2025.02

deep end

THE DUTCH SEAFARERS MISSIONS MAGAZINE

HEARTACHE

DIVING DOCTOR

PLIMSOLL LINE

LAST SHIP

Port Betaald postnl

“THE BEST OF PROPHETS OF THE FUTURE IS THE PAST,”

wrote Lord George Byron.

That’s why, in this issue, we dive into a few historical themes—always with an eye on the future. We tackle questions like: Was everything better in the old days? Why does the story of the wartime “Seamen’s Relief Fund” still matter? Is loading past the Plimsoll line a timeless issue?

DeepEnd includes an article not found in the Dutch edition—about a diving doctor. And of course we again spotlight maritime art—this time on an unprecedented scale.

Enjoy the read!

P.S. We welcome your feedback. If you have comments or topics you think we should cover, please email: *deepend@gmail.com*

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subscription is possible by becoming a donor (min. € 25 per year) of the Dutch Seafarers’ Welfare, Lichtenauerlaan 46, 3062 ME Rotterdam
IBAN NL72 INGB 0000 144030 (also for gifts and donations)

pdf It is possible to receive Deepend free of charge in PDF. Send a request to: ***contact@zeevarendencentrale.nl***

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COLOPHON

DEEPEND
is a joint publication of
Nederlandse Zeevarendencentrale (Dutch Seafarers Welfare | zeevarendencentrale.nl) and
Stichting Pastoraat Werkers Overzee (Pastoral Care for Workers in Dredging and Marine Construction | spwo.nl)
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Parelduikerhof 8 | 4332 DA Middelburg
The Netherlands
circulation
2000
distribution
Dutch merchant shipping, dredging and deep sea fishing vessels, Seafarers’ Centers and subscribers
graphic design
Meike van Schijndel
print
Drukkerij Rijpsma
ISSN
1567 - 3472

SPW Stichting Pastoraat Werkers Overzee

deep end

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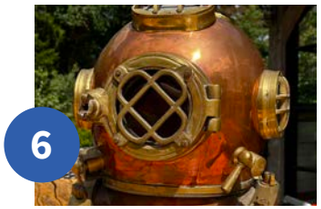

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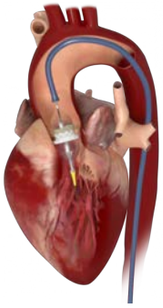

STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART

by Stefan Francke

I was lying on the operating table. Everything inside me had to come to a stop. Literally. My heart was still. My blood rerouted. A machine took over for a while. Tubes, valves, and pumps — it all felt more like an engine room than a human body.

As the 'dredging pastor', I often visit vessels and offshore projects. There I see systems designed to handle pressure, redirect flow, and clear blockages. Everything needs to function, or the operation comes to a halt. Facing my surgery, I thought: My body is now in the hands of people who know exactly what they're doing — just like a ship entrusted to a crew that knows how to maintain it.

And yet… no matter how technical the procedure, how skilled the medical team — it remains a miracle. That the heart starts beating again. That the blood flows. That life goes on. Not a certainty, but a gift.

There was a hymn that carried me through those days. It says:
God's goodness is too great for happiness alone.
It moves through every fate, through all of life it's shown.

In moments of vulnerability, you may sense a kind of goodness that goes deeper than comfort or success. A goodness that carries you, even when you can do nothing at all.

It all started at the end of March. I was exercising when I suddenly felt chest pain. That was the beginning of what would lead to open-heart surgery, including several bypasses. It reminded me of how a ship, after a long and intensive work period, goes into drydock. Everything is checked. Inspected. At times something has to be replaced or rerouted. And then — a new voyage begins, with an extended life cycle.

That's how I feel now: not perfect but restored. Back on course. And deeply thankful for the time I've been given.

To every seafarer reading this: your life is not a machine either. You are more than your rank, your strength, or your performance. You are a human being. Cherished. Known. And — whatever may come — carried.

Lord,
You who give life and carry life,
thank You for the skill of medicine,
and for the silence in which You speak.
Bless all who give care,
and all who feel broken.
Set us back on course again and again —
with hope, with courage,
and with Your goodness.

Amen.

Interview with

Diving Doctor Marcel Grosfeld

by Helene Perfors

The moment you hear Dr. Marcel Grosfeld speak, it's clear: this is a man with deep love for his profession, and someone who knows exactly what (sea)water can do to a human body.

© Marcel Grosfeld

He is both a cardiologist and a diving medical specialist—a rare combination. For nearly forty years, he has advised, examined, and at times remotely guided divers in life-threatening situations. His stories shed new light on the endless safety drills seafarers undergo: behind every wave may lurk a risk that can betray your heart or your body.

From Navy Doctor to Cardiologist

Dr. Marcel Grosfeld began his career in the navy. First he read medicine at Leiden University, and pursued a specialization in diving medicine at the naval base in Den Helder. After leaving the service, he became a cardiologist, but the world of diving never let him go. Since 1986 he has been active in the commercial diving industry, both as a consultant and as a medical examiner.

