

2025.01

# deep end

THE DUTCH SEAFARERS MISSIONS MAGAZINE



**DANGERS  
AT SEA**



**COCO  
NUTS**



**CITADEL  
XMAS**



**GOODBYE**



# FAREWELL

For seafarers, saying goodbye is simply part of the job. Each time, you leave your loved ones behind—sometimes for a few weeks, sometimes for months. But every now and then, a goodbye is final—and that's much harder.

Sadly, we recently had to say farewell to our editorial team member Jos Hilberding. He was struck by an illness that took his life within a few short months. Jos had been part of Diepgang/DeepEnd almost from the very beginning and was a familiar and valued presence on our team. In this issue, we reflect on his passing and honor him by reprinting two of his previously published articles.

Thankfully, the farewell to our designer Anja Verhart is of a very different kind. After many years of designing Diepgang/DeepEnd—including guiding us smoothly through the transition to full color—she's now heading into a well-deserved retirement. In this issue, we're celebrating her contributions with a special collage page. At the same time, we're thrilled to welcome Meike van Schijndel as our new designer. Meike already helped design our first bilingual edition, so we're very happy to have her officially on board.

Sometimes a goodbye also marks the start of something new. We hope you enjoy this issue!

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FROM THE EDITORS



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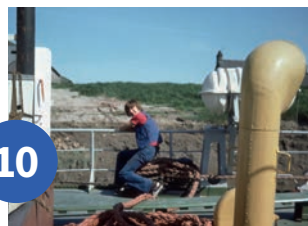
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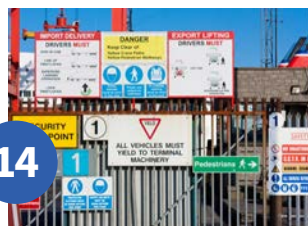
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# BLESSING OF THE SAILS

by Helene Perfors



A sunny Sunday morning in August. SAIL Amsterdam is in full swing. The flapping of sails, the hum of airplanes high in the sky, the deep sound of a ship horn echoing against the facades along the water.

The harbor is filled with tall ships, proud sailing vessels from all over the world. On the quays, early visitors wander, searching for the most beautiful ship or simply standing still in quiet admiration. On the deck of a Dutch frigate, a sunshade has been stretched. A psalm melody drifts through the air. People sit in silence, listening, gazing out over the water.

Together with the naval chaplain, the rabbi, and the minister, I

stand on the deck of *HMS De Ruyter*. It almost sounds like the beginning of a joke: “A minister, a pastor, and a rabbi walk onto a ship...”

But today, it is no joke. Today, it is solemn. Today, it is sacred.

We speak a blessing over the sails, over the ships, over those who sail. For a safe voyage. For protection and peace upon the waters. We mention the name of a visitor who lost his life in this harbor two days ago. We acknowledge the sorrow that still lingers around the Chilean ship *Esmeralda*, which lies here as well, and the shadows of its past. Not everything is sunlight and sea breeze. At times, it feels as though life simply surrenders

us to the waves—as if God does not see whether we sink or stay afloat.

Then, the rabbi speaks: “It seems, my friends, yes, it seems so... As if I determine the course, choose the pace, as if I live by every breath, as if my actions alone define who I am. Yes, it seems so... But it is not as it seems. For at sea, I know better. The wind fills my sails, the waves carry me—or strike me down. And then I know: I am not in control. My course is carried, directed, and blessed—by Someone greater than I.”

