

SURVIVING IN THE WORLD'S MOST DANGEROUS PROFESSION:  
KING CRAB FISHING ON ALASKA'S HIGH SEAS



# Working on the Edge

Spike Walker

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## **Working on the Edge: Surviving in the World's Most Dangerous Profession: King Crab Fishing on Alaska's High Seas** Spike Walker

No profession pits man against nature more brutally than king crab fishing in the frigid, unpredictable waters of the Bering Sea. The yearly death toll is staggering (forty-two men in 1988 alone); the conditions are beyond most imaginations (90-mph Arctic winds, 25-foot seas, and super-human stretches of on-deck labor); but the payback, if one survives can be tens of thousands of dollars for a month-long season.

In a breathtaking, action-packed account that combines his personal story with the stories of survivors of the industry's most harrowing disasters, Spike Walker re-creates the boom years of Alaskan crab fishing--a modern-day gold rush that drew hundreds of fortune-and adventure-hunters to Alaska's dangerous waters--and the crash that followed.

## **Working on the Edge: Surviving in the World's Most Dangerous Profession: King Crab Fishing on Alaska's High Seas Details**

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Author : Spike Walker

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# **From Reader Review Working on the Edge: Surviving in the World's Most Dangerous Profession: King Crab Fishing on Alaska's High Seas for online ebook**

## **Brian says**

Excellent book. I could tell the great amount of research that Spike put into his books. The accounts of the fishermen involved are unforgettable.

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## **Kenno82 says**

Walker's book provides a first-hand insight into the Alaskan crab fishing industry in the late 1970s and early 1980s, long before "The Deadliest Catch" Discovery documentary series. Personal tales are mixed with survival stories from fellow fisherman who crewed other boats during the crabbing seasons. Walker is very likeable and his writing comes across as authentic. Walker doesn't glorify the industry, nor does he exaggerate the heroic stories - he doesn't need to. I'll read more of his books in the future.

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## **Moriah says**

Since I have watched some of the Deadliest Catch I was interested in reading this book and learning more about king crab fishing. I did enjoy reading Spike's adventures and gaining a better understanding about the lives of crab fishermen...a very dangerous and somewhat sad life. (Caution for younger readers: I took a couple stars off because of language and, what I consider, inappropriate topics/happenings.)

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## **Dan Secor says**

Written long before the popular Discovery Channel show Deadliest Catch, this book explores what it is like to work on the dangerous crab boats in Alaska's Bering Sea, written by someone who was there during the boom days of the late 70's and early '80s. Most of the book centers around his first hand experience on several different ships, but he also has accounts (through interviews with survivors) of some of the more spectacular disasters of that era, a couple of which are recounted during the first season of the show. Not a literary work of excellence, but a good account of a fascinating industry.

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## **awesomatik.de says**

Bist du es leid Tag ein Tag aus ins Büro zu fahren und den ganzen Tag vor einem Bildschirm zu verbringen? Suchst du das Abenteuer in der Natur? Arbeitest du gerne 80 Stunden in der Woche?

Dann solltest du es mit Krabbenfischerei in Alaska versuchen. Das Wetter ist meistens beschissen. Brutale

Winde, Blitzes und haushohe Wellen sind keine Seltenheit. Auch gestandene Fischer kotzen sich vor Seekrankheit die Seele aus dem Leib. Und jährlich sterben unzählige Menschen bei Arbeitsunfällen und Schiffsuntergängen.

Klingt doch nicht mehr so interessant, oder? Aber was, wenn ich dir sagen würde, dass du in nur zwei Monaten bis zu 100 000 Dollar verdienen könntest?

Diese Aussichten auf schnellen Reichtum führten dazu, dass Ende der siebziger Jahre ein regelrechter Krabbenfang-Boom entstand vergleichbar mit dem Klondike Goldrausch am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts.

Und so strömten unzählige junge Männer gen Norden, in der Hoffnung einen Platz an Bord eines Krabbenkutters zu bekommen.

Zu diesen jungen Wilden zählte auch Spike Walker, der im Winter des Jahres 1978 mit zwanzig Dollar in der Tasche in Kodiak Alaska aufkreuzte.

Durch hartnäckige Präsenz an den Docks und Hafenbars, schaffte er es nach kurzer Zeit auf einem kleinen aber renommierten Schiff angeheuert zu werden.

