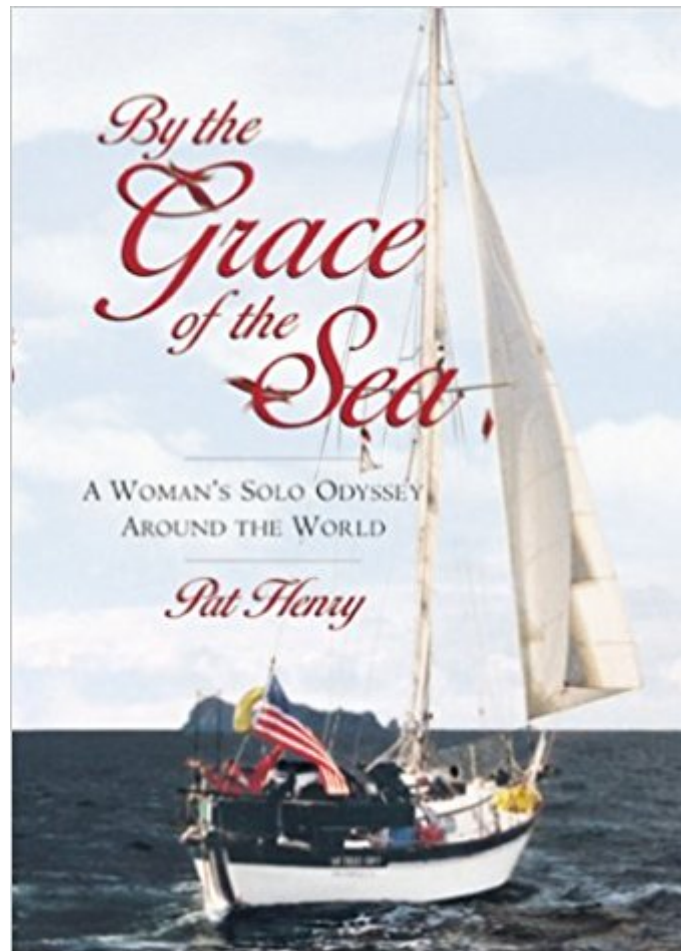




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By The Grace Of The Sea : A Woman's Solo Odyssey Around The World



Synopsis

On May 5, 1997, when Pat Henry anchored her 31-foot Southern Cross sailboat in Acapulco Harbour, she became the first American woman to sail around the world alone. At 56, with two adult daughters and three grandchildren, she is also the oldest woman in the world to have done so. Her voyage began in 1989 and took her through 40 countries, 27,000 miles and eight years. Her longest passage at sea was her first, 36 days from Acapulco to the Marquesas Islands in the South Pacific. Sailing without sponsorship and with little money, learning as she went, Henry encountered storms, near collisions, fatigue, equipment failures, uncharted reefs, health problems and weeks of solitude in her voyage. She supported herself by selling her watercolours - one reason the trip took so long. At her nadir in New Zealand, down to her last \$3, unable to sell paintings, she abandoned herself to despair and considered ending her life by stepping off the boat. But this resourceful and resilient sailor also found beauty, diversity, romance and a network of friendships around the globe. Her solo circumnavigation is a triumph to rival Joshua Slocum's -the prototype for all that have followed. Henry's adventure began with the collapse of her import business in 1988. In debt and suffering a crisis of self-doubt, she moved aboard a 21-year-old sloop to live frugally in Santa Cruz harbour while working in a shoreside graphic arts studio. But Henry's wanderlust soon propelled her out of the harbour for a "brief cruise" to Mexico, and then, impetuously, onward around the world, never fully realizing the magnitude of her undertaking. A voyage of eight years cannot be written as a continuous narrative. Rather, the manuscript is a rich tapestry woven from discrete, chronologically sequential episodes like those in the attached writing sample. Several recurring elements - the author's letters to her friend Kitty; brief, dated logbook entries; and brief transcripts of the Voice of America broadcasts that brought the momentous events of the world into Henry's cabin in midocean - give structure to the narrative. So, too, do the maps that open each of the book's seven sections. Buoyantly adventurous by nature, Pat Henry is also a good storyteller and an admirable protagonist. There is good travel writing here, informed by an artist's eye and an observant student of human nature. Her best writing is in her descriptive passages, whether of people, a marketplace, or a tropical anchorage. Her story will require careful editing for continuity and transition, but the end result promises to be a winner. Illustrated, full-colour endsheets show photos from the voyage as well as several of the vivid watercolours Henry painted of scenes encountered along the way. These delightful paintings tell the reader much about the storyteller.