"Your heart is crucial in everything to do with water and underwater," he explains. *"But the combination of cardiologist and diving doctor is almost unheard of. That's why I often get calls from divers with heart problems. This needs to be tailor-made."*

Water as the Heart's Enemy

Even for *"ordinary"* seafarers, who usually prefer to stay on the water rather than under it, Dr. Marcel has an urgent message:

"Going into the water is actually the most dangerous thing you can do for your heart," he begins. *"In water below 34°C your body constantly loses heat. You start shivering, but that only helps for a short time. Your blood vessels constrict, your heart suddenly has to handle a greater volume of blood, and at the same time you feel like you can't breathe. Add waves to that, and you already have the first ingredients for drowning."*

A dangerous chain reaction follows: *"Cold makes you hyperventilate. Your muscles stop responding the way you want. 'Swimming failure' can set in: you simply can't keep yourself above water. Or you might suffer a shallow-water blackout: your muscles don't tell you to surface, but you're still burning oxygen. And if you survive all that, you'll continue cooling. At 35.5°C hypothermia starts. Consciousness fades, arrhythmias develop. Below 28°C, they are often fatal."*

He recalls how, during his navy days, he treated a woman so hypothermic that the thermometer no longer registered a temperature. *"All I could do was wrap her in blankets and warm her up slowly. That made me wonder: what is hypothermia*

really? Back then—in the early eighties—we knew very little about it in the Netherlands."

Lessons from the Titanic

Surprisingly, he found many answers in older sources. During World War II, when convoys to Murmansk suffered heavy losses, doctors gained a lot of practical knowledge. Even earlier, after the sinking of the Titanic, information surfaced in lawsuits against insurance company Lloyd's.

"Lloyd's did not pay out for drowning. But bodies were found floating face-up. They hadn't drowned; they had died of cold. And some who were rescued alive still died later. All of that was carefully documented."

One crucial lesson: a hypothermic person must be lifted horizontally from the water. *"At sea the body is under constant pressure. If you pull someone out vertically, the heart may fail instantly. Gravity drains blood from the brain. Often, it's fatal."*

So how do you save someone? He does the math: *"Suppose someone weighs 80 kilos. That's about 65 liters of water in the body. Warming that up takes time. You need to insulate the person, give warm sugary drinks if they're conscious, wrap limbs separately, use an IV if possible. Do it wrong, and they may die anyway."* Yet there's a hopeful side: *"Hypothermia can actually protect the brain. The body uses less oxygen. The faster someone cools, the greater the chance of survival."*

Communication in a Tough World

Because Dr. Marcel is often not physically present at accidents, communication is everything. *"You need to speak the divers' language. You must understand each other, even in medical terms. Otherwise, things go wrong. The internet is a blessing: you can watch via camera, ask questions, and better assess symptoms."*

But challenges remain: *"In Europe you run into cultural differences and regulations. One uniform system would make things easier. We have knowledge and expertise here, but we don't use it well. Certification is often complicated."*

He describes the diving world as tough: *"It's macho—less than before, but still. These are tough men. If you don't invest in building trust, you'll run into trouble."*

The Hand That Reached Back

One story stands out above the rest. As a remote advisor, he was involved in the salvage of a Nigerian tugboat lying at 30 meters depth. Divers were retrieving bodies; they had already found four. At one point, a diver saw a hand and grabbed it—assuming it was another corpse. But the hand grabbed back. It was the cook, who had survived more than 60 hours in an air pocket. He was brought up alive. Later calculations showed he had only three hours of air left. Remarkably, he went on to earn a diving certificate himself.

Always on Standby

His role as diving doctor spans wide: from North Sea work and caisson projects in Amsterdam to pipeline laying in the Gulf of Mexico.

"Anything under pressure is part of the diving doctor's field. A diving medical specialist must always be available 24/7. The protocols are usually clear—the US Navy tables are known worldwide—but sometimes you have to improvise. Fortunately, it almost always works out."

And he never stops learning: *"If you stop being amazed, you die."*

Listening to Marcel Grosfeld, you meet a man firmly rooted in practice, yet full of wonder about the strength and fragility of the human body in the sea. The ocean, he says, will always be stronger than us. But thanks to knowledge, experience, and good communication, divers and seafarers have a far greater chance of making it back safely.

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YouTube:
Nigerian cook rescued

MARITIME PASTORAL CARE IN ACTION

At the spectacular Sail Amsterdam event, port chaplain Leon Rasser and former navy chaplain and Elvis tribute artist Fred Omvlee joined in—one with blessings, the other with song.

Two very different ways of reaching the heart.

PAST, PRESENT – AND FUTURE

Events of the war have left their mark up to the present day and beyond

by Helene Perfors

The lines of the past continue into our present. Events from 85 years ago still have consequences – also in the maritime world and in the geopolitical developments that seafarers face today. The echoes of war still ripple through our lives today. Our children and grandchildren ask questions, and seafarers too are confronted with choices.

