

# Nautical Trivia



by Ginny Hauff

1. Did you know the phrase "between the Devil and the Deep" (also "Deep Blue Sea") originated in wooden ships, the "devil" was the longest seam of the ship? It ran from the bow to the stern. When at sea and the "devil" had to be caulked, the sailor sat in a bo'sun's chair to do so. He was suspended between the "devil" and the sea — the "deep" — a very precarious position, especially when the ship was underway.
2. Did you know a thin iron bar, which is used to secure the tarpaulin cover over a cargo hatch, or passageway is referred to as a "batten". "Batten down the hatches" usually means prepare for a storm or trouble.
3. Did you know that "Aye" is old English for "yes." A blue-jacket says, "Aye aye, sir," meaning, "I understand and I will obey." It is based on the Latin word, 'Aio', meaning 'yes'
4. Did you know that a sailor's bell-bottom trousers, which came to epitomize the '60s and early '70s fashion, are actually a practical item for sailors living aboard ship? The wide, flared, legs are easy to roll up when swabbing a deck or wading through slightly flooded spaces.
5. Did you know the term "boot camp" evolved during the Spanish-American War? Sailors wore leggings called boots, which came to mean a Navy (or Marine) recruit. These recruits trained in "boot" camps.
6. Did you know the phrase "to buy the farm" originated back in the era of World War I? When killed in action or by accident while on duty, American servicemen were offered a government insurance policy, which was often large enough to pay off the family farm.

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