

A Global Forum for Naval Historical Scholarship

International Journal of Naval History

August 2008

Volume 7 Number 2

D. Thaddeus Novak, *Life and Death on the Greenland Patrol, 1942*. Gainesville FL : University Press of Florida , 2005. 206pp., Forward by James C. Bradford and Gene A. Smith, figures, photographs, appendix, notes, references, index.

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Thaddeus D. Novak's, *Life and Death on the Greenland Patrol, 1942* is a six month diary account (June-December) of life aboard the Coast Guard vessel *Nanok*. The journal focuses on the day-to-day life of an average serviceman and describes the feelings, loneliness and homesickness of men at war. It gives the reader an insight into encounters between sailors and native Greenlanders and documents the trials and tribulations of friendships and the endurance of spirit in the face of adversity.

At the age of 21, Ted Novak found himself on board one of ten fishing trawlers converted to Arctic service. Greenland cryolite (used in the production of aluminium) was the cornerstone of the U.S. aircraft industry since the 1920's and accounted for practically all of Greenland 's exports. Greenland was also used as a refuelling stop for planes flying between North America and Great Britain . In 1942, it was the *Nanok*'s duty to safeguard the southern coast of Greenland against enemy submarines and to transport supplies and people from various weather stations and military camps. Despite *Life and Death* being a tale of one young man's battle against cold and loneliness, Novak considered himself lucky to be among the glaciers and frigid temperatures of Greenland when at the time thousands of American servicemen were dying in warmer climes.

Some of the most enjoyable aspects of *Life and Death* are the author's amusing tales of encounters with the native peoples. Whether it be feeling a woman's hips while part of a conga line on a frozen beach, or being seduced by a forty-two inch woman (luckily for Novak the woman's clothing reeked of urine and he was not tempted by her touch), the reader is sure to enjoy a few laughs at the author's expense. For those who have been away from home for long periods, it is easy to relate to the crew members who had their creature comforts in the form of candy bars and green olives. In addition to food, the most prized possession for the men on board the *Nanok* were letters from home. Novak often held letters from his new wife close to his chest and fell asleep to the sweet smell of her perfume. This type of homesickness was often almost more than he could bare.

Life and Death on the Greenland Patrol is not a book for those seeking an action packed read filled with harrowing war stories. The author's many days of idleness are often described in his entries and he constantly talks of his loneliness and boredom. Novak's obsession with becoming a coxswain is also a major part of the book; this goal gave the author something to concentrate on other than the mind numbing cold and the excruciating homesickness. One of the most exciting parts of the book is the return journey of December 1942 when the crew battled the elements to return to Constitution Wharf in time for Christmas. The protagonist faced several near death experiences and spent hour after frigid hour chipping ice from the *Nanok*.

This book is unique in World War II naval history as it is only one of a few first-hand accounts written from the perspective of an enlisted seaman during the critical early period of the Greenland Patrol. It is also one of the few literary works that focus on the role of the Coast Guard in the Second World War. This account may have been lost to history if Novak destroyed his journal as ordered by Chief George Tolledo. The keeping of a diary was a direct violation of standing orders and Novak would have faced a court-martial if Chief Tolledo did not take pity on him.

Life and Death on the Greenland Patrol is an enjoyable read for anyone wishing to learn more about the function of the Coast Guard or simply know more about life and survival in the Arctic . If Novak had followed orders, this epic account of one man's inner struggle to battle loneliness, depression and boredom in one of the most inhospitable places on earth, would have been lost forever. Ted Novak received a medical discharge because of a back injury in 1943. His diary did not find its way to the Coast Guard Historian's Office until early 1994. He passed away in 1997.



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