

If you haven't commissioned your vessel yet ... you're late! But, speaking to people from other parts of the world and even the more rural places in this great country, we tend to be too scheduled, probably due to the fast pace of modern urban living. In any case, it can't be healthy and a little more relaxation woven into one of our favorite pastimes is a good thing. Not to worry, mon. Simple words for a basic prescription.

The mariners' environment has some of its own words and nautical terms. Many years ago I listed some of them and it could be time to refresh that presentation. In other words "Get salty". The language of the sea has its own place and we can't avoid using expressions as "bow, stern, port and starboard" in public places. A glossary of these terms can fill hundreds of pages. Most terminology originated centuries ago and may have lost an understanding of the true meaning or may have changed. For instance; a "slug" can mean a imitation coin, but around the 17th century it meant a slow sailing ship.

"Topsides" are the sides and area of a vessel above the waterline. Colloquially, the term means "on deck" and from this the commercial name for the footwear called "Topsiders" can be understood. "Ditch" has multiple meanings as initially a reference to the sea, also ... to throw overboard and here on the East Coast we have given this name to the Intercoastal Waterway. "Trim" is the difference between the vessel's draft fore and aft (bow and stern or front and back or the pointy end and whatever?) or the degree to which she is deeper in the water at the head or stern. Speaking of the "head"... going to the head came from serving on the old square riggers where the on-duty deck crew was not allowed to leave station and go below. To relieve normal bodily functions, the crewman would go to the most downwind location on deck, which would be at the very bow or head of the vessel. While in this area, the saying "Before the Mast" was an expression to describe the ordinary seaman or rating. It was derived from the practice of accommodating common sailors in the forecabin while officers were accommodated aft.

Thus a common seaman was one who "sailed before the mast". Sounds like typical crew's quarters. The crew, on occasion, were



by Michael Kurnides

**sailing** (sā'ling), *n.*  
the fine art of getting wet  
and becoming ill while  
slowly going nowhere.



served "sea pies". This was a dish of meat and vegetables layered between crusts of pastry. The number of layers afforded the names "Double or Three Decker". The originator may have been related to the Earl of Sandwich. You may know that while spending many months at sea, the seaman of old would live on only salted meat and no fresh vegetables providing necessary Vitamin C to ward off the debilitating disease called scurvy. The British Navy introduced the obligatory ration of limes to provide the vitamin and prevent the occurrence of this affliction. As a result, the seamen were nicknamed "Lime Juicers" or just "Limeys" for short. Those long months at sea caused other misfortunes. Sea stories tell us of a punishment imposed on a seaman who was found to have invaded the privacy of a fellow crew member. This "keel hauling" practice has the of-

fender secured by ropes, ditched over the bow and positioned to flow aft along the barnacle-encrusted keel to be retrieved at the stern, followed by a whipping and a sentence to the ship's "brig" (jail). The logged crime was written "For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge".

On the other hand, there was "grog", a liquid refreshment described as a portion of rum mixed with water. First introduced by the Royal Navy in 1740, it was named after Admiral Edward Vernon whose nickname was "Old Grog" because he wore a cloak of Grogam cloth. Another well-known jacket, called a Blazer, comes from the type of uniform used to dress the crew of the *H.M.S. Blazer* in 1845. Other terms of significance include "lubber" and referred to a lazy and/or clumsy man, and one without sufficient experience or skill may be called a "landlubber". And then there is "lubberland", an imaginary sort of paradise where even clumsy lubbers can be tolerated. Did you know that the title "land shark" existed before "Saturday Night Live." It was reserved, back then, for lawyers. These folk were considered bad luck to have on board for any reason. I don't understand that. I know many fine lawyers and some of them even own yachts. How about he is a "son of a gun"! Originally, the complimentary term meant a seaman born at sea. Derived from the period when wives of seaman lived on board in harbor and, occasionally, at sea and had to give birth in the space between the guns as to keep the open deck clear for crew work.

Many a sea story is told over a pint of grog and done in "Heavy Weather". In this case, the heavy weather refers to an exaggerated tale of difficulty.

New voyages at sea are ever-present and it is the presentation that enhances even a circumnavigation of a local harbor. Last season we read about the successful voyage of the *Laura Lynn* from New York to Florida to the Bahamas and back. The update is that Co-Captains Paul and Debbie have written a book, which is to be published. My excitement over the book comes from their talents to make words paint the picture and make the experience come alive. I'll let you know when it is available, wish them luck!

And to all.....Fair Winds!



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