that has been home to the dory fishermen of Newport Beach, Calif., since 1891.

Today the boats are motorized, modern, and the dorymen have their own Web site. But the links to tradition are unmistakable. “There’s a connection with the customer you just don’t find many other places in this country or in the world,” says Escobar, 40, of Laguna Beach. “I know what my customers want, and they know I’ll be here to deliver it.”

## DORY FISHERMAN







A century ago, James and Robert McFadden established a legacy that endures in a region known for its transience. They paid \$1 an acre for undeveloped land, the bulk of which has long since been divided into lots that regularly fetch seven figures. They saved a sliver of that land for the dory fishermen, who then numbered about 20. Now there are six, who specialize in everything from sculpin to shark, sea trout to san dabs.

Once the buyers came by rail in wool suits and straw hats or calico dresses and sunbonnets. Today they arrive by car, most in T-shirts and jeans. Among them are Asian- and Arab-Americans, as well as Latinos and tourists from Europe and beyond. The diversity is reflected in the exit sign at the dory fleet market. It now says “thank you” in 10 languages.



**S**uccess requires a willingness to work long hours and to tackle many tasks, from baiting hooks and repairing traps to meeting the myriad needs of an ever-changing clientele. Escobar can turn wire, tar and concrete into traps that entice eight kinds of crab. He knows how to bait and position the traps to attract the most marketable catch.

But perhaps greater than his fishing skill is his commitment to his customers.

On a spring Saturday, he swaps stories and shares recipes with regulars and first-timers alike. One man mentions that his lobster turned out a bit tough last time. Escobar cautions against overcooking and offers tips on preparation. Then he slips an extra lobster into the man's bag. "Be sure to let me know how they turn out this time," he says with a smile.









**S**ome who carry on the dory tradition are second-, third- and even fourth-generation fishermen. Escobar is the college-educated son of a rancher who for more than a decade made his living selling high-end computer printers. In his free time, he fished.

He crewed part-time for commercial fishermen as he saved to buy his own boat. He asked loads of questions and studied for hours at the library of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla. Eventually a Newport Beach doryman was willing to sell, and Escobar seized the opportunity. “It was,” he recalls, “the chance of a lifetime.”



# Number 3

"DORY" 2002

The Asplandesign Chronicles are published to showcase the creative talents of Asplandesign, CE Specialized Communications and Sasaki Photography. For additional copies, please contact Kurt Aspland at 714 738 5587. All photography is used by permission and is copyright 2001 Russel Sasaki.

Design	Asplandesign	714 738 5587	kaspland@asplandesign.com
Copy Writer	Dennis Arp	714 257 9211	cecomm@mindspring.com
Photographer	Sasaki Photography	714 540 2433	sasakiphoto@earthlink.net