



## A Unique Life at Sea

**Peter Skog**

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*A Unique Life at Sea is a riveting memoir that gathers rare adventures together.*

Peter Skog's exhilarating and hair-raising memoir *A Unique Life at Sea* is about his work on the oceans.

Raised in the Swedish port city of Malmö, Skog spent his sixteenth summer working on a cargo ship. He returned committed to a career at sea. After finishing high school and attending nautical college, he spent the next five decades on the water. Wild adventures, narrow escapes, and rich memories followed at a nonstop pace.

The book takes off at jet speed. Ashore in a Honduran port, Skog's first sexual encounter leads to a jealous spat and triggers a bar brawl that ends in arrest and detainment in a rickety jail. Having learned his lesson, Skog emerges as conscientious, if still quick to embrace adventure—a recurrent theme that leads to exploits like skiing down an Antarctic mountain as crevices shear off around him.

Stories come thick and fast and create a craving for more; each is fresh and distinctive. Scenes are packed with incidents and sharp, focused descriptions. Action scenes unfold without digression, involving the audience in the thick of their events. When background information is needed, it's woven into the text as a story of its own: telling the story of the 1789 mutiny aboard the HMS *Bounty* adds palpable anticipation to a dive to the ship's skeleton.

When Skog signs on to the *Lindblad Explorer*, the first passenger ship to glimpse Antarctica, it's a turning point in the narrative, opening it up to locales and experiences rare to their times. Settings take center stage, with descriptions of the alien beauty and ever-present dangers of Antarctica and the remoteness of islands throughout the South Pacific. Contrasts between the contemporary world and the world of the 1970s are recurrent, nodding to cumbersome communications before the internet, and how ships navigated by stars and calculations, rather than with GPS.

As Skog rises to more exacting positions and comes to captain a ship, the memoir depicts what it takes to be part of the senior crew. Accounts of navigating through ice floes, careful calculations, and close calls with rocks, other vessels, and towering storms are dramatic.

The book's sense of love for the sea, and of the strong bond between Skog and his boat, is constant, preserving a sense of grand adventure into the end. Details about Skog's family life on shore and his accomplishments at sea round out the book, while dramatic, high-quality color photographs of locales, crewmates, and others encountered along the way amplify it further.

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SUSAN WAGGONER (February 28, 2020)

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