Book Information

Hardcover: 388 pages

Publisher: International Marine Publishing; First Edition edition (August 9, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0071355278

ISBN-13: 978-0071355278

Product Dimensions: 9.3 x 6.2 x 1.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.7 pounds

Average Customer Review: 3.5 out of 5 stars 24 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,886,152 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #98 in [Books > Sports & Outdoors > Outdoor Recreation > Sailing > Narratives](#) #252 in [Books > Travel > Specialty Travel > Solo Travel](#) #1704 in [Books > Sports & Outdoors > Outdoor Recreation > Boating](#)

Customer Reviews

With a bankrupt business, pending lawsuits and an audit by the IRS, Henry had plenty of reasons to hit the deck. In 1989 she set sail aboard the 31-foot Southern Cross and traveled the world. Eight years later Henry returned to Acapulco, Mexico; at 56, she became the oldest American woman (not the first, as the book jacket erroneously reports) to complete a solo circumnavigation. Over the course of this memoirish travelogue, Henry emerges as an artist, creating original watercolors of the coastal villages she calls home, mounting exhibitions in galleries across the globe and earning enough money to support her sailing. She also develops a deeper understanding of herself. Indeed, Henry may well be construed as a shining example of midlife reinvention, an inspiration to woman wishing to put aside the past in pursuit of a dream. Unfortunately, Henry's narrative lacks the requisite arc and flow of a compelling story. Full of mundane details (including what she ate for breakfast, the contents of her pantry and her latest book selections), the writing feels slow and weighted. Endless laments about her failed business, unlucky love life and strained relationship with her daughter fine fodder for a private diary feel cliched and tiresome when issued for public consumption. Occasionally, Henry peppers the text with anecdotes about the political history of each region, serving to right the sinking ship. Watercolors and b&w photos not seen by PW. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

Henry, the first American woman to sail 27,000 miles solo around the world, left Acapulco in her 31' sailboat, Southern Cross, on May 4, 1989, and returned eight years later on May 5, 1997. Except for approximately two years intermittently exploring some of the 40 islands and countries en route, Henry spent her time navigating treacherous waters and endured gale-force winds, high seas,

equipment and navigation failures, and the constant, frightful prospect of nighttime collision with behemoth cargo ships. In log-book diary form, she recounts the encounters and events of her long journey-first to Polynesia and the Coral Sea, then through the Malacca Straits to the Arabian Sea and onward to the Red Sea, the Mediterranean, and the North Atlantic, until finally she threads the Caribbean homeward. The narrative is garrulous yet informative and evocative, but the editorial decision to substitute original letters for creations that "reflect closely the nature and content of real letters" compromises its authenticity. Still, this tactic neither diminishes Henry's accomplishment nor detracts from the interest this memoir will generate. For most public and large academic libraries.

Lonnie Weatherby, McGill Univ. Lib., Montreal

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I met the author while on vacation in Mexico many years ago. She had recently completed this voyage and was relaxing while deciding what to do next. Pat Henry is one of the most successful humans I have met -- she has mastered the art of LIVING LIFE. Her 'adventure' continues. She operates a women's sailing school. Last I heard her new passions are the Tango and Yoga.

I know one of the couples mentioned in the book which is the main reason I bought it. I am having difficulty getting through the story because I find it drags. My mind frequently drifts off to other things while I'm reading. I have put the book away for awhile & will try it again in the future.