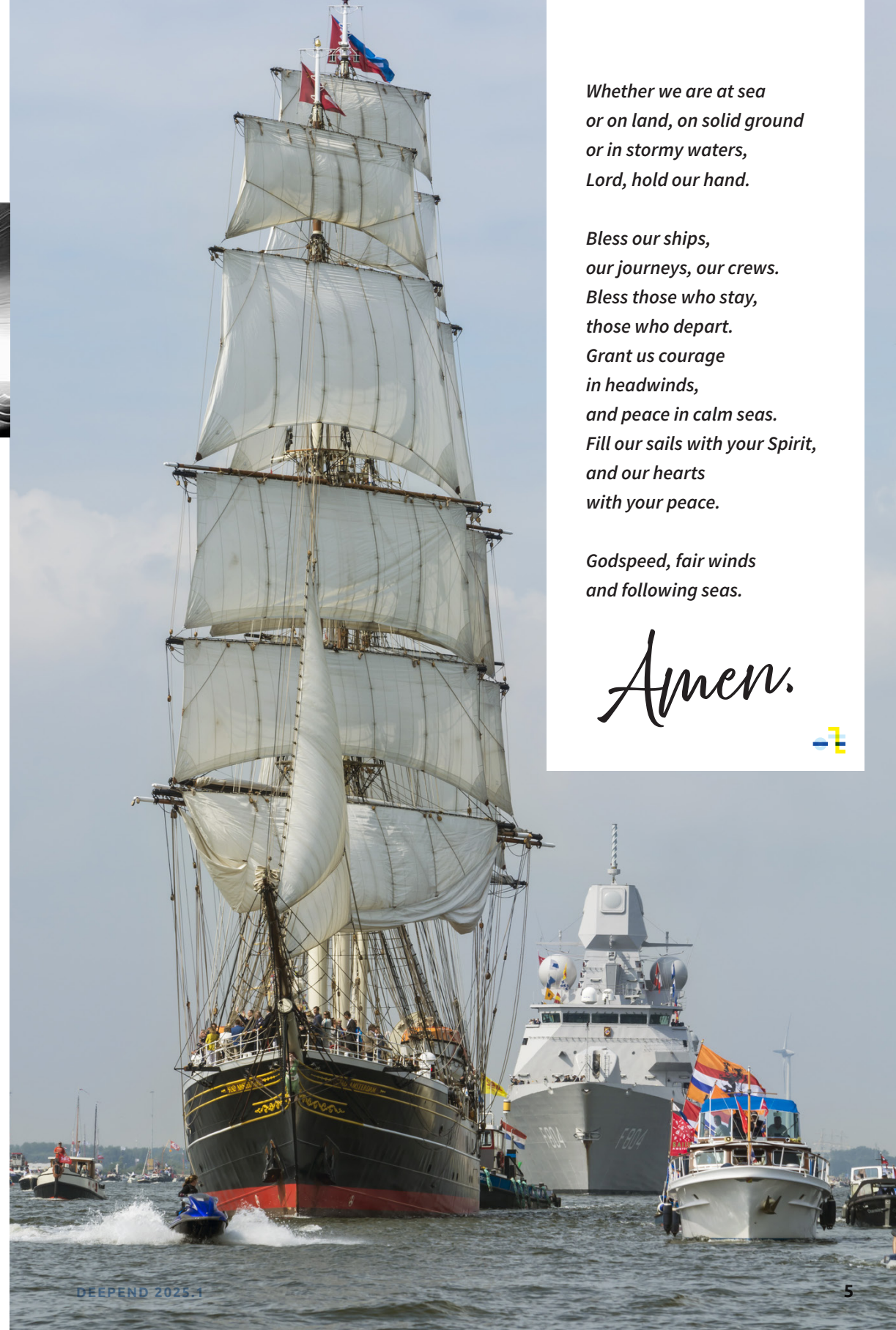
And so, we pray:

*Whether we are at sea  
or on land, on solid ground  
or in stormy waters,  
Lord, hold our hand.*

*Bless our ships,  
our journeys, our crews.  
Bless those who stay,  
those who depart.  
Grant us courage  
in headwinds,  
and peace in calm seas.  
Fill our sails with your Spirit,  
and our hearts  
with your peace.*

*Godspeed, fair winds  
and following seas.*

*Amen.*





# THE SEA IS ON FIRE

by Hans Luesink

**Evening has fallen, and we're getting ready for the night. One last round and a cup of coffee in the mess room. While the coffee brews, I chat with some crew members. The lights on the fake Christmas tree soften the stark bareness of the room. In the background, the hum of the engines fills the air — and the steady vibrations of the propulsion system are ever-present. It seems like an evening like any other.**

**But the reality is different.**

**At night**, you can't see the barbed wire we've wrapped around the ship. You don't notice the barricades on the stairs and ladders. Outer doors are sealed shut to delay any unwanted entry. Every light that could shine outside has been blacked out. On the bridge and in the engine room, there's double watch duty. Compromises have been made — safety has taken a backseat to ISPS regulations. In this region, "safety" has a very different meaning.

Out here, in a piracy-sensitive area, our lifebuoy is time. Time that we must gain in case of

attack. To mobilize help — if help is even coming. Fort Gorée in Dakar closed years ago. Since then, trade with West Africa has dwindled. No profits to protect, no headlines to grab. And without media or money, there are no rapid-response forces. What's the use of buying time if no one is coming?

**A fortified steel box where we can retreat and try to gain those precious minutes.**

What remains are the protocols. Extra steel doors to

create a citadel — a fortified steel box where we can retreat and try to gain those precious minutes. Protocols that turn a merchant vessel into a floating fortress. But no matter what we do, we're constantly walking a tightrope between SOLAS and ISPS regulations. South of Dakar, it's clear: the rules are interpreted differently than they are up north.

It's almost Christmas, and the world is burning — with wars in Gaza, Ukraine, and Syria. We're sailing in the Gulf of Guinea, near Bata, Equatorial Guinea. On board, everything appears calm. But it's not really calm







— it's resignation. Resignation, because we also want our paychecks at the end of the month. Our wages to provide for our loved ones at home. We try to make the best of the situation. Beneath the surface, tension simmers.

