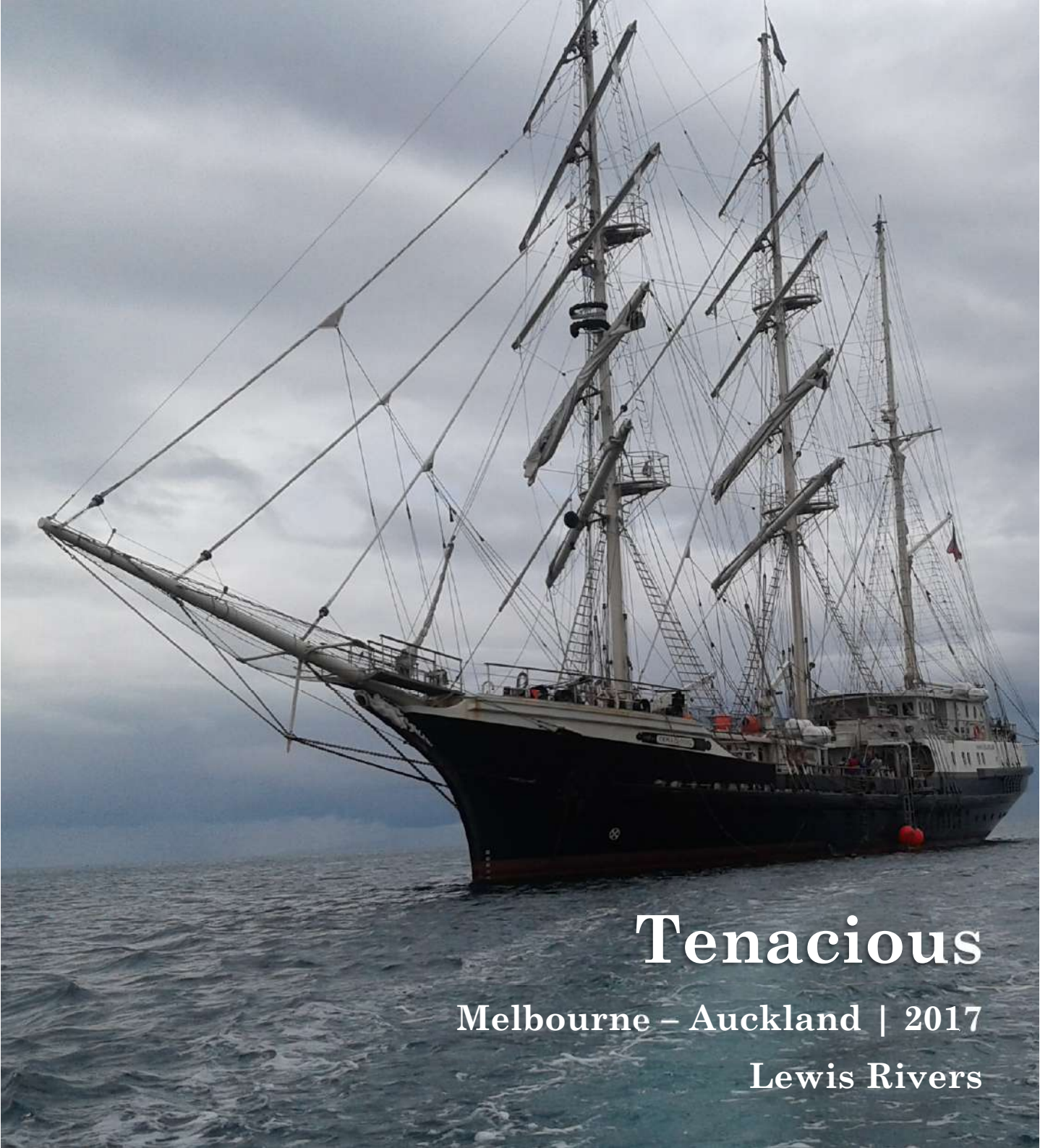
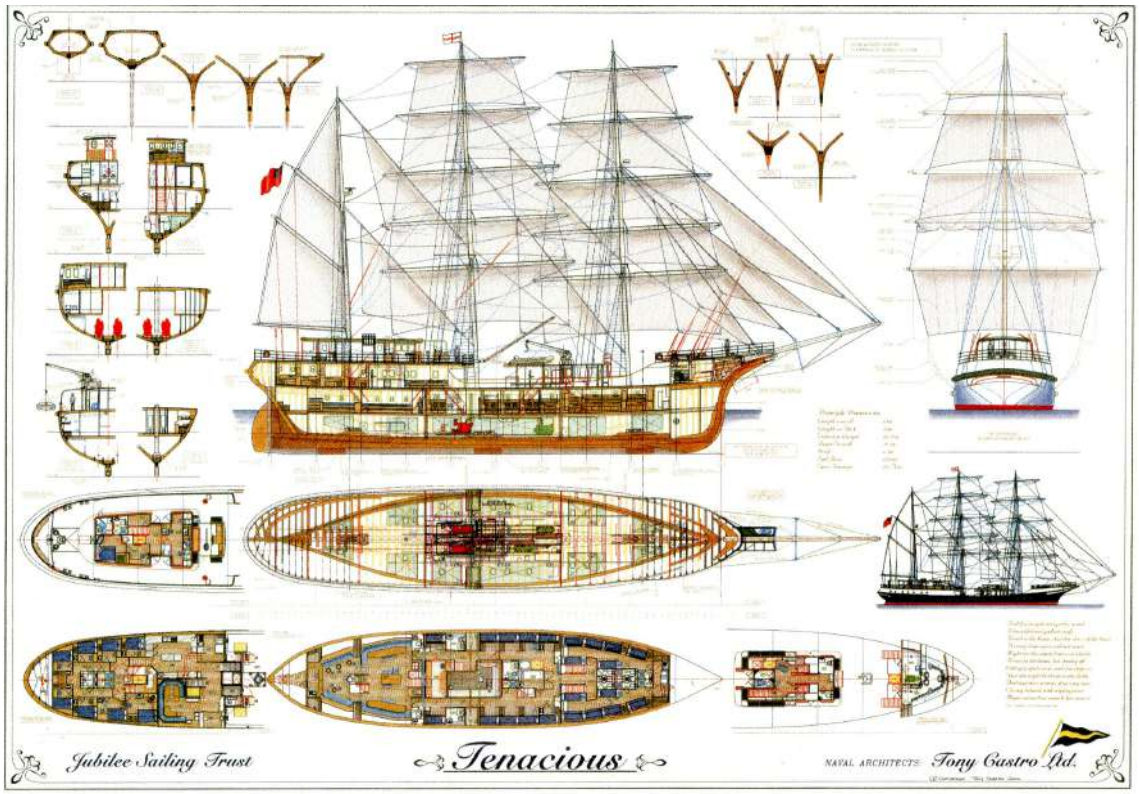