In den neun Saisons, die er insgesamt an Bord diverser Boote verbringen sollte, erlebte er alle Höhen und Tiefen der Boom-Jahre mit. Er brachte Rekordfänge ein und stand Rekordstürme durch. Er arbeitete 74 Stunden am Stück ohne zu schlafen. Er sah Boote sinken und beteiligte sich an Rettungsaktionen.

Sein Schweiß und seine Tränen brachten ihm tausende von Dollar ein. Und das alles dank eines Tieres, das aussieht wie ein Riesenunterwasserkäfer aus der Urzeit.

Wenn man sich überlegt wie viel hunderttausend Tonnen an Riesenkrabben in diesen Jahren aus dem Meer gezogen wurde, der Meeresgrund der Beringsee musste überrannt worden sein von einer Armee diesen Viechern (Hier eins meiner Lieblingsvideos zum Thema: <http://awesomatik.com/2014/06/27/giant-crab-hunting-in-the-bering-sea/>)

In „Working on the edge“ erfährt man alles über die tägliche Arbeit an Bord eines Krabbenkutters. Die technischen aber auch die emotionalen Aspekte der Arbeit. Walker beschreibt die Monotonie der Abläufe, das Zusammenleben auf engstem Raum mit schwierigen Crewmitgliedern aber auch die Schönheit der alaskischen Wildnis und das wilde Leben abseits des Bootes.

Seine persönlichen Erfahrungen verbindet er mit den unglaublichen Geschichten von Überlebenden.

Männer und Frauen, die Opfer der schlimmsten Seeunglücke wurden. Die über Bord gingen, die tagelang in Rettungsanzügen im dunklen, eiskalten Wasser der Beringsee trieben. Männer, die das rettende Land erreichten und dann von Grizzlybären verfolgt wurden.

### **Fazit – Seemansgarn vom Feinsten**

Walking on the edge erzählt vom maritimen Goldrausch, der Ende der siebziger Jahre in Alaska ausbrach. Junge Abenteurer fuhren ans Ende der Welt um ihr Glück auf den tödlichen Wogen der Beringsee zu suchen. Die einen fanden Reichtum und Ehre auf andere wartete der Tod.

Ein faszinierender Einblick in die raue Welt der Krabbenfischerei.

Eine Lektüre durch wackelige, stürmische und unbarmherzige Gefilde, die der Leser staunend in der Sicherheit der eigenen vier Wände genießen sollte. Alle Mann an Bord!

Alle awesomatik Rezensionen auf einen Blick:

<http://awesomatik.com/buchfuhlung/>

### **awesomatik Kuriosum**

Wenn ich das richtig gelesen habe, war dieses Buch auch die Inspiration für die Reality Show The deadliest Catch (Der gefährlichste Job Alaskas) von der es aktuell unglaubliche zehn Staffeln gibt!  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yct7z...>

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### **Jacob says**

I think that exactly what you would expect with this book is what you get, except maybe a little higher caliber writing. The author does a pretty good job of not painting a repetitive picture of king crab fishing, which I can imagine was a challenge. The writing is crisp and, where appropriate, suspenseful. A minor complaint is that I wish the editor had been a little more on the ball. Some simple errors I remember were talking about being on the northernmost edge of the ice sheet extending southwards through the Bering Sea (obviously meaning the southernmost edge) and clear references to Lake Union as Lake Washington. It took me a while to get through the book so it isn't exactly a page turner but if you have any interest in Alaska or a working man's view of the fishing industry, this is a good one to pick up. Would give it 3.5 stars if that were an option.

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### **Marsturgeon says**

Spike Walker brought the dangerous seas to life...or death as it were. By the middle of the book it was like Spike and I were sitting at a pub and him telling his story.

Knowing the crab fishing industry was tough did NOTHING to prepare this reader for the seemingly daily struggle for life itself. From trying to obtain a paying jig to live through a sinking ship Spike scared me far from the decks of any such vessel.

The loss of life makes me reconsider my own food-value thoughts. That is, if so many must die what is the true cost to eating that crab?

What was Spike's next adventure like? He did the canoe thing in the Yukon. What a guy!

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### **Robyn Obermeyer says**

I often associate my line of work with fishing, working under the sun. weeding, baiting, dragging, pulling, working hard. This book allowed me to see a side of the world I may never go but surely am drawn to it!

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### **Jessi says**

I don't want to write a review cause I already had to write a bunch of stuff about this for school. Basically, it had good writing but I would not recommend this unless you are incredibly interested in king crab fishing in Alaska.

