

My Last Tuna Season

My last tuna season was 1988. We brought the Sea Hope up to Gloucester from Norfolk, which took four days and four nights, running constantly. We only stopped in New Bedford for some extra fuel. We had three people on board, Sato, Mary and I. Each one of us had a four hour shift to drive and then 8 hours of rest. With this arrangement we were able to drive constantly. I remember handing over my shift to Mary south of the Delaware Bay, telling her to proceed to the mouth of the Delaware Bay and head up the coast east of New Jersey. I expected her to cut straight across the bay and up the coast however she decided to head straight to Montauk, New York instead, past Hudson Canyon in deep waters.



My last tuna fish
925 pounds



Gerhard and John unloading the fish

I remember waking up, when the boat was rolling quite a bit. It seemed to be in a beam sea. So I got up and checked, what was going on, not expecting high seas at all. When I entered the wheel house and looked around, I couldn't see any land, and the fish finder showed me, we were in deep waters. I asked Mary: "What did you do, this is not straight across Delaware Bay". Her answer was: "I decided to go straight across to Montauk". As a result we encountered 5 to 6 foot waves around the Hudson Canyon. I checked the plotter and found out, that we were almost right on course to Montauk, New York. I decided that we just keep on going and remembered seeing the Light House on Block Island with its green light. I changed course a little bit, aiming directly at Block Island and the Light House. In the end we actually saved quite a bit of time.

Nevertheless, we needed to stop in New Bedford for fuel and then continued on through Buzzard's Bay into the Cape Cod Canal. In the Cape Cod Canal I found the waters running south to north and our speed increased from 7 to 8 mph to 15 mph into Massachusetts Bay, 50 miles short of Gloucester.

At the beginning of the training program that year we decided to focus on developing good leadership, especially future captains, and of course tuna fishermen, and after the traditional Blessing of the Fleet, the actual tuna fishing season of 1988 started.

I was designated as captain of the New Hope, and centered on the New Hope all Good Go boats would follow in V-formation according to our tradition. Father wasn't present at the outset, but came a little later. At that time the fleet was already out fishing, and because I took out the New Hope, he had no way to join the fleet. Father did not like the idea at all, and consequently I was no longer captain of the New Hope. I had to take the Sea Hope instead.

Compared to the New Hope with a speed of 15 to 20 knots, the Sea Hope was rather slow at 7 to 8 knots and the Good Go boats had no leader anymore. As a result the Good Go boats didn't wait for me and were already anchored at the fishing grounds by the time I arrived, and I had to anchor at an unoccupied spot.

During the whole season I only caught one fish at Jeffry's Ledge, weighing 925 pounds. I used live bait, a cod I caught out there. I put the whole fish on the hook with a thin piece of wire going through his eyes. The fish stayed alive, constantly swimming around. When the tuna approached and took the bait, he swallowed the whole fish, including the hook, and that sealed his fate. I remember that day very clearly.

When I was still head of the fleet, four guests from Brazil came over to my boat, and one of them, Waldir talked about the situation of the Brazilian Unification Church. Of course he, as the National leader, didn't have to report to me, but nonetheless he did. I don't want to go into detail about some of the difficult situations there. One of the four visitors was Caesar, and he told me that this day marked his daughter's birthday. Interestingly enough it was my own son's birthday as well, August 3rd. While we were talking, my mate John continued fishing, when suddenly he screamed: "Strike". I was expecting to catch a fish today on account of my son's birthday, which I was not able to attend. I witnessed several times, that we caught a tuna on the day, when the captain of the boat or one of the crew were celebrating the birthday of one of their children.

The fish was 125 inches in length and weighed 925 pounds, which meant it was still lean and a good fighter. We took turns fighting the fish and eventually landed it. This was the last tuna fish I ever caught.

