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Rescue at Sea

Alex R. Larzelere

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were manned by naval officers and crews while others remained with the Treasury Department (sometimes serving under the operational control of the army or the navy). A case in point is the Second Seminole War (1836-1842) during which revenue cutters cooperated with naval vessels in Florida waters. In 1841 the cutters *Jefferson*, *Madison*, and *Van Buren* were transferred to the Navy Department, yet King continues to discuss their operations as if they were still revenue cutters. This is surprising because one of his principal sources, *Records of Movements: Vessels of the United States Coast Guard*, makes it clear that the three schooners were naval vessels until their return to the Treasury Department.

King's problem, however, is that of giving importance to the war services of relatively few, small, weakly-armed ships. Certainly cutter sailors fought bravely on occasion, but their opponents were usually privateers or other small vessels whose loss was unlikely to be noted with concern by the enemy. During the Mexican War the navy found itself embarrassingly short of shallow-draft ships able to operate close inshore and to ascend rivers; even then, purchased steamers proved more effective in this task than the few cutters that joined the Gulf Squadron. King's final chapter puts this matter in perspective—the Revenue Cutter Service's part in the Civil War requires no more than fourteen pages of text.

The author does not neglect the peacetime functions that justified the service's existence: enforcement of the nation's customs and maritime revenue

laws; saving of life and property at sea; suppression of piracy and the slave trade; working with aids to navigation; and generally assisting other governmental agencies in the discharge of their duties. With regard to the first of these, he points out quite properly that success was by no means foreordained; smuggling had long been a part of American life, and efforts by the British authorities to suppress it had added to the grievances which culminated in the American Revolution. Yet the Revenue Cutter Service did succeed, in large part because of the care with which cutter officers were chosen, and also because the cutters won acceptance by the seaboard population through their performance of humanitarian duties.

The cutters' dispersal and the multiplicity of their duties posed obvious organizational problems; nonetheless, King's use of topical divisions within a chronological framework is reasonably effective. The illustrations generally complement the text, and the notes are extensive. One wonders, however, about the author's repeated references to his earlier work as a source.

ROBERT ERWIN JOHNSON
University of Alabama

Waters, John M., Jr. *Rescue at Sea*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1989. 324pp. \$28.95
The history and heritage of the United States is closely linked with the great

oceans that wash our shores, the vast lakes that dominate our northern border, and the rivers that twist and cut their way through our heartland. Not only are these waterways vital factors in our economic prosperity, they are sources of recreation as well.

John Waters has chronicled the valuable contributions of the Coast Guard men and women who routinely risk their lives to deliver mariners and their property from peril. He describes the service's humanitarian work in vivid detail, and includes accounts of daring rescues from his own experiences. During his distinguished career as a search and rescue (SAR) aviator and mariner, Waters participated in more than 5,000 missions. It would be difficult to find anyone better qualified to discuss the subject. The author is an internationally renowned authority on maritime emergency operations and the principal author of the *American National Search and Rescue Manual*. He is also credited with the idea for a National Search and Rescue School jointly operated by the Coast Guard (Maritime SAR) and Air Force (Inland SAR) to train rescue personnel from other countries as well as the United States.

In this expanded version of an earlier edition, the author has included areas of Coast Guard activity beyond search and rescue. The service's resurgent role in law enforcement is traced from the days of prohibition to modern drug enforcement operations. He describes the service's response to the flow of refugees

streaming north from the Caribbean, including the extensive rescue and enforcement operations during the Cuban Exodus of 1980—the Coast Guard's largest peacetime rescue operation. Waters also addresses the difficult task faced by many Coast Guard crews in shifting from the rescue mode to enforcement when dealing with Haitian refugees. The Haitians, attempting to reach the United States, are taken from overloaded and unseaworthy boats and returned to Haiti.

While in Chapter 4 the problem of locating distressed vessels is addressed, the book deals primarily with the rescue phase of search and rescue. There is no mention of how an Operations Center plans a search and coordinates the assignment of resources, which would help readers understand the complexity of the overall problem. Also missing is a discussion of the use of sophisticated tools such as Computer Assisted Search Planning (CASP) in organizing and executing large area searches, which would have been of interest.

Captain Waters is the first person to present, in fascinating narrative, the story of maritime rescue from the post-World War II era to the present. His style is uncomplicated, and he has skillfully combined his personal experiences with well researched data. The book, sprinkled with humorous anecdotes, is enjoyable as well as informative. For those who have flown through murky skies or stood on heaving decks, the descriptive stories of lost aircraft and

foundering ships are sure to evoke the response, "There, but for the grace of God, go I."

ALEX R. LARZELERE
United States Coast Guard (Ret.)
Alexandria, Virginia

McPhee, John. *Looking For A Ship*.

New York: Farrar Straus Giroux,
1990. 242pp. \$18.95

"Looking for a ship" is the American merchant mariners' phrase for attending hiring calls at union halls and comparing dates on their National Shipping Cards: the longer they have been without work, the higher their position at the hiring call. With fewer American-flag vessels operating each year, looking for a ship is a discouraging and disheartening process for a professional mariner.

John McPhee has a remarkable talent for writing about such disparate things as geology, civil engineering, Alaska, and deltoid pumpkin seeds. He adroitly tells us a good deal about something we didn't know we were interested in, demonstrates its significance, and leaves us with a fresh understanding of the subject.

McPhee signed himself aboard the SS *Stella Lykes*, an American-flag container ship, for a forty-two day voyage through the Panama Canal and down the west coast of South America. He was a P.A.C. (Person in Addition to Crew), a sort of supernumerary. The *Stella Lykes* was unusual in this day, for she flew the American flag and had an American crew.

Looking For A Ship is both a journal of that voyage and, more importantly, a commentary on the unhappy state of the American merchant marine today. In the last decade, the American merchant marine has declined from two thousand ships to fewer than four hundred. Jobs for experienced mariners are so scarce that one must often spend an enforced six months on the beach so that the work can be shared. Crews are aging; on the *Stella Lykes* the average age of the crew was fifty-one. No new ships are being built, and few young men and women can look to maritime careers.

Foreign, often subsidized, competition appears to be the core cause. The standards to which American ships are kept—construction, maintenance, licensing, and labor—are easily undercut by those flying flags of convenience. As a result, we haven't enough American-flag ships to meet congressionally mandated shipping shares. Less than the required one-half of foreign aid is now moved on American vessels. McPhee tells of American jet engines for F-14s carried to Israel in Russian-flag ships.

For readers of the *Naval War College Review*, McPhee's account is more than a sad tale of neglect and indifference: it has strategic significance. We are a continental nation that is greatly dependent on and involved with foreign trade. Our strategic interests are widely spread and forward-based at the ends of many sea lanes. At this writing, we are shipping immense amounts of material to the Persian Gulf theater; foreign ships have had to