

I LOVED THIS WORK...I HAVE BEEN DELIGHTFULLY BUSY: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY BY JOHN T. CROWELL, MASTER MARINER, AT SEA AND IN THE POLAR REGIONS. Recorded in part by CAPTAIN JIM SHARP; Compiled and edited by SPENCER APOLLONIO. Stonington, Maine: Penobscot Books, 2010. ISBN 0-941238-07-6. x + 163 p., maps, b&w illus., companion DVD, appendices, glossary, index. Softbound. US\$49.95.

Coastal towns are often known for the skippers they shaped. Two such towns are Brigus, Newfoundland, home of the Bartletts, and Gloucester, Massachusetts, where Master Mariner John T. Crowell was born on February 17, 1898. Crowell spent over 50 years at sea and on the shores of the Arctic and Antarctic as skipper, logistics expert, and advisor to the U.S. Army and Air Force. Crowell's autobiography was compiled and edited by Spencer Apollonio, who included interviews with Crowell recorded by Captain Jim Sharp, Crowell's own notes and reports, tape-recorded conversations, and newspaper clippings.

Life at sea started early for Jack, as he was usually called, when he dropped out of high school and boarded the school ship, *Ranger* (later *Nantucket*), a steam barkentine vessel built in 1870. Crowell describes the practice of "Last man on deck Up and Over," in which the cadet who finished last had to repeat the climb up the rigging, over the foretop, and down the other side to the safety of the deck. Clearly this was not a life for the weak of heart.

When the United States entered the First World War, Crowell entered the civilian part of the navy, which involved service onboard a cargo carrier, one of many "60-day" vessels built in that amount of time at the beginning of the war. The Germans had taken their naval war below the ocean surface with submarine attacks. Crowell's first action could easily have been his last: his vessel was torpedoed and sunk in the Bay of Biscay. The oil-soaked and burned survivors were huddled in a life boat when the German submarine U-92 surfaced and, in what may have been a rare case of chivalry, provided the survivors with course and direction to the nearest coastal town of Brest, 350 miles away, a harrowing journey followed by long hospital stays.

In 1919, Crowell joined the crew of the three-masted, full-rigged ship *Brynhilda*, which carried an impressive 24 sails. As Crowell explained in an interview, "The heavy physical effort required by men when hauling on braces during tacking or wearing must be experienced to be appreciated" (p. 27). His further description of scrubbing decks with sandstones and shoveling ballast of stone and earth are vivid enough to convince anyone to find another occupation.

Crowell's interest in going north became reality in 1926, when the Arctic explorer Donald B. MacMillan chose Crowell to captain a two-masted schooner, *Sachem*, which was to accompany MacMillan on the *Bowdoin* for a voyage to Labrador and Greenland. The vessels remained separated for most of the journey, testing Crowell's skills to the utmost as he worked with an inadequate supply of charts,

navigating along rugged coastlines in heavy seas and ice-filled waters. Upon his return, Crowell married Alice, a remarkable woman, who turned out to be an amazing match for a man whose working life often meant long periods of separation from the home fires.

In the following years, Crowell continued to work with MacMillan, who was heading up the Rawson-MacMillan Subarctic Expedition under the auspices of the Field Museum of Chicago. In support of the expedition's research objectives, Crowell located a two-masted schooner, *Radio*, used to transport supplies and materials for an expedition hut built east of Nain, Labrador, in Anetalik [sic] Bay (presumably he is referring to Anaktalak Bay). Having completed his mission, Crowell returned south, where he was instructed by MacMillan to take the *Bowdoin* north with a complement of scientists, stopping briefly in Anaktalak Bay and then heading for Baffin Island. Sailing into the uncharted waters of Frobisher Bay was a considerable challenge, and Crowell noted that the occasional grounding was to be expected. Crowell worked as mate for MacMillan on several occasions, and the association was clearly one of complete trust.

During the Depression of the 1930s, Jack and Alice Crowell lived and worked on Burnt Island, off the coast of Maine. Later they bought part of nearby Kimball Island, where they homesteaded for a number of years. In 1937 MacMillan chartered the 116-foot *Gertrude L. Thebaud*, the last of the fishing schooners built by the Arthur D. Story yard in Essex, Massachusetts. Jack Crowell was master of the *Thebaud* on its voyage of scientific exploration to Baffin Island. Accompanying the autobiography is a DVD with movie footage of the vessel and its near-disastrous grounding in Frobisher Bay.

The biography section entitled "The Arctic in Wartime" provides a good description of military and civilian activities in the eastern Arctic during the Second World War, many under American command. Jack Crowell was busier than ever, first as a civilian government advisor on Arctic affairs, later as a captain in the U.S. Army. Much secrecy surrounded all assignments, from transporting men and constructing materials for weather stations in the eastern Arctic to establishing bases and aircraft landing areas on Baffin Island. The winter of 1941–42 was spent in Crowell's camp, also known as Crystal Two, in Frobisher Bay (near present-day Iqaluit), and Crowell's account provides good insights into the challenges of living with a few people in confined conditions. Crowell was clearly the type of person you would want to have in camp at times of stress.

