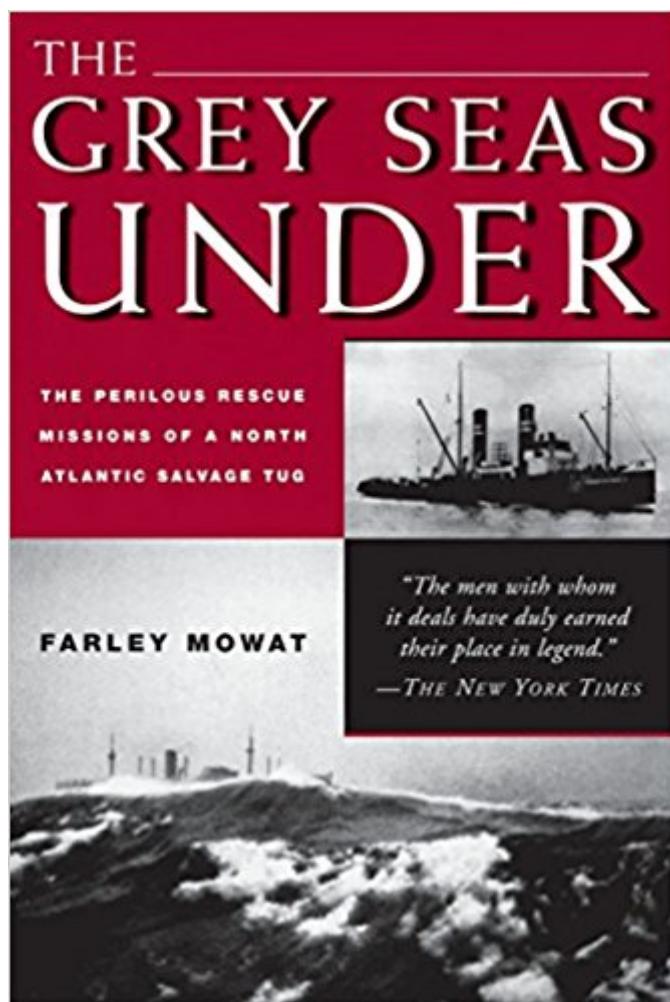


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The Grey Seas Under: The Perilous Rescue Mission Of A N.A. Salvage Tug



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

Released in 1958 and 1961, respectively, these books are Mowat's paean to tugboats of the North Atlantic. Though often overlooked, these vessels have rescued thousands of stranded ships from watery graves. Mowat proves that being a member of a deep-water tug crew is one of the most dangerous jobs a sailor can have during peacetime. Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"Here is a good book, and it merits the attention of those who love and respect the sea."--The New York Times

I first read Farley Mowat's pair of books about the oceangoing salvage tugs of Foundation Maritime, "The Grey Seas Under" and "The Serpent's Coil", when I was a teen. I have just finished re-reading them, and can't for the life of me imagine what took me so long. These are great books about the rigors of life on a salvage tug in the Atlantic Ocean. "The Grey Seas Under" is the first of the two books and is also set somewhat earlier than "The Serpent's Coil". The book largely chronicles the epic adventures of the tug "Foundation Franklin", a tug that started life in the British Royal Navy as "H.M.S. Frisky" and was responsible for making Foundation Maritime into a Canadian marine

salvage powerhouse. To say this tug had a full and productive life would be an understatement, particularly during the years of World War Two when she would frequently have to rescue freighters torpedoed by German U-Boats, exposing herself to extreme danger in the process: salvage ships were highly prized targets for the German submarines. Most people have no idea of the hazards involved with maritime salvage, but Mowat makes decades of amazing and harrowing exploits come to life in these two books: although they read like fiction, they are true. I particularly like the way Mowat can weave a spellbinding tale while still explaining technical details and business issues in interesting and relatable ways. (Who knew the Lloyd's Open Form salvage contract could be so fascinating?) The ships themselves are discussed at length, but the focus is clearly on the valor of the men who risked everything to rescue doomed ships and save their crews. If you have any interest at all in maritime salvage, ships, the sea, or adventure writing in general, do not miss "The Grey Seas Under" and "The Serpent's Coil"!

The Grey Seas Under. Hmmmm. unusual title. Under what? Farley Mowatt. Unusual name. The beginning is slow and disoriented, like being in a foggy unfamiliar harbor jammed full of rust streaked vessels, succumbing to neglect. In retrospect, the sodden tone of the beginning, that caught me off guard, was an ideal prologue. The Grey Seas Under chronicles the life of the 156' salvage tug, Foundation Franklin, originally christened H.M.S. Frisky, from her purchase in early 1930 by the Montreal-based Foundation Company of Canada, to her last assignment during the cruel winter of 1946. Her battles with the sea were epic. The men who sailed her, heroic, sometimes eccentric and the rescues she accomplished, legendary. The lives she saved: grateful beyond measure. So what makes this book a must-read masterpiece? It is not written to highlight an exemplary vocabulary. There are no superlative descriptions. Displays of elite literary proficiency are missing. The Grey Seas Under is a song. A ballad. Farley Mowatt is a minstrel, singing of a period in his life where he felt most alive, most connected to his fiber. Those days pass quickly for mortals but the tone is not sad. It is an adagio form, punctuated with rolling staccato storms. This is not a gilded representation of reality seen through progressive bifocals; this is a raw and salty reality lived by working men whose poetry sails above varnished table tops with fiddled edges and coffee mugs. No pontifications from the podium are found. If you have a paperback copy read it twice. Read it to your kids and grandkids. If you have a hardbound copy in good condition, you have an appreciating asset. BIG thanks to Ray R. for the loan of this fabulous book. The Grey Seas Under. Under what? Under the keel of a good ship. A ship that does not veer from difficulty, but takes pride in accomplishment and returns to home port, time after time. The Grey Seas Under? As it always

has been, under the watchful but impassive heavens.

Farley Mowat writes this Maritime (true) story in a captivating manner, and you will feel as though you are right there, as the tale unfolds. There is also a follow-up to this book called, "The Serpents Coil", that you will want to read too. He also wrote a book that is a "side-splitter" called "The Boat Who Wouldn't Float" (my favorite). He was a prolific writer, with "People of the Deer", "Never Cry Wolf", "A Whale For The Killing", et al. I've read most of his works, but (sadly) not all.

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