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Tuning the Rig: A Journey to the Arctic

Harvey Oxenhorn

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Harvey Oxenhorn : Tuning the Rig: A Journey to the Arctic before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Tuning the Rig: A Journey to the Arctic:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great adventure, great life.By markfavThis is one of the best creative nonfiction / memoir books I have read in years. Although it is out of print, I recommend getting a used copy. This is an account of Harvey Oxenhorn's self discovery and world discovery. The tall mast ship on which he sailed is a metaphor for life and the importance of relationships. It is an incredible story of how one can learn something totally new that is seemingly disconnected from everyday life yet in reality is intimately connected with the living of life. He learned how to go beyond his comfort zone, face danger and the real prospect of death,the necessity of relying on and trusting others, and a whole host of other things.And, are you curious what the title, "Tuning the Rig" means? Well, get the book. I don't think you will be disappointed!0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Jeff BuddIf you like travel stories this is a very good one.3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A sad lossBy John the ReaderWhy, oh why is this masterwork "long out of print"? Because the author died so young perhaps, in a fatal accident shortly after it was published? That accident deprives us, a potentially great, engaging author lost to readers far too early. Probably a greater loss to teaching and scholarship. An incredibly good read, great easy-flowing prose, startling revelations and insights as this "landlubber" grows into a tall-ship sailor.A whale-watching research cruise into the Arctic, up among our beloved "newfies" and their hard fishing lives, this Professor finds several 'animals' of interest. "To think differently about these animals is to think differently about ourselves as well. From now

on, we must all stand watch. One tribe. One family. One crew."The work reduced this reader to tears by the final chapters, even as he read and sang-along to those half remembered shanties, feeling again those wet-feet moments and the hearing the laughter and jeers of long forgotten shipmates. An apt and regretted memorial to this author.If you find a copy, do read and enjoy it.

An Excerpt: 25 July. 69 N/52 W. Off Jakobshavn.I'm on the wheel at 0600 hours, steering toward the eastern shore of Disko Bay. Having circled the sky at a height of six degrees off the horizon all night long, the sun now oozes upward like a squashed fruit, spreading its pulpy light across a wreckage of ice and stone. The Jakobshavn Glacier, so-called Mother of Icebergs, sprawls dead ahead, grinding seaward at the rate of sixty feet per day, dropping aircraft carrier-sized icebergs into the blue-black sea.Seven miles offshore we meet our first ice. Closer in it is everywhere; there is often one floe ten yards to starboard and another just as close to port. These chunks are not pack ice formed from the frozen sea. They are splinters, dumptruck-sized, of larger icebergs. It's impossible to guess just how much farther they extend beneath the surface.Under normal conditions the person on helm may let the compass wander up to five degrees, holding course over time by balancing the swings to either side. But when maneuvering here, straying even one degree could cause real trouble. Square-riggers don't respond like sports cars; steering is hard work, you have to know what you're doing, and at such times in the past it's been routine for a deckhand to take over. So I am surprised, to put it mildly, when George does not replace me at the helm. My arms are tired, and my back is tense. I keep my eyes glued to the compass and my fingers tight around the wheel. George stands on the roof of the after deckhouse, above and behind me. Amidships, everyone maintains silence so that the helmsman can hear and repeat the captain's orders.- What's your bearing, Harvey?- One seven eight.- Come to one seven nine.- One seven nine. (Twenty seconds pass.) One seven nine, on.- Steady. (A half minute passes.) What's your bearing?- One seven nine.- Come two stokes to port.- Two strokes to port.- Come four strokes to port.- Four strokes to port, aye.- What is your bearing?- One seven eight.- Steady onThere are all kinds of intimacy in the world. This one proceeds, uninterrupted and unadorned, until I lose track of time. I almost lose myself in the hypnotic counterpoint of order and

From Publishers WeeklyThe Regina Maris is a white oak barkentine built in 1908, now converted to a training ship for oceanographic research. When he signed on as apprentice, Oxenhorn had romantic expectations about a voyage from Boston to Greenland by way of Newfoundland and Labrador. The object was to study humpback whales. Once under way, however, Oxenhorn became indignant and frustrated by sheer hard work, lack of free time and cramped quarters. Yet when the Regina returned to port 66 days later, he had a totally different perspective on his 29 shipmates and himself. His journal reflects the changes in his attitude and his awareness of his role in society and the environment. There are fine descriptive passages that evoke the desolation of northern seas and poverty in Greenland. Oxenhorn, whose poetry has appeared in the Atlantic and Southern , has written a captivating travel-adventure story. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc.From Library JournalThis is a rather poetic account (indeed in the later chapters we discover the author is a poet) of a voyage via barkentine north from Boston with Greenland its ultimate destination. Aside from a few professionals on board (captain, engineer, and scientists), the crew is amateur. Engagingly written, this features descriptions of sail handling, whales and their habits, much on icebergs, and the areas visited. In essence, it's good reading, and the reader learns a great deal about hitherto unfamiliar subjects. Maps should add to one's comprehension. Recommended in particular for libraries with readers interested in sealore, sailing, and geography.- Robert E. Greenfield, formerly with Baltimore Cty. P.L.Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc. "... it mingles beautifully crafted evocations of the sea, land and wildlife with honest descriptions of life and work in the ship's tightly knit community." -- The Toronto Globe Mail"An eloquent and vibrant spiritual journey." -- The Boston Globe"He is at his best and most passionate when he speaks of man's depredation of the ocean." -- The New York Times Book "Thoroughly engaging. An eye-opening odyssey." -- Boston Sunday Herald