

## **“A Fish Story Just for the Halibut.” By Renee Shea**

I was shopping at the deli counter at Dierberg’s the other evening when a little girl, about five years old, looked up at me and said, “There are a million SpongeBobs and a million Patricks in the ocean.” I disagreed. I said “No, there is only one SpongeBob. He lives in a pineapple under the sea.” Her older sister chimed in, “No, really. They said so on TV.” She looked to be about seven years old. “Well,” thought I. “If they said so on TV....”

I thought about it all that night. If there are a million SpongeBobs, wouldn’t they soak up all the ocean water? On the other hand, perhaps a million are needed in order to keep the ocean from overflowing the entire land. And what about the million Patricks? I am referring of course to SpongeBob’s best friend, Patrick Star, the starfish. Do they serve a porpoise? I mean, purpose?

A few nights ago I didn’t know the answer to that question. I just figured that once they die, they make lovely decorations in one’s house or in a seafood restaurant. Those kids really had me thinking, so I went online to research starfish and why they exist.

It was very interesting, even though I had to struggle through a whole new vocabulary of words such as, porcellanasteridae, cribriform and phagocytic. Even my spell-check is not familiar with those words.

Anyway, starfish like to prey on mussels, clams and other slow moving shellfish. Mussel and clam fisherman once decided to declare war on the starfish so they could yield more catch. They would capture the starfish and cut them into many pieces. This did not phase the starfish. Their severed body parts would grow into new starfish, so the fisherman basically caused the creatures to multiply rather than deplete. Sorry for being so graphic, but I did spare you what I learned about how starfish go about eating oysters. That would really ruin your lunch.

Nonetheless, starfish, including Patrick Star, are an important part of our environment. Patrick is part of the sea’s food chain helping to keep balance in the ocean (even though he is too nice to ever eat SpongeBob’s pet snail, Gary).

So a million Patricks and SpongeBobs is a good thing. I say, the more the mariner; oops, I mean *merrier*.

Now, if you know a Patrick, a Bob or anyone else who may be looking into retirement communities, invite them over for lunch and a tour with Patty or me. If they move into one of our lovely oysters, we’ll take a thousand clams off your following month’s rent. That’s like finding a sunken treasure chest! Happy fishing!

