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Thaddeus D. Novak. *Life and Death on the Greenland Patrol, 1942.* J. Capelotti. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005. xx + 205 pp. $59.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8130-2912-2.

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Cold Water Warfare

Early in the Second World War the protection of Greenland proved a necessity to the Allied war effort. As a refueling station and as a weather observation post, the island proved to be a valuable strategic asset. The Coast Guards' experience in Artic waters made them the natural choice to protect the island, and Task Force 24.8, under the authority of the commander in chief of Atlantic naval forces, was chosen for this assignment. The men sent to Greenland faced a daunting task marked by rough weather in a desolate landscape.

Thaddeus D. Novak was a young seaman, first class, when he embarked aboard the U.S.C.G. *Nanok*, a fishing trawler hastily converted into an Artic cutter and made part of TF 24.8 in June of 1941. Despite the fact that keeping a personal journal was prohibited, Novak kept an account of his six months on the Greenland Patrol on board the *Nanok*. The document sent to the U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office by the author in 1994–before his death in 1997– represents in the words of the editor "one of the few first-hand accounts to survive from the early crisis period of the Greenland Patrol and the only such first-hand account from the perspective of an involved young enlisted seamen" (p. xx). It is a tale of misery, loneliness, and peril: While the specific instances may have been unique to Novak and his shipmates, the general experiences are universal to fighting men and women across time.

Novak's journal makes for a fascinating account of life aboard one the small vessels patrolling the west coast of Greenland. If Novak's journal is divided in seven parts–from June to December 1942–his narrative can be broken down into three main parts. The first relates his journey from the Coast Guard Receiving Station in Boston to his arrival in Greenland. The voyage through Boston, Halifax, and the Labrador Sea offers a glance at the composite crew on board the *Nanok*. As crew members begin to work together, they must learn to relate to their captain, Lieutenant (j.g.) Magnus G. Magnusson. Unconcerned with traditional naval hierarchy, Magnusson slowly gains the respect of Novak and the crew.

The second part of the narrative follows Novak through the five months he spent in Greenland. Despite the need to guard the island against a potential German threat, the *Nanok* spends its time ferrying men and material around the west coast of the island. The backdrop is one of homesickness, frigid weather, and general boredom.

Finally, the third and last part of Novak's account describes the trip back home amidst bad weather, dangerous seas, and a vicious storm that threatens to send the ship to the bottom of the sea. For those who have served in the hazards of an icy and stormy sea, the peril is very real.

The richness of Novak's story lies in its description of daily business aboard a small Artic trawler in Greenland and it offers a fascinating look at ordinary seamen's life during these troublous times. Novak's journal offers intimate insight into the nature of relationships amongst

crew members on such a small and cramped vessel, as well as a look into the discipline that reigned on board. Moreover, Novak's journal portrays the uneasy relationship between the local natives and the American servicemen in Greenland.

Although Professor P.J. Capelotti has edited the diary and offers, through endnotes, additional material and information, Novak's journal must be handled with care. As the author explains in his preface: "This true story is an expansion of my wartime diary" (p. 3) and this gives rise to a serious issue as to what was edited and what constitutes original material? Moreover, a glossary of maritime "parlance" might be useful to the uninitiated reader.

These remarks don't, however, lessen the value of Novak's chronicle and it earns a well-deserved place on the reading lists of many maritime and Second World War history courses.

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