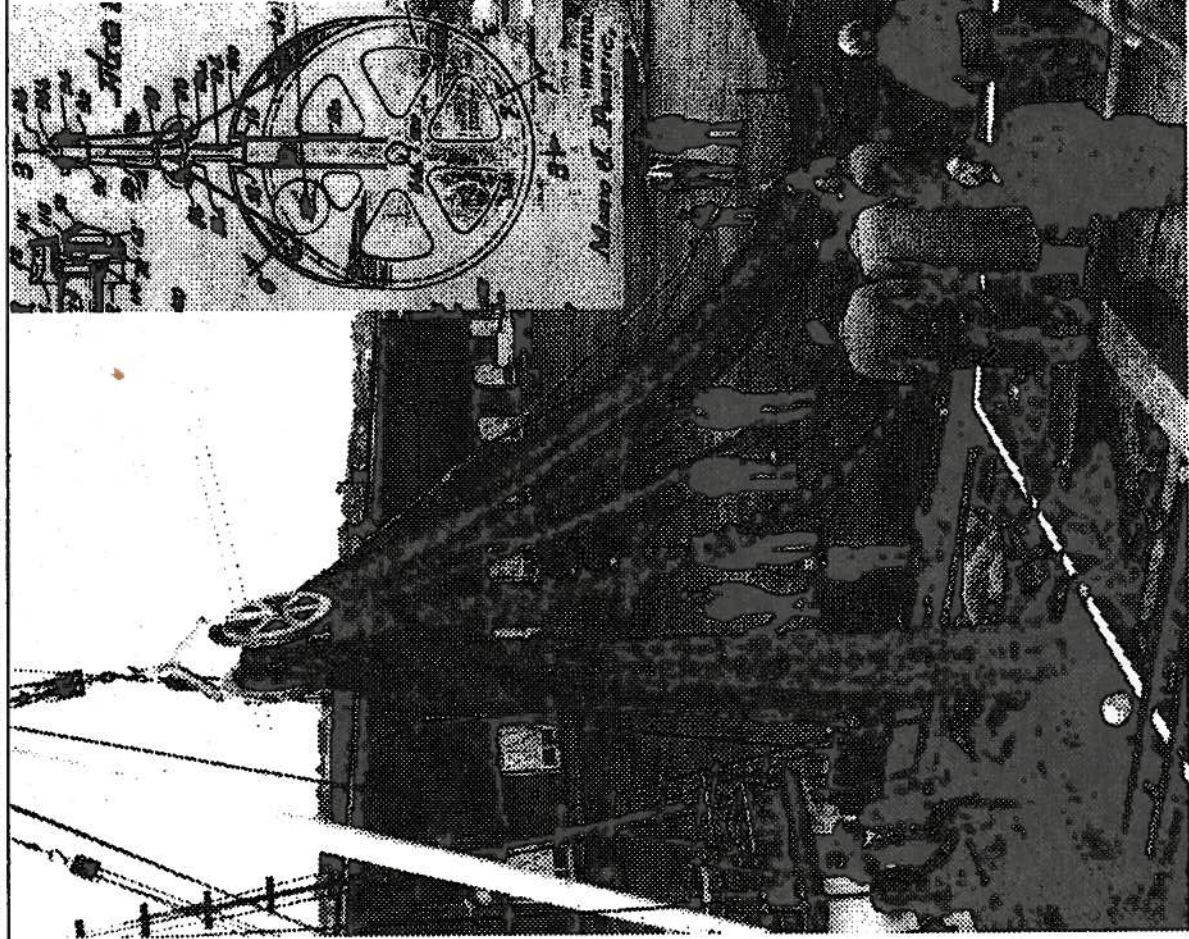


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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FISHERIES CENTRE AT UBC



traction to pull the net out of the water. Puretic's 1954 prototype impressed Peter Schmidt, head of the Marine Construction and Design Company (MARCO) of Seattle, who helped back Puretic to refine and patent his invention.

While Puretic's prototype was made of steel and rope-driven, the MARCO models were made of aluminum to cut down on weight. Aluminum was also less corrosive than steel in saltwater and easier to shape into curved edges, producing fewer hang-ups and less wear on gear. MARCO produced the block with hydraulic converters as well as rope drives. As boat owners converted to hydraulics they merely had to insert a hydraulic motor into the spot provided for it instead of investing in a new block. In April 1955 the first power block was introduced in the Pacific Northwest fishery of Washington and British Columbia.

While the drum has replaced the power block in B.C.'s modern day seine fishery, the block remains popular in numerous other fisheries. It has revolutionized the purse seine fishery simply and inexpensively by supplying a way to increase hauling speed, reduce manpower needs and wear on the net, and requiring no major changes to the vessel or net design.

Duncan Stacey is a fisheries historian based in Vancouver, British Columbia.

FishBase: Electronic Encyclopedia of B.C. Fishes

A collaborative project between the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, and the Fisheries Centre, UBC to enhance the FishBase coverage of the fish fauna of British Columbia has begun. FishBase is a computerised database on the nomenclature, biology and ecology of 12,400 of the 24,000 species of fish in the world, developed by the Manila-based International Centre for Living Aquatic Resources Management (ICLARM). Results from this project will be incorporated in the next edition of the FishBase CD-ROM software and allow fisheries scientists, the fisheries sector educators, and the public at large to use FishBase as a major source of information on B.C. fishes. Specific results include geo-referenced records on all fishes ever reported from BC waters on a digital map with figures, descriptions of their life history, and key references.

However, it was only with the development of the power block that seiners were able to cut the time it took to make a complete set from about seventy minutes to thirty. Also, the block saved considerable wear on the gear.

In 1953 Mario Puretic, a tuna and sardine fisherman from San Pedro, California, conceived the idea of passing the entire seine net through an elevated, free-swinging, self-powered V-sheave, which had the necessary

The Power Block by Duncan Stacey

Until the early 1950's seine fishermen hauled in their nets with brute strength. The slowness of the net hauling procedure plagued the purse seine fishery. In the 1920's the development of the power roller on smaller purse seine vessels and the strapping method on larger ones helped address this problem.