Tenacious

Melbourne – Auckland | 2017

Lewis Rivers



Tenacious

Melbourne to Auckland
December 2017

The barque STS *Tenacious* left Melbourne, Australia, with me onboard, on Monday 4 December at about 1100 hours, bound for Auckland, New Zealand. Before arriving in Melbourne, the ship had sailed out from Southampton in the United Kingdom. Her departure from Melbourne was the beginning of the long trek back home via Cape Horn and the Falkland Islands.

My initial impressions of *Tenacious* were not great. Too much top hamper and a deck house arrangement that implied a degree of topple. In addition, I was aware that she was a timber ship (there is nothing wrong with timber ships), the largest wooden sailing ship in the world. I was also aware that she had been built upside down. I wondered about the integrity of the hull and the much hoped for secondary stability. She was designed by Tony Castro, a world-renowned super yacht designer.

I was wrong all round. My view now is Castro is a genius. His Wikipedia page does not mention *Tenacious* yet in my view she has to be one of his best designs. She is probably the Castro design that has taken the most people to sea and certainly the most people with disabilities.

Tenacious has the underwater lines of a Grimsby sidewinder (sidewinders dragged full nets up over the gunnel without turning turtle). She has a fine deep entry and a sweetly shaped exit. Her forepeak reeks of buoyancy and her hull openings, apart from the chart house entries, are all midships. The openings along the centre line give her the ability, with watertight doors, to withstand a knock-down.

In a blow *Tenacious* will put her shoulder down, show a bone in her teeth, and soldier on. Her secondary stability absorbs the power of the wind and she will make ground. The forefoot will assist her to come through the eye of the wind.

Although I am not an intrepid traveller, I have done stuff that others would shy away from, usually on boats and ships;

however, my risk taking is measured, perhaps high on perceived risk and low on actual risk.

Previous to this voyage I have been at sea both on deck and as part of catering departments. My interest and involvement in the briny stems from childhood and sailing small yachts in Nelson. I went to sea on ships by chance. One afternoon, walking the Wellington water front, a man on a square rigger (the *Spirit of New Zealand*) leaned across and asked if J and I wanted to come sailing. I never really got off.

Over the next couple of years, I did a number of ten-day trips around the New Zealand coast, sometimes on her and sometimes on a 100-foot schooner (two squares and a triatic royal). Work then consumed me for about a decade until I realised that try as I might the traction had been and gone. I went back to the wharves and spent time at sea on the *Spirit of New Zealand*, a barquentine. It was there I took up food spoiling and it was there I resolved to ship out on commercial ships in a waged capacity.

I was lucky to secure a berth with a New Zealand company and spent time on the coast doing short-hall ferries, coastal cargo followed by a couple of research vessel stints. After some years at sea I came home and sat on the sofa. After another career, this time in the conciliation business, I retired fully and again took up residence on the sofa.

I went back to sea on *Tenacious* because the Jubilee Sailing Trust emailed offering a berth for the voyage from Melbourne through to Auckland. I had just six days to get it together and fly across to join the ship. Getting it together was a bit of a mission, not least because of the travel insurance requirement. None of the readily available providers did other than draw breath and then decline as I described the voyage and the ship.

I eventually approached an English outfit used to covering the lunatic fringe. The company was easy to deal with once I had done a couple of middle of the night phone calls (the company, being in England was 12 hours behind New Zealand).

J drove me to Wellington airport. My luggage was an 11-kg duffel bag and a small day bag. Being from New Zealand, I packed my puffer ready-to-hand in the back pack. Kiwis are always ready for the worst in weather.

I packed carefully for the trip, upgrading my wardrobe for the Tasman. It is always cold at sea, and often wet one way or another. With that in mind I had a number of layers ready to go. My base layer was polypropylene long sleeve tops and long johns. The next was a merino jersey, then the puffer and finally a water and wind proof jacket. For the lower body and legs, I had long johns, new wind proof trousers and finally waterproof trousers that fitted over the top. The Trust had said the ship would be carrying wet weather gear and sea boots for all.

I joined the ship Saturday 4 December. The weather was foul, streaming with rain and blowing like billy-oh. I received storm warnings from the Victoria State authorities on my cell phone telling me to stock-up and stay indoors. Excellent weather to set off out into Bass Strait—not.

In the first couple of hours aboard I found my cabin, met the other occupant, listened to the mate, and looked at the safety systems. Then it was out in the cold and wet for instruction on how to sheet in, belay, tie off, ease (but not to the stopper, you can't do the stopper until there is weight on the line) and coil up. Much of what we were taught was standard to square rig.

My dream of shifting from the lower-deck to the ruling classes crashed and burned early. My hope had been that the galley assistant would break a leg

and I would be asked to take up the slack. However, once I had met the galley assistant and mended her trousers, I realised how ungenerous this thought was.

After two days at the wharf sitting out the weather, the lines were let go at 1130 hours Monday. A few hardy souls were on the wharf to wave us farewell. She was off to the Solent, back home for the English summer, stopping at Auckland and other places on the way.