About 300 people were participating in the tuna program in 1988. If you are out on the water tuna fishing, with about 80 boats surrounding you, it's unlikely that the leader of the fleet

would know if every participant is out fishing or not. I remember finding out towards the end of the season that 10 people had left the program a few days earlier for the West Coast, to start up a witnessing program for Ocean Church. I was not told of their departure, but I remember the last day of our program when Mr. Kamiyama officially closed the tuna season. We had to come in earlier to take part in a meeting where we then were informed, that he received a message from the West Coast about a serious boating accident. One big sleeper wave had caused one of our Good Go boats to capsize and two of our people were missing.

I had absolutely no idea who those people were, and that they left the program 10 days earlier. Once on the West Coast, they decided to go out fishing in one of our Good Go boats. Unfortunately they had a boating accident the very next day, and two of them lost their lives. Of course the tuna program was over then, and we understood Father's warning clearly, when he told us in 1980: "The Ocean is dangerous".

I was told later on, that those two brothers who lost their lives, had a prayer meeting at the Holy Ground the night before, asking God to please use them any way he wants. They were ready to do anything for God.

After the end of the tuna season I brought the Sea Hope back down to Virginia and did some gill netting and catching conch, and in the wintertime I dredged for crabs. The tuna program continued for a few more years on a very small level, but I never participated any more.

After the tuna program was discontinued, the Gloucester fishermen were at a loss as to what happened. Where were the Moonies? No Moonies out here anymore. A few years earlier they gave us such a hard time, persecuting us, but now they missed us, and understandably so, as we had a fleet of 80 – 100 boats fishing out there.

Another incident happened during the tuna season, when I took the Harvard out and it broke down just outside Gloucester in a thunderstorm. I anchored the boat, called the Coast Guard for assistance and waited for their arrival. The storm intensified, and as the downpour got heavier, the color of the ocean changed to green. It was a beautiful sight. When fresh water mixes with salt water it somehow causes the salt water to turn cloudy, making the fishing easier, as the tuna can't see that well.

One year while being out tuna fishing, a southeasterly wind picked up, and I ordered everyone to hoist their anchor and return to Gloucester. As we entered the harbor I heard over the radio, that two Good Go boats had broken down and needed to be towed in. At that time I was on the New Hope, but Ken was the captain. I asked Ken to turn around, as those two boats needed to be towed in, but Ken refused. So I asked him to stop the boat and let me disembark. I then boarded the next Good Go boat, turned it around and went right back out to tow the crippled boats in. By that time the seas had built up to around 15 feet, a very dangerous situation.

The roughest spot was just outside Gloucester Harbor. I drove right into the waves with that little Good Go boat. The mate looked at the size of the waves and gazed back at me, and his face mirrored, how scared he was. But the Good Go, which Father used to refer to as Reverend Moon's boats, was extremely well built and performed excellent in head seas. The waves were twice my height and I headed straight into them at a speed of only a couple of knots.

Just a short distance outside of Gloucester harbor I spotted the troubled boats, being towed in by other Good Go boats. They had almost made it home. I watched them enter the harbor and was grateful for their safe return. I mention this story because I wanted to emphasize the safety of the Good Go boats, even in rough weather. No matter how big the seas are,

even in head seas, the Good Go boats will be ok. Father did a great job building these boats, pretty much pulling out all the stops designing it.

I also distinctly remember February 1980. Daikan was part of Father's party and accompanied Father everywhere he went, meaning he always had Father's special attention, until tuna season. At the end of the tuna season Father decided to establish Ocean Church on October 1st 1980 and appointed Daikan as the leader. Almost all the members who participated in the tuna program had a change of mission and were assigned to Ocean church. Father picked out 30 cities along the East Coast, the Gulf and West Coast for the establishment of future Ocean Church centers. I was assigned to Norfolk.

During the tuna season of 1980 we had the "Sunrise" out at the fishing grounds. The Sunrise was a shrimp boat, built at our shipyard, Master Marine, in Alabama, and Father wanted to take her out trawling in Massachusetts, inviting me to join him on this trip. I marveled at the brand new electronics of the Sunrise. For the first time I saw a color fish finder and was very impressed by this piece of technology. It marked different fish the way they appeared on the screen, displayed in different colors. Father was very impressed too.