This illusion of calm is suddenly shattered by alarm sirens. Over the PA system:

"Code Yellow, Code Yellow, Code Yell..."

Doors slam open. Rushed footsteps thunder through the stairwell. Everyone heads for the citadel, jolted awake. On

the bridge, only the captain, the officer, and a lookout remain. The citadel doors are guarded, ready to be sealed when the last man must retreat. Between the bridge and citadel: four steel doors. Steel meant to protect us — but also to trap us. Inside the citadel, heads are counted. Is everyone here?

**Two skiffs trying  
to approach.  
It's dark, no moon,  
only radar.**

Eighteen crew members cramped into a small space.

We listen tensely, hoping for updates from the bridge.

What's happening? The monitors show the main engine running at maximum. Speed is increasing. Word comes from the bridge: two skiffs trying to approach. It's dark, no moon, only radar. No visual contact. The thermal camera barely reaches the bow. Evasive maneuvers are underway. We anxiously watch the systems on the screen. What if a malfunction occurs now? We're sealed off from the engine room. We have to rely on already 27-year-old equipment.

**I know one of them  
has been through a  
hijacking before.**

Outwardly calm, but burning inside, I check on the crew. I know one of them has been through a hijacking before. Eyes and ears are working overtime, absorbing every bit of information. Is the engine holding? The cooling systems? The crew? On smuggled phones, some type out messages on social media — final words to their families? The tension is unbearable. The bridge — our command center — is fully occupied, trying to

fend off the attack, inform the outside world. In the citadel, we hunger for news. What's happening? How bad is it? Are we facing a full blackout, trapped behind four steel doors, listening to the pirate footsteps? Or will we be able to leave safely? We're wavering between hope and fear.

Then the phone rings. "Hello citadel, this is the bridge. The attack has been aborted."

We stay alert, remaining in the citadel until we're at a safe distance. Two full hours later, the situation is stable enough to leave. "Peace on earth," the

words we sing at Christmas, take on a whole new meaning out here.

**There were two more  
hijacking attempts  
in the area.**

That same night, there were two more hijacking attempts in the area. One of them succeeded.



# VHF FOOT-SWITCH

*“Just four more weeks on board, then I’m heading home,” Niels thinks as his eyes wander across the sea. The sun is slowly rising, casting a golden glow over the water. Above the roar of the main engine, he can hear seagulls crying behind the ship, circling the wake in search of prey.*

His daydreaming is suddenly interrupted. “Good morning, Niels!” It’s Mixer’s voice. Niels and Mixer have worked together for a long time — they know each other inside and out. Over the years, they’ve built a strong bond, one built on trust and a sense of safety.

*“Morning, Mixer! Say, we really don’t have enough hands to sail this ship safely through busy port areas and the locks on the Moselle. I only have two hands, that’s one short to handle*

*communication with the guys,” Niels says. “And you’re only just figuring that out after all these years?”*

*“Yeah, apparently I am,” Niels replies, slightly annoyed.*

*“So, what are you going to do about it?” asks Mixer.*

*“We’ll ask the office to send us a footswitch for one of the VHF radios. That way, we can use it with our foot and keep our hands free for the wheel, the bow thruster, and the engine controls,” Niels says with a satisfied grin.*

*“Not a bad idea at all,” says Mixer. “And where would you install this switch?”*

*“Well, where else? On the floor, obviously — where your foot can reach it,” Niels replies.*

*“Genius!” Mixer says with mock admiration.*

*“And another thing — I’m not installing it. You are, once it arrives,” Niels adds, grinning sideways at Mixer.*

*“That’s because you’re the captain and I’m just the mate, right?”*

*“Exactly. And don’t forget — there’s no democracy on board, only pure dictatorship.”*

*“Yeah, yeah, you’ve mentioned that before. Fine. Go get some sleep.”*

The pedal arrives on the next voyage. Niels has brought the ship into port at Sunderland to unload a cargo of steel coils. He looks out over the harbor, lost in thought.

Mixer appears on the bridge, fully rested.

*“Well, Mixer — here it is, the footswitch. Have fun with it. I’ll see you at lunch,” Niels says.*

*“And you actually think I can handle this?” Mixer shoots back.*

*“Well, to be honest, there’s not much you can mess up here. It’s simple: drill a small hole, run the cable through, connect it to the VHF, and screw the switch into the floor. You’ve got this, right?” Niels replies, a bit sarcastically.*

*“You really do have a lot of faith in me,” Mixer says, laughing.*

*“I surprise myself sometimes,” Niels sighs.*

As they prepare to leave Sunderland, Mixer shows where he installed the switch. Together, they test it — and it works perfectly.

