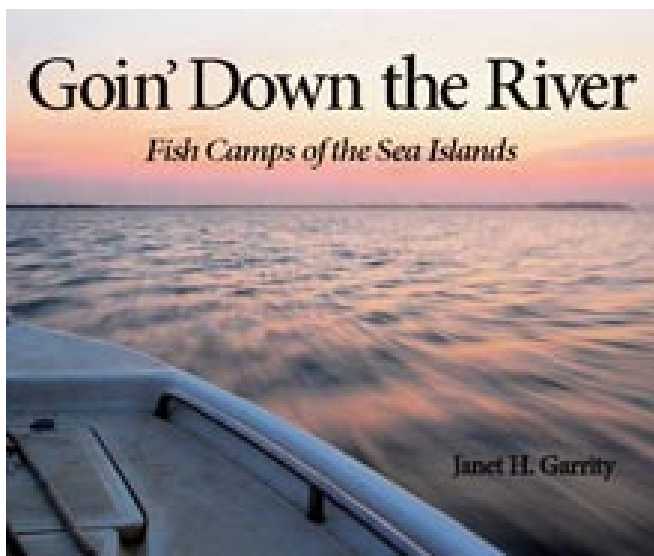


The Story of Fish Camps

Written by Margaret Evans

Tuesday, 25 September 2012 12:28 - Last Updated Wednesday, 26 September 2012 06:26

A new book captures the essence of an old Lowcountry tradition.



“Scattered around the South Carolina Sea Islands are camps that have become very special places to generations of families and friends in the Lowcountry. These camps are referred to as fish camps. Full of character and fairly remote, the camps are accessible only by water and, therefore, exclusive (as well as reclusive, if need be). These camps have been witness to so many life experiences and lessons that you can almost hear the memories whispering to you as you step from the boat to the dock...”

Thus begins Janet Garrity’s beautiful new book, *Goin’ Down the River: Fish Camps of the Sea Islands*, 128 pages of stories, history and photos that capture the essence of an old Lowcountry tradition still quietly flourishing today.

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Garrity, who was raised in upstate New York and moved from Ithaca to Beaufort with her husband in 2008, says the Sea Island fish camps, though new to her, were in some ways very familiar.



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“My grandfather bought a cabin in the Adirondack Mountains in 1939,” she says. “The guys would use it for hunting and fishing in the fall and winter. The rest of us would go in the summer and just run around for weeks in bare feet and bathing suits. It was wonderful! These fish camps have the same spirit.”

Garrity has dedicated the book to her friend, photographer Alex Spencer, who first conceived of the project. Soon after they met, Spencer was diagnosed with colon cancer. Garrity accompanied him on a couple of fish camp photo shoots while he was undergoing treatment, and became intrigued with the subject matter. Soon, Spencer was unable to work anymore, and in April of last year, he passed away.

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“Before Alex died, I got



it into my head that I was going to finish this book,” says Garrity. “He inspired me. I’d always been an amateur photographer. Just did it for love. I’d give photographs as Christmas presents, that sort of thing... But Alex gave me the courage to really put my work out there.”

But “putting it out there” was easier said than done. Unfamiliar with the Lowcountry marshes and snaking, convoluted waterways, Garrity needed a guide. “I needed somebody who wouldn’t let me die out there,” she laughs.

She found just what she was looking for in the person of one Gibbes McDowell.

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