We decided to trawl for cod, and as we were steaming towards the east of Cape Cod, I had a chance to talk to Father. I told him about one of my dreams. I dreamt about Father entering Russia. Father got very excited and said: "You have to believe in this dream, you have to believe it". Years later, after the fall of communism, Father managed to enter Moscow and meet with Chairman Mikhail Gorbachev. This event was almost identical to my dream I told Father 10 years earlier. This dream was like prophesy.

Another event in 1984 comes to my mind. At that time Father was so angry with Ocean Church members, and during that meeting he changed the leadership. Daikan was no longer

the leader however Ocean Church remained under Japanese leadership. Early that year we had a 40-day workshop in the World Mission Center. The workshop was given by Mr. Kamiyama. One day Father came for a visit to check up on the progress of this workshop and said that Daikan was no longer fishing with Father, because he had cancer, and asked me to be his fishing guide. I responded by saying “Yes Father”. He then asked me, whether I could feel fish being around while fishing. Immediately my experiences while tuna fishing came to my mind, when I could feel the presence of tuna fish. So I truthfully answered: “Yes, Father, I can”. Then Father said: “Yes, I can do that too, and I know exactly when the fish is kissing the bait”. I never heard that expression before. I always thought that once fish see the bait, they come and swallow it. However that is no true. Before fish bite, they circle around several times, smelling the bait from close up, which Father calls kissing the bait. Sometimes this takes place for quite some time, before they decide to take it.

At that time Father told me, to escort him whenever he goes out fishing, and prepare good fishing spots. Then he asked me again: “Can you do that”, and I responded happily: “Yes, I can”. However I did not have the chance to escort Father many times on fishing trips, because he had to go to Danbury prison soon afterwards. However, I remember one instance, when Ken came to my place in Hempstead and said: “Father wants to go fishing out of Montauk, New York. How about doing some test fishing for him in advance?” Of course I was excited, and we went to Montauk for a trial run. We ended up on the north side of Block Island, right at the point where there was an abundance of Atlantic Mackerel. The next day Father actually came to Montauk. As we went out to sea, I told Father about our test fishing the previous day, and about the spot with plenty of mackerel. Eventually Father said: “Ok, let’s go there”. When we arrived at Block Island, we found the Mackerel there still

plentiful, and Fathers party caught so many Atlantic Mackerels, that Father said after a while: “Ok let’s go home, too many fish”. In all the years I spent with Father, I have never heard him say: “Let’s go home, too many fish”, never ever.

Later Father told us to bring the boat up to Gloucester for tuna fishing. He came up one day for fishing and we went out. However at that time the deep water was still very cold. The water at the surface was kind of ok however in the deep of the ocean it was too cold for tuna.

A day later Father entered Danbury prison with Mr. Kamiyama. After that unsuccessful day of tuna fishing in Gloucester, Father never called me again to escort him as his fishing guide. After their release from Danbury Mr. Kamiyama was his escort.

At this time I would like to talk a little bit about the Sea Hope 2. It was a 34 foot Silverton, equipped with two Mitsubishi diesel engines and a small one cylinder Onan generator. Actually those Mitsubishi’s were no good. We constantly had problems with them, and eventually one had to be replaced while still under warranty. Anyway, I used to drive the Sea Hope 2 for tuna fishing for a while. One day, coming back from the fishing grounds, entering Gloucester Harbor, one engine acted up funny. I opened up the engine cover, when smoke came out from the engine. I could not believe what I saw. The engine block had a big hole in its side and I could watch the cylinder and the connecting rods going up and down. When I contacted the dealer, they replaced the defective engine without question. They must have been aware of the poor quality of those Mitsubishi engines, and as to myself, I would never buy a Misubishi diesel engine ever again.

I remember one incident while tuna fishing with the Sea Hope 2, with Paul as my mate. On this particular day I was in the restroom, when Paul called me, that we “got a strike”. I quickly went outside to catch this tuna, which eventually we

did. However I made one major mistake. Once the tuna was next to the boat, ready to be tied up, I tied the tail line to the stern cleat and put a second line through his gills, tying it to the other side of the stern cleat, so that the fish was tied up perpendicular to the boat. While moving the boat forward, everything worked out ok. However, when I had to do some maneuvering and back up one engine, the propeller, being in reverse, sucked in the tuna fish and chewed up the soft part of the tuna, biting a gigantic hole into that fish. As a result the fish was completely ruined, only good for cat and dog food. What a loss! Needless to say, I never did that again. Why in the world did I ever get that stupid idea in the first place.