Twelve hours after casting off, we went through the Port Phillip rip in cold, overcast conditions. The weather remained miserable for the next couple of days. Standing watches, particularly at night, with bone-numbing cold rivulets running down the spine, inside the five layers of protection, I did wonder at the sanity of choosing to be there.

As expected, the crew were 'very sorry' but there were 'no sea boots your size'. Surprise, surprise. Even chandleries often don't have sea boots my size. On other sailing ships, I have worn white gumboots, just like fishermen. I did consider bringing gumboots from home; however, they are just too big for international air travel (maybe I could have worn them). More sensibly I should have popped out and bought a pair in Melbourne before departure.

It is Wednesday, day five of being aboard and three days away from the wharf. We are under sail with the two lower top gallants set (one on the foremast, one on the main), the fore staysail and the main staysail. The motors are off and I think the generator is off as well. The ship is quiet and I am managing a lot of sleeping. Many have been seasick. Currently we are sailing a little north of east, having dropped down from sailing a little south of east. This has put the wind aft of the beam, reduced the motion and settled everything down. The ship has an easy motion, even in these confused seas.

I am in the aft saloon, the big one for the use of the voyage crew. The portholes regularly wash under and the view is much the same as looking into a front loader washing machine. It reminds me of the white ship, the original *Spirit*. Her galley was below decks with portholes that frequently disappeared under water. The cooks ruled on some issues (which is often the way) and laid down that they had to be told before the ship went about. If they were not told, the contents of the oven would slop all over and the two courses would become one sweet and sour dish.

It is quiet at present. We had a nasty front through earlier with gusts of maybe 45 knots (gale force). According to some, there is more nasty stuff on the way. Every ship I have been on has had some predicting more nasty stuff on the way. It is a prediction that can never be wrong.

I guess now we are in the open ocean. I expect the captain will counter the worst effects of any nastiness by keeping the heading away from the south. I feel okay on this ship. She has a good feel to her, a good grip on the water. I think her strength lies in her secondary stability. This is the stability that absorbs the power, puts the shoulder down and sails well in strong winds. You can either have good primary stability (a catamaran), or good secondary stability (this ship and car carriers), but you can't have both.

Largely our seascape is grey, with close cloud cover and the continuous sound of the wind. I won't say howl of the wind as it is not that blowy, but give it another ten knots. . . The colour of the sea resembles the grey sky and away towards the horizon the two merge, indistinguishable, one from the other.

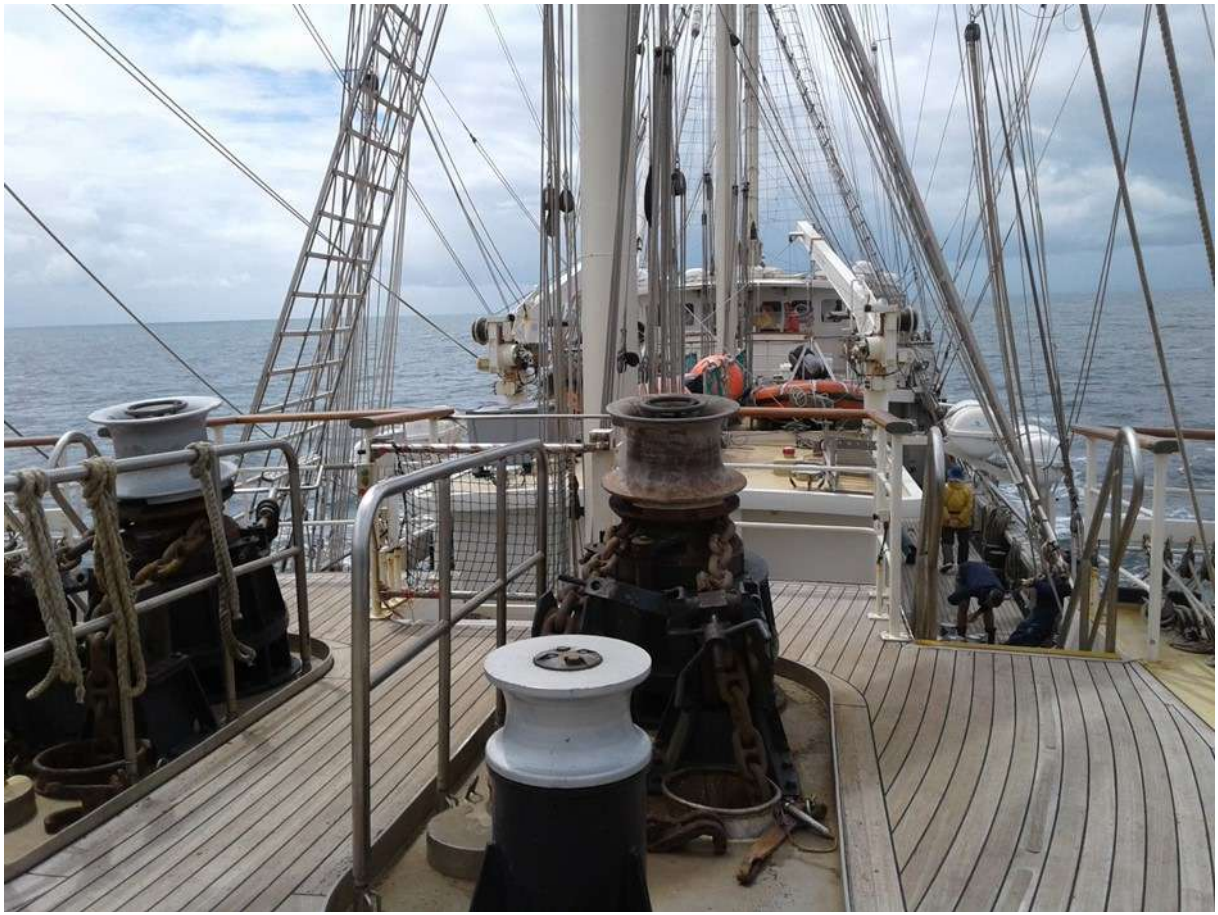
Few seafarers tell stories about storms and gales. Everyone who goes to sea will endure bad weather from time to time, but each new day, each new

voyage brings its own weather and the bad stuff is largely forgotten. I know that I have been through weather that left me determined to give up seafaring, yet again and again I have found myself settling into yet another bunk, or worse standing out in the weather with the cold creeping under the layers and down my back.

