



Escape from Archangel: An American Merchant Seaman at War

Thomas E. Simmons

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During World War II, merchant marine tankers in convoys plied the frozen North Atlantic through the flaming wreckage of torpedoed ships. Working to keep sea lanes open, valiant merchant seamen supplied food, fuel, and goods to the Allies in the last pockets of European resistance to the Nazis.

This exciting book acknowledges that the merchant marines, all volunteers, are among the unsung heroes of the war. One of these was Jac Smith, an ordinary seamen on the *Cedar Creek*, a new civilian tanker lend-leased to the U.S.S.R. and in the merchantman convoy running from Scotland to Murmansk. Smith's riveting adventures at sea and in the frozen taigas and tundra are a story of valor that underlines the essential role of merchant marines in the war against the Axis powers.

This gripping narrative tells of a cruel blow that fate dealt Smith when, after volunteering to serve on the tanker headed for Murmansk, he was arrested and interned in a Soviet work camp near Arkhangelsk.

Escape from Archangel recounts how this American happened to be imprisoned in an Allied country and how he planned and managed his escape. In his arduous 900-mile trek to freedom, he encountered the remarkable Laplanders of the far north and brave Norwegian resistance fighters. While telling this astonishing story of Jac Smith and of the awesome dangers merchant seamen endured while keeping commerce alive on the seascape of war, *Escape from Archangel* brings long-deserved attention to the role of the merchant marine and their sacrifices during wartime.

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