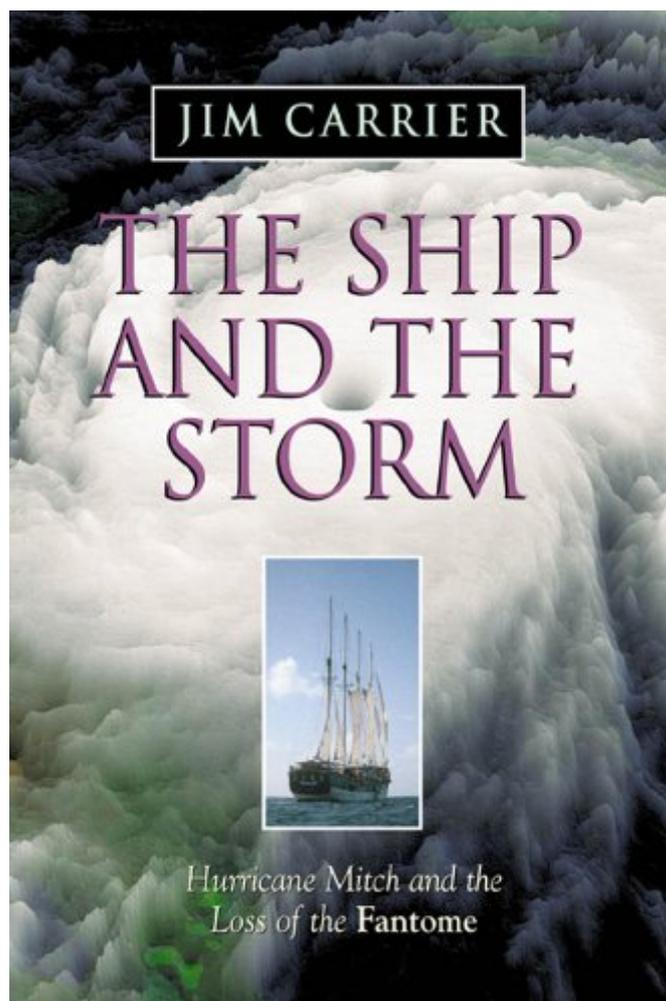


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# The Ship And The Storm: Hurricane Mitch And The Loss Of The Fantome



## Synopsis

"Utterly compulsive and unputdownable--the most exciting, authentic, and humanly moving of all the recent Storm books. Brilliantly paced and perfectly balanced. . . . Carrier is a marvelously trustworthy narrator. . . . A terrific book."--Jonathan Raban, author of *Passage to Juneau: A Sea and Its Meanings* and *Bad Land: An American Romance*"A wonderful story. An extremely well-written account of the events as I knew them. I commend Jim Carrier for a magnificent job."--Jerry D. Jarrell, Director, National Hurricane Center

In October 1998, the majestic schooner *Fantome* came face-to-face with one of the most savage storms in Atlantic history. The last days of the *Fantome* are reconstructed in vivid and heartbreaking detail through Jim Carrier's extensive research and hundreds of personal interviews. What emerges is a story of courage, hubris, the agony of command, the weight of lives versus wealth, and the advances of science versus the terrible power and unpredictability of nature.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Jim Carrier has written a comprehensive and very well researched account of a tragic event that reminds us "not to mess with Mother Nature." Many readers may be tempted to compare this to a rather famous movie "The Perfect Storm." The comparison in this book extends beyond the factors contributing to the meteorological storm itself, but goes on to describe a perfect storm formed by technological breakdowns, greed on the part of ship company owners, a legal system that invites avoidance rather than compliance with safety regulations, and an economic system that exploits developing world workers. Carrier explores the history of the national Weather Service, its successes and failures and the continuing attempts to develop better predictive technologies to forecast Hurricanes and other serious weather threats. In this part on technology, we also get to read about the hurricane hunters that fly into storms, drop sensors, and provide real time updates to those in headquarters issuing the latest information to those in harm's way from weather events. This event happened in 1998. By this time, the average people in the street trusted government services such as these to provide accurate forecasts. Those in the government looked for ways to politely say "these are estimates" while at the same time reassuring the general populace about agency credibility. This quite possibly led to a major reason for the Fantome being at exactly the wrong place at the wrong time. Captain Guyan March trusted the technology. The Windjammer company owners at this time were two generations, both named Burke. Carrier describes the history of the company and the history of the ship, the Fantome. The ship had a history from 1925, the senior Mike Burke bought the ship in 1972 when it was in such a condition that it needed major overhauls and renovation. These types of operations can be done at great expense or on the cheap. As revealed in this book, when some parts needed replacement, there were no original parts in production to be purchased for replacement. Talented crew members could create workaround parts. These same crewmembers did not have education as machinists. To get the most profit for the least monetary outlay seemed to be the de facto motto of the founding Burke. Passengers on a cruise ship expect safety regulations as to operations and ship construction to be met. As Carrier reports, there are all kinds of regulations. They are written in various countries. Choosing a country of registration, adopting its flag, and following the regulations of "adopted citizenship" could be much cheaper than registering in and following the rules of, say, the US, despite the fact that the majority of passengers might be from the US. The friendlier regulations may have even been written by officials friendly to the industry for which they were being written. Even when a ship might be inspected by US officials; compliance was only measured by standards of the registering country. Although there are formal licenses and accreditation procedures for ship personnel, they don't apply to everyone. Many of the