At sea there is a continuous empty horizon, no matter which way you look. It is as though the ship, and your world, is contained within the perimeter of a saucer.

My watch is coming up. It is the second dog, from 1800 to 2000 hours. The time will be spent standing outside, in the cold, watching either to port or starboard or helming the ship. Maybe I can call the whole thing off, catch a number nine bus and head home, and be toasty and warm. There again maybe I can't.

All of the watch, apart from the helmsperson, is largely superfluous. This was demonstrated when I watched the permanent crew take little notice of sighting reports by the lookouts. The mate already knew about the target being reported because he had seen it on the 24-mile radar, before the target came over the horizon. But once a lookout's sighting is not given appropriate attention, he or she becomes less likely to report sightings. The assumption is that the mate will have already seen the target. But not everything registers on the radar, and



such an assumption is a recipe for an avoidable collision. The resolution is simple: assign a watch member to the chart room and have that person watch the instruments, including the radar, alongside the mate. When the mate or the watch member sees a target, the mate can get on with plots and predictions and the watch person can go to the lookout and tell them a ship will come up soon. In addition, the watch member in the chart house can be the first port of call for the lookouts, leaving the mate free to get on with the plotting. A further reason to introduce the chart house watchkeeping position is that every voyage crew member will learn the basics of finding range and bearing by radar.

Once the dog is over, I will get 12 hours in the sack before clambering up to the exposed outdoor bridge to do it all again. I am lucky with sleep. Although I joke about needing 12 hours a day, this is pretty much the number of hours I do sleep each day on board. *Tenacious* is remarkably quiet down below, with an easy motion, so for me sleep comes easily.

We are ocean sailing. We have the fore staysail, the fore course, the fore upper topsail, the fore lower topsail, the main staysail, the main upper topsail, and the main lower topsail set. The breeze is gentle;

maybe 20 knots and blowing up our tail, though the wind speed over the deck is, of course, the 20 knots minus the speed of the ship. In this case the ship is powering along at maybe five or six knots, making the wind over deck a gentle 14 or 15 knots. Add to this the lack of motion (we are going along with seas, not against them) and it is gentle sailing. Our direction augurs well for a landfall somewhere up around North Cape. Though what would I know; the captain may have a sudden rush of blood to the head and decide it is Puysegur for us, or perhaps Cook Strait. If it is Cook Strait, I will call home, not physically but on the phone.

This reminds me of a container ship voyage J and I did in the Baltic a few years back. The chief mate had sailed from Melbourne to Europe, around Cape Horn. Going to the Horn, his ship had travelled through Cook Strait. He had, as I put it, seen the lights of Wellington but not the sights.

In New Zealand, whenever I set off for other parts on the sailing ships, the weather usually turned to rubbish. New Zealand is in the southern South Pacific, next stop Antarctica. I used to think it was too isolated; now days I relish the isolation from both the States and Europe. We are a country, that in comparison to much of world, is not only miles away, but also under-populated. Long may this last.

Much of the time, when I was cooking on commercial ships and crossing Cook Strait four times a day, I had no idea what the weather was like outside, such was the size of the ship. Cook Strait, in a northerly, can blow itself inside out, but with little fetch the seas don't rage (unless you are in a small ship, or God forbid, a 30-foot yacht).

A southerly in Cook Strait is different. In a southerly the fetch is from Antarctica, giving the seas plenty of time to become bad tempered as they travel thousands of miles before bashing themselves to pieces on the north coast of Cook Strait. One time on a big ferry, plugging into a southerly I happened to glance out of the galley

and saw a cattle ship (quite a small one) going in the same direction as us but falling astern. It looked as though a full third of her length came out of the water each time it climbed yet another Antarctic grey beard.

On *Tenacious,* the voyage crew (as opposed to the professional crew) range from about 16 years through to somewhere north of 90. If I ever set out to join a sailing ship when I am north of an advanced age, please just increase the drugs, put a video on and tip a bucket of cold water over my head.

Two of the voyage crew are from the New Zealand Maritime School. Time on *Tenacious* counts as sea time for these students. Some other crew are repeat voyagers, from the United Kingdom, while others are first timers from New Zealand, Australia, Europe and the United States.

I am not sure what some expected coming on a sailing ship. One or two certainly didn't expect what they are getting. This is not a cruise ship; it is a working commercial sailing vessel. It is participatory and there are expectations. There is no cabin service. Neither are there restaurants, casinos, or live shows. The experience is the journey, maybe even the destination is secondary. Now, don't let this put you off. The experience will not all be plain sailing. Hardship puts the edge on joy. Participation puts the edge on pleasure. Weather can put fear into the equation. But it is worth it.

There are four watches. These are groups of six voyage crew with one designated the watch leader. Usually there are ten to a watch; however we have sailed with about 16 empty bunks. Watch leaders have sailed on the ship previously. Watch leadership is a collegial and cooperative affair. It is not a master and commander position, rather it falls to the watch leader to organise roster-type stuff and to attend the morning watch-leader meeting so the voyage crew can be told what is happening. Our watch leader had

excellent interpersonal skills and managed the role well. I thought others in the watch supported her well and contributed to the success of both her voyage and our individual voyages. This is how it should be, seafaring cannot be a competitive endeavour, after all everyone is literally in the same boat and the success of a voyage requires everyone getting home safely.