They depart from Sunderland, a heavy sky looming over the North Sea. The weather forecast isn’t looking good. Winds up to force 9 from the southeast — straight against them. But they’ll manage. It’s only 26 hours to Hook

of Holland. There’ll be delays, sure, but every hour gets them closer to peace and away from the rolling and pounding.

Niels takes over the watch near Whitby. He feels a bit restless on the bridge, unsure where to sit. Sometimes he settles into the adjustable helm chair, other times on the bench. To pass the time, he turns on the radio and tunes in to the BBC.

Then he hears a news item: someone in Whitby is interfering with emergency maritime radio traffic.

He frowns. Who does that? Probably some bored guy sitting in a car, playing around with a transmitter and messing with the marine emergency frequency. Anyway, he doesn’t seem to be affected himself. He’s too busy handling the storm to give it much thought. His VHF radios seem fine.

The sea grows wilder. Waves crash over the bow, and the wind lashes the water against the bridge windows. The radio plays “*I Will Always Love You*”, and Niels sings it at the top of his lungs. Alone on the bridge — who cares?

Then suddenly, the BBC DJ breaks in:

*“Hey, you’re disturbing the communication traffic at sea — and you sing badly too!”*

Was that directed at him? That can’t be. There’s no way a BBC DJ is talking about him... right? But somehow, it feels like he is.

Still, how would they even know?

He’s too tired to figure it out.

The next morning, during his watch, a message comes through on the Navtex:

*“A ship with a blue hull is disturbing communication traffic at sea.”*

They have a blue hull.

Niels checks everything again, now wide-eyed. The VHFs are fine. But then he notices the adjustable helm chair. When pushed forward, it ever-so-slightly presses down on... the VHF footswitch.



by Kees Wiersum

*“Things were better back in the day!”*

I’ve been hearing that line since the start of my career and all the way to retirement. The seasoned seafarers I met when I was just a young guy with big dreams always had something to say about my enthusiasm. Whenever I expressed my amazement, I’d often get responses like: *“That’s nice and all... but back in our day, things were way better!”*

I didn’t argue—I just quietly enjoyed all the new experiences. At the same time, I couldn’t help but wonder: if everything used to be so much better, why were those old-timers still sailing?

**While the old-school sailors hit the local pubs, I’d wander around strange cities with my camera.**

To be fair, there was some truth in what they were saying. Back when they were young, ship crews were mostly Dutch—at least the officers, and sometimes even a few Dutch deckhands. When I started out, I sailed with Portuguese, Spanish, and Cape Verdean crews. I got along with them well and even picked up a bit of Portuguese and Spanish along the way. Ships used to stay in port for longer too. We usually worked until 5 PM, which meant there was time to stretch your legs. While the old-school sailors hit the local pubs, I’d wander around strange cities with my camera. Okay... sometimes I ended up in the pub too. I mean, I was a sailor, after all.

But life at sea started changing—slowly at first, and then faster than anyone could keep up with.

2001—9/11. The Twin Towers attack in New York was a turning point—not just for the world, but for shipping too. Before that infamous day, you could walk into most ports without any issue. Within a year, that was over. Suddenly there were fences, gates, guards, and barbed wire everywhere. Not that ports or ships had actually been attacked—none that I can recall—but “they” figured it was better to be safe than sorry. Unfortunately, it was the seafarer who paid the price, with more restrictions and a lot less freedom.

And that was just the beginning.

Rules kept piling up. Early in my career, I could freely take the MOB boat into the Forcados River delta in Warri, Nigeria. That’s off-limits now. In the U.S., you could only go ashore if you had a TWIC card—which cost \$80 and required a training course.





### At first, pirates would just steal your stuff.

Sometimes it felt like seafarers weren't really welcome anymore. And in some places, it got flat-out dangerous. If you were anchored off the coast of West African countries, you were lucky if thieves didn't pay you a visit. Captains started drifting dozens of miles offshore instead of anchoring near land—eventually even hundreds of miles, as pirate attacks became more frequent. At first, pirates would just steal your stuff. Later, the threat got worse.

Then came the First Gulf War—followed by the Second. Even Dutch ships got pulled in, carrying huge loads of weapons, military vehicles, and ammo to war zones. If you refused to sail, you could lose your job. Later, under national pressure, Dutch seafarers were allowed to choose whether to go—for extra pay, of course. But let's be real, those ships were anything but safe.

### We sailed with heavily armed guards on board

Meanwhile, Somali pirates—many of them former fishermen who lost their livelihoods—found a new income stream: hijacking ships and crews. Dozens of vessels were attacked, shot at, or captured in the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean. Ransoms were demanded for ships and crews. I sailed through those waters more than once, always with heavily armed guards on board. Eventually, things got so bad that shipowners started rerouting vessels around the Cape of Good Hope instead of going through the Suez Canal.

