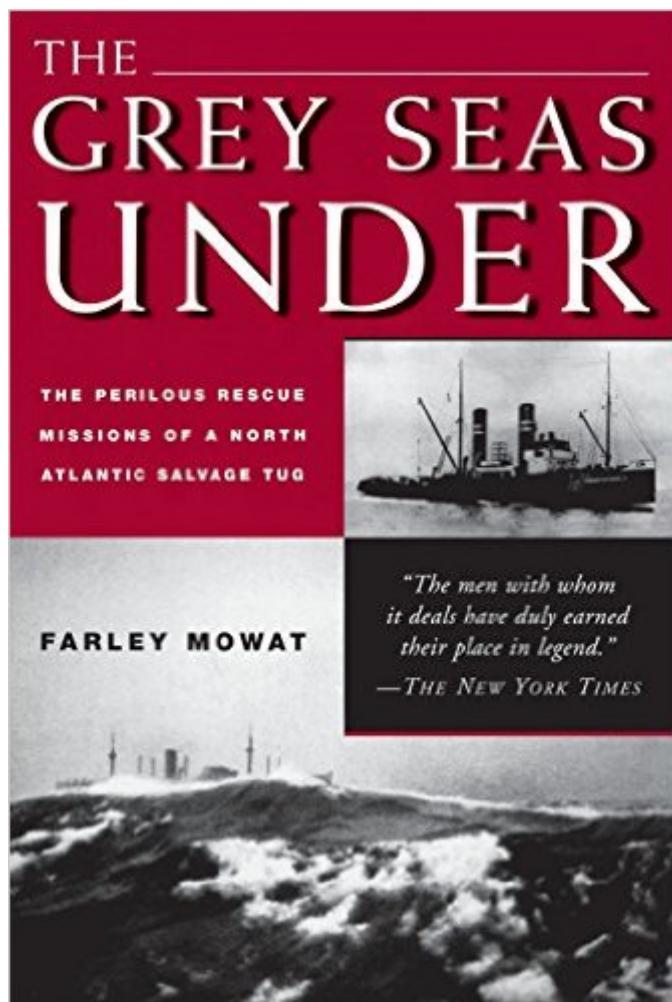


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The Grey Seas Under: The Perilous Rescue Mission Of A N.A. Salvage Tug



Synopsis

The hair-raising rescue missions of a deep-sea salvage tug that saved hundreds of lives during two decades of service in the North Atlantic.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The ocean-going salvage tug, "Foundation Franklin" was more than a match for the worst the North Atlantic could throw at her, including Force 10 gales and Nazi U-Boats. Perfect Storm, eat your heart out! Here is the real book about the great-hearted men and their staunch little ships that survived blow after blow from the Atlantic and bobbed up for more. If the author, Farley Mowat is sometimes guilty of over-the-top prose---well, he lived and worked on the Franklin, and he loved her sturdy lines, her jaunty roll, and every rivet that held her together while she rescued ships that were Goliaths to her chubby, little Baby Huey. No work could have been more dangerous; none required a higher degree of seamanship and courage than dropping a line on a berserk, lunging, steel-hulled freighter, and then towing her through the maw of a mid-December gale, or the shoals and "sunkers" of the Newfoundland coast---something the Franklin did so many times that her crew lost memory of all but their most freakish or man-killing expeditions. "Grey Seas Under" will give you an interesting perspective on the true maritime heroes of World War II. Farley Mowat doesn't pull any punches when he describes the tension that existed between the expert seamen on the ocean-going salvage and rescue tugs, and their relatively "amateur" counterparts on Canadian and American naval warships. Some of the funniest scenes in the book involve convoys of merchant ships under the "protection" of corvettes and destroyers. Once a

U-Boat had been sighted and the merchants steamed for cover, it was up to the Franklin to rescue the ones that ran into each other or shoaled themselves. Usually, the tug had to perform her duties without any cover from the warships.

As a sea officer, I learned about salvage tugs, the men who man them and the ships they've saved from stories told around the dinner table in the officers' saloon and in bars around the world. You just pray you and your ship will never have need of their services. There are many deep-ocean tugs whose names are well known in the maritime community, but Foundation Franklin was the queen of her kind. In ten words or less, if you were in trouble and she got a line on you, chances were you'd make it home. From a seafarer, there is no higher praise. Farley Mowat tells her story, from her owners acquiring her as Royal Navy surplus in 1919 until she was laid up for the last time, with loving attention to detail. He writes of her missions, from the comparatively mundane to the incredibly dangerous, in such a way that you feel the deck moving under your feet and the cold North Atlantic spray lashing your face. He puts you squarely in the middle of the action. True, the finer points will be best appreciated by those of us who make or have made our living on the deep blue, but the writing is so rich even landsmen and armchair sailors will understand and come to respect the intrepidity of the deep ocean salvage men. That's reason enough to read this book. But more to the point, Mowat manages to convey to his readers the pride that sailors feel when some of their own pull off a difficult mission. He chronicles a little known and unappreciated chapter of the Second World War: the Merchant Mariners who faced the perils of U-Boats, bomber attacks and of course the ordinary hazards of foul weather sailing; and who, by getting the cargo through, enabled the armed forces to win the war against the Nazis.

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