At this time I would like to talk about some secret tips from Father. When questioning Father about his many strikes while fishing, he answered: "If there is no fish around, you have to find a tuna with your line spiritually and hook it. Then later in the day you will have a strike on that line". I remember someone asking me "How can we spiritually hook a tuna fish?" I had no answer to that question, because I had never done it before. However later on, when I was out on the ocean, waiting for tunas to strike, I remembered Father's words "You have to find and hook a tuna spiritually".

I would like to emphasize, that you really can feel the presence of a tuna, as I have experienced this many times. But what do you do, when there are no tunas around? According to Father's words, you have to find a tuna spiritually and hook it. I tried it many times and succeeded eventually, but I cannot say for sure, whether I found the tuna or the fish found me. Whatever happened, I ended up with a hook up and the tuna was caught.

Successful fishing is much more than just the physical work on the ocean. I also remember Father saying at one time, that you have to focus upon one buoy to go down, and eventually you will have a catch on that line. All I can say is,

mind over matter. Whenever Father sensed the presence of a fish, he checked the fish finder, marked the fish and raised the tuna flag on the New Hope to half-staff, halfway up the antenna, signaling, that a tuna was around. For us it meant, to increase the chumming, correct the spacing of the lines and wait for the tuna to strike.

Once, Father called our brother Jonathan, to adjust one of his lines, to go one and a half fathom deeper. After a little while, that specific line had a strike. How in the world did Father know, where the tuna was in relation to the other lines. But he surely knew. A tuna swims basically horizontally and very rarely vertically. When Father knew, where the tuna was, he realized that Jonathan's line was not at the right depth. How did he know the depth of the tuna? How did he know, the line in the water did not match that depth? He gave orders to extend that specific line, so that the tuna could bite. As a result the tuna was caught. To me that was incredible.

Once, while I was out on the Sea Hope 2, the sea conditions were very rough. I remember Zola approaching with his boat, asking me for permission to tie up behind me. When I agreed, he threw me a line and I tied it up on my stern cleat. It was early afternoon, and I was pretty hungry. I started up the generator to cook some ramen. Actually it was kind of difficult. The movement of the boat caused the ramen pot to slide from one side to the other on that little stove, and I had to hold unto it most of the time. Eventually the ramen was ready to eat. I poured it into a bowl, stepped outside and proudly announced that I had ramen for lunch. In the meantime one of Zola's crew members asked him: "Should I throw some chum into that ramen bowl?" Zola said: "Go ahead" thinking the chum would only reach half the distance. However, this brother had much power in his arm, and lo and behold, that piece of chum landed in my ramen bowl. When they saw the bait hitting the bull's eye, all of them dropped to the floor instantly, laughing and

laughing, except for Zola. I was completely shocked, when out of the blue this piece of bait landed in my ramen bowl. The ramen splashed all over my clothes, causing some nasty burns. I looked at the boat and could only see Zola standing there, eyes wide open. I got so mad that I disconnected their line, threw it into the water and sent Zola and his crew drifting.

Once I had a really good and productive season. I caught a tuna early on and went in. The tuna fishing program itself was rather strenuous and took a lot of energy. Therefore, when we reached the dock, I was rather happy for the opportunity, to catch some extra sleep. Of course, when Father and the rest of the fleet came in for dinner, I was not there, because I was sleeping. Father then decided to speak to all the fishermen, and when he did not see me, he asked several times: "Where is Gerhard?" Nobody really knew, because no one came into the bedroom yet. I only woke up, when the speech was over and the people came in to rest. They told me then, that Father spoke and asked about my whereabouts. I felt so sorry, that I did not attend Father at that time, and that feeling stayed with me. I really wish I could have been there and listened, to what Father had to say.