HISTORY COMES TO LIFE

During the World Port Days in Rotterdam this year, the National Merchant Navy Monument De Boeg was given two new memorials. Mayor Carola Schouten unveiled the so-called lecterns, an initiative of the Foundation for Merchant Navy Personnel 1940–1945 and the Foundation Memorial Zeemanspot and National Support Fund. They will remain permanently at the monument and contain QR codes that lead visitors to personal stories and historical context. With a simple scan of a phone, the past literally comes to life.

AT SEA – THE MERCHANT NAVY, SAILING FOR FREEDOM

Seafarers were of inestimable value during the Second World War. They ensured the supply lines of the Allied Forces and the transport of troops. Their work across the world's oceans – dangerous and often far from home – was crucial for our freedom and contributed greatly to the liberation of Europe and the end of the war in Asia.

ON SHORE – THE ZEEMANSPOT AND THE NATIONAL SUPPORT FUND

Alongside the struggle at sea, another story unfolded on shore: that of bankers and volunteers from all walks of life who, with ingenuity and courage, built up the Zeemanspot and the National Support Fund. Using clever but often perilous methods, they collected money to support the families of seafarers and to finance the resistance. It was a unique form of financially organized resistance in occupied Europe. Of the approximately 2,000 people involved, 84 ultimately paid with their lives.

WOMEN – FORGOTTEN HEROINES

The wives of seafarers carried a heavy burden. While their husbands braved all dangers at sea, they kept their families going in occupied Netherlands, often in anxious uncertainty. Every knock at the door could bring bad news. Yet they persevered, with strength and resilience.
There were also women in leading positions within the resistance, as well as couriers who carried money and information through occupied territory at great personal risk. They took on leadership, showed incredible courage, and played an essential role. Their contribution has too often been overlooked. The Zeemanspot lectern rightly gives them the recognition they deserve.

The past continues to move us, the present keeps it alive, and the future calls on us to pass it on.

THE MERCHANT NAVY IN WARTIME – AT SEA AND ON SHORE

The fight for freedom was waged not only across the oceans, but also in silence, on shore – together forming two indispensable fronts of the same war.

On 10 May 1940, Germany invades the Netherlands. Most Dutch merchant ships are at sea at the time. For the 32,000 seafarers on board, the so-called vaarplicht ("sailing duty") comes into force: they are required to contribute to the war effort by sailing for the Allies. Often sailing in convoys, the ships play a crucial role in transporting food, equipment, and thousands of troops to the front. But danger lurks everywhere: mines, U-boats, and bombers make every voyage life-threatening. Fierce battles are fought in the Atlantic Ocean, the Mediterranean, and around the Dutch East Indies. And as if that is not enough, the seafarers on the convoy routes to Murmansk and Archangelsk also have to endure the relentless cold – a struggle of life and death.

The price is steep: more than 500 Dutch merchant ships are lost and over 4,200 crew members are killed. The Foundation for Merchant Navy Personnel 1940–1945 works to ensure recognition and appreciation of these Merchant Navy veterans.

www.koopvaardijpersoneel40-45.nl

But the fight is not only waged at sea. On shore, seafarers and their allies organize themselves to support the families of sailors and to sustain the resistance.
At the outbreak of the war, there are more than 800 Dutch merchant ships at sea. The German occupier demands that they return to the Netherlands, but the crews refuse. In retaliation, their families are cut off financially. To help them, the Zeemanspot ("Seamen's Fund"), a resistance organization by and for seafarers, is established.

The initiative comes from Captain Abraham Filippo of the Holland America Line, together with former naval officer Iman Jacob van den Bosch and banker and former mate Walraven van Hall. With the 5.2 million guilders the Zeemanspot collects, about 18,000 family members of seafarers are supported.

Soon, however, the need grows beyond the maritime community. Increasingly, others require help as well: people in hiding – especially Jews and members of the resistance – need food, clothing, and shelter. That demands greater resources. In 1943 the Nationaal Steunfonds (National Support Fund, NSF) is founded. In the end, the NSF collects more than 100 million guilders. Thanks to a network of young women who, at great personal risk, act as couriers distributing the money, some 150,000 people can go into hiding and survive the war.
The cost to the initiators is high. Van den Bosch is executed on 28 October 1944, followed by Van Hall on 12 February 1945. Filippo dies shortly after the liberation in his hometown of Rotterdam.

