



Ship Captain's Daughter: Growing Up on the Great Lakes

Ann Michler Lewis

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Ann Lewis's childhood was marked by an unusual rhythm. Each year the thawing and freezing of the Great Lakes signaled the beginning and end of the shipping season, months of waiting that were punctuated by brief trips to various ports to meet her father, the captain.

With lively storytelling and vivid details, Lewis captures the unusual life of shipping families whose days and weeks revolved around the shipping industry on the Great Lakes. She paints an intriguing and affectionate portrait of her father, a talented pianist whose summer job aboard an ore freighter led him to a life on the water. Working his way up from deckhand to ship captain, Willis Michler became the master of thirteen ships over a span of twenty-eight years. From the age of twelve, Ann accompanied the captain to the ports of Milwaukee, Chicago, Toledo, and Cleveland on the lower Great Lakes. She describes sailing through stormy weather and starry nights, visiting the engine room, dining at the captain's table, and wheeling the block-long ship with her father in the pilot house. Through her mother's stories and remarks, Lewis also reveals insights into the trials and rewards of being a ship captain's wife. The book is enhanced by the author's vintage snapshots, depicting this bygone lifestyle.

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