

## Uncertain Moments in Commercial Fishing

Anonymous, paraphrased, June 16, 2010

Things have been different since four years ago—since the earthquake and tsunami in Indonesia. Most ocean circulation patterns we know about and measure are at the surface, largely driven by the winds. But that time of the quake was when the bottom waters came to the top; when alien creatures, jellies and the like, came from far, *far* away, to *here*, San Diego.... It's been four years of change, with new conditions in the summer, and I've failed to adapt, failed to evolve.

I know, I play a high risk game, making a living with a small boat, making way in a very small coastal region surrounding Mission Bay, whereas the other fishermen, with their bigger boats and deck hands, can cross to distant coastal waters, or venture to the islands when the local conditions become sour. But it's ironic, that this is a point in my life when I have accrued the most amount of knowledge, I have acquired the most number of permits, I am maintaining the most diverse array of gear I have ever had in my lifetime, and still, *still*, in the past few months I can't catch any fish, with routine measure! I've never experienced these conditions in my entire thirty years of fishing! I've been tossing out more money toward the ocean than getting back in return, for *too long*. It's actually cheaper for me to stay at home and work in the garage than make any fishing effort at all....

And now it's time to take my own advice? Now, *I'm* the dinosaur? And I'm not adapting? I haven't evolved?! When am I going to recognize that I've been watching the same ol' movie the last four years, and say it's time to roll the dice differently? It's time to fold the cards? I've been planning on retiring in ten years, and I'm seeing this year slipping away... to *eleven* years... I don't want it to be *20* years before I can comfortably retire! Money isn't everything, of course, but it makes you worry, it eats you up when you're not making any.... I can't rest, I can't take a break and escape to the mountains.... I'm already looking forward to lobster season [in October] but I still have 100 days of summer left, and that's not good....

No, no, *no*... I'm *not* worrying, I'm just thinking aloud... but no, I know it sounds like I'm worrying.... Yes, *I know*, I can't worry about the things I cannot change. Yes, *yes*, I know I can't change ocean circulation. I cannot change the weather either. Nor can the scientists, *ya, yes*.... Ya, I know the Serenity Prayer....I just can't keep spinning my wheels like this. Within the next month, I'm going to have to make a critical decision: to either stay connected to the ocean through the summer... or at least for now, find another job.