Then, just as that crisis was brought under control thanks to international naval patrols, the COVID pandemic hit. Suddenly, no more shore leave. Even worse—many seafarers couldn't even get home. Some were stuck on board for over a year. A lot of countries seemed to like how quiet the ports had become and kept the restrictions in place even after COVID was officially “over.”

And just as COVID faded, Russia invaded Ukraine. A lot of Dutch ships had mixed crews—Russian, Ukrainian, Filipino (and yeah, sometimes still a random Dutchie). Shipowners insisted “politics isn't an issue,” but come on—there's no way tensions didn't creep in. On top of that, sailing to or from Ukraine became incredibly risky.

### Innocent seafarers lost their lives.

Then came October 7, 2023. Hamas fighters stormed into Israel and brutally attacked civilians. Israel struck back even harder, devastating the entire Gaza Strip, with tens of thousands of deaths as a result. The Middle East teetered on the brink. Houthi rebels started attacking ships in the Red Sea. Some vessels sank. Others were badly damaged. Innocent seafarers lost their lives. The US and UK responded by bombing targets in Yemen. Once again, merchant ships had no business being in the area, and the Cape of Good Hope route was used again.

So what's next?

In the U.S., an imperialistic, narcissistic president has been elected. He's made no secret of wanting Greenland, the Panama Canal, and even Canada. He's not ruling out military action either. What will that do to shipping routes?

And as if that weren't enough, he's kicked off an international trade war that's only getting worse. That's bad news for shipping—putting it mildly. Meanwhile, in the Middle East, Houthi rebels are threatening to target Israeli ships again. In Ukraine, Russia is now going after food supply infrastructure. The *MV MJ Pinar* was attacked, killing four seafarers.

Phew.

Looking back... maybe things really were better back in the day. I'll let you be the judge of that.





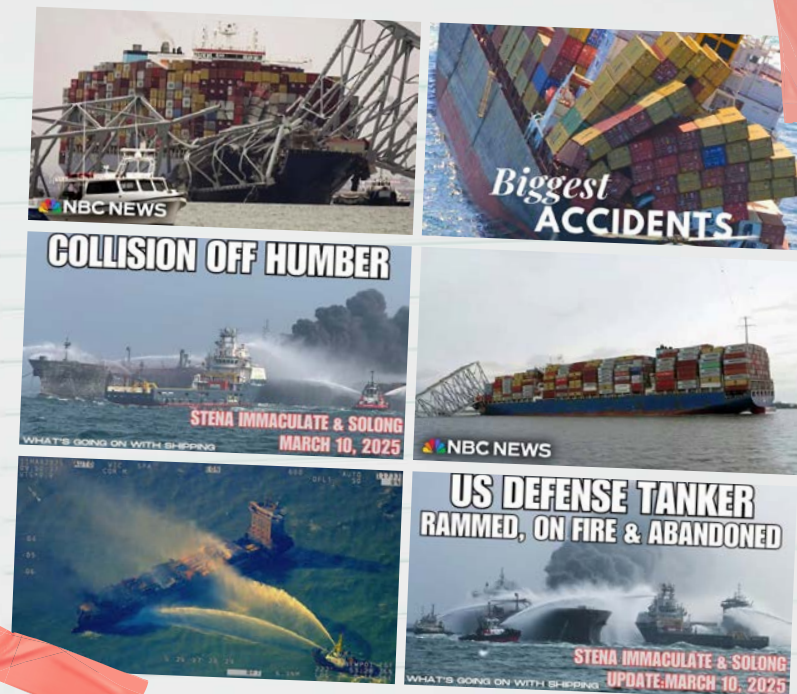
# Rabbit hole

The other day I saw on social media this really scary video of a huge ship crashing straight into a dock. Little yachts that were tied up nearby got completely crushed by the giant, while people ran around screaming in panic. The weird thing is, after that, my phone kept showing me more and more of these kinds of accidents. Apparently, ship collisions happen all the time. They usually happen really slowly, and once they start, there's no stopping them. It's like watching a movie in slow motion—the ships seem to steer away at the last second, but it's already too late. I'd fallen into what they call a \*rabbit hole\*, filled with videos of ships crashing.

Once you're in that rabbit hole, you start to realize just how many accidents happen at sea. I keep thinking, "This can't be real, these must be made with AI." Our kids are always saying you can do crazy stuff with AI these days.

Still, I'm totally sure my husband's ship is safe. I believe that so strongly that I don't even worry about where he is. He's working on a ship somewhere out in the North Sea, and of course, everything will be fine.

But then again... maybe not. Take that recent crash off the coast of England, between the container ship \*Solong\* and the oil tanker \*Stena Immaculate\*. The container ship just ploughed straight into the tanker. Was it on purpose? A mistake? Was no one watching? Did nobody look out the window—or at that super expensive radar system? Imagine you're just anchored, having breakfast or lying in bed, \*minding your own business\*, and then suddenly a container ship smashes into you at full speed. Yep, that can really happen.