The professional crew all hold seagoing qualifications relevant to their positions. Some have been with the Trust for years; others are employed through crewing agencies on a voyage-by-voyage basis.

In the main, maritime employers employ people on the basis of the tickets they hold. Sail training organisations usually look for appropriate people management skills in addition to the tickets. The combination of technical skills and people management skills is relatively rare and does not often happen by chance. Many of the maritime-qualified people I have sailed with had poor people management skills. They were limited to treating people the way they had been treated as they moved up through the seagoing ranks. This is a poor way to learn; it makes change very difficult, and it can promote practices that makes ships more unsafe than they need to be.

Overall, the professional crew on *Tenacious* lacked either the motivation or the skills to engage in anything other than 'pull this' or 'ease that' conversations with the voyage crew. I have experienced this sort of thing on both sailing ships and other commercial vessels. It doesn't need to be this way. It is interesting to read the maritime regulations and see how the industry is trying to promote safer practices through more collegial relationships. This doesn't undermine discipline. Put simply, those who do not understand the importance of acknowledging and listening to others diminish their ability to lead.

I do get periods of intense longing. There is an anatomy to longing, perhaps best described as palpable nostalgia. For me, it is thoughts of being part of a crew again and reliving some remarkable times. Maybe I could again stand on a sailing ship and talk to a small boy alongside on the wharf, as I did one time in Picton. The boy, maybe seven, asked, in all seriousness, if I was a pirate and was this a pirate's ship. I said I was and it was. His eyes opened wide and I asked him if he wanted to come with us. He nodded. I said he would need to talk to his mother and maybe she would let him join us once he was sixteen. I hope that happened for him, and maybe he is now following the dream that lit up his eyes 20 years ago. It was a moment of privilege for me. Maybe today he is a second mate foreign going.

Working in the galley brings on more intense feelings of longing. The moments I treasure were when teenagers said the magic words. No, not 'please' and 'thank you' but rather the true magic of 'yum that tasted good'. Cooking at sea, though, is the province of younger people, people who can do long days on their feet.

Right now, it is teatime and then it's back in my bunk through to 0000 hours. Which reminds me, on about day two on the ship, I took a top bunk plunge. I have not mentioned this before and I sure do not want to relive it. To call it a top bunk plunge is over-egging it a bit. I slipped climbing down and ended up lying on the cabin floor groaning and thinking, 'that hurt'. My cabin mate muttered something along the lines of 'are you alright?' Well I was, apart from shaken confidence. I stayed stretched out for a bit on the floor, reflecting that I'd had a lucky escape from a medical evacuation, a forced flight home, insurance claims and paper work.

The top bunk plunge influenced my decision not to climb on this voyage. I won't climb the masts anymore because I am too old. I can no longer

do what I used to do, lead an aloft team, go to the ends of the yards, gasket with the best, and overhaul the bunts and clews. Not climbing is part of letting go. Letting go has so many meanings and it is easy really, though I do not recommend letting go while climbing. By letting go I mean moving on from stuff you used to be able to do but can no longer. It's both mental and physical.

Now, about bunks. I have come across some that were positively dreamy and others best described as shockers. The trans-Canada train has standout bunks. Their bunks are second to none. The top bunk, and that is the one I occupied, was long enough, wide enough and soft enough to satisfy an elephant. Add to this the white bed linen was crisp, clean and sweet smelling. And a further plus was the bag with ablution stuff and cotton towels. More of these bags were available at the end of the passageway, there for the taking when needed. Add to this scenario the kaleidoscope of the Rockies and the excellent service and food. I think of it now and wonder if I will ever do that trip again. If I did it would be in the opposite direction and in the middle of winter. The vision of dashing through the snow is compelling, all the while remaining toasty and warm. True the clamber to the top bunk was a bit of a mission and I was very careful not to step on J whenever I did either the up or down.

In contrast, the worst bunk experience we have ever had, well that J has ever had, was overnight from Paris to Hamburg in a six-berth train cabin. Three tiered bunks running athwartships. J had the top on one side, I had the top on the other. It was a long, cramped night, punctuated by German police shouting for passports and shining torches in our faces. In the morning J said pointedly that someone spent the night snoring. I slept through it so had no idea who it was until I realised why the people in the next compartment kept banging on the walls. In addition, the other occupants of our cabin in the morning, kept cracking up with laughter every time

they glanced in my direction. At journey's end J hurried off the train and did little more than hiss at me for the rest of the morning.

It is Saturday and I am losing track of time. This is exactly what I wanted. Watch follows watch, my world is the saucer of sea, the ship trundles east, or in this case east with a bit of north. I was on the graveyard watch last night, midnight to 0400 hours. There was a slight sea with five squares set. The foremast squares were set to starboard with the main squares set athwartships. I am not sure why the squares were offset against each other. I have never seen this before and neither have I read about it.

There was barely steerage towards the end of the watch. I think we are probably in the middle of a high. Latest information is the weather will remain good for the next few days. I hear we are heading for Cape Reinga. Some will lament not getting to Milford Sound or missing out on Cook Strait. Me, I am happy to take the northern route. If you want to know what the weather is like in New Zealand's southern regions, tune in to the marine forecast (4.00 am daily on RNZ National). Sea area Puysegur often has a gale warning in place which means sustained winds of 60 to 90 kilometres per hour. Cook Strait is not much better with wind from either the south or north being funnelled through the small gap between the islands. Sure, up the top around Cape Reinga can be ropey; however, overall, the north end is usually much easier than either the central passage or the deep south. By the way, last night we had all-round lights with a red above the green at the mast head. I must look up the requirements, but I guess red above green means we are a sailing machine. Very few people get to look aloft and see this configuration.

I regard myself knowledgeable when it comes to square rig. You know, all the stuff about how to sail

square rig ships, how the rig works, and what you need to do next to ensure you get home for tea. Well, life is a great teacher. Here are a couple of things I learnt.

