THE CREST OF THE WAVE: ADVENTURES IN OCEANOGRAPHY

By Willard Bascom

1988, 318 pp., $19.95, hardbound, Harper and Row, New York

If your buckles need swashing, look no further.

The second World War ushered in a new era of oceanography, championed by entrepreneurs, driven by national needs, and fueled by federal dollars. The new protagonist was invariably male, ruggedly handsome, and chafing to go forth and tame the sea. Explorers and adventurers were our unsurpassed heroes, and oceanographers worth their salt had the right stuff, although at the time nobody knew what to call it.

Willard Bascom is a post-war oceanographer. His new book chronicles adventures that begin underground in Colorado mines, where he drills and blasts through the hard rock of youth, shuffling off dangers and wishing for more. One night, fate intervenes, in the person of John Isaacs, who offers cosmoline cocktails in lieu of a threadbare but probably accurate picture of ironman oceanography, with rough-and-ready scenes before an atomic blast starkly contrast with a poignant image of "a pair of fairy terns, blinded by the explosion, stumbling about in a clearing." Reminded of the madness, readers can only hope to escape the terns' fate.

The final third of the book continues with greater velocity but lesser impact. After the bomb tests, Bascom successively applies his special talents to deep-ocean drilling, diamond mining off Africa, treasure-hunting in the Bahamas, and wind-powered research vessels. Each of these is a tale in itself, each farther from mainline oceanography, and each an example of the author's swashbuckling style. In a few cases—for example, during the search for Spanish gold—plans go awry, and the acid residue can be tasted in the text. On the other hand, the early drilling program and its quest for the "Moho" lead directly to the presently successful ocean drilling program. And one cannot fail to be impressed by the author's creative response to the last energy crisis: a grand research schooner, four-masted, computer controlled, and named, with characteristic modesty, the R/V Willard Bascom.

Bascom's latest book reflects a time when raw energy, inventive talent, and personal charisma carried the day. The book is a sequence of adventures drawn from the author's experiences, written in the style of an embellished diary; it is not a sea story or a novel, with developed characters and connective tissue. The Crest of the Wave offers an insightful and entertaining view of oceanography when it was rapidly developing in the United States. Some readers may be put off by the author's abundant hubris, but many will appreciate his unbounded enthusiasm for new ideas.

David A. Brooks, Department of Oceanography, Texas A&M University, College Station.

Editor's Note: In addition to reviews of scientific books, we will occasionally publish thumbnail sketches of works that may have wider appeal. This category could include, for example, brief reviews of novels, biographies, and historical anecdotes—the only requirement is relevance to the ocean and interest to the reader. We solicit well-prepared reviews in either the scientific or the thumbnail vein; the latter will carry the banner "Short Takes."
great success during the forty-five years since the school’s founding. The resources available to students in the form of facilities, curriculum and faculty are extensive. The RSMAS library is accessible to students 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Each student receives nearly unlimited time on the school’s computing system, which includes links to a variety of academic and research networks. And, of course, individual divisions provide facilities equipped to satisfy research needs within their respective sub-disciplines. The small student-to-faculty ratio (~2) enables students to work closely with their advisors and to play an active role in research. These factors and more come together at the RSMAS to create an exceptional educational environment.

Despite the excellent provisions of the RSMAS, students have gone a step further and established two organizations to address student needs and concerns. These are the Marine Science Graduate Student Organization (MSGSO) and the Organization of Tropical Marine Science Students (OTMSS). Soon after the founding of the RSMAS, the MSGSO was established to insure student representation within the University. It has remained an active voice throughout the school’s history. A representative of the MSGSO occupies a voting position on the school’s Academic Committee and participates in the formulation of policy regarding students. The MSGSO also provides a number of services such as short-term, no-interest loans and new student orientation intended to help with the problems of “student life.” As a means of promoting student-faculty exchange as well as student-student interaction, the MSGSO operates a commons complete with music and a full bar. Finally, the MSGSO has created a travel fund program to provide financial assistance to students presenting and a full bar. Finally, the MSGSO has created a travel fund program to provide financial assistance to students presenting at national conferences. The above are just a few of the ways that the OTMSS will sponsor a series of workshops directed at improving students’ presentation skills.

The importance of effective communication is fully recognized among students at the RSMAS, and the planned workshops will combine expert instruction with practical experience. Individual workshops will cover written and verbal skills, and will be lead by selected faculty members noted for their presentation skills.

The above are just a few of the ways that graduate students at the University of Miami’s Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science are enriching the educational experience for themselves and their fellow students. We encourage other students to share their successes.

**The South Atlantic**


**Satellite Altimetry**


**References**