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### **Stephanie Warnement says**

Before I started reading this book I must admit that I entertained thoughts of some day trying my hand at crab fishing. In fact my boyfriend mentioned off hand that there was a crab boat looking for some crew members in town (Florence, OR) a couple weeks ago. I was perturbed that he hadn't mentioned it earlier because the crab season was already underway and the position was long filled.... Then I picked up this book. Spike Walker writes about his experiences crab fishing out of Kodiak and Dutch Harbor during the crab boom of the 70s. His description of life aboard the boat and the work involved sucks you in. He's a great writer. He also includes accounts of tragedies that happened during those years. Some of the stories go from bad to worse and when you think nothing else could go wrong mother nature throws something else into the mix. It definitely turned me off of beating the docks, but I also gained a respect for those that chose that profession. It's definitely a great read.

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### **Eric\_W says**

To maximize the sensation of coldness and wetness while reading Spike Walker's *Working on the Edge* you should really listen to Ralph Vaughn-Williams *Antarctic Symphony*. It captures the loneliness, hard work and intense cold of the crab industry off Alaska's Bering Strait shores. Walker's book is about the meteoric rise and precipitous fall of an industry which has an occupational mortality rate 20 times that of the coal mining industry. Working conditions were frightful. Crewmen had to muscle 750 lb. crab pots over icy decks in 40 – 80 knot winds with seas often running over 30 feet. They were constantly drenched with frigid water for periods of up to 40 hours with no rest. The rewards, however, were extraordinary. During the late 70's the king crab population simply exploded. In the peak year of 1980 the 130,000,000 lb. quota was filled in 29 days by some 230 crab boats (a record high.) A regular crewman pulling the standard full share of 7% of the boat's take might top \$50,000 for those 29 days. He (or she) could then go on to fish for tanner crab and pull in additional enormous sums.

Walker was lucky. He had been working in the timber industry, got tired and heard they were hiring up in Alaska. He was a strong worker and despite a predilection for seasickness Learned to love the hard work. In fact, when back in the "lower 48" for a visit he was disgusted to find people whose only desire was to get out of work. He couldn't wait to get back to Alaska and its raw living on the edge. Raw living it was. Bar house brawls were common, and the vast amounts of cash attracted enormous amounts of cocaine. By the 1981 season, however, only 28,000,000 lbs. were taken, and in 1983 the season was totally closed. It was determined that crabs had succumbed to a disease that was making the majority of females sterile.

In between descriptions of how one baits a crab pot and the relative merits of various crew mates, Walker peppers his book with vivid descriptions of calamities and near deaths at sea. He interviewed many of these

survivors for the book, and his retelling is spell-binding. From September 1982 through September 1983, 68 vessels sank in Alaskan waters with 46 crewmen killed. Storms were ubiquitous and particularly vicious. You gotta be nuts. Great account for us Walter Mittys.

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### **James Korsmo says**

For those who love Deadliest Catch, this book is a way to get a more thorough picture of Alaskan crab fishing. Spike Walker fished the deadly waters during the crab boom, when deck hands could take home spectacular paychecks, and boats were being built or converted as fast as the yards could do it. In this book, he chronicles his own journey to become a crab fisherman, starting as a greenhorn. We get to know a number of the captains and crews from his years on the water. He also tell tales of amazing storms, unexpected tragedies, and daring rescues that keep you reading. I'd give it 3.5 stars if I could.

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### **D says**

I enjoyed Working on the Edge but the book is maybe 100 pages too long. The highlight of the book was the incredible survival stories of other crab fishermen whose ships went down or were abandoned. The book is more or less divided between these types of stories and Spike Walker's own experiences on crab boats. Spike goes into too much detail when recounting his own crab boat experiences especially since nothing much happened to him. The description of the first boat he worked on was interesting but I didn't need another two descriptions of slightly different boats. The survival stories and his descriptions of the Alaskan ports more than make up for it though. I'm glad I finished the book.

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### **Jacquelyn says**

This book was absolutely riveting!!! Amazing!! I would recommend this book to everyone. I have been a fan of Discovery channel's "Deadliest Catch" since it began airing 4 years ago. This book (like the Deadliest Catch tv show) gives every reader such a respect for the harding working men and women in the Alaskan Bering Sea. I will always gladly pay a high price for crab, knowing exactly how it came to me.

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### **Kerry says**

He is a great writer and really did his experiences justice with his descriptions. I got a little tired of the constant re-hashing of boats/people going down. I'm more of a -yes stuff happens, but how does it make you FEEL- kinda reader.

It was a good book. I will probably end up reading the rest of his too.

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