In my experience, where the yard itself is hoisted when a sail is set, the procedure is always hoist the yard and then set the sail. Well, turns out that's not always the case. Here on *Tenacious* the procedure is to set the sail first and then to hoist the yard. This way the sheets for the sail will be tightened more than if it is done the other way around, which makes sense once it is explained. Sheeting the sail home is done with a two-to-one purchase and with many people pulling. Hoisting the yard is done with an eight-to-one purchase with many people pulling. The power of the eight-to-one purchase is greater than the power of the two-to-one.

Now everything worked fine with this system, until the furler inside the yard jammed. It jammed because there is a continuous line operating it. To get a continuous line the two ends have to be spliced together. The diameter of the splice is more than the diameter of the line. Once the splice goes inside the yard and around the furler, it is prone to jam. Once it is jammed the sail stops unfurling. The eight-to-one purchase can then provide sufficient force to damage the sail. The damage was prevented by the captain giving a shout, followed by the bosun's mates going aloft and clearing the jam, and then the voyage crew resuming the hoist. It was an excellent illustration of why heaving on lines need to be accompanied by an understanding of what is really happening.

We are out of lettuce; the bag of leaves has turned to sludge. Individual lettuces wrapped in newspaper will keep for two or more weeks, cabbages will go on forever. Salads with cabbage and carrot with chopped peppers and other stuff. . . actually I might stop there. Here, on the ship there is a major lack of vegetables. But such is life. I am not

having a beef about the food and neither am I having a dig at the food spoiler. He provides excellent meals with what he has available. He also manages the different dietary requirements exceptionally well. In contrast I recall a six-week voyage on a research ship where both fruit and yoghurt ran out at least a fortnight before hop off day. Not content with under-ordering fruit and yoghurt, the cook told the vegetarians that vegies were served at all meals and on the night she did tacos every taco was filled with mince. She taught those pesky vegetarians a thing or two.

Cooking at sea is a specialised occupation. In the main, particularly on Trust-operated ships, there will be only one cook. There will usually be an untrained galley assistant (a volunteer who changes every voyage). On the research and cargo vessels I have worked on there has always been two cooks once the crew numbers reach more than 25.

For our 20-day *Tenacious* voyage, with about 36 people aboard, the cook produced more than 2,000 meals. This is a big ask, working every day doing breakfast lunch and dinner. The balance is between feeding hungry people and not running out of food.

I recall being horrified at the contents of the gash bucket early on in my seafaring cooking days. I was cooking for about 50. Each serving included a quarter chicken, but for 20 or more of those plates, only half of each serving of chicken had been eaten. The gash bucket was full of wasted chicken. I changed that by carving each chicken into ten pieces and serving one piece per plate. This meant at the end of first service there were still 80 pieces of chicken left.

By carving smaller pieces I managed to give seconds (and thirds) to those who wanted more and still have chicken left over for either a cold dish or for soup the next day. Gash buckets on ships

should be largely empty; if they aren't, then the portions are too big or the food is not up to snuff.

On *Tenacious*, the cook dished up every plate at every meal. His portion control was excellent, his food was excellent, any who wanted seconds pretty much always got them, and what wasn't eaten got a second journey. Not a third journey, mind you, two journeys for food is fine, three journeys are not.

Today I have been one of four mess persons (both genders). The day started at 1630 hours with dinner prep and then service, followed by clean up. Now with mess person's duties complete for the day I am free till 0700 tomorrow, when I have further duties through to 1630 hours.

Here are some reflections. Part of me says being at sea is where I belong, it is who I am, and it is what I do. When I had these feelings on the *Spirit of New Zealand*, I kept going back, and in time sailed as the cook. On the Cook Strait ferries, I started as a galley assistant day worker, hopping on each morning and off in the evening. After a short time, the captain asked me to be the second cook and stay aboard for a fortnight at a time. I remember my first commercial ship cabin, complete with desk, bunk and ensuite. I had gone from land lubber to seafarer, in my mid-fifties no less.

The feeling of belonging at sea won't last this time, which is fine; it is so nice to have these feelings remind me of how it was. Funny though, how you forget the times at sea when all you wanted was to be at home.

We are sailing again. The engines are off and have been for the past 24 hours. *Tenacious* is jogging along with both top sails set on both the fore and main masts. Also, the

fore staysail is pulling us along. The main staysail was dropped earlier. There is some bad weather on the way according to the captain. We are heading more northerly with the wind close to being up our tail and I think this will continue. The weather will continue to come out of the starboard quarter so even if it blows forty thousand bugles, the motion should remain relatively placid. This is a stunningly good ship. She has a good grip on the water, she is probably all that Tony Castro intended. Reading the history of the Trust, I think she is probably all the visionaries dreamed of. I feel a link back to the dreamers of the day who came up with the concept and created *Tenacious*. This is now my life. Watches punctuated by sleep. I am enormously tired. This is the voyage I wanted.

It is 0400 hours and I have just come in from the graveyard watch (0000 to 0400 hours). Four hours of standing outside in the dark, well mostly standing, but all of it outside and all of it dark. Just by-the-by, at 0400 the sky is showing some barely perceptible lightening over on the eastern horizon. Daylight, like old age, tends to creep up.

Tea last night was roast pork with broccoli carrots and potatoes. I was pleased to see vegetables.

The ship is using the naval watch system with two dog watches, one from 1600 to 1800 hours and the other from 1800 to 2000 hours. The dog watches mean that each day your watch times shift forward four hours. Here, though, it is further complicated by having four watch groups rather than three. I am not back on watch until 1600 hours so I have a full 12 hours off. Time for some deep sleeping.

I recall one New Zealand coastal sailing trip where bad weather set in soon after departing a southern port. Sometime in the night the mate (a misnomer if I ever heard one) shuffled along and said that we were operating under the Swedish watchkeeping

system. On imparting this piece of flim-flummery, he toddled off to his scratcher leaving me standing out in the weather. I think it was six hours before he relieved me and I was able to reacquaint myself with my bunk. By that time daylight had arrived, the rain had stopped and the sun was breaking through the clouds. I have never struck the Swedish watchkeeping system again. Maybe it was a figment of the mate's imagination. Maybe it was designed to keep him toasty warm and dry while I . . . Well, enough.

