



Shore Leave

You are a fisherman and a seaman and you want your shore leave. To take a trip ashore is your right, of course, whenever wind and weather and fishing and running between fishing grounds permit.

You may want to have a snort or two during your shore leave, and that also may be a needed easement. One man enjoys having a drink, another man enjoys *not* having one; both have a perfect right to enjoy whatever they prefer, up to a point. And the point is right here: your enjoyment must not interfere with the rights of the next fellow.

Before you step ashore, ask the skipper about leaving time. It is the skipper's duty, really, to announce the exact hour at which he intends to leave port, but if the skipper does not do so, ask him. And make certain that you have the hour well fixed in your mind.

Once you know the hour of departure, you have no excuse whatsoever for being late. Make sure that you arrive on board the vessel 5-10 minutes before the announced leaving time. Remember, if you don't show up on board on time, the vessel and its crew will be forced to wait for you, and you have no right at all to make other people wait for you, especially when such waiting is costing the time of both vessel and crew, which means fishing time, which again means loss of earnings. The adage "time is money" is more true in commercial fishing than in nearly any other kind of work because the fish (like the tide) wait for no man. Ergo: be back on board in good time for leaving port.

If you have "hoisted a few" while ashore, be extra careful when approaching your boat. The dock may be slippery, the tide may be out, and the deck of your boat a long way

down. Keep a good, solid grip on the stepladder, as you slowly descend from dock to deck.

If several boats are tied up abreast, and your boat happens to be on the outside, be careful when crossing the in between boats—a hatch, or a manhole, may be open! Remember, if you suffer an injury while on a "lee tack," you may well lose your privilege of free medical attention. The law says: "Disability benefits arising from injury or disease contracted on shore leave is included, *unless due to the seaman's willful misconduct or deliberate indiscretion.*"¹ And getting stewed is a "deliberate indiscretion," surely. So, be careful!

If you happen to have the first wheelturn when leaving port, you must, of course, be dead sober when returning from shore leave. An inebriated man at the wheel of a vessel

¹ Simpson, op. cit.

can cause untold amounts of damage and of human misery. No seaman, needless to say, can assume the responsibility for the safety of vessel and crew when less than sober.

After unloading a trip, the boat is washed down and tied to a float or a dock. Then the boys clean themselves up while the skipper and delegate are at the store "settling up," and getting the checks ready. When these two stalwarts get back with the checks and some cash for those who want to go uptown, the boat will empty of life except for one or two who want to write a letter or perhaps take a nap before that evening uptown. If several days are spent at the docks before going out again, and especially if you are not in your homeport, there will be many trips up on the dock.

There will also be many trips to the galley or fo'c'sle of another boat to visit friends and swap stories and "get the latest." This is a favorite pastime and most enjoyable, to meet old shipmates and make new friends, trading information and gossip, and goes on whether you are taking your ease at the galley table, overhauling gear on the deck, or up on the dock. You are part of a club.

But even socializing is not an un-mixed blessing. You may be tied up two or three boats away from the dock or the float, and the deck arrangement of gear and equipment will differ on each boat. There will be something to stumble against on an unfamiliar deck when you return in the middle of the night. Some boats may have carelessly left the hatch open, and the deck lights might be out, or too dim to see well on deck. Gear and stays may hang down from overhead. The inside boat will have fenders out, and therefore will be a foot or two out from the float whose planks may be rotten or slimy from a combination of rain and mossy growth.

If lying at a dock, you may have a long climb up the ladder when the tide is out, and the ladder will be slippery with seaweed. Some ladders of wood will have broken or loose

rungs. Metal ladders are best but may be severely bent from boats rubbing against them. Note particularly if there is a handhold at the top of the dock stringer, to pull yourself up with. Several rungs down, the ladder may be close to a dock timber, giving you only a toehold.

This is the "jungle" in a fishing town. To be alert is to survive. Many fishermen stack the odds further by carrying within a "tankful" of whiskey back to the boat. Those who stepped, slipped, jumped, and didn't bounce, are either no longer with us or carry the scars of their blunder. Most docks are in good shape, but make a careful note of the path you follow when leaving the boat. The open hatches, the broker ladder (which you may not see when stepping ashore at high tide) should be a big question mark in your mind when you return that night and see the mast tops of the boat level with the dock.

The safest grasp on the ladder is its sides, not the rungs, although at

Conclusion

The choice (or necessity) of being a commercial fisherman today is basically a way of making money. However, there are other trades where more or less income can be generated and more fringe benefits received. But there is a presumption or belief that when equivalent earnings are available elsewhere, a person who goes commercial fishing by choice is looking for other values.

One of the ideas advanced and generally agreed to by some economists, sociologists, and fishermen themselves, is the idea that fishermen have more than an ordinary amount of freedom—of independence. This is a generality that varies in truth from fishery to fishery. For precision then, reduce this to the northeast Pacific fisheries, and to those vessels in which a crew of one or more is employed besides the skipper.

the top the ladder sides may be fast to the timbers so that you must hold the rungs. As you reach up, be certain your next handhold is secure before letting go the other hand. Step on the ladder with the rungs under the instep, not on your toes. Use special care on ladder and dock if they are wet. If you do drop off the ladder, the chances of landing between the boat and dock are about 50-50, but you will suffer less damage if falling in the water. Many have not survived this drop because they hit their heads on the boat rail as they went by, or were squeezed between the boat and the piling. If in the water, keep away from the outside of the piling. Your bones will find 20-100 tons of boat to be a rather irresistible force. If unable to climb out, don't wear yourself out. Hang on and holler like hell. Best precaution: travel in pairs if possible.

From the dock, uptown and back, it's all yours. Have a good time and good luck.

Trawling for bottomfish and shrimp; longlining for halibut and black cod; potfishing for dungeness, king, and tanner crab; purse seining for salmon; and to some extent, trolling for salmon and albacore, are the most typical fisheries of the area. Others, like scallop dredging or potfishing for fin fish, are minor fisheries now. These fisheries generate fair to very good incomes, and the stories of big seasons have a basis in fact. But they are exceptional in most cases, and do not reflect the average.

Since the seasons are quite short in many of these fisheries, most incomes are quite high considering the real time spent fishing. Most of the time this is an advantage over shore wages only if the fisherman has a skill to employ while ashore during the off-season, and to which he can come back each year. Many do. Some, without these other skills, resort to