



Working on Deck

In commercial fishing, the handling of the various types of fishing gear is almost always teamwork. In the purse seine, beach seine, lampara seine, as well as in the otter trawl fisheries, the entire crew works as a team; in longlining, two men work as a team most of the time.

On a longline vessel a new or green man will always have an experienced man as his partner or teammate, whose job it is to break in the beginner, teach him the tricks of the trade, and do whatever must be done in order to transform the greenhorn into a competent deep-sea fisherman. During this period of learning it is the beginner's bounden duty to do his best to learn as fast as he can and to obey orders from his partner without argu-

ments or back talk. Remember, while you are learning you will not be able to do your share of the work, and it is your partner who must take up the slack when you fall behind.

To put into print a detailed description of how to work on deck would be a rank presumption. Further, it would be an utterly useless undertaking, because each and every skipper has his own idea about how he wants work performed on board his vessel. Besides that, every experienced fisherman who takes it upon himself to break in a green man has his own idea on how to go about that task. Hence, a detailed description on a printed page would do little good. There are, however, some fundamental facts that will serve as guidelines for

the budding fishermen. We'll briefly mention some of the more important ones, starting by enumerating a few things to remember.

1. Safety first, always! That means safety of others as well as your own. Look out so that you don't get hurt or cause a shipmate to get hurt.

2. Get out of your bunk the moment you are called. Don't be the last man on deck. Be first as often as possible.

3. When pulling and hauling as part of a team, make sure that you pull and haul your share of the load. Yes, and a wee bit more, too, if you can. "Pull hard, and it comes easy" is more than just a clever play on words. For instance, when stacking down a purse seine be sure that you



have as much of the web between your fists as your working partners on the seine table have between theirs. Watch your working partners' hands (and feet), and learn to work in concert with them.

4. When some small but unpleasant job is to be done and you have the know-how, do it! Your shipmates are

doing part of your work for you while you are learning and will continue to do so until you have learned to be as proficient in your work as they are. Show them that you understand and appreciate that.

5. Learn to handle deck machinery and to operate it with care so you don't hurt yourself or abuse the ma-

chinery. The different pieces of deck machinery are the tools needed for the performance of your work. It is part of good seamanship to avoid abuse of these tools and to help keep them in good working order. When using the wash-down water hose, be careful not to throw a "kink" in it when moving along the deck. A sharp kink in the hose may well cause back pressure to break the water pump.

6. Keep your vessel clean! A dirty deck is a dangerous deck. Hose down the deck as soon as you notice even a small accumulation of trash. Many a man has taken a bad fall and hurt his back, knocked a hole in his scalp, or toppled overboard because he stepped on a blade of slippery kelp, a piece of gurdy bait, or a small flatfish just as the boat made an unexpected roll. It takes only a minute to hose down the deck, and it is a minute well spent, for reasons of both comfort and safety. A hosing down is always in order; on the stern of a longline boat frequent hosing down is of the utmost importance, because pieces of old bait will be strewn around



when men are trying to bait in a hurry. A dirty deck is dangerous so keep your deck clean. The fellow you save from going overboard may be yourself!

7. Find your sea legs as quickly as you can. A goodly share of both your comfort and safety depends upon how well you can stand on your feet when the boat is pitching and rolling. It has been estimated that, on the average, a commercial fisherman must use about one-third of his strength just to keep himself in an upright position. That's a man with sea legs, mind you. Before you find your sea legs you may have to use up as much as one-half of your strength keeping yourself in a vertical position, even in a most moderate sea. In somewhat rough fishing weather you may well have to use most of your strength for that purpose which will leave you with little strength for your work.

8. Keep your head covered when working on deck. This rule applies to everyone, only more so to those with long hair. Fish slime and fish "gurry"—the partly digested food-stuff in the guts of the fish—contain irritants that may cause a most unpleasant scalp itch (and perhaps permanent damage). When stacking a purse seine or retrieving a trawl net, wear your sou'wester! Small particles of jellyfish will be fairly raining down upon you from the net; they are unpleasant and potentially dangerous to your eyes, skin, and scalp. Uncovered long hair may easily get caught in running tackle, drivebelts and chains, gears, sprockets, etc. Don't take foolish chances. Wear a sou'wester or other suitable head covering.