Fantome crew seem to be either self-taught or educated through a type of mentoring system from experienced crew. The extreme example of this was when three crew members could not disembark the ship at one port because they did not have proper visas. Trained professionals would not be lax in such a small administrative matter; a responsible monitoring company would not allow this to happen. The locally hired crew were paid much less than crew hired in more developed countries. Carrier details how, although aware, crew members accepted this system as better than available alternatives. Several may have felt obligated to stay with the ship when alternatives to leave were given them. I would have given five stars to the book except for two parts. There were the dream sequences on the part of several family members of those lost. This lent a paranormal, fiction quality to an excellent non-fiction work. Then there was the part toward the end of the book in which Carrier interviewed several marine professionals where they speculated on what may have been the last thing the dying men may have seen. This, for me, disrupted the serious, factual tone of the book. It is good, it is informative, and a book I would recommend for those who like the sea, people with angst about income inequality in a global environment, and (really this is not a stretch) even global warming.

If you are a mariner of any kind, yachting, tugboats, deep sea, you should read this book. Hurricanes/typhoons are something mariners should NEVER underestimate. This well crafted narrative will tell you why in so many ways. The author weaves together several narratives covering the sad tale of the loss of the Windjammer Cruises 'Phantome' along with several other simultaneous events surrounding this event. The horrific nature and cruelly indifferent character of Nature's violence comes through very clearly. Eye witness accounts from survivors on islands affected by the same hurricane show very well why thinking of these storms as anything but destructive, death dealing events is criminally foolish. Recent events (the El Faro loss) are more easily understood after reading this account of a tragic loss. I could hardly put this book down till finished.

This book has special meaning to my wife and I. We sailed on Fantome two weeks before it was lost. It is still the best vacation that I have ever taken and gave me memories I will never forget. We have a picture of Fantome, signed by the crew, that will always hang proudly on our wall at home. The people described in this book are more than words on paper, they were people we met and admired. It is still a good book even if you have never been on a Windjammer cruise, a story of man versus nature and what happens when nature throws us more than we can handle. So to Captain

Guyan, Brasso, Onasis, Colin, Francis, Chrispin, Bobby, Eon, and all the crew of Fantome - you truly sailed with amazing grace.

This was well researched and well written. The author not only told the story of a ship, but also told of the crew in such a way as to make the reader feel like he knew each of them. This was interesting and thought provoking. What actually happened to the ship will never be known. What I found so despicable was the small amount of money the company that owned the ship offered to the families of those who were lost. Seems their bottom line was more important to the company than doing the right thing.

Seems like most of the time when an author presents a very well-researched, detailed account, it's inevitable that some bias will come through. Not here--the author does a great job of laying out the event, making the story interesting and captivating. I'm not necessarily even an aficionado of the specific genre, but enjoyed it immensely. I read this on my mobile and did need to keep checking the internet for Mitch path information--the illustrations in the book weren't really enough on a small screen. Great book!

A well-written story of the Windjammer ship, the Fantome, that was lost in Mitch in 1998. Most of the book was captivating, but I had trouble with the meteorology of the storm. Illustrations would have been very helpful. Mr. Carrier makes the crew very real and thus the loss of them becomes personal. I read this near the 40th anniversary of the sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald. They were reminders of the great strength of the seas.

My husband and I spent our two week honeymoon on the Fantome in 1980. When we heard about the sinking of this ship, we tried to gather as much information as possible. This was one of the best written books about the ship and crew and was described in so much detail that we felt we were with the ship until the end;

This was a very interesting book. I had a 37 foot sail boat that we sailed around the N.E. US. We took it over to Bermudia and had a very good time. On our way home, there was a tropical deprecison. No big deal. But it was a very big deal when you are in it, It was no fun. All was well and we got home in good shape. I can not even think about the guys on this ship and were thinking as they drove sailed into the abis...

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