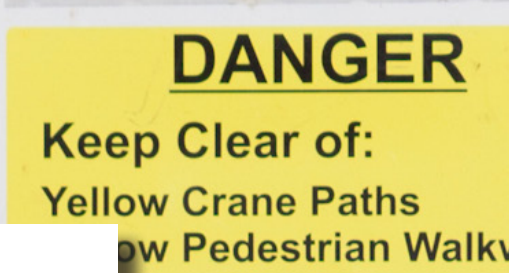


It's kind of like driving. I'll be cruising along, sticking to the speed limit, \*minding my own business\*, and then some Audi is right up behind me, or someone comes flying past on the right while staring at their phone. It's dangerous out there—sometimes it's just bad luck, but a lot of the time, it's because of someone else. Same thing at sea. You can follow every rule in the book, and still, someone else can mess it all up.

Let's just hope you don't run into them.

Take care,  
@strid





# THE SENSE AND NON-SENSE OF WARNINGS

by Stefan Francke



Every time I get into my car after visiting my mother, she never fails to say, “Drive carefully!” Sometimes, I’m tempted to respond with, “Not today, I think I’ll be reckless for a change.” Of course, I never actually say that—I know she means well, and I don’t want to upset her. But honestly, does she really think I’d get into my car with the intention of being careless?

Is there any real benefit to constantly warning people about danger? According to various studies, it seems to depend on the situation. For instance, weather warnings like “Code Yellow” or “Code Red” don’t seem to have much impact—except on the small group of people who already pay close attention to the weather. Meanwhile, those terrifying images on cigarette packs may deter new smokers, but they do nothing to stop the seasoned smokers from lighting up.

What about the Maritime World? In the maritime industry, I—along with service technicians—probably belong to one of the most heavily safety-inducted groups out there. Every project, every port visit, every ship inspection comes with yet another briefing on potential risks and hazards. Nowadays, these are often conducted online, usually followed by a quiz. The irony is that these quizzes sometimes ask about details that weren’t even mentioned in the safety video. Suddenly, I’m supposed to know the exact color-coding for lifting equipment tags (I’m just a chaplain!) or be able to recall every single symbol for hazardous materials transport.

That being said, ships, ports, and industrial sites are inherently dangerous places, so safety warnings do serve a purpose. Risks are always present. Safety briefings and programs make sense. However, I sometimes feel that an excessive amount of time and energy is spent hammering in rules that should be common sense by now. Maybe there should be a (inter)national certificate that allows you to skip the following reminders:

- The speed limit in port areas is 15 or 20 km/h
- Don’t walk under overhead work
- Make eye contact with truck or forklift drivers before crossing
- Only smoke in designated smoking areas
- Walk on the paths marked with yellow lines
- Wear your helmet and safety vest

Because let’s be honest—if half the induction is spent on these obvious points, my attention starts to drift, and I risk missing the information that actually matters. That’s why I always try to pick up at least one new piece of information or appreciate a creative approach to the briefing (just like with airline safety videos).

On board a ship, things are usually more straightforward. The officer giving the tour checks if you already know the basics and focuses on what’s actually relevant to someone like me—the muster station, lifeboats, life rafts, and the areas that require an escort. After all, they’re busy enough as it is.

And what do I say to my mother when she tells me to drive carefully?

**“Of course, Mom.”**



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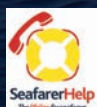
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## NEED HELP?

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# Jos Hilberding

by Leon Rasser

Cancer is a terrible disease that takes the lives of people in the very prime of their lives. Sadly, Jos Hilberding, the most athletic member of the DeepEnd editorial team, was no exception. Just like in sports, living a good life doesn't always mean you get more time on this earth.

Jos was always there for his wife and stepchildren, volunteered at his church, worked behind the bar at the seafarer's club without asking for anything in return, and still found time to contribute to this magazine.

One of Jos's most remarkable traits was his strong sense of justice. As a union worker, he defended seafarers against shipowners who failed to meet their obligations. With his deep knowledge of maritime laws and labor agreements, he made sure they didn't stand a chance.

As someone who regularly visits ship crews in the Amsterdam harbor, I saw firsthand how much Jos cared about the injustices they faced—like captains who padlocked the fridge to stop their crew from “eating too much,” set limits on how much sugar they could put in their coffee, or forced Filipino sailors to eat bread instead of rice... We often found ourselves genuinely outraged over these things, sometimes forgetting that, as Christians, we are supposed to love our enemies.

At his funeral, Jos's daughter shared how he had made every family member a better person. It may sound like a cliché, but I hope it holds true for everyone who knew Jos—even if it's just through reading this tribute.







