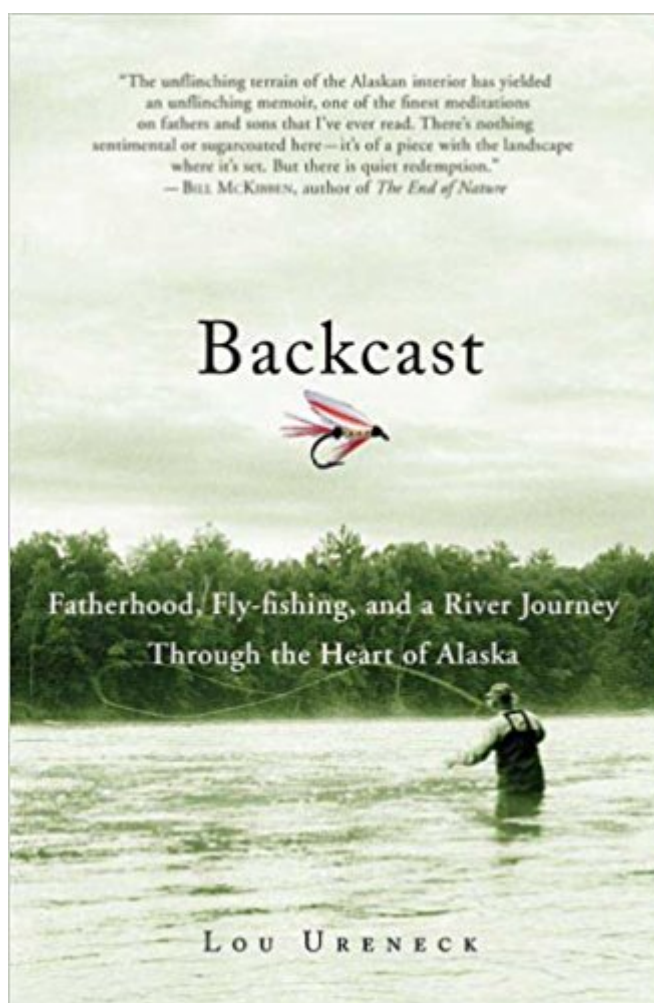


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# Backcast: Fatherhood, Fly-fishing, And A River Journey Through The Heart Of Alaska



## Synopsis

While father and son fishing trips can be the stuff of American legend, they can also turn out to be the stuff of anger, love and self-discovery. In his memoir of a fishing trip through the Alaskan wilderness, Lou Ureneck brings to life the struggle to reclaim the trust of his teenage son, Adam, following his divorce. Told against the backdrop of the Alaskan wilds, *Backcast* is the remembrance of a fishing trip that carried a father and son from the mountains of Alaska to the Bering Sea. Along the way, nature transforms from friend into foe, and their struggles are played out against the poignant emotional battle raging between the two as they descend the river headed toward confrontation. On their journey, the two encounter nature's dangers -- bears, violent river currents and ruthless, punishing weather -- as well as the hurts that exist between them, the reasons for divorce, the absence of a father and the withheld love of a son. Dipping his hand into the river of his own life, Ureneck recounts his own fatherless childhood, the influence of his mother's boyfriend who helped him learn to fish, and the realization that he himself had done the one thing he always promised himself he would not do: He ended his marriage in divorce. Part adventure story, part reconciliation with life's unexpected turns, and part commentary on the healing power of nature, "*Backcast*" explores the world of a man confronted by the hard choices divorce can bring to create a moving meditation on fatherhood.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Lou Ureneck is a master craftsman, and in "*Backcast*" he has meticulously constructed a story that's lasting and splendid to behold. You need not love fishing or the outdoors to enjoy this

