

As Nostalgia Awakens the Senses

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The smelt are running! Those four words echo through the community and drive families and friends to the piers of Lake Michigan.

During the night together, side by side, the groups become friends united by the shared camaraderie of this annual ritual. Sometimes there is silence as the nets are lowered and raised. Sometimes there are cheers when the bounty is great.

With the rise of dawn, the smelters disappear one-by-one and the piers are once again empty – with no signs of the gathering to harvest the bounty offered up by our Great Waters. This annual shared community only comes together in the dead of night.

If I close my eyes, I can still hear the murmurs of the smelters and see the lights on the crowded pier. I can smell the cooking oil as the flour-dredged smelt are fried. I can almost taste the memories and feel the generational connection touch my soul.

Next year. Same time. Same place. Always.