# OVERTIME AND PIT PONIES

by Jos Hilberding

**Aside from aviation, I can hardly think of any transport sector where such long hours are worked as in the maritime industry. In road transport, drivers must comply with driving regulations, limiting them to 8 hours per day, with tachographs precisely monitoring their hours.**

## 12-hour workday

In contrast, a 12-hour workday is not uncommon at sea. Captains, officers, and crew members are on board 24 hours a day, always available to attend to the ship, cargo, or crew needs.

## 98-hour workweek

At a 2009 IMO conference on the revision of the Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping (STCW), the International Shipowners Federation advocated for a 98-hour workweek, while maritime unions proposed a 91-hour maximum, emphasizing the well-being of seafarers, onboard safety, and the maritime environment. The proposed adjustment from 70 to 77 rest hours per week (on paper) included a minimum of 10 hours of rest per day. Some flag states and shipowners protested against this minimum, arguing that seafarers needed more “flexibility”!

## Rules

IMO Secretary-General Efthimios Mitropoulos stated: *“New rules on fitness for duty will create better conditions for seafarers to be adequately rested before they undertake their onboard duties.”*

With frequent minimal crewing, discussions about fatigue - its causes and consequences are likely to continue. Shipwrecks will still happen, with human casualties at sea and oil washing up on beaches.

## Ponies

In March 1928, a heated debate took place in the House of Commons in London regarding ponies used in coal mines. At the time, the ponies worked 16-hour shifts in 14-day cycles. Twenty years later, these so-called pit ponies were limited to a 48-hour workweek, and two shifts within 24 hours were no longer allowed. It is bitterly ironic that pit ponies back then received better protection than today's seafarers.

## Maximum

The new IMO Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) will soon come into effect once ratified by at least 30 countries. It sets a maximum of 14 working hours per day and 72 hours within 7 days.

Perhaps, one day, seafarers will finally receive the same protection as the pit ponies did.



# THANK YOU ANJA

A magazine is more than just text; design plays an essential role. Without a good visual foundation, a story doesn't come to life as it should. From the very beginning, Anja Verhart has been involved with *Diepgang*, using her expertise and creativity to shape the magazine.

After 25 years, Anja is passing on the baton. The editorial team would like to express their heartfelt thanks for her dedication, her patience—especially when last-minute changes came up—and her eye for detail. Thanks to her work, *Diepgang* has become not only a magazine with strong content, but also a visual gem.

With this special collage page, we honor Anja's versatility and vibrant creativity as a designer.

Anja, we are deeply grateful for everything you have contributed to *Diepgang*.





# THE WADDEN PAINTER

by Kees Wiersum

**In the middle of this turbulent world, a tiny boat sails quietly across the Dutch Wadden Sea, just south of the Island of Schiermonnikoog. It moves carefully along the coastline, then drops anchor. A little while later, as the tide goes out, the boat settles on the seabed. And that's exactly the plan. Once the boat stops rocking, the real work can begin.**

I guess I'm a bit old-fashioned—I still read actual newspapers and listen to the radio. Sure, I browse the internet too now and then, but most of my views on how the world's doing still come from good old mainstream media. In one of those papers, I recently came across a long article regarding the Wadden Sea. It felt like a warm bath amid all the war coverage. The piece was about a remarkable man who's often out on the mudflats: Geurt Busser, a painter who's been sailing the Wadden for decades in his floating studio. For DeepEnd, I joined him for a day on board.

A floating studio—that was a new one for me. Turns out, it's basically a converted shrimp trawler. It has a small forecabin with a kitchenette and a wood stove. There are bunks in the front and back. A tiny toilet completes the setup.

Inside the wheelhouse, along with some basic navigation gear, are stacks of art supplies.

On the console are large and small brushes—not for ship maintenance, but for watercolors. Beneath the wheelhouse deck, watercolor pads are neatly stored in racks, ready for use. Most of Geurt's work is created while his boat is high and dry on the mudflats.

Today is no different. Once we've gone aground, the painter-captain sets to work. He hangs a few wooden trestles over the railing to create an outdoor painting table. Not long after, the day's first painting begins. With confident brushstrokes that show his years of experience, he captures the coastline. While halfway across the world some narcissistic president is busy making another dramatic decision, the Wadden Painter just keeps working in peace. Out here on the flats, there's no war, no political madness, none of the day's chaos—just sky and sea, like a calming medicine for a world spinning out of control.

Still, later on in the wheelhouse, it becomes clear that Geurt is very aware of what's happening in the world. He's a thorn in the side of NAM—the Dutch gas company. He's fought court battles against pollution and the exploitation of our last real wilderness: the Wadden Conservation Area. His stories show just how deeply he cares for the nature around him.