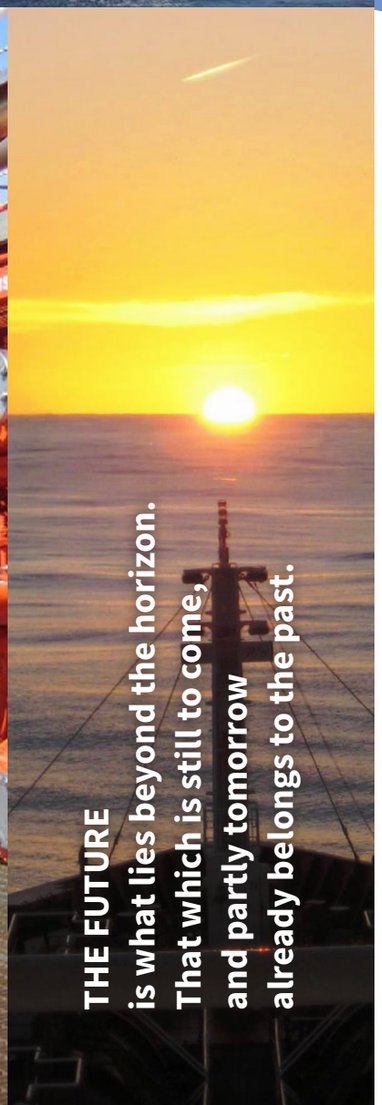
www.zeemanspot.nl

REFLECTIONS
of a chief engineer

by Hans Luesink

THE PAST
is what lies behind us.
Lived through, experienced,
engraved in our memory.

THE PRESENT
the dividing line
between what was
and what is yet to come—
the threshold on which we now stand.



THE FUTURE
is what lies beyond the horizon.
That which is still to come,
and partly tomorrow
already belongs to the past.

THE PLIMSOLL MARK

Plimsoll was a coal merchant. He soon realized that capitalism gave shipowners the freedom to overload their vessels. Since the ships and cargo were insured, it didn't matter to them if the ships sank. When Plimsoll's business came to an end, he became a Member of Parliament and took on the task of helping seafarers. In 1876 his bill was passed, introducing a mark on ships showing the maximum loading line, ensuring they could sail safely across the seas.

Peter Jan had invited him to sail on one of his vessels that was suitable for the Saimaa lakes. The idea appealed to him. He had lived in Finland for several years and already knew the lakes from family holidays in the east. He had sailed many rivers, lakes, and seas, but never Saimaa.

He boarded the ship in Brake and met the crew. Young Dutch guys, together with Filipino deckhands. The atmosphere was pleasant, and he felt at home straight away. The mate, Hjalmar, was quiet and friendly but also distant. His answers were short. It took a while to gain his trust. A fine young man, hardworking, who took his responsibilities seriously.

The next day Peter Jan came on board. He had met him before during the job interview a few months earlier. At that time, Peter Jan's rather casual remarks had surprised him. He had also met his brother-in-law, who would train him for a few days before going home to celebrate Christmas. He had remarked to the brother-in-law that it wasn't necessary to load a ship too deeply, past the Plimsoll line. He had sailed with his father, who owned a ship, and knew the tricks.

"No, absolutely not. You definitely don't have to do that," the brother-in-law had assured him. But he soon regretted saying it, as it turned out to be asking for trouble.

Peter Jan told him: *"There's no need to take a pilot when going to Harlingen, you can manage without."* He had been to Harlingen before, but years ago, with an inland vessel through Kornwerderzand. Now, doing it without a pilot felt wrong. But Peter Jan had made his point firmly, leaving no room for argument. He sensed it well. During the interview he had told Peter Jan that he wanted to follow the law, but this clearly made no impression. Or perhaps it did—and now Peter Jan wanted to prove that he didn't care.

The cards were dealt, and he would just have to make the best of it. He knew this was no longer about sailing—it would turn personal, as it often did.

He called Brandaris (the marine traffic control station). *"Come in, the way is clear,"* was the reply. First past Stortemelk, where he could see the waves boiling up. Then on towards Vlieland, sailing close to the coast. A bit further to make the sharp turn into Harlingen harbour. Here Peter Jan warned him to be careful, proudly adding that he himself had sailed there in force 8 winds. He was impressed, but didn't show it. They berthed safely, just in time to load a cargo of salt for Pasajes. Nobody cared that again no pilot had been taken, though it was mandatory. The risk weighed heavily on him, but he avoided confrontation. He had only been on board for 24 hours. And Peter Jan, of course, would know nothing of it.

Not long after, they were again loading salt in Harlingen. Peter Jan came on board with supplies—vegetables, bread, meat—and, to his surprise, more cargo. The mate was handling the loading while Peter Jan sat with him on the bridge. He himself had to prepare documents for the agent, until the mate came up and asked if he could *"just finish the loading." "Peter Jan is there too,"* he added.
Oh dear, he thought, this will be something. From the quay he could already see the ship was too deep forward, but Peter Jan claimed the bow would rise once more weight was added aft. He feared the worst.
"She's sitting nicely," said Peter Jan.
"Yes, but too deep."
"That doesn't matter, I've always done it this way."
"Why not add another 200 tons then?"
"No, that would be too much," said Peter Jan.
"If you say this is all fine, then I'll hold you to it."
"No, you are responsible," Peter Jan replied.

He could have protested, but sensed it would lead to a fiasco. Better to see how to solve it later. Clearly there was no reasoning with Peter Jan. Perhaps his brother-in-law had told him about his views on overloading, and Peter Jan had made it a challenge to push him into it anyway.

