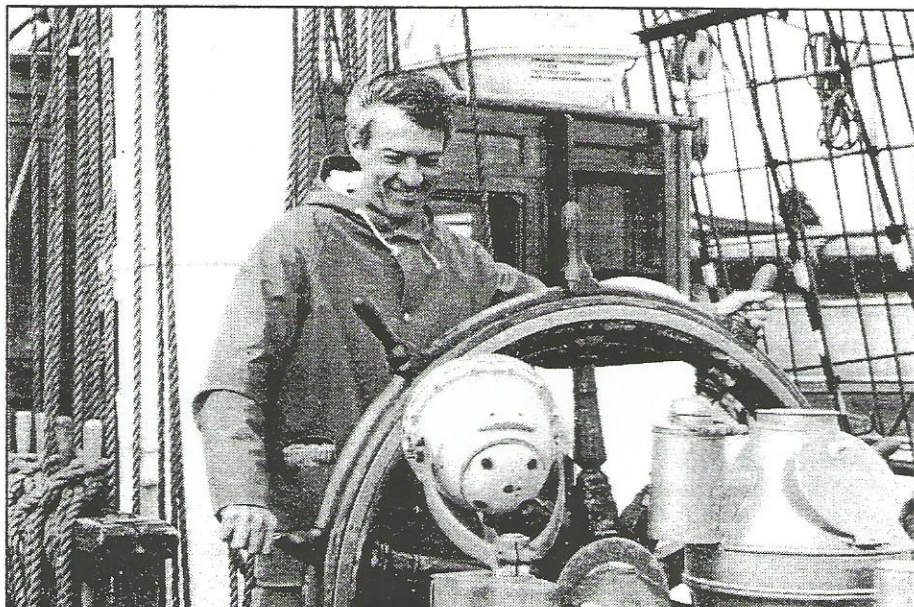


# Twelve Days Before the Mast

Skal tro om ikke Vladimir Guerrero, Feltutvikling & Satellittutbygging, Asker, kan skilte med årets mest originale sommerferieopplegg:



"There I was, on my way back to Oslo, steering 027 degrees at nine knots under full sail". Fulfillment of an old dream for Vladimir Guerrero.

Fall sailing ships, Cape Horn, a blue lagoon to lay at anchor in the South Pacific. Such images are as much a part of some of us as the salt in our blood. Therefore, when the Christian Radich announced in July available space for a 12 day trip to Amsterdam, I did not hesitate to sign on as a "medseiler," in total innocence of my action. The confirmation of my booking and a tape of seashanties served to direct my imagination to grass-skirted native girls and the HMS Bounty. So I was certainly not short of expectations when we motored down Oslofjord against a light breeze on a beautiful August morning.

The reason for the trip was SAIL 90, a celebration of the special relationship between the Dutch and the sea, held every five years in Amsterdam. This time it brought together some twenty large square riggers, hundreds of classic ships of every type and an estimated five million spectators. The Christian Radich was representing Norway in the school-ship class. It sailed with its professional crew of twelve, their families as guests, nineteen former students (who knew which ropes should be pulled when) and us landkrabbers turned medseilers, straight from the livingroom couch.

The first day out was beautiful. We had a safety drill, selected our watch, and were shown how to climb the rigging. During my first 4 - 8 watch that afternoon, I was look-out, and helped with the ropes. The evening was uneventful. Darkness brought us a full-moon. The wind picked up, but unfortunately in the wrong direction.

By the time my next watch began at 4 a.m the sea was quite rough. Perhaps it wasn't Cape Horn, but there was no possibility of keeping your breakfast. In the light of day the medseilers be-

gan to pale, some pale grey, others pale green. In the "banjer", the space below deck where we lived, hammocks were hung and many spent the day trying to sleep. When duty called again from 4 - 8 p.m., pale green and lunchless, I took my turn at steering. By the end of the watch I was making secret plans to return from Amsterdam by train.

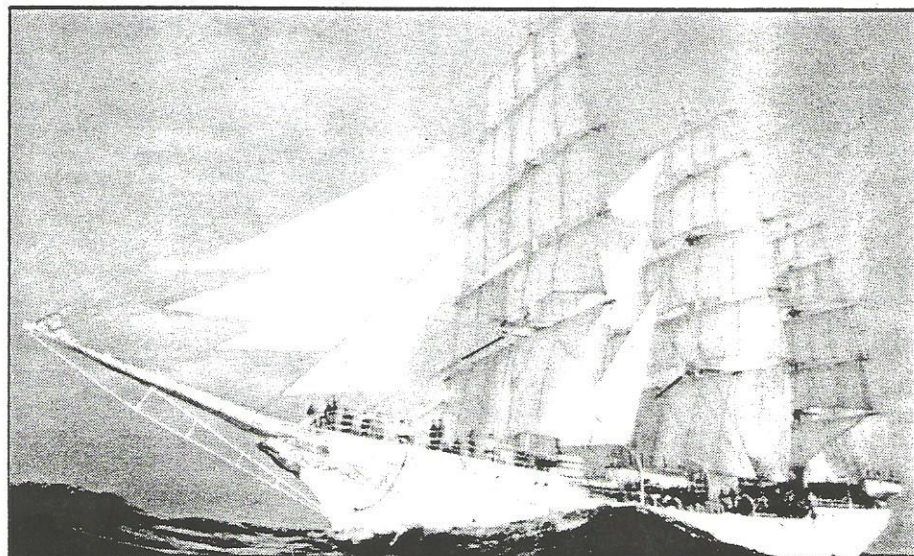
Fortunately over night the sea calmed and the wind changed direction. We put up a few sails. I was able to eat again, and by 5 a.m. Thursday the ship made her rendez-vous off the Dutch coast.

The tall ships gathered and waited, from Portugal, Argentina, Russia, Poland.... for the signal. Daybreak showed that the 15 km channel to the heart of Amsterdam was lined solid on both banks with spectators, and on the water everything that floated added some more.

A bright summer breeze cleared off the morning mist and gently pointed the direction to Amsterdam. Libertad, from Argentina, was the first to unfurl. One by one the other ships followed, dressing the yards with sails for the gala parade.

The port of Amsterdam was not a blue lagoon. Neither coconut palms nor grass skirted natives could be found. But on the way back to Oslo, steering 027 degrees at nine knots under full sail, the deck swaying unnoticed below, I thought to myself: Next year.....Cape Horn.

*Vladimir*



*Christian Radich on her way to Amsterdam.*