He even won a court case about his right to let his boat run aground in a zone off-limits to tourists. "If shrimpers are allowed to fish here, then I can definitely paint here!" he says. "All I do is capture the beauty of water and mud—with water. I don't take anything away, and I'm not in anyone's way."

So yes, Geurt is also a bit of an activist. But what he really wants to say is there in his watercolors: the quiet vastness of the Wadden, early in the morning or late in the day, when the light is at its best—captured in just a few brushstrokes.

Out there, nothing is urgent. There's peace, silence, stillness. And it should stay that way. There are politicians—even here in the Netherlands—who could learn a thing or two from that.

For centuries, the maritime world has inspired artists to create beautiful works. In the upcoming editions, DeepEnd will explore maritime art from both recent and distant history.





# Splashes

Tiny splashes of news featuring fresh headlines, eye-catching facts, and nautical oddities.



## IMO INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE SEAFARER 2025

Seafarers are the backbone of global trade. On June 25, the Day of the Seafarer, we take a moment worldwide to recognize their vital contribution to shipping, the global economy, and society as a whole. This year, the IMO has chosen the theme: "Our ocean, our obligation, our opportunity," emphasizing the need to build a future of respect at sea.

In the port of Rotterdam, seafarers will also be honored. Around June 25, ISC The Bridge will host various activities, and, just like last year, volunteers will deliver around 1,000 Dutch pastries on board—a token of appreciation and support.

**SEAFARERS MATTER!**



## BLESSING OF THE SAILS

**SAIL - Amsterdam** wouldn't be complete without 'The Blessing of the Sails'. This special church service will take place on board *Zr. Ms. Evertsen*.

The well-known Katwijk men's choir Jubilate and a brass quartet from the Marine Band will provide the music. The service will be led by fleet chaplain *Gert Pennekamp*, with assistance from Amsterdam port chaplain *Leon Rasser*. Readers of *DeepEnd* are warmly invited to attend.

### Blessing of the Sails

date: sun. 24 aug. 2025  
time: 11:00 - 12:00 hrs  
location: Zr.Ms. Evertsen



However, at the time of writing, the exact mooring location is still unknown, and the time may change. It is advised to check the SAIL program before heading out.



# A coconut is more dangerous THAN A SHARK!

**Recently, I took a course on safety, where I learned that our perception does not always align with reality. When shown a picture of a great white shark, we immediately thought of danger; yet, when shown a coconut, we associated it with vacation and relaxation. However, statistically speaking, more people die from falling coconuts than from shark bites.**

Of course, perspective is key—if you swim among sharks daily, your risk increases, whereas in the Netherlands, you are (unfortunately) quite safe from coconuts.

The sea has always been a place of contradiction: both a source of life and a harbinger of danger. Seafarers have long understood that there is no absolute danger at sea; it is relative, shaped by experience, technology, and even our own perceptions.

For the landlubber or the novice seafarer, the ocean can feel overwhelmingly threaten-

ing. Its vastness, the unpredictability of the waves, and the sheer isolation can create a sense of vulnerability. A calm day with a gentle swell may seem peaceful to a seasoned sailor, but to someone unfamiliar with the ways of the sea, even a slight change in weather can be unnerving.

For professional sailors or those in commercial shipping, the real dangers lie elsewhere. They know that the most treacherous situations are not only caused by storms but also by human error, equipment failures, and even geopolitical factors. A skilled chief engineer is

often able to find creative solutions in challenging situations. A well-trained crew that understands their ship, the weather, and the rhythms of the ocean can turn an apparently dangerous voyage into routine navigation—perhaps with a touch of seasickness.

The way we perceive the dangers of the sea also depends on context. A storm at sea poses a far greater threat to a lone sailor in a small yacht than to a cargo ship with reinforced hulls and modern navigation systems. A coral reef is a breathtaking underwater paradise for a diver but a hidden danger for a ship's captain navigating unfamiliar waters. Even sharks, long seen as the villains of the ocean, pose a minimal risk to humans compared to strong currents, dehydration, mechanical failures—or coconuts.

In many ways, the relativity of danger at sea reflects how we approach risks

in life. The more we learn, prepare, and adjust, the less we fear what once seemed insurmountable.

Today's news is filled with stories of potential dangers and global unrest. But is the world really that much crazier than it was thirty years ago? Or has only our perception changed? No one can tell us for sure, but most risks thankfully remain far from our daily lives. For some, faith or a sense of purpose provides guidance. It does not change the situation, but it can bring peace of mind.

Just as the ocean will always remain unpredictable, we can learn to navigate its dangers with knowledge and respect for Mother Nature. Not by seeing them as absolute threats, but as challenges that can be understood and overcome.



# THE EXPRESSION “SHIP OF THE DESERT” NORMALLY REFERS TO A CAMEL...

De uitdrukking “schip der woestijn” slaat normaal gesproken op een kameel...