On the way to Imatra the ship moved like a rag through the canal. In Finland, the pilots were changed. The new pilot immediately noted they were too deep.
"If I had boarded at the first lock and seen this, I would not have allowed you through. I would have sent you to Hamina to unload 100 tons so you'd be at the proper draft."
"If only you had boarded at the first lock," he replied.
"Oh?" said the pilot.
"Yes, then I'd have had one problem less. You know how some owners always push the limits. And especially this one, whom you also know well. But please, just take us to Joensuu. I'll speak with him and explain what happened—though I doubt it will change his mind."
"I'll discuss it with my pilot station," the pilot said.
"Please do," he replied.

The next day, the pilot station sent out a message to all charterers transporting cargo to the Saimaa lake: the maximum draft in the canal must be observed.

Plimsoll was a courageous member of parliament. He knew it wouldn't be easy to get his bill passed. Where have such people gone, those who stand up for seafarers—or for ordinary citizens?

His Last Ship

"This might be my last ship."
Out of the blue, my husband suddenly says this. After more than 30 years of sailing on dozens of ships, it hits me like a bolt from the blue. Alarm bells immediately go off in my head. What happened? Did the voyage not go well? What signs did I miss? How serious is this? But he doesn't elaborate any further: "No, nothing happened. I just think this might be my last ship."

I have wondered before what my life, his life—our life—would look like without shipping in it. That question was always easy to set aside, because it simply wasn't relevant. Shipping has always been there, for as long as we've been together.
Living with a seaman has meant that whenever things changed, our lives had to be adjusted in a big way. Since more people work in offices than at sea, I didn't have many role models to follow. But over time, the seafaring life started to fit me like a glove. At least, I think my life doesn't feel all that different from my neighbor's, whose husband cycles to the office every day—it all feels quite ordinary.

And then reality suddenly hits me: after 30 years of shipping, I have absolutely no idea what his life, my life, our life, would look like without it. The future feels like a wide-open void, and it's high time to change that. I figure it's a good idea to start thinking it through together. But I don't need to suggest it—he's already been thinking about it.

"I want to go into teaching," he says, to my surprise. "When I was at nautical college, my teachers were people at the very top of their careers, with loads of knowledge and experience to share. I benefited enormously from that at sea. That's what I want to give to the younger generation."
I think it's a beautiful idea. Young people are often accused of knowing so little. If that's true, then it's down to the quality of education, I'm convinced. The adults who design, shape, and deliver education are responsible—the youth simply have to make do with it. So what could be better than hiring experienced professionals to pass on their knowledge to the next generation?

Of course, being an engineer doesn't automatically make you a teacher. How do you convey your knowledge? How do young people's brains develop around the age of 20, and how do you tailor lessons and assignments to that during their studies? What can you expect of them now, and what only later? How do you account for differences between students? No two captains are the same, and the same goes for students.
And how do you create a safe and supportive learning environment? On board, you're expected to speak up immediately if you see an unsafe situation. But how do you make sure that even the quietest student develops and learns to trust themselves? How do you prepare young, eager people for an internship on a Dutch ship, where they'll be learning the trade from a Russian captain, a Romanian officer, and a Polish engineer?

In short, my husband would need to train to become a teacher. Makes sense—teaching is a profession in its own right. But then the question arises: what does a teacher actually earn?
That turns out to be a huge disappointment. "How is that possible? Back in my day, experienced captains taught while keeping their captain's salary. I'd be taking such a big pay cut that it just isn't feasible," he says, disheartened.
The salary gap is simply too large. With teaching off the table and no other ideas for now, he packs his bag and heads back to sea.
A few days later, I call him to cautiously ask how things are going. I'm worried, but I needn't be. "Fine," he says. "It was just all those endless rules and the piles of paperwork. It was getting to me, because it leaves so little time for real work. But I've let it go now. I'm doing relaxation exercises—and Zen meditations, too."

When I hang up, I know what my future will look like, at least for now: just as it always has—life with a seaman.

Take care, @strid

Astrid Feitsema a Dutch seafarer's wife. Her partner is an engineer on an offshore ship.

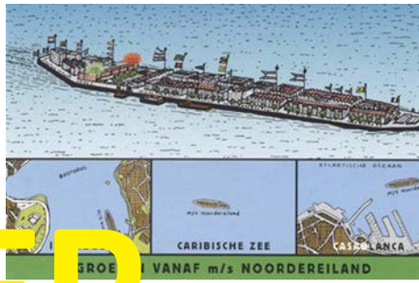
For centuries, the maritime world has inspired artists to create beautiful works. In the upcoming editions, DeepEnd will explore maritime art from both recent and distant history.

THERE IS A SHIP IN ROTTERDAM. THAT SOUNDS LIKE AN OPENING SENTENCE WITH AS LITTLE NEWS VALUE AS: "A PLANE LANDS AT SCHIPHOL." OF COURSE, THERE'S A SHIP IN ROTTERDAM—MANY SHIPS, IN FACT. BUT THIS SHIP IS DIFFERENT. IT IS THE LARGEST IN THE WORLD, NO LESS THAN 1,300 METERS LONG AND 100 METERS WIDE!