redemptive and intensely observed journey of self-discovery."--Boston Globe "A beautiful book ... as clear and bright as an Alaskan snowmelt."--Portland Oregonian " ...gripping from beginning to end."- Roanoke Times "A stunning memoir, a marvelous outdoor adventure, a breathtaking travelogue that explores the wilds of Alaska and the intricacies of the human heart."-- Boston Globe "The Alaskan wilderness leaps to life in its gritty reality "fast-rushing rivers, misty rolling hills, bears "the size of church doors," relentless rainfalls, eddies roiling with fat salmon and char "just as the tenuous terrain between father and son leaps to life too. Anger and hurt thread through this book "but so do taut stretches of beauty, wonder, and redemption in the riches of life in the wild."--Don George, National Geographic Traveler (Book of the Month) "Backcast" is a compelling read, part true adventure, part commentary on fatherhood and life's twists and turns."--Peter Genovese, Newark Star-Ledger "I wholly recommend this read, for anyone who thinks of fly fishing, or the outdoors as an indispensable part of their lives, and to anyone who has ever been a father or a son, and had hopes and disappointments for that relationship. This is a well written book, a real book, an honest book, a thoughtful book, and a thoroughly enjoyable read."--Cameron Larsen, Oregon guide and Big Y Fly blog "This book is a rarity: humble in its beauty, elegant in its reflection."--Anchorage Daily News "Backcast is a deeply personal and often painful memoir on fatherhood, growing up, the many manifestations of family dysfunction, and the role of the outdoors in one's life...intriguing and valuable both for its insights and what you might see as its warnings. I applaud Lou Ureneck for finding the courage to write such a book."--Tennessee Valley Angler "Huckleberry Finn written by Charles Dickens, a story of self-preservation told without bathos. ... There are two adventures here, each in its own wilderness and each with its own measure of indecision, difficulty, discovery and serendipity."--Jim Rousmanier, Keene Sentinel "With its poetic fineness and almost mathematical detail, fly-fishing has a gestural language which links aficionados on a stream, even in silence. It's that language that Ureneck hoped would help reverse a widening gulf between himself and a teenage son. The hope played out in an eventful fishing trip on Alaska's lonely Kanektok River in 2000. The father-son link was reknit, if not right away, and not necessarily in the way Ureneck imagined. ... More than a fish story, it's an autobiography, and at the center are two broken families."--David Mehegan, The Boston Globe "Although the fishing-trip memoir verges on literary cliché, this recounting of an Alaskan journey that Ureneck, head of BU's journalism program, took with his son manages to more than stand out " calling to mind at times that gold standard of fish-and-family portraits, Norman MacLean's A River Runs Through It. Exploring in equal parts the Alaskan wilderness and his tricky relationship with his son, Ureneck is not content with mere absolution; instead, he hunts for redemption, and

along the way nets a fresh start with his boy."-Geoffrey Gagnon, Boston Magazine " [A] thoughtful, engaging memoir...an enjoyable, heartfelt narrative."--Kirkus Reviews "The unflinching terrain of the Alaskan interior has yielded an unflinching memoir, one of the finest meditations on fathers and sons that I've ever read. There's nothing sentimental or sugarcoated here" it's of a piece with the landscape where it's set. But there is quiet redemption. "Bill McKibben, author of *The End of Nature* "This is simply a fabulous book, as deep and true as the Alaskan waters that serve as its backdrop. It is an exciting adventure story. It is a profound story of the heart. It is warm and beautiful and so sweetly honest, a father fighting for his son, to know him, to regain him, in a way that will stay and linger long after the final page is turned." Buzz Bissinger, author of *Friday Night Lights* "Think of crossing Tobias Wolff's dysfunctional upbringing in *This Boy's Life* with Norman MacLean's metaphysical fly-fishing in *A River Runs Through It* (with admixtures of E.B. White's classic essay "Once More to the Lake" and Hemingway's "Big Two-Hearted River" all of it going back more or less to Huck and Jim on the raft) and you get a rough idea of the territory, and of the high standard that Lou Ureneck has set for himself. But Ureneck's memoir has its own entirely distinctive flow of life: turbulent, painful, resilient, intelligent, gropingly moral, beautifully observed. It's hard to write about fathers and sons or rather, it is hard for fathers and sons to write about one another. But Lou Ureneck has done it brilliantly. " Lance Morrow, author of *The Chief: A Memoir of Fathers and Sons* "This is a very rich memoir: part outdoor adventure story, menacing bears and all; part travel book about the Alaskan outback; part fish story (in the most literal and informative sense); and part personal drama about a father re-bonding with his son." -- Justin Kaplan, Winner of the National Book Award and Pulitzer Prize for *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain: A Biography*

