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Wanderer



Synopsis

At seventeen, he ran away to sea. By twenty-two, he was the captain of his own brigantine. Discovered by Hollywood, he acted in more than forty motion pictures including THE ASPHALT JUNGLE and DR. STRANGELOVE. He has had three wives, including the famous film star, Madeleine Carroll. During the war he served with the O.S.S. and fought with the partisans in Yugoslavia. After the war, he joined the Communist Party and later recanted, naming the names of his fellow party members before the House Un-American Affairs Committee. Finally, scorning all that Hollywood represents, he threw up his \$160,000-a-year career and sailed for Tahiti with his four children on a voyage that made headlines all over the world. WANDERER — “A superb piece of writing. Literate and literary, rebellious and beatnik...Echoes from Poe and Melville to Steinbeck and Mailer. A work of fascination on every level: Hayden’s love of the sea, his Hollywood success, his marriages and divorces, his vision of wartime heroism, and blacklist cowardice...Brutal, savage and true.” — • New York Post.

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Customer Reviews

This is for the Kindle Version. The book is definitely controversial still, and I have to be careful not to reflect my judgement on the man here. This is a book review, not a character review. Sterling Hayden was **definitely** a man of contrasts, which makes his life story very interesting to read - even if you don't much like him. The writing is unlike anything you see today, which is more the pity. Hayden is actually a talented writer. Not a genius, but talented. The reviews at the time compare him to many people, but not Hemingway which is odd to me, for that is what I saw as I read it. Regardless, it's a pleasant and engaging style. His stories of life at sea are where the book truly shines. He was a born sailor, for sure. It was his calling and his vocation and his only peace. I don't believe that the ocean was the magic, however - Sterling Hayden was a danger-addict. He adored his time at war - at least when he was deployed - as much as he adored his life at sea. He was a risk taker extraordinaire, which makes for a great read. In all other ways his life is a mixture of tragedy, moral cowardice, and a host of other less than ideal character traits, but this is what makes the book an interesting read. There are a few transcription errors in the kindle version, but no big deal.

In 1963 I was sent by the Navy to a base in Newfoundland. Out in the boonies. I arrived the week before Thanksgiving. That Christmas I got a package from home. In it was Sterling Hayden's original print, hardback edition. I was nineteen then and it influenced me as I was in the middle of the then still vibrant cod fishery along the South Coast of Newfoundland. I am almost 70 now and have owned 18 different boats and the best was my Swampscott dory. This is a great read for any sailor and rereading it has brought back a flood of memories. When I went to look for this book a year ago I found that my hardback original print copy was now worth \$550 on E-bay. Thankfully it was available for a much better price on Kindle.

"Shortly after midnight she came to the end of the road and, with Venus Point Light bearing due south, three miles distant, we hove her to till dawn. And the ship slept under a blanket of stars and so did most of her crew. But not the one in command. He paced alone, alone and lost in memories of the time..." Wanderer, page 247. Hayden wrote *The Wanderer* (1963) and then *Voyage* (1976). Both books read like Conrad and Melville with Hayden living the life of an adventurer before and after Hollywood. He is both Melville and a character from Melville. Hayden ran away from home at fifteen to sail the Great Banks of Newfoundland: sailed around the world the first time at twenty-one, captained a square-rigger from Gloucester to Tahiti at twenty-two, and he was the navigator for the

schooner Gertrude L. Thebaud in the Fisherman's Cup the following year. News coverage of the race had led to Hollywood calling the sailor west, but he refused initially. He would sail around the world a second time before he reported to Paramount Studios in 1941. He married and seemed to settle down to a staid but secure income and life. Paramount awarded him a seven-year contract starting at \$250 a week, which was very good money then. He would break his contract in less than a year. He felt the wind and left the shore. Wanderer. Hayden was not a man easy to miss in the crowd: at six-five, with rugged good looks that earned him the moniker "The Beautiful Blond Viking God," he managed to enlist in the U.S. Marine Corps, see action, earn both the Silver Star and Bronze Star and other combat decorations, get on a first-name basis with "Wild Bill" Donovan of the OSS, precursor to the CIA, and run numerous covert gun-running and rescue operations into Yugoslavia before it had become known that he was some two-bit actor from Hollywood. In other words, Hayden had enlisted using a false name. He had dined with FDR as John Hamilton. That's acting. Hayden's missions for the nascent CIA were not declassified until 2008. Hayden was an interesting man. As an author he, like another actor who loved the sea, Humphrey Bogart, knew his Conrad, London, Melville, and Stevenson inside and out. Wanderer, in typical Haydenesque style, began as an open act of defiance. Defying a court order, he took his four children and sailed for the South Seas. He set sail with no radio. Wanderer is not a celebrity rendition of life on the lam with all the posh accoutrements; it is literary fiction drawn from living the hard life at sea with children; and Hayden demonstrates the breadth of his maritime knowledge and the depth of his reading, for the book opens with a pivotal incipit from Walter de la Mare. Substitute Wanderer for 'Traveler' and you see Sterling Hayden, the author and man, who loved his children and the sea. He was both Ishmael and Ahab.

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