



🎵 "Theme From The Love Boat"



Views from the Upper deck

I Visit The Brigantine - Romance

The Romance



It was in '68, or '69, when I popped into St. Thomas, Virgin Islands for a Port Visit with the Gilliss, that I spotted this grand vessel anchored in the harbor. I was pretty sure it was the vessel I was thinking of - The Brigantine Romance, owned by a former ship-mate, and his wife.

We first sailed together on the "old" [Mobilgas](#) - a Socony Vacuum tanker...he Second Mate, and I, on his watch - AB. That was in '54. I was a Brooklyn kid, and he from Massachusetts, and "salty" in an "old age" way...he acted, and sounded like from out of the past...to me anyways.

Though not all that much older than I, maybe ten, or fifteen years, he walked with an old sailor's swagger. He, at that time held his Master's license, and was an academy graduate. I remember one stormy night off the coast...he was in the chart room cursing the old, very old, RDF while trying to get a set of bearings. Those old RDFs could be a frustration when there was slop between the wheel, and the loop, or if the battery was getting low...not to mention, that this particular night was filled with lightning - lots of static. It sounded to me, a young kid at the time, like some pirate was in the chart room...the wheel house dark, and I steering. It was kind of strange.

However, he was a great guy, and had powerful hands...I saw him one time finish off a sail-makers whipping on a piece of two-and-a-half-inch manila without pliers...he could pull that needle through that board-hard line with just his thumb, and fore-finger. In other words, he could pull a nail through a one-by-four that way.

We sailed together once again some years later, he now Chief Mate, and me - Third Mate, and I think it actually was on the "New" [Mobilgas](#). He had, by himself, painted the stack...something ordinarily not done by Chief Mates, but he just loved being aloft, and painting...to boot. He at one time brought me a can of

paint, and a small brush, and suggested I touch up a little in the wheel house while standing watch. Like I said, I was from Brooklyn, and this wasn't the thirties...I laughed at him, and ignored the paint. He quit after that voyage...I remember, he was leaving the vessel in Staten Island - Port Socony, and we both rode into Manhattan together, heading for Penn Station, me for a few hours home on L.I., he to Massachusetts to a fate unknown. Before boarding our trains, we had a drink together, and there he told me he was fed up with tankers....It wasn't the last I was to hear from him.

Ahoy There

The Harbor Master's Dock



The Romance from the Harbor Master's Dock. These photos are enlargable...just Click on "em. Luckily, the Harbor Master was about, and gladly took me out to the Romance...happy to accomodate any ol' ship mate of her skipper, and especially since I was one too, and from Brooklyn...whatever that has to do with it.

Steering Wheel, and Binnacle



The first thing I noticed upon boarding. I had my camera of course, and this wasn't to be missed. However, too much remeniscing cost me other good shots.

As we got closer to the Romance, I spotted my old shipmate on deck, and though it had been fifteen, or so years, he looked the same. He didn't expect me, we hadn't corresponded in some time, but he remember me right off, and welcomed me aboard. I thanked the Harbor Master as he backed away, and returned to shore. It's been a while since then - thirty-some years, but I guess it was a surprise for him to see me, and after explaining how I came about to be there, he showed me around the Romance. Having never been aboard a sail vessel of this size, and with only the most rudimentary knowledge of what things were for, I was most impressed with below decks...each cabin door maintained the plaque for the hollywood star that acted aboard the vessel during the making of the Movie Hawaii, in which the ship was used. Everything was spic, and span, and shipshape.

On Deck

Me, and My Old Friend



Disappointed? My ol' friend - the fellow on the right, dressed in contemporary street clothes,

The Jib Boom Out Of The Past



The top-hamper, rigging, and general arrangement was from the past, Hollywood having