We are becalmed. Not a breath of wind this morning. I was on watch from 0400 to 0800 hours. The wind, well what there was of it, died away and by breakfast it had almost completely departed. By 1000 hours it was just us and the ripples. The sea still heaved away but there was no malice. It was languid. The sea was in a lazy Saturday morning mood. I had planned on having a morning kip; however the captain decided it was time for happy hour (ship cleaning) followed by clewing up (no, not a pub quiz). With the squares tidied away, the motors came on and we resumed our New Zealand trundle. We now resemble a Japanese squid boat with excessive top hamper.

There are about ten days to go. I never count the last day of a swing as that is disembarkation day, taken up with packing, leaving, getting a coffee, going to the airport and then home to J and a shower.

Currently we are in the middle of the Tasman, about two miles from land; however, that land is directly below us, on the sea floor. If the space station went over, it would be our closest neighbour.

Not having connection to the internet is probably a good thing. I have lost all connection with the US political scene, the Australian government's citizenship debacle and what's happening with Boris. I have also lost all contact with how the coalition is shaping up in the land of the long white cloud.

Lunch is coming up. Talking of lunch coming up, seasickness seems to have departed the ship. Many of the previously close-to-death brigade are now full participants. I felt a bit queasy a few days back, but only as I was washing the deck head (ceiling) of the upper saloon. It was the angle of attack that almost did for me, not the nature of the stuff stuck to the deck head. This time, for happy hour, I polished the bell and two plaques. The cleaning station required one of my finely-honed skills, making a cushy number fill the time available. Polishing brass is neither difficult nor taxing.

Today the sea was calm, completely calm. Not a whisper, not a zephyr, nothing. The ocean lacked even the tiniest of ripples. We were, for a while, a painted ship upon a painted ocean

The swell remained, but it was not even quarter-hearted. It rose and fell, barely in unison with itself. The only breeze on deck was the one created as we gently trundled on. And the occasional conversation. The fearsome Tasman is at its most mild. I refuse to decry the absence of sailing weather; rather I accept we are now the MV (motor vessel) *Tenacious* and no longer STS (sail training ship) *Tenacious*.
For me wishing for wind is akin to hoping for rain in Wellington: it will come. The weather will change and, glancing around now in the mid-afternoon, there is no better to get: it can only get worse.

Shouldn't northerlies be called southerlies? Wind and weather are, in the main, completely misunderstood. Both seafarers and farmers talk of northerly or southerly winds, referring to where they come from and not where they are going. The most ferocious northerlies, in reality, are very sucky southerlies. How can this be many will ask? It is simple, wind always flows to the area of lowest pressure. Like water, wind flows downhill, hence it is more accurate to call a wind according to the direction

whence it goes, not the direction whence it came (yes, I know, that is a grammatical liberty). Think of a car journey; if you are driving south you don't describe your journey as northerly. There are two young people aboard who are attending the New Zealand Maritime School. I will put my theories to them and they can take them back to the School. It could put them ahead of the game. I wonder if there is a paper waiting to be written. Perhaps I could be invited to a conference. Maybe I could become famous . . . while remaining humble, of course.

Tea is not far away. I have just completed my galley duties, spread over two days. Standing at the sink, gazing to the horizon, filled with longing. It is a lovely feeling, I can run my fingers around its edge, gently squeeze, and feel both the pain and pleasure of desire. My knees, though, tell me different. To cook at sea requires an ability to forgo the horizontal for up to twelve hours at a time. So, seagoing food spoiling is not for me any more.

Tomorrow is hump day. Usually hump day is the mid-point, the day when it is all but half over. I see tomorrow as hump day because there is just a week to go. Tomorrow is the last Thursday of the voyage, not counting, of course, disembarkation day, which is also a Thursday but doesn't count. These tricks of time were what I used to get me through some of the swings cooking aboard the Cook Strait ferries.

Hump day is the day I always long for home. I am ready to get my coat and catch the bus; however, I am back on watch for the second dog today, 1800 to 2000 hours. This is followed by a clear 12 hours in the scratcher. Maybe life's a breeze, maybe things are going swimmingly. On second thoughts this is not the best metaphor.

Later yesterday the Three Kings popped up to port. Land, New Zealand, a signal that this is coming to an end. It has become clear since leaving Melbourne that this is my last voyage in square rig.

We passed between the Three Kings, a group of 13 islands, and Cape Reinga. Not sure how far off the Cape we were, but probably five or more sea miles. That put us about 20 miles off the Three Kings. As dusk fell, I picked up the Cape Reinga light (single flash every 12 seconds). It looked comforting; however, its message is keep away, not come here. I recall the light of Cape Campbell (single flash every 15 seconds) some years back, from the cockpit of a yacht. At the time the skipper said the light was probably from a Japanese squid boat. Hm . . .

Our Tasman passage has been remarkably benign. The wind was occasionally zilch and the seas flattened day by day. Our passage, once we cleared the top of Tasmania, was often under power, though on a couple of nights, with the engines off, we displayed all-round masthead lights, red over green, signalling we were a sailing machine.

The top of the North Island was appropriately shrouded in cloud. Not to long after dusk I came below and slept the whole night. In the morning little was in sight. Our course was 12 to 15 miles off shore, in international waters. We are required to remain outside the 12-nautical mile line until we have cleared customs. We will go alongside to clear in the forenoon tomorrow, just a quick foray into North Port (Marsden Point). Right now, I am off for a sleep. First though I will check the phone signal and maybe call J.

This morning we are going in to North Port, Whangarei, to clear the ship. It is Saturday and there are a few days to go before laying alongside in Auckland for the off.