MV NOORDER-EILAND

Joe Cillen

by Kees Wiersum



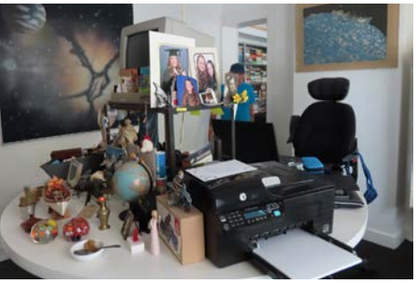
In 2023 the ship had a crew of 3,455, I found on Wikipedia. More than a century ago it even carried 8,695 crew members!

The ship's name: MV Noordereiland. It sails under a flag I had never seen before: three horizontal stripes—green, white, green—with a red heart in the middle.

I walk across the bridge *'Willemsbrug'* toward the island—because that's what it is. But it does indeed look more like a gigantic ship, calmly anchored in the river Nieuwe Maas. I have an appointment, not with the captain perhaps, but with a very important crew member: Joe Cillen.

Joe, a former AB in the merchant navy, now a diving instructor but above all a visual artist and the initiator of the island-ship, has invited me aboard. We meet at his gallery, located somewhere forward on starboard side. He turns out to be a great storyteller and knows much about the island where he lives, overlooking the ships passing just a short distance away.

Earlier this year, when I received the farewell book from the Dutch Cape Horners' Association—disbanded after



their membership had dwindled—I read Joe's story there, with a photo of his life-sized mural of Cape Horn. There are not many images of that famous cape, and since I belong to the select group of seafarers who have actually rounded the Horn, my interest in the artist and his work was piqued. And now it turns out he lives on this gigantic island-ship in the heart of Rotterdam.

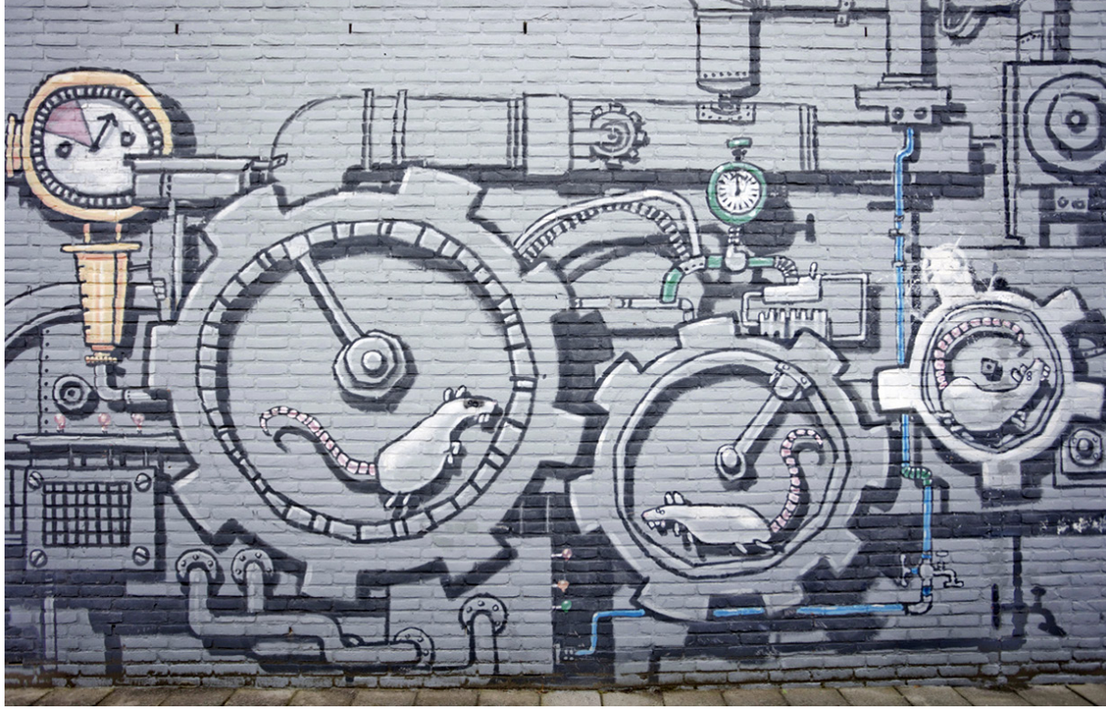
As we walk along the deck of this ship, I am struck time and again by new surprises. There's a hawsehole on the bow, a piece of art by another artist. There are navigation lights, mounted on two tall buildings to port and starboard. It has taken quite some effort to get those lights approved; authorities are rarely blessed with much imagination.

The entrance halls of the new apartment blocks on the stern are all decorated with maritime art by Cillen. He also points out many subtle details on the island-ship. Where the railway once ran (connecting via the old bridge De Hef to the mainland) there is now a park. Thanks to Cillen, cherry trees were planted there. When I look at him in surprise, he explains:

"AGAINST SCURVY, OF COURSE…!"

