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The Centuries Old Art of Scrimshanding on Swordfish Bills



Commercial sword fisherman have brought home "that prize bill to make it in to a mantle piece that could tell a story. "It was the biggest, meanest fish I ever did see, he jist about sank the dang boat", one old fisherman might say when you admire his sculptured sword over the fireplace.

The process of harpooning the fish hasn't changed to much over the years except for the advantage of having lots of horsepower to chase the fish, instead of a small rowing dory cast off a sailing schooner. Many of the dorys have been holed by the "Four Feet of Sword" coming up through the bottom of their boat while trying to pull the fish aboard. Or, the fish would take off in the opposite direction, dragging the dory on a Nantucket Sleigh ride".

Today sword fishing is controlled by strict regulations and limits. The bills are more and more difficult to acquire, especially the larger ones. I have been making the swords since I was fifteen years old. A friend's Uncle had several large bill stashed in a barn, awaiting to be

finished in to a prize piece. Since then I have made many different styles with old time scenes or logos scribed into the surface, inked and then coated with a shellac-alcohol solution to secure the surface. I have recently acquired a number of large, straight bills awaiting to custom design for you.

The price of a finished custom designed sword varies with the size and complexity of the graphics. Generally \$250 to \$500

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