Following a brief visit back home, Crowell left Alice alone once again as he headed for new assignments in East Greenland. In 1943, he was in charge of establishing a U.S. Army weather station at Cape Cort Adelaer, braving storms, crushing pack-ice conditions, and uncharted waters. Thanks to the impressive skills of the Norwegian skipper and crew of the *Polarbjørn*, Crowell completed his assignments, always on the lookout for Germans attempting similar landings.

In 1952, circumstances finally allowed Alice to join her husband on one of his assignments in the Arctic: a two-year sojourn to northern Greenland. It was now the height of the Cold War, and the U.S. Weather Bureau had decided to set up a weather station in cooperation with the Danes at North Star Bay, near the ancient settlement of Umanak and the Thule trading station established by Peter Freuchen and Knud Rasmussen in 1910. When the Crowells arrived, they were astonished to see an armada of 40 ships in the bay—landing 10,000 men and supplies in one massive, round-the-clock exercise during the brief Arctic summer. The U.S. Strategic Air Command was in the process of establishing an enormous base and fuel-storage facility at Thule. In Appendix A of the autobiography, readers will find Alice Crowell's excellent description of her time at Thule.

Crowell's remarkable post-Thule period career undoubtedly could have filled an additional volume; however, even the very condensed version in the final part of this book is filled with amazing stories about constructing landing strips on ice islands in the Arctic, visiting Peary Land, and supervising the building of the research vessel *Hero* for work in the Antarctic.

Spencer Apollonio has done an excellent job in compiling this book, and readers will enjoy both the book and the accompanying DVD: I certainly did.

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**RUN UNTIL DEAD: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE POLAR EXPEDITION DOG.** By MARGET FLORIO. Mercersburg, Pennsylvania: The Polar Press, 2010. ISBN 978-1-4507-3550-6. 138 p., maps, b&w illus., sources, index. No price indicated.

The reluctance of British explorers to use their sled dogs as food for other dogs and expedition members was the exception in the early days of polar exploration. When Danish explorer Einar Mikkelsen visited England in 1905 to seek funding for an expedition to the Beaufort Sea ice fields, Queen Alexandra was initially receptive. But her enthusiasm for the project cooled considerably when she was told that, if necessary, the dogs would be on the menu.

In *Run Until Dead*, the author presents an ode to the expedition dog as a crucial component of the successful or unsuccessful completion of numerous polar expeditions. The book is divided into three main sections. In the first, entitled "Dogs of the Arctic," after a very abbreviated description of the use of dog-drawn sleds for exploration transport, the author provides the reader with a condensed version of 19th-century polar travels. It should be noted that most of these attempts to get to the North Pole or voyage through the Northwest Passage were led by the British,

who were steadfastly determined not to take advantage of the dog-drawn transportation used so proficiently by the indigenous people they encountered. Manhauling was the way of the British to the bitter end of Captain Scott's journey to the South Pole early in the 20th century. Norwegian Fridtjof Nansen and American Robert Peary, on the other hand, were quick to incorporate dogs into their expedition planning, both as a means of transportation and as food. The author, for some reason, neglects to mention the extraordinary exploration of Otto Sverdrup and his men, who traveled widely by dog-drawn sleds in the High Arctic between 1898 and 1902.

The section ends with two more detailed accounts of the use of dogs by explorers Nansen and Peary. "Nansen's Dogs" were used during his drift expedition across the Polar Basin in *Fram* and his unsuccessful attempt to reach the North Pole with his companion Hjalmar Johansen and a team of dogs. The most interesting part of this discussion is the story of how Samoyed dogs were procured in Siberia and transported to Khabarova on the shores of the Kara Sea, where Nansen brought them onboard *Fram*. In the second account, readers learn about "Peary's Dogs," used during his six attempts to reach the North Pole between 1886 and 1908.

In the book's second section, "Dogs of the Antarctic," the reader is introduced to the Norwegian-born Carsten Borchgrevink, leader of the first Antarctic expedition to use sledge dogs and to overwinter on the continent. During the expedition, Borchgrevink and two companions, using dogs and skis, reached 78°50' south. His achievements received little attention in England—he was, after all, not British. As a further illustration of the British reluctance to use dogs on polar expeditions, the author presents us with "Scott's Dogs," hardly the conveyance championed by Robert Falcon Scott. The dogs used during the British National Antarctic Expedition should more appropriately be known as Meares' Dogs, for the amazing character Cecil Meares, who was instructed by Scott to head to Eastern Siberia and purchase dogs and ponies for the expedition. The story of Meares' trials and tribulations getting the animals to New Zealand for embarkation to Antarctica and his further involvement with the march south is a worthy account on its own.

In remarkable contrast follows the story of "Amundsen's Dogs," used during Roald Amundsen's successful quest to reach the South Pole, beating Scott to the illusive point in the white wilderness by one month. Always the meticulous expedition planner, Amundsen relied on the dogs to haul sleds and to be served up as food for other dogs and the men along the way. The sole survivor among the dogs was "The Colonel" who was brought back to Norway by Oskar Wisting, one of the Pole party members. The second section concludes with descriptions of the dogs attached to Antarctic expeditions led by Douglas Mawson, Ernest Shackleton, Ernest Joyce, Richard Byrd, Robert Dover, and Vivian Fuchs.