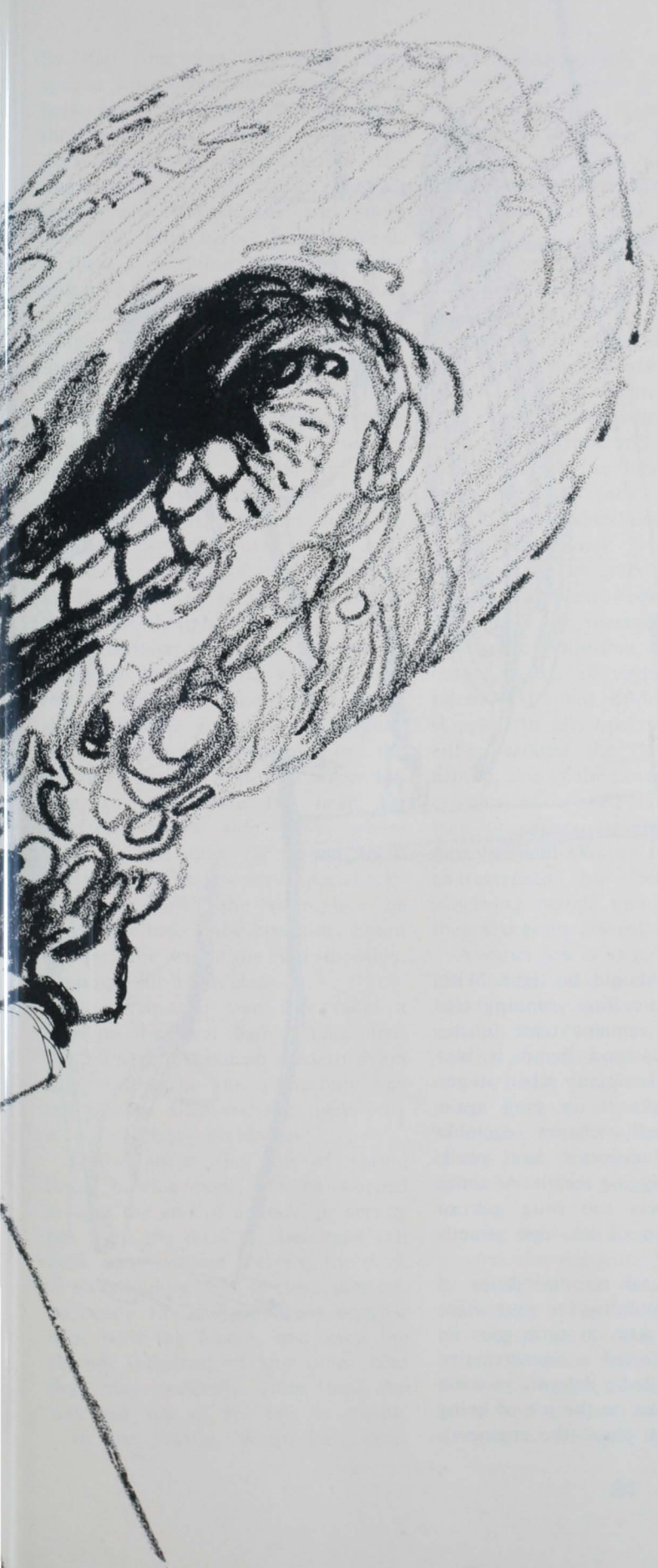
Those are the do's. Now let's have a go at some don'ts.

1. Don't step on or inside a coil of rope such as purse line, buoy lines, or warps while gear is being set out. Such practices may provide you with a quick trip overboard, plus a broken leg or a mangled foot, or both.

2. Don't grab running gear, long-lines, buoylines, warps, and the like







outside the roller or linepuller. Broken arms and mangled hands will be the result of such foolishness. If you must work on gear outside the roller or linepuller, be sure that the gurdy or linepuller has come to a complete stop before you touch that gear!

3. Don't neglect to wear gloves when handling fishing gear. If you are dealing with wire rope, wear leather gloves. Your hide is easily punctured and remember, most infections develop from small punctures.

4. Don't stand in line with the warp (wire rope) leading from the block at the railing to the winch drum when hauling in the trawl warps. If the wire rope should break, its whipping end might hit you and divide you into two unequal parts. Always think of a taut wire or line as a rifle barrel: dangerous if pointed at you.

5. Don't try to fairlead a wire rope, whether warp or anchor cable, onto the winch drum by pushing on it with your hands or your feet. If the winch is not equipped with proper fairleads, use an iron rod, a length of pipe, or a hardwood pole for guiding the wire rope onto the drum. Then be sure that you have good, solid footing, because a fall across the incoming warp may carry you into the winch.

6. Don't step on the tackle as it comes down on deck from the gypsyhead. Instead, throw the tackle-rope away from and clear of your feet.

7. Don't put too many turns on the gypsyhead when using an old-fashioned deck (purse) winch. Just one turn too many may cause overlap. If this should happen to you, stop the winch at once and call for someone to give you a hand clearing the tackle. It is not good practice for one man to try using the gypsyhead for pulling line while manning the start-stop controls, even if they are close by. The practice is common, and so are the resulting accidents. If you get entangled in the line, you may not be able to reach the controls. Keep this in mind.