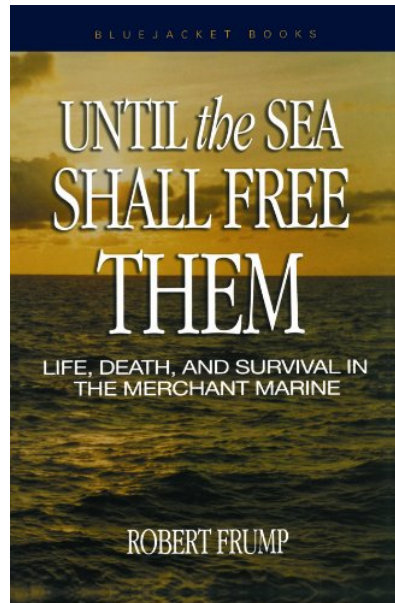


## NCQrx [GET] Until the Sea Shall Free Them: Life, Death, and Survival in the Merchant Marine (Bluejacket Books)



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Until the Sea Shall Free Them; has an unusual setting: off the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, in February 1983. There the merchant vessel Marine Electric, a coal carrier converted from a World War II-vintage Liberty ship, participated in the rescue of a fishing boat caught in a fierce storm, only to be herself overwhelmed by the raging sea. Though only 30 miles off the coast, the Marine Electric had no chance to survive, and heroic Coast Guard helicopter pilots and Navy rescue divers were barely able to rescue a handful of survivors. Frump, a former reporter for the Philadelphia Inquirer, meticulously reconstructs the sinking, along with the investigation and litigation that followed in its wake. In attempting to evade corporate liability for the sinking, the ship's owners put the blame on faulty loading and preparation for the storm by the former chief mate, Bob Cusick, who was one of the survivors. The corporation devoted immense resources to substantiating its claims, hiring marine salvage specialists for an exhaustive survey of the wreck, and naval architects to construct an elaborate theory of the accident. The theory soon began to unravel, however, due to the determination of then Philadelphia Inquirer editor Gene Roberts, who decided to have his newspaper investigate the whole issue of marine safety and turned loose Frump and other reporters on the story. Frump's book recounts in some detail how the journalists penetrated layers of industry secrecy and the closed ranks of seamen fearing for their jobs to establish that old Liberty ships were virtual serial sinkers. In this page-turner, Frump starts from a single sinking to expose weaknesses in the entire system of maritime safety and sketchy reforms that ultimately took out of service many of the old unseaworthy Liberty ships.

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