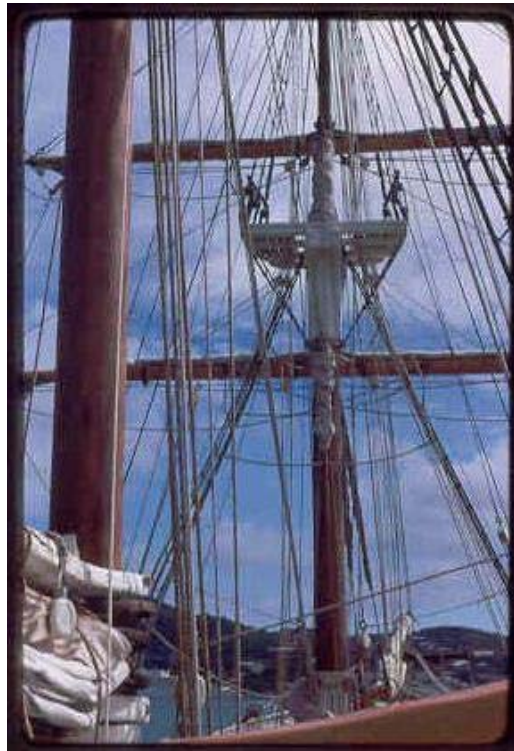
but under that facade is something akin to Hornblower's, or Long John Silver's garb. Could be he saved that for his paying guests.

done extensive makeover to the vessel's original simple plans, and this, for me, confirmed the true character of this fellow.

After quitting Socony, he dropped me a line saying he was content with just sailing his little "Hoqua"...I think that's the spelling of the name of his boat, and having gotten a job in a sail loft. Where better to work for a "jumping off place" to the past...sewing sails...putting those might hands to work. Reminds me of Cap'n Wolf Larsen of the book of the same name by Joseph Conrad. Captain of the "Ghost", his hands were so powerful as to be able to squeeze a raw potato to pulp, it coming out from between his fingers like tooth paste.

The next letter from him some time afterwards indicated he was back at sea, but on a motor yacht of considerable size - the Carmac. He was Chief Mate, and heading for the opening ceremonies of the St. Lawrence Seaway.

The Foremast



Looking Forward, and Aloft

Tar, and Hemp

Looking Aft



No nylon, or braided line here...the only "modern" thing to be seen would be the small diesel engine exhaust stack.

The Anchor Windlass



Hollywood out did themselves...I did see similar arrangements on old wooden New York Trap Rock scows. Norwegian steam needed here.

The next letter, or post card from my ol' friend indicated he had taken command of the world famous brigantine Yankee, and was starting out on a World Cruise...I guess he was beginning to "see the light at the end of the tunnel". A very

prestigious position to hold, especially in yachting circles...probably the top of the list of enviable commands.

It wasn't to last beyond Tahiti...first a Christmas Card, then the next card I got, and it was some card - a photo of him, and his new bride...one of the paying "crew"...a woman professional yachting photographer, and sailor. Both of them standing by the Wheel of the Yankee with flowers draped around their necks. He turned command of the Yankee over to the Chief Mate. A subsequent letter informed me the ship had run aground, and foundered.

It wasn't long before I received another letter saying the two had pooled their resources, and bought a schooner - the Olad II, and had begun taking out paying guests, working out of St. Croix.

It was all beginning to come together for me...this is how he would subsist while living in the past.

Time to Leave

A Last Glance



A last glance over my ol' friend's world leaves us with payed hands working on a skiff, and plastic (so there was some) mattresses, with a New World cruise ship not far off, at anchor. Anchored only in St. Thomas between cruises, guests were embarked, and dis-embarked in St. Croix.

Couldn't Resist



My only treat to this world of yesteryear, to play at steering this magnificent replica...holding the wheel that maybe Max Von Sydo, or Julie Andrews had posed by.

Now I saw the culmination of his plans first hand. I knew of the Romance coming into his, their lives in a next to last letter from him telling me about his purchase from Hollywood. The last letter showed some planned brochures, and schedules, and had a most cheerful ring to it, if not a definite sound of relief in finding the final slot in his life at last.

He beat the system, starting out in the commercial world of sailing, becoming disenchanted because of some latent connection to the past, and achieving just that - the past in the fashion of his imagination, and choosing.

Joseph Conrad, for a change from the sad, and dejected seamen he wrote about, should have written this story.

That evening, we - my ol' friend, his lady, and I "hit the beach" in St. Thomas. I honestly forget what we talked about...probably about their adventures, and very briefly about my "job". I had met her briefly when aboard, but that evening could see how she fit in with my ol' friends plans...something I can't explain, as I never figured him for the marrying kind...except for sail ships, and she had to be just as good, if not better.

I never heard from them again, but didn't have to...I could imagine it all, and be right.

The Stern



My last view of the Romance

The photographs above were scanned from 35MM colored slides taken at the time. The scanning method is explained [here](#).



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