Many residents of Noordereiland gladly embrace the playful illusion of the island-ship. Some even give their address as *"starboard side," "midships,"* or *"aft"* instead of using street names.

The whole island breathes a maritime atmosphere, but nothing captures the imagination more than the engine room. At the end of the last century, the alley where the engine room now stands was a dark, unsafe, filthy place where junkies used drugs and pub-goers relieved themselves. Today it is a long passageway, its walls covered with comic-like murals of fantasy machines, created by artists together with neighborhood children. The most wonderful thing about this engine room is that it is clean and wonderfully quiet. Because on an art-island-ship, such a thing is possible: an engine room without heat, oil, grease, or noise!



When you cross the gangway (alias Willemsbrug) and set foot on deck (Maaskade) of the MV Noordereiland, you step into a maritime world. To port and starboard there is nothing but water; looking west from the bow you can almost imagine the sea. When will we set sail? Or is it an illusion? Cillen knows the answer:

"I believe—and I express this in my work—that everything is an illusion. Nothing is what it seems, and even that simple idea is an illusion…"

I have nothing to say to that.

The day is gone before I realize it. Still mulling over all the impressions, I dive back into the cosmopolitan life of the city of Rotterdam, home port of the largest ship in the world.

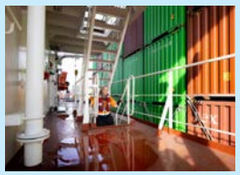
"I BELIEVE—AND I EXPRESS THIS IN MY WORK—THAT EVERYTHING IS AN ILLUSION. NOTHING IS WHAT IT SEEMS, AND EVEN THAT SIMPLE IDEA IS AN ILLUSION…"

Splashes

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

Tip!

A CAPTAIN IS NOT ALWAYS A MAN WITH A MUSTACHE



A new exhibition at the Maritime Museum Rotterdam tells the stories of maritime women. These stories have remained unknown until now, even though women have left their mark on our maritime history – and continue to do so to this very day.

The assumption is that women weren't really there and couldn't, wouldn't, or didn't do things. But that image is not accurate.

Women at the helm
From captains' daughters who secretly signed on, to women who ran shipyards or accompanied their husbands at sea – they have always been there. Sometimes out of love, sometimes out of pure passion for the profession. "The fact that women were not allowed to sail does not mean they didn't," says curator Irene Jacobs. Now, these women are being given a face.

Women in the picture
Contemporary maritime women are also placed in the spotlight. Photographer Anne Reitsma followed five women during their work at sea and in the harbor. Her photo reports can be admired in the free exhibition *'In Sight'* at the museum entrance.

MARITIEM MUSEUM

From October 3 2025
Maritime Museum Rotterdam
Leuvehaven 1, Rotterdam
www.maritiemmuseum.nl

HARBOURMASTER ISSUES CALL:

Shore Leave Access in the Port of Amsterdam can be Improved

A well-attended meeting on shore leave for seafarers was recently held at the Seafarers Centre in Amsterdam. What stood out was that this time, the event was not organised by the trade union or the Seafarers' Welfare Foundation, but by Port of Amsterdam itself.

During the meeting, staff from the Port Authority presented the results of an in-depth study on the importance of shore leave and the obstacles seafarers face in obtaining it. The findings clearly indicate that there is room for improvement.

Harbourmaster Milembe Mateyo made a strong appeal to terminal operators and companies to work together with the Port Authority on finding solutions. "This is the starting point for moving forward," she said.

For more information, contact Port of Amsterdam or download the report at: https://kvnr.nl/nl/actueel/recht-op-walverlof

SEAFARERS MATTER!

PARROT

In the past – and I mean really in the past, not before Wi-Fi but before compass – as a seafarer you needed guts. Guts to go out on the ocean in a kind of wooden bathtub with a star as navigation and some secondhand knowledge from an old colleague, and intestines that did not protest after months of dried cod and ship biscuits. What brave guys they were!