This is a marvelous book, very well written, about an amazing adventure. Her story of sailing around the world in a 31-foot boat is interesting enough. To do it all alone, without enough money to start with, having to figure out ways of making money in strange ports as she went - that is amazing. I sailed around the world in a 42 foot boat with my wife to share the duties and with enough money. I thought I had an adventure. To do it the way Pat did is truly remarkable. Her writing accurately reflects the joys and challenges of world cruising. Seen from a woman's eyes, she saw things I never saw (I'm male) She was exposed to dangers I never was, and she reacted to situations in ways that help me understand women a little better. On top of all this, she deals intimately with the healing of troubled relationships she left at home, and the rethinking of what she wants her life to be. I enjoyed every page of this book.

Pat Henry is truly an exceptional adventuress. A solo voyage around the world is amazing undertaking. Her trials and tribulations, plus her accomplishments are wonderful to read about.

good reading

Terrible just terrible...Pat must have run out of money again! This is the first book "about sailing" I have not been able to finish. She should never have been talked into writing it. Some of the most wonderful sailing adventures have been written by women and I have read them again and again over the years. Female sailors have amazing insights into sea passage that escapes males and I have searched for that something amazing here. Pat Henry does not bring it. This book is pathetic, in that, I cannot find a portrait of the author, who is most enthusiastic about telling the reader about herself. I do not know why she went to sea other than escape from the IRS. Who is she? The portrait I am left with is that of an author trying to make-a-buck. I can understand that some readers will find Pat Henry courageous for sharing intimate details of her life--I do not. There needs to be some point in doing so. The author must have felt some measure of catharsis in writing the book and I truly hope it has made her well-off. I have endeavored (not nearly hard enough) to like Pat Henry. But I just cannot get past the notion that she is sharing intimacy for money. I suppose this is a book you must like the author and what-is-more want to help her financially in order to finish it. Rather, I would like my money back. There we go throwing more abuse on poor Patty!

Well, I have read this. It is a how to "not to" sail around the world. You might notice that there are a lot of books on the shelves by people who didn't practice, didn't study, didn't review, didn't safety drill, didn't train, and then went out to adventure, got them selves into a jam, and struggled to get out of it, then published a book, did a speaking tour, or perhaps even made a movie. Rather than be careful, be prudent, learn, practice, and train, it is better financially if you just go out there, find a rock to fall on you, cut off your own arm, and then write a book and sell it. Then there are those suckers who pay off their mortgage first and then go out and buy a sailboat.

As I finish my second reading, a few impressions strike me. First, as other's point out, she does whine more than is quite right for a sailor. Yes, there are weather and equipment problems - that's adventuring and sailing. Other sailors make light of their problems, focusing more on solutions. She went to sea unprepared, not having developed a skill-set as a sailor, as a mechanic, or as an adventurer and with no notion that these skills had value. Second, she lived far too often on charity - even to the point where I assume most of the money she "earned" was really charitable. How many people bought her art not really wanting it or having a place to put it, simply because they were

nice? It's difficult to guess. Third, her personal relationships are all a mess and she can't see the common thread. She is several times angry at people for not doing something when she has failed to express to them her desires. She is prickly, angry, exacting, uncharitable, and sometimes grasping and greedy. She has a sense of entitlement and an ability to manipulate that should be a warning to any in her path. Finally, it's clear that much of the story was made up or modified to fit her interpretation. She states explicitly that she made up letters, changed names and events, and fabricated some of the story. She is careful not to say what is real and what is not. Many of the facts are just too pat to be real. Having smelled a rat in the books "A Million Little Pieces," "The Long Walk," "Desperate Voyage," and a few others, this book had a similar feel. I am certain that the bare fact of her circumnavigation is more or less real, but I also know she was perfectly happy to make up facts to sell a book. I am almost certain that she fabricated much more than she lets on. Overall, there is little here other than more evidence that you can make a living by being a huckster. I'm no art critic by any stretch, but I wouldn't ever be tempted by her paintings either.

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