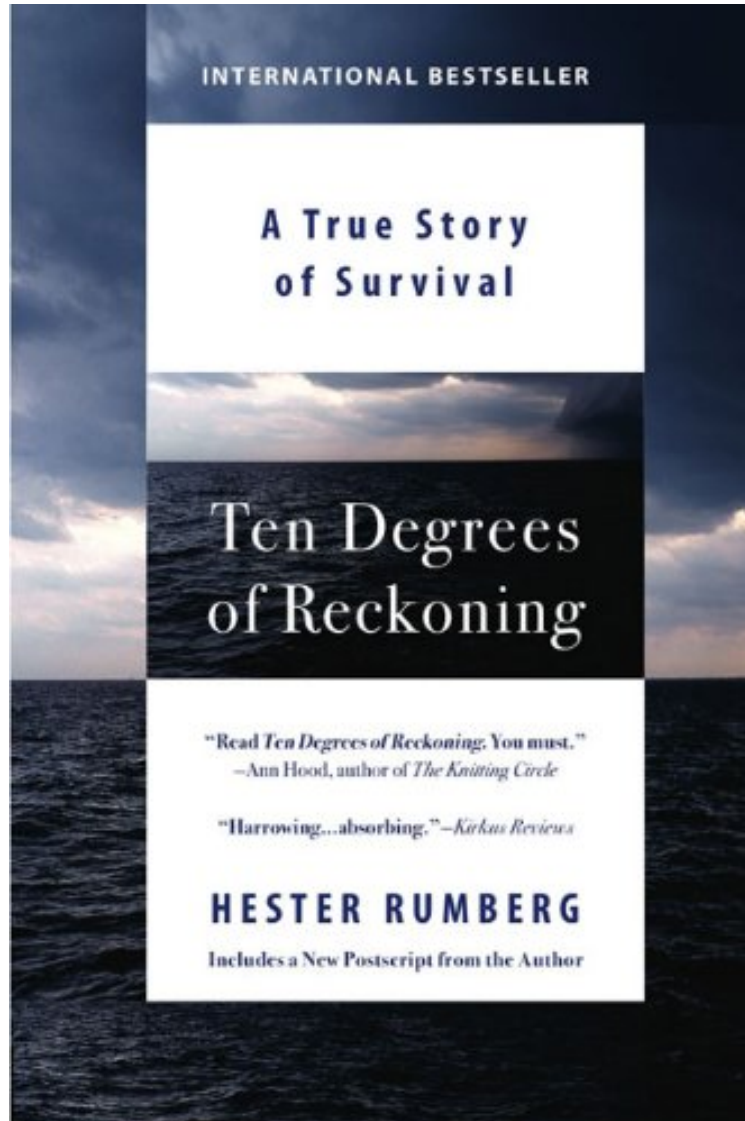


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Ten Degrees of Reckoning: A True Story of Survival

Hester Rumberg

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Hester Rumberg : Ten Degrees of Reckoning: A True Story of Survival before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Ten Degrees of Reckoning: A True Story of Survival:

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about this book on a radio show before it's release and thought it sounded like a great story. It is a fantastic story of love, courage, hope and family. I enjoy true stories with lots of detail and this fits the bill. I highly recommend it.

An international bestseller. A remarkable true story of one woman's courage. In 1993, Judith and Michael Sleavin and their two children set out to sail around the world. Three years into their incredible journey, a nearby freighter altered its course by a mere ten degrees-and everything changed... After forty-four hours in the icy water clinging to an overturned dinghy, her back broken and paralyzed below the waist, Judith miraculously survived, winding up in a small community on the New Zealand coast. Gripping, unbelievable yet true, Judith's story of courage, survival, and retribution is alternately heartrending and uplifting. It's also a story of unbreakable bonds, of shattering loss, and of one woman reborn through the strength of friendship and the profound love of strangers who became family.

"Ten Degrees of Reckoning" is a rare book. It both celebrates the love and spirit of adventure of the Sleavin family and tells in harrowing and gut-wrenching detail about the tragedy that claims the lives of three out of four of its members. To people who say: I can't read such a sad story, I say only, you must. You must learn about and celebrate Annie and Ben and Mike so that they may be remembered. You must marvel at Judy's bravery, her resilience, her will. You must repeat their story to others so that what befell them doesn't happen again. Read "Ten Degrees of Reckoning," You must.