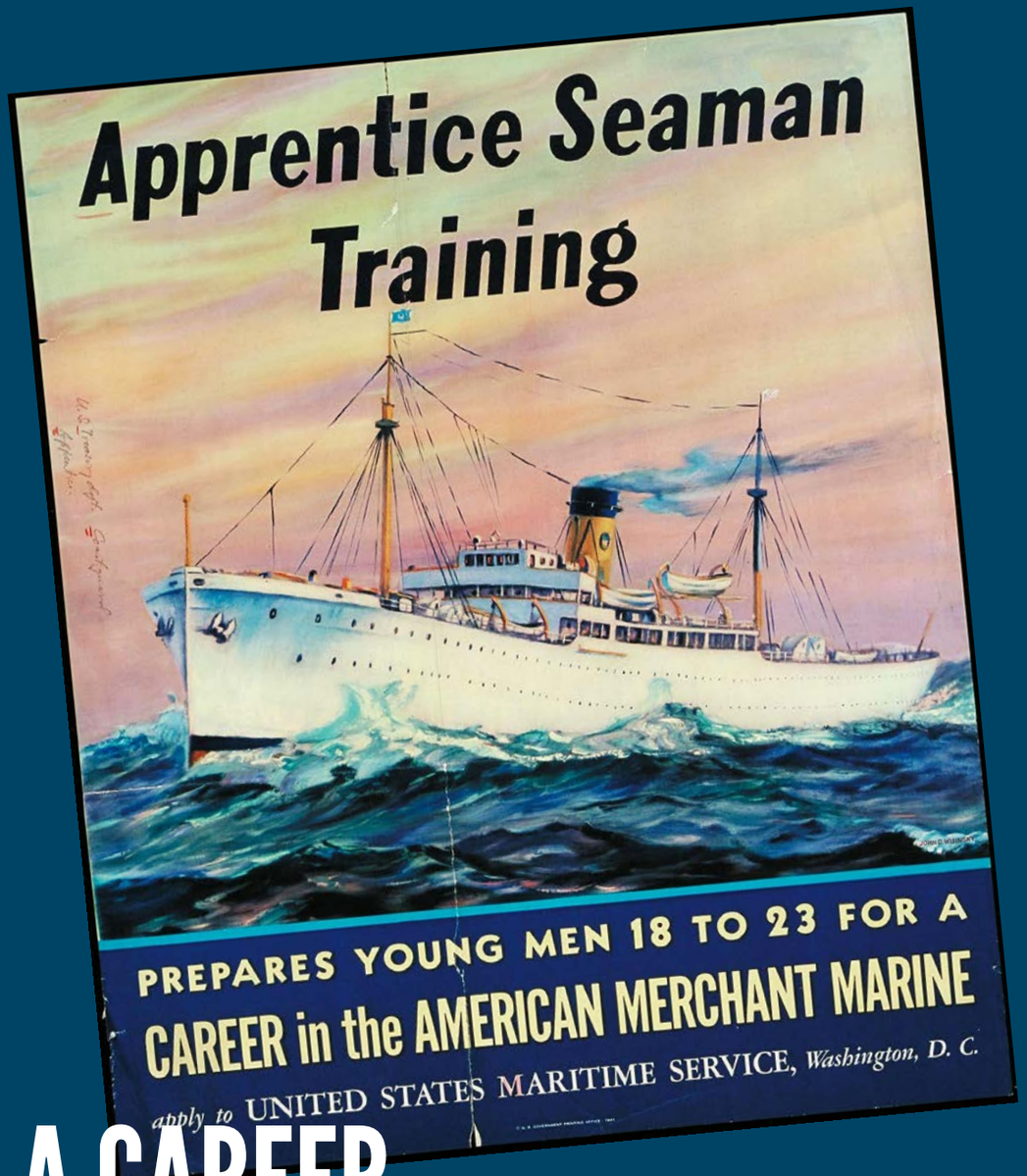
I have this image of those tough sailors of yesteryear: they smoked wet pipes (which went out every time due to a flooding wave), wore sweaters that itched like crazy, and could tell with one look at the horizon whether a storm was coming or just a flock of stray seagulls. They fought sea monsters, storms, scurvy ánd old stories - after two years of the same colleagues around them. And, of course, had a parrot on their shoulder.

I recently heard a great podcast about how the Polynesians navigated and how they helped James Cook in his world travels. They went out on the ocean in a kind of large canoe with a sail, sailed around the world and lived close to nature. It was only recently that scientists discovered how the guides knew where they were, so ingenious was their navigation.

Fast forward to now: the modern seafarer is in a 400-meter-long floating apartment building, with Wi-Fi, Netflix and air conditioning. The biggest battle? A stable Zoom connection with the home front and the discussion in pidgin English with 5 nationalities about who ate the last stroopwafel. And Head Office calls as soon as you deviate from the prescribed course by even 5 minutes. On the other hand, GPS tells you exactly where you are, you can somewhat avoid the fiercest storms, the ship steers itself and the only vermin on board is fried and served with wasabi mayo.

And the future? It looks even crazier. Will we soon have autonomous ships without crew? The seafarer would become a kind of gamer on the mainland: joystick in one hand, can of Red Bull in the other, steering a ship as if it were a game of Mario Kart. I don't think so, cannot see ChatGPT replacing a filter, putting a new impeller or giving that extra hand.

That's why seafaring will stay attractive – whether you have a beard full of salt or a headset on your head. In the middle of the ocean on a sailing canoe or in an ergonomic helm seat behind a row of screens: as soon as you use the word "portside", you are part of an age-old tradition. As long as there is water and things that must go from A to B, there will be a seafarer. People who come up with creative solutions for changing weather conditions, who can keep the ship running with an old bicycle tire and a mattress and who feel responsible for cargo and colleagues. Maybe not with a parrot on the shoulder anymore, but with a smartwatch that says, "Turn right in 20 miles." And honestly? Not everything was better in the past...



A CAREER BEYOND HORIZONS–

WIFI NOT INCLUDED

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