LOU URENECK is an outdoorsman, professor and father. In his 20 years at the Portland (Maine) Press Herald, where he rose from reporter to editor, Lou crusaded to protect the state's environment against clear-cutting and commercial over-fishing. He was an editor-in-residence at the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University and page-one editor of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. He is now chairman of the Department of Journalism at Boston University. His work has been published in *The New York Times*, *Boston Globe* and *Field & Stream*. He lives in Brookline, Massachusetts.

I expected a book recounting about re-bonding on a fishing trip between a father and son, each of whom had distanced themselves from the other. Instead, it is partly about a poorly planned fishing trip, and mostly about the author's lousy childhood and his painful divorce. Neither of these seems to

lend much to the rest of the book, which could not have been covered in a short chapter. Even the trip itself is quite odd, with the son being as much of a jerk as he thinks his father is. It ends with no real clue as to whether this trip was even a success from a bonding and mending standpoint. I've read probably 100 fishing books, and I'd rate this in the bottom 20%, and it is not written as it is advertised. At best, this is a library read....don't fork over any cash.

I truly enjoyed this book, since it was real, involved father son relationships, and included fishing in Alaska. As a father of 4 sons, I related reasonably well to the struggles the father and son encountered during this trip. I have been to Alaska on a similar trip with both friends and a son and the descriptions of the float and wildlife were very accurate. I thought the hostility of the son toward his father, who was the leader of the trip, cook, fishing guide, fly tier and financier was a little overdone. Having never been through a divorce, maybe I don't relate to this part of the relationship. The father did more than his share to bridge the gap with what appeared to be little or no effort or reciprocity by the son. They had spent many hours together before the trip, so this seemed a little over done.

This book is a book that deals with fly fishing, but does not fit into any typical strain of the fly fishing genre of literature. It is a book that offers up fly fishing as a window into one's life, but it does not contain any whoring around, putting off work, or drinking. Rather, it uses a fishing trip to recount one man's efforts to reconcile his son to the choices that the father has made in the then recent past. So you are not exposed to a great deal of insight into fly fishing in Alaska, but you are treated to the meaning that fly fishing occupied in this one man's life. All in all, a very good book about how fly fishing made a broken man and strained relationship much better.

Lou Ureneck's memoir, "Backcast" is the story of a good man committed to examining the bonds of love between self and family. He allows us to accompany him as he undertakes this journey with a soul searching vigilance for truth, the sometimes painful but always authentic insights on life, and the consequences of giving and receiving love. His gift for storytelling, willingness to work hard, and his well honed craft as a writer combine to make "Backcast" a treasure.

This book is misnamed...it should be named fraud cast. This book leads you to believe it is about Alaska, fishing, and fatherhood...it isn't!! This book is an overly dramatic breakdown of every issue with his childhood, and every mistake in his marriage. I truly did enjoy the outdoor and fishing

chapters, I HATED the never ending whining about his childhood and marriage. This belongs on Oprah, not an adventurer's bookcase.

Purchased as a Christmas gift Recipient was excited about reading it.

Absolutely brilliant loved it

I think the best word that describes this book is: honest. Ureneck presents an honest account of his life and relationships with his family. The focus is more on fatherhood than fishing or the heart of Alaska, which works perfectly in this account. Pick this up and you won't regret it!

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