



John van Amerongen with his Martin guitar on his way to tour the remote Aleutian processing plant.

VanAm is back at it again

Longtime fisherpoet
to perform

BY ZOË BUCHLI

John van Amerongen, known to many as “VanAm,” has been bringing his bluegrass-style music and poetry to the Fisher-Poets Gathering for nearly two decades.

Known for songs including “Truckstop Chili,” “The Ballad of the Arctic Rose” and “Night Watch,” van Amerongen’s songs tell the stories of different people he’s met and experiences he has had during his career in the fishing industry.

“I try to rely on the images and emotions that the fishing fleet feels as they’re out there and I’ve kind of learned those

things by my own experience as well,” he said.

“Truckstop Chili” was van Amerongen’s breakthrough ballad. The song, written around 1977, is a talking-style song that tells a story about truck driving.

“I started writing tunes that made sense to me,” van Amerongen said. “Most of (these songs) fell into the occupational

poetry and ballads category, especially about commercial fishing and such.”

“The Ballad of the Arctic Rose” is another of van Amerongen’s songs. The song weaves through the tragedy of the Arctic Rose fishing boat that sunk after being overloaded with an underprepared

See Page 5