The voyage is over. The next few days will be spent tootling around the Gulf, followed by one or two nights alongside in Auckland. I am ready to go home

now. The Gulf tootle is not something I need, but that's how it crumbles, that's how it is.

I came off watch at midnight. Sleep was a sticky affair. The combination of a plastic covered mattress and rumpled bottom sheet kept me reasonably uncomfortable from about 0100 hours through to maybe 0530. I got up, had a shower, and then sorted my kit ready for customs to do a rummage. On the one hand, this ship is an unlikely smuggler; equally, being unlikely is a clue in itself. There is some consternation among the voyage crew about what will be confiscated in the open food department. Last evening it was the night of the nuts with much stuff being eaten rather than being left to be seized and destroyed.

We are alongside at Whangarei. There is a large tanker astern and a big bulk chip carrier ahead. North Port is, like most commercial docks, very industrial, though there are no container cranes.

The line handling team were waiting for us and not long after the lines were ashore a customs official turned up. Aha, I thought, they are not going to rummage. One border control officer is probably going to do a fairly perfunctory once over lightly and we will soon be on our way, back out into the great green yonder and looking for a park for the night. But these hopes were dashed, not by the arrival of his off-sider, or the rummage squad, or the barking of dogs as the leashes were let go. None of that. Our hopes were dashed by the customs officer leaning over the side of the wharf and mumbling 'Get the captain to fill in these forms'. As he mumbled, he threw the papers in a shipboard direction, where upon a mere zephyr took them into the drink. Mr Border Protection Officer then muttered something that I didn't quite catch, maybe it rhymed with luck, got back in the car and drove off to get more papers. Maybe the papers are kept in Auckland? I think we are lucky that here in New Zealand the border protection warriors don't pack heat. This guy would probably have

shot up the neighbourhood simply out of embarrassment.

Whangarei still. I think we are here for a while. At present the border patrol is examining bottles. Following bottles, our border's finest will shift on to the voyage crew. I have volunteered as first friskee as that may deter some of the enthusiasm of the friskers. There again, maybe not.

Good news, the ship has been cleared into New Zealand; bad news although the ship is cleared, the people aboard are not (not sure how this works). Further bad news the customs officials took all the meat (maybe they have their Christmas barbeque coming up). But now here's some more good news, the agent has taken the cook off to a supermarket.

It is now evening. We are at anchor somewhere close to Auckland, but not in sight of the Sky Tower. The plan is to mosey around until hop-off time on Thursday. This is not a great plan for me for two reasons, one being we are now effectively just out for a ride on a boat, and secondly the nub of this experience lay in crossing the Tasman. We have crossed the Tasman and it is time to go home. I will, of course keep my powder dry and just cope.

It's almost all over. Almost, but not quite. In case you sense I am ready for the off, that conclusion is too simple. I have had one or two others commenting that they can't wait to get off the ship. I understand this but would counsel that nurturing the desire to be gone will only prolong the wait. Disembarkation will happen and dissatisfaction for other reasons will take its place. There is no shortage of dissatisfaction in our world.

Journeys are largely internal. What is happening around you is circumstance. The emotion you experience is internal; your thinking determines the emotion. The exception is when the ship is either on fire or is sinking and then the

external environment may determine your emotions, attitudes and experience of it.

We are at anchor somewhere near Waiheke; we go alongside in Auckland tomorrow night.

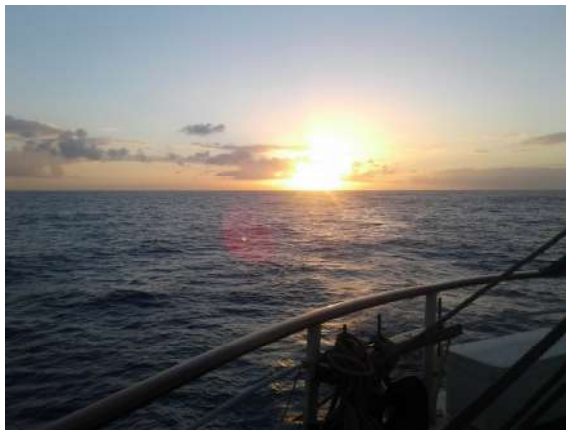
We are parked up in Auckland, ready for the off. I cannot remember the shanty apart from the line 'Leave her boys, leave her'. As with many shanties, the line is repeated many times. Shanties were one of the few opportunities crew got to comment on leadership. Shanty leaders were the rappers of the day and worked in comments that reflected just what the crew thought of management.

About midnight Wednesday, soon after we went alongside, the captain parked a portaloo on the wharf next to the ship. The ship's toilets were out of action (the sullage was full, I won't elaborate on what the sullage is, though it has to do with tanks). With about 40 people aboard, two in wheel chairs, I admired the captain's optimism in ordering a portaloo and parking it, on a trailer, up steps, just under a hotel balcony.

About 300 metres from the ship were a set of well lit, clean, 24-hour public toilets completely accessible for those in wheel chairs. The captain didn't ask for suggestions and on this occasion, I kept shtum. He is the first captain I have sailed with who, at the end of the voyage, met his portaloo. Just by-the-by, the portaloo was pink. Quite touchingly, so was the captain's shirt.

I left the ship without a glance back. She, like all ships, sat lifeless at the wharf, patiently waiting for the new lot who will join her in a few days, donkey's breakfasts and all. Ships are the very embodiment of here today, gone tomorrow.

All the way down the wharf I had a kaleidoscope of images and memories; the plunging forefoot, the bone in her teeth, shoulder down, the shape of the sails, the sound of nothing but sea and weather, late night and early morning bone-numbing cold that creeps through everything, hot tea in the dark, the light of the binnacle, and death row for the afflicted. Being at sea is never all just one thing. It is the mix of apprehension, the moment, and reflection. It can be exhilarating and it can be fearful. Maybe that is why I have found all these years of ships compelling. There again, maybe the best view of a ship is through the back window of a taxi.



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