

Trabing

Mostly about People

By Wally Trabing



Y'heave ho my lads, the wind blows free;

A pleasant gale is on our lee.

I met an Old Salt, which is rare to do now days and the first thing you think about on rare occasions like this is adventure.

He had 'em all right, did Antony Dacosta, of 128 Glenview street.

He was 20 years at sea under canvas. His last sailing ship being in 1922, a full rigged three-master, the Edward Sewald.

He's a short, light man, horn-pipe size, honed to the sea, with a rugged unhusked complexion.

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Oh, Jack's come home from sea today; all brown and bronzed was he.

For many years he's been away; from his home across the sea.

Back in 1908 he set out from Buenos Aires in a three masted bark loaded with grain. He can't remember now whether it was the Berkshire or the Perthshire, because ships have come and gone and have dulled his 74-year-old mind.

Anyway, the 24-man crew was headed for Leith, Scotland, and they didn't reach their destination until 1909.

"We were 14 months at sea—becalmed most of the time. Spent two Christmases aboard. By the time we reached Leith my leg bones were so soft I could actually bend 'em. Everyone was crabby and we had a bit of a wild time ashore.

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**Now come all you young sailors and listen to me;
With your way hay, blow the man down.**

Another time, a stormy night in 1912 aboard a Russian three master, the "Omar" out of Georgetown, with a load of greenheart timber, Antony was holding a half-yard line on deck while two Russians were sent aloft to unfurl a

sail. They let go a line which yanked Antony off the deck. The ship was rolling 45 degrees. Antony was swung out to sea and dipped deep like a candy apple; then the ship righted and swung over to the other side, Antony passing across deck like a knob on a pendulum and out to sea again for another dunking. On the next pass he caught a mast and slid down to the deck.

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**One night when were sailing;
we were off shore a way;
I'll never shall forget it in all
all my mortal days.**

"In February, 1920, I shipped out of Leith on the three mast bark Gracia out of New York. We ran into a strong southwestern; how long it lasted I did not know with so much climbing up and down the mast.

"We had no time to change clothes and the few minutes we were below were spent fighting rats that were forever running over us looking for a dry place in our straw bunks.

"A friend, Jim, and I were sent aloft to take in sail and a big one ballooned in Jim's face, knocking him off into the sea and we never heard from him again. Our eyes were closed by flying spray and the howling winds covered up his cries.

"Later I was called on deck to relieve the wheel, but before I could lash myself to it, a wall of sea came over the poop deck and washed me overboard. I said, 'Here I go too,' but something was pulling me toward the ship and on board and then I realized that I was still gripping the lash-

ing. "On board again my fingers wouldn't open. The mate had to pry them from the line."

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**God bless the widows that
sure do weep;
For the loss of their husbands
that's sank in the deep.**

"Another time rats saved me from a water grave," said Antony.

"I signed on a tramp steamer in the days when, if we saw a rat running off the ship before sailing time, we believed that ship was doomed.

"Well, it was sailing the next day and when I took my seabag aboard I saw rats leaving by way of the mooring lines.

"I didn't sail on that ship. She got another man and sailed on schedule.

"Two days later she sent out an SOS saying she was breaking up in heavy seas. The first ship to reach the scene found only wreckage and one man, the cook, clinging to a hatch cover—the only survivor."

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**For the sake of that loved
one that's waiting for me;
Oh, bury me not in the deep,
deep sea!**

During World War I he shipped aboard an oil tanker headed for Scapa Flow.

"I was leaning on forecandle head rail when a torpedo hit the ship.

"The impact threw me overboard. I could barely make out the shoreline and I started to swim for it just as another explosion let go and I went flying again and landed a few feet from the rocks on shore." And survived.

And these are only a few of Antony's adventures.

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