

Book for Greenhorns to be Published

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

Every year young people come to Alaska looking to make their fortune commercial fishing. However, many of them are woefully underprepared. Many can't handle the conditions at sea or the long hours, or it's just too tough for them. Former fishing boat captain Jonathan Allen has seen good greenhorns and bad during his years in the industry, and decided to write a handbook to help the prospective crewman.

"The Big Bucks Guide to Commercial Fishing in Alaska," was the result. It is the subtitle that holds the real story, though: "How to run away to Alaska, Work Harder than You Ever Thought Possible and Perhaps Even Get Paid."

Allen, now retired from fishing and living in Idaho, still ships out as a merchant seaman. He started writing the book while waiting for a cod season to begin back in the mid-90s:

-- (Greenhorn 1 35 sec "So there we were in the ... was about half way done with it.")

The book attempts to do a service for skippers in the industry. Allen does his best to discourage slackers from applying, because there are a lot of greenhorns who fail:

-- (Greenhorn 2 27 sec "I had one guy who decided to ... beginning of the 21st Century.")

He encourages prospective deckhands to increase their odds by lining up a job before coming to Alaska.

-- (Greenhorn 3 43 sec "The capital of Alaskan fishing ... what anybody else sends them.")

Allen points out that an inexperienced hand should not expect to make much - if any - money on his first boat, but he says the experience is more valuable than the pay at the beginning of a career:

-- (Greenhorn 4 32 sec "The best opportunities are never ... somebody with no experience.")

He says having a background in the military or growing up on a farm is ideal for a fishing hand. He says those people generally are used to getting up very early and working hard every day. Barring that, having some rope-tying skills could be the difference between getting hired or not:

-- (Greenhorn 5 16 sec "Everybody's got to be able to tie a bowline ... ahead of the game.")

"The Big Bucks Guide to Commercial Fishing in Alaska," by Jonathan Allen will be published later this winter.