Ann Hood, author of "The Knitting Circle" and "Comfort: A Journey Through Grief"

About the Author: Hester Rumberg was an oral/maxillofacial radiologist and an experienced offshore sailor. Along with Judith Sleavin, she established the Sleavin Family Foundation to promote maritime safety. Her book Ten Degrees of Reckoning stands as a tribute to the Sleavin family.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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For the crew of the Melinda Lee, spirited adventurers all

A voice said in my sleep: Do not delay: Do not delay; the golden moments fly!

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW The Masque of Pandora (1875)

Foreword

IT WILL SOON BE THIRTEEN YEARS SINCE MY FAMILY disappeared with the downing of our boat, the Melinda Lee. I knew the story needed to be told, but I couldn't do it, and it took me all these years before I was ready to entrust my trusted friend with the task of writing this book.

In 1993 my husband and I, along with our son and daughter, set out to live our dream to sail around the world. For almost three years we did exactly that. But in 1995 my family and I were in a devastating collision that took away from me everything in the world I held dear. My back was broken and my skull was fractured, with some irreversible brain damage but none of that compared with the loss of my family. There were many times when I thought I, too, was going to die. What kept me alive was the love of my family and the longing to tell our story.

Everything you will read is true, and while there are terrible portions, as in life, there is also joy and love, adventure and resilience. When tragedy struck, the depth of the despair was almost exactly the inverse of the incredible height of happiness I had always experienced being with Michael, Ben, and

Annie. Throughout the years, filmmakers, journalists, and authors have all approached me with requests to tell my tale. I repeatedly heard the word inspirational attached to it and to me, and I hoped someday the telling might even save lives. But I wasn't ready, until now. I chose Hester Rumberg to tell our story. It was important to me that she had been an experienced oceangoing sailor like me, that she had sailed on our boat, and that she has been a treasured part of our extended family. I respected her professional accomplishments in her field as a radiologist, and then as my spokesperson in the maritime community. But most important, I could express my feelings and thoughts to her when I couldn't tell anyone else, and she always understood. She had the empathy, love, and patience to listen, and the skill, intelligence, and knowledge to tell the story. A talented writer and a cherished friend, Hester has turned untellable circumstances into a powerful and gripping story. She captured my most elusive feelings and put them into words. She pieced together my painful memories and wove them into an accurate picture. She explored the meanings behind the facts without losing the authenticity of the story. She has balanced a story of unfathomable layers with reflective insights, and has given even me a new understanding of some of its features. Some parts of this story are still too big for me to comprehend, and some of my feelings are still too raw to articulate. When you read the book, you'll know my trust was not misplaced when I chose Dr. Hester Rumberg as the author. If I could have written a book, this would be it, exactly.

Judith Sleavin
November 24, 1995
THIS IS NOT MY STORY. IT IS A STORY EMBEDDED IN THE
very fibers of my heart, and it has changed the direction of my life, but it is not my story. Oh, I've managed to insert myself into some of its chapters, but I am a long way from being one of the principal characters. They have been silenced by an enormous tragedy and its aftermath, and have selected me to give voice to a story that needs telling. I choose to begin the account on November 24, 1995, but really, that is when the story ends. On November 23, 1995, all over the United States people were enjoying Thanksgiving with their families, in their homes. The Sleavin family celebrated in the cockpit of their sailboat, the Melinda Lee, sailing toward New Zealand. They were about seventy-five miles from its coast, and they expected to be there by the next morning. This might not have been a conventional Thanksgiving celebration, but they were not a conventional family. The Sleavins had been away from home for almost three years, and they planned to settle down somewhere in New Zealand for a while. The family, Mike and Judy and their children, Ben and Annie, were in great humor. The weather didn't match the mood of the sailors, though; it was overcast and gloomy, the wind was increasing in strength, the waves were getting larger, and the whitecaps were spraying them with sea foam and salt water. The Sleavins didn't mind. After thirty-three months at sea, they were experienced in the routines, the capriciousness of the weather, and the patience required in ocean passage-making. The Sleavins had crossed thousands of miles of the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea in a forty-seven-foot sailboat, and after many remarkable adventures, they were approaching their destination. At 8:45 that morning, they made their usual daily radio contact with other sailboats heading toward New Zealand's North Island. Most voyaging boats worldwide like to make connections on ham and marine single sideband radio frequency networks. Belonging to a network of sailors gives the crew information about other vessels and conditions at sea, and decreases the sense of isolation. These nets also have a safety aspect. Vessels are expected to check in every day at an established time, and if they fail to do so, search-and-rescue efforts may be implemented. The Sleavins were part of a net facilitated by Annique, another sailor circumnavigating the world.

